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The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever: Jesus as Timekeeper

William C. Weinrich

Let us begin by looking at three testimonies concerning time. Two come from Jewish sources, the third is Christian. In 2 Maccabees, we are told that the Syrian general, Nicanor, determined to attack Judas Maccabaeus on the Sabbath day. When certain Jews in his company urged him to give honor to that day "which he who sees all things has honored and made holy above [all other days]," Nicanor arrogantly demanded to know whether "there was in heaven a Sovereign [δυνάστης] who had commanded the keeping of the Sabbath." To this the Jews responded, "It is the living Lord himself, the Sovereign in heaven, who ordered us to observe the seventh day." To this Nicanor answered, "And I am a sovereign also, on earth, and I command you to take up arms and do the king's business" (2 Macc 15:1–5).[1] In this agonistic context, two distinct times come into conflict, and these two times are the times of two different and distinct sovereigns. One time is that of the living God in heaven, and the other time is that of the earthly king. Moreover, these two times and the two corresponding powers require differing loyalties and differing behaviors. For the Jews, the time of the seventh day demands rest from the work of the earth. For Nicanor, there is no Sabbath rest; he is bound to the times of the earth and so is bound to the work of an earthly king.

The second text introduces us more directly to the central theme of our topic. It comes from Jewish rabbinic literature. Referring to the time of the Exodus and the month in which it was celebrated, this explanation is given: "When God chose his world, he appointed months and years therein, and when he chose Jacob and his sons, he appointed for them a new moon of redemption in which Israel were redeemed from Egypt and in which they are destined to be redeemed again, as it says: 'As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things' (Micah 7:15)" (*Rab. Exod*. 15.11).[2] In this interesting text the

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, English translations of the Septuagint and the New Testament are the author's.

[2] *Exodus*, trans. Rabbi Dr. S. M. Lehrmann, in *Midrash Rabbah*, trans. and ed. Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1939, 1961), 173.

William C. Weinrich is professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

moons and years of the creation are contrasted with a "new moon of redemption." What we must note, however, is that this "new moon of redemption" is not another time in the sequence of times; it is a time of redemption *in which* all of God's redeeming acts subsist: "*in which* Israel were redeemed from Egypt and *in which* they are destined to be redeemed again." Thus, there is a time that is filled by event and happening but which is not a mere event of history, for that event comes from God and is not bound to nor dependent upon the forces either of nature or of men. Moreover—and this is important—the "new moon of redemption" is a time of recollection of God's past acts of salvation, which in turn presage and prefigure a future act of salvation. In the "new moon of redemption," there is both remembrance and the expectation of hope and faith. In the "new moon," past and future come together not so much as prophecy and fulfillment but as preliminary future and consummated past. The "new moon" is the time of God's ultimate and eschatological purpose and so lies outside of or beyond the times of this world. The days of the week and the time of the new moon are distinct, for this time is not *of the week*; it is rather the consummation of the week.

The third text comes from one of the Easter/Paschal homilies of Gregory of Nyssa.[3] Being a Christian writer, Gregory knows of that time "in which [Israel] is destined to be redeemed again." It is the time of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Consider the Sabbath theology of the Christian. The true Sabbath rest, foretold in that Sabbath rest of God on the seventh day, is the rest of God whereby he initiates a new day:

> You wonder at the sublime Moses, who by the power of knowledge apprehended the whole of God's creation? See, you have the Sabbath of the first origin of the world being blessed; learn through that Sabbath that this Sabbath is the day of rest which God has blessed above all other days. For on this day the only-begotten God truly rested from all his works, having kept Sabbath in the flesh through the dispensation befitting death, and returning to what he was by his resurrection he raised again together with himself all that lay prostrate, becoming life and resurrection and sunrise and dawn and day for those in darkness and death's shadow.[4]

Later in the homily Gregory reflects on the fact that the prophet Zechariah says that the day of redemption will be neither night nor day

[3] Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Three-Day Period of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ," in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, Patristic Monograph Series, no. 9 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981), 31–50.

[4] Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Three-Day Period," 31–32.

(Zech 14:7). Gregory quotes Ps 118:24, "This is the day which the Lord has made," and continues:

> [This is the day] but different from the days made at the beginning of creation, by which time is measured, this is the beginning of another creation. For on this day God makes a new heaven and a new earth. . . . What heaven? The firmament of faith in Christ. What earth? I mean the good heart . . . the earth which drinks the rain which comes on it and ripens plentiful grain. In this creation pure living is the sun, the virtues are stars, transparent conduct is the air, the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge is the sea, good teaching and divine doctrines are herbage and plants, which the people of his pasture, that is God's flock, grazes on, the performance of the commandments is trees bearing fruit. In this [creation] is created also the true man who is made in the image and likeness of God. You see the kind of world of which "This day which the Lord has made" becomes the beginning; of which the prophet says that it is not a day like other days, nor a night like other nights.[5]

As did the rabbis in the *Midrash Rabbah*, Gregory distinguishes between the times given in creation and the time of redemption, which, to be sure, is a time but not a time among times. For Gregory, this new time is present now and experienced now. He speaks of the paschal events of Baptism and of the Eucharist and quite directly of those who have been baptized and participate in the Supper of Christ. For Gregory, the time of baptism is the time of the new birth, and participation in the Eucharist is participation in "the day which the Lord has made."

Such texts, both Jewish and Christian, could easily be multiplied. But let us back up and inquire after the basic and fundamental theological perspective that allows and demands such reflection as we have surveyed. In his book, *The Origins of History*, Herbert Butterfield argues that the Old Testament prophets were virtually unique in the ancient world in their understanding of time.[6] The civilizations that surrounded them reckoned time according to the cycles of nature. Time, as it were, was located in the movement of the seasons, and so time consisted of a constant and never-ending repetition of growth and decay that characterized the natural cycle. In such a perspective, man too was but a feature of nature, given over to the natural cycle of life and death. Thus, man was imprisoned in a never-ending cycle of return and repetition that had neither purpose nor meaning. Not surprisingly, from such a conviction the quest for the

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[5] Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Three-Day Period," 34–35.

[6] Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of History*, ed. Adam Watson (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 80–117.

philosophical life and for the life of God existed in the quest to escape the constraints and limitations of time and space. Within the sphere of Greek philosophy, this quest could assume the form of the immortality of the soul as a freedom from the corruptible body, or it could assume the more radical form of the annihilating conflagration, or ἐκπύρωσις, of all things at the end of each cycle of time, a view held by the Stoics.

How very different is the understanding of the Old Testament! Consider, for example, these two comments from the *Wisdom of Solomon* (LXX) concerning the *telos,* or divinely ordained purpose, of man: "God did not make death, nor does he delight in the destruction of the living. For he created all things that they might exist [εἰς τὸ εἶναι] and the generations of the world are full of health [σωτήριοι] and in them is no destructive poison" (Wis 1:13–14). And this: "God created man for incorruption [ἐπ᾽ ἀφθαρσίᾳ], and made him in the image of his own character" [εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ἰδιότητος]" (Wis 2:23).

Several aspects of these assertions may be highlighted. First of all, God created with a purpose, and this purpose lay, so to speak, not only behind the creation as cause but precisely within creation itself as its goal and intent. This was, in fact, the essential claim made by the Christian assertion, elaborated especially by Irenaeus in the second century, that God made the world *ex nihilo*, "from nothing." The biblical text was that of Genesis: God spoke and it was as God had spoken it (see Gen 1:3; Ps 33:9). God made *ex nihilo*, that is, by his word and command. God's act of creation, therefore, was not merely the beginning of all things; it vested in creation itself—and here we speak especially of man—its intended end. "God created man *for incorruption*." The definition of man, therefore, includes man's goal: man *is* the creature intended for incorruption. This leads directly to the second aspect that we must mention. Unlike in cyclical notions of time, in the biblical perspective death is an alien and hostile intrusion into God's creation, not merely as a corrupting influence but as that which stultifies and threatens God's purpose for man. Sin and death call God's final intent for man into question: "Through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to him experience it" (Wis 2:24). Sin and death, as it were, reduce man to a mere creature of nature, caught and bound in the cycle of life and death, without purpose and without meaning.

Finally, and somewhat in summary, these texts from *Wisdom* claim that the existence of man stretches out toward a future goal. That is to say that the existence of man, precisely as that which has a future, is characterized by time. Man does not exist *in* time; rather, man is *temporal*. Man is not

essentially a natural phenomenon; he is a historical reality. But as a temporal, historical reality, man is given a life to live, and that life is to correspond to the will and intent of God, who made man. Man's own will and behavior is to be dedicated to and is to correspond to that end, which is the proper end of man. Not surprisingly, therefore, according to biblical understanding, when the true Man appears, the fullness of times has likewise come (see Matt 3:17; Gal 4:4). The eschatological end of all times is defined as the eschatological consummation of man.

Butterfield notes the historical consciousness that characterizes Old Testament summaries of Israel's existence by quoting from Deuteronomy 26. This is, as Butterfield puts it, "a kind of creedal statement"[7] which was to be recited at the harvest festival when the first fruits were presented to the priest and placed before the altar:

> A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which You, O Lord, have given me. (Deut 26:5–10)

The offering of harvest fruit to the deity was a typical expression of the pagan worship of nature and its recurring cycle of the seasons. But as Butterfield notes, "the children of Israel associated [the harvest festival] with a unique event. It did not bind them to nature. It reminded them of their history."[8] What, however, must be added to Butterfield's comment is this: the work of man and the fruits of his labors become the essential content of man's worship of God, and this precisely in view of God's promise that the land of milk and honey is the abode of his people. The sacrifice of man to God is man himself and all that constitutes his life.

As a temporal, historical being, man is given a life to live. In the Old Testament this life was exhibited by practice and habit that was in obedience to the statutes and commandments of God. Butterfield notes that when the question arose as to why Israel ought to observe the commandments, they did not resort to ethical discourse or philosophical

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[7] Butterfield, *The Origins of History*, 82.

[8] Butterfield, *The Origins of History*, 82.

explanation. They appealed yet again to their history. When Moses delivered the commandments to the people, he is reported as saying:

> When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules which the Lord our God has commanded you?" then you shall say to your son, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day." (Deut 6:20–23)

The commandments of God are intimately connected with the promise of God concerning the land. They are not laid upon Israel as foreign elements that oppress and bind. They are rather given to Israel as the form of that life which is conformed to God's promise. The promise of the land to Abraham became especially associated with the Exodus, along with the giving of the Torah and the wilderness sojourn. It was this event, or these events, that substantiated that the promise of God would be fulfilled, even through the necessity of redemption from bondage and the destruction of Pharaoh. Butterfield summarizes:

> It seemed that the whole history of the people had been a history based on the Promise. At some time or other, the Promise came to be regarded as a continuing thing; it represented the hope for the future, but it depended on the conduct of the people themselves, the fidelity to the covenant, the obeying of the commandments. All this implied a further bond, fastening men's minds on history, and connecting religion with history.[9]

When the holy writer commenced the story of Israel with the account of the creation, he confessed that the meaning of creation lay not within the natural cycles of seedtime and harvest but within the history of a people. Time stretched out toward the future, for time was not an empty vessel but was laden with meaning. It is important to note, however, that the meaning that filled the moments of time was determined by the *final* purpose of God. For the Hebrew mind, not the beginning but the end was decisive. Thus, already at the beginning God had promised the end, and the end was already in view: "Let us make man in our image and likeness"

[9] Butterfield, *The Origins of History*, 87.

(Gen 1:26). The man made at the beginning was not yet man as he was to become. The apostle Paul makes the remarkable comment that Adam was "the type of the one who was to come [τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος]" (Rom 5:14). Adam was not the goal of creation; he was prophetic of the goal of creation. The same was true of Israel. As Butterfield noted, "the whole history of the people had been a history based on the Promise." That is, the future (i.e., the promise) gave structure and significance to the history of Israel. The future, as it were, constantly intruded upon the events of Israel and, in doing so, moved Israel onward toward that very future. Israel was eschatologically determined, and her fulfillment lay beyond her own history.

We can see this quite clearly in the prophetic announcements concerning a future and final exodus, more glorious than the first. Two aspects are involved: memory and recollection of the past and expectation and hope of that promise that is yet to come. Consider, for example, Isa 51:9–11:

> Awake, awake, put on strength,
> O arm of the Lord;
> awake, as in days of old,
> the generations of long ago.
> Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces,
> that pierced the dragon?
> Was it not you who dried up the sea,
> the waters of the great deep,
> who made the depths of the sea a way
> for the redeemed to pass over?
> And the ransomed of the Lord shall return
> and come to Zion with singing;
> everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
> they shall obtain joy and gladness,
> and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The final redemption of Israel will be a new Exodus, which is also depicted as a new creation. This final redemption will be everlasting and will be accompanied by joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing forever gone and never to return. Moreover, the new Exodus will not merely repeat the Exodus of old or be merely similar to it. The new Exodus will *surpass* the old and cause that old Exodus to be forgotten. The Jews of old left Egypt in great haste (Exod 12:39), but the new Exodus will not be in haste because it will be a triumphant march: "For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard" (Isa 52:12).

The worship of Israel was based upon such eschatological hopes. What had occurred in the past was recollected and celebrated *as* the foundation and image of a future event in which Israel would, finally, become true Israel. The fulfillment of Israel would at the same time be the consummation of all humanity. Creation will have reached its end, the goal set for it by God at the beginning. Consider, for example, the imagery behind the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated the presence of God's glory in the tabernacle during the wilderness sojourn, the future ingathering of scattered Israel from the nations, and the resultant dwelling of God in the reconstructed, eschatological temple. The significant text is found in Zechariah:

> On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be continuous day . . . not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his Name one. (Zech 14:6–9, RSV)

Although an agricultural harvest festival, Tabernacles had co-opted the natural season of harvest and made it into a celebration of a future event in which creation would come to its end in a never-ending day. Israel brought nature into the service of her liturgy of remembrance and expectation. "On that day" signifies a day unlike and beyond all days, a day of perpetual light, that is, a day of the knowledge of God and of obedience to his commandments. It will be a day of living waters, that is, of the forgiveness of sin and, hence, the arrival of the eschatological paradise. In addition, with the manifestation of Israel God himself is manifested, made known, acknowledged, and worshipped. The time of the eschatological fulfillment is the time of the manifestation both of Israel and of God, Israel as the people of God and God as the God of Israel. Hence, the temple would become the focus of Israel's eschatological worship.

Israel celebrated its redemptive history and its future hope through its festive liturgies—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The early church retained these celebrations, while ascribing to them her conviction that the eschatological completion, expected by Israel, had in fact come in the coming of Jesus. This completion of the ancient expectations was not, however, a simple continuation from what had gone before. This completion entailed something radically new, not new in the sense of unexpected, although that is true as well, but new in the sense that the old did not contain the new in itself and so had no capacity to bring the new forth. The

apostle Paul gives expression to this discontinuous continuity of the old with the new: "Even though we regarded Christ according to the flesh [i.e., as a descendent of Abraham], we now no longer regard [him in that way]. So that if anyone be in Christ, [he is] a new creation; the old things have passed away, behold, the new things have come" (2 Cor 5:16–17). The "old things" [τὰ ἀρχαῖα] are the various institutions and festivals of the old covenant. These the Christians will no longer celebrate *as* do the Jews. Nonetheless, these the Christians will celebrate according to that newness which is Christ himself. The Orthodox liturgist, Alexander Schmemann, once observed that while non-Jewish Christians might accept the Old Testament because they believe in the New, the "logic" of the early *Jewish*-Christians was quite otherwise:

> They believed in the New because they had seen, experienced and perceived the fulfillment of the Old. Jesus was the Christ; the Messiah; the One in whom all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled. They experienced Christianity as the beginning of the 'Lord's Day,' toward which the whole history of the chosen people was moving.[10]

Thus, there is a continuity, for the history of Israel and the cultic celebrations of its past are not replaced, abolished, or superseded. They yet exist and are celebrated. However, they now exist and are celebrated as that which has found its fulfillment and consummation. That to which they prophetically pointed has arrived. There is, moreover, a newness that cannot be fully explained and accounted for by reference to the Old. The "new things" of which Paul spoke have come wholly and exclusively in the coming of Jesus and, quite especially, in his death and resurrection: "Behold, I make all things new," says he who sits upon the throne [Ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα] (Rev 21:5). While Jesus is the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, he is also the one sent from above who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born from the Virgin Mary. The eschatological fullness, therefore, which is Jesus himself, brings into present time that which is not of time. The eschatological completion of time does not arise from time; the consummation of history does not itself have historical causation, and so it is, as it were, a history beyond all history. As the prophet Zechariah proclaimed, "On that day, there shall be continuous day, not day and not night."

On the way to his death in the early second century, Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Christians of Magnesia: "If those who lived under the

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[10] Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, trans. Asheleigh E. Moorehouse (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 59.

old order of things [ἐν παλαιοίς πράγμασιν] have come to the newness of hope [εἰς καινότητα ελπίδος], no longer observing the Sabbath, but living according to the Lord's Day [κατά κυριακήν ζῶντες]—on which also our life rose up through him, indeed, through his death . . . how shall we live apart from him?" (Ign. *Mag*. 9:1).[11] Ignatius gives expression to the Christian conviction that "to live according to the Lord's Day" is to live a life whose principle and reality lies within history but is not mere history. For the early church the Lord's Day was not a Christian equivalent of the Jewish Sabbath. The Sabbath was the day of God's rest after the creation of the world. In observing the Sabbath the Jew participated in the rest of God and thereby acknowledged that the world created by God was indeed good, even as God said it was. Therefore, "the Sabbath sanctions the whole natural life of the world unfolding through the cycles of time, because it is the divinely instituted sign of the correspondence of the world to God's will and purpose."[12] Yet this world ordered to God's purposes was also the scene of sin and death. In view of this woeful situation, the Sabbath rest assumed a distinctly penultimate character. The Sabbath as the final day of the week of creation lay nonetheless *within* the old aeon, which must pass away. Thus, the Sabbath rest was prophetic of another Sabbath rest, which would be the sign of that new creation in which all of humanity would be redeemed.

That is why Ignatius says that those who have come into "the newness of hope" no longer observe the Sabbath. To observe the Sabbath would be to fall again under the sign of the old order whose end is death and corruption. According to the time of Christ's passion, the Sabbath was the day of his rest in the tomb, "the day which completed his task within the limits of the 'old aeon.'"[13] Christ did not rise from the dead on the Sabbath but on "the first day of the week" [μία σαββάτων], the day that Ignatius called "the Lord's Day" and that came also to be called "the eighth day" because it lay outside the boundaries of the seven-day week of creation. Here, too, we see what I have earlier termed the "discontinuous continuity" with the Old Testament celebrations. Nothing in the old dispensation possessed the capacity to effect the resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Christ from the dead was a work of God, a work of God alone, and could only be a work of God.

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[11] *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, ed. J. B. Lightfoot, J. R. Harmer, and Michael W. Holmes, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 154–155.

[12] Schmemann, *Introduction*, 60.

[13] Schmemann, *Introduction*, 78.

In the Gospel of John, the works of Jesus on the Sabbath were miracles of healing, that is, events foretelling the new creation of his resurrection. In the first Sabbath miracle, Jesus heals the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda. The language is replete with the terminology of new creation and the accompanying new life of discipleship: "Jesus said to him, 'Arise [ἔγειρε], take your pallet and walk. And straightway the man became whole [ἐγένετο ὑγιὴς]" (John 5:8–9). The Jews accuse the man of breaking the Sabbath, but he replies to them, "He who made me whole [ὁ ποιήσας με ὑγιῆ] said to me, 'Take your pallet and walk'" (John 5:11). In the ensuing exchange with the Jews, Jesus expressly invokes the theology of Sabbath: "My Father works until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17). The Jews understand well the implications of Jesus' words. The healing of the paralytic is a sign of the new Sabbath rest of the new creation in which the new obedient Israel will be manifested. That work only God can effect, and so they accuse Jesus of making himself equal to God [ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ] (John 5:18).

The second Sabbath miracle in the Gospel of John is the healing of the man born blind. When the disciples inquire whether the man's blindness is due to sin, Jesus again explicitly invokes ideas of the Sabbath and of the new Sabbath it presages. Neither the man nor his parents have sinned. Rather, the situation exists "in order that the works of God might in him become manifest" (John 9:3). Then Jesus says, "It is necessary that we [namely, the Father and Jesus] work the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night comes when no one can work" (John 9:4). As we learn later, the night is the time of betrayal and of Jesus' death. It is the end of all things, and as the end it is also the time of the eschatological renewal. Jesus then effects an act by which the new Sabbath is manifested. He makes clay from his spittle and "christens" [ἐπέχρισεν] the eyes of the man with the clay (John 9:6). Then he says to the man, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." And the man went away and washed himself and returned seeing (John 9:7). It is a baptism scene depicted as the creation of a new Adam made from the clay of the earth.

The time in which salvation is effected by God has come. In the work of Jesus the new creation appears, as does the eschatological Israel of prophetic promise. Jesus brings, as Paul puts it, "the fullness of the time" [τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου] (Gal 4:4). This "fullness of the time," however, is not another time of times. It possesses a content both paschal and Pentecostal (i.e., of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost):

> When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that *we* might receive the adoption of sonship. And because

> you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:4–6; emphasis added)

For the first Christians, the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist instantiated the promised time of salvation and renewal and, thus, were the celebrations of the new eschatological Sabbath. Through Baptism, one entered into the new Israel of Christ by water and the Spirit; it was the new purifying path through the Red Sea of sin, death, and the devil. In the Eucharist, the new freedom of sonship given and received in baptism was repeatedly recalled and celebrated at the table of the heavenly Father. It is not incidental that the Lord's Prayer addressed to "our Father, who art in heaven" was the prayer of the new Israel created in the waters of baptism. In these sacraments, the death and resurrection of Christ, in themselves singular events of the past, were recognized and acknowledged to be the eschatological fullness of the time. By them and in them, that which is above time and not determined by time, namely, the will of God that man should be incorruptible and have eternal life, becomes itself event and so can be experienced by man and lived by him. "The Kingdom of God has entered into the world, becoming the new life in the Spirit given by Him as life within Himself."[14] The life of the new creation has brought the future of God's redemption into the present and has revealed that time by which all times and moments are to be measured and evaluated. Moreover, this life of the new aeon is not pure spirit. It is manifested and experienced in the liturgical *events* of Baptism and the Eucharist through which the new Israel, the church, is manifested. Thus, the church is called to baptize and to administer the Supper, not as things the church is commanded to do and so does as a work, but as that in which the church subsists and through which the church is manifested as the people of God, participants in the coming of God the Redeemer, and recipients of the promise foretold by the prophets but made present in the person of Jesus, the incarnated Son of the Father. The sacraments are the actualizations of the new aeon in the old. Through them, the church, the community of the re-created, lives in the world of time but as the true citizens of the heavenly city. Lived in faith, hope, and love, the fullness of the time remains in this age "hidden" in Christ. It will, however, become visible for all to behold at the coming again of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. Then what is beheld and received and experienced at the table of the Lord will be revealed:

> You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a

[14] Schmemann, *Introduction*, 72.

> judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12:22–24, RSV)

When the writer of Hebrews claims that "Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8), he does not make an ontological statement about the eternity of Jesus as true God. He states, rather, that in the repetition of the Supper he who *said*, "Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Take, drink, this is the blood of the new covenant," is he who even now *says*, "Take, eat. This is my body given for you." And so, in the fullness of time we are bold to pray:

> O God, the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness, who in loving-kindness sent your only-begotten Son into the flesh, we thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament, and we ask You not to forsake Your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.[15]

[15] *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 166.

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Then Let Us Keep the Festival: That Christ Be Manifest in His Saints

D. Richard Stuckwisch

In the year leading up to my vicarage, I was beginning to preach with some regularity at my fieldwork congregation. During lunch one day with Dr. William Weinrich in the seminary dining hall, I asked him for advice on how to approach the task of preaching. In the course of our conversation, he noted that a class I was scheduled to have with him that spring, Early Christian Popular Literature, would be of particular help in this regard. I have spent the years ever since learning to appreciate and benefit from what he had in mind—namely, the compelling confession of Christ in concrete circumstances lived under the cross. It wears flesh and blood. It struggles with less-than-ideal situations and suffers persecution without knowing in advance the way it will unfold. It lives and dies in the hope of the resurrection, hidden with Christ in God and embodied on earth in men and women, boys and girls, who were like us, and yet like Christ.

Commemoration of the saints is not a vague, internalized, noetic exercise but a specific public activity and narrative, like the witness of the Christian lives we thus recall. It is rooted in real history and set forth in the external word of preaching. It belongs to the corporate confession and prayer of the church's collective memory, an important aspect of her ongoing sacred tradition.

We praise and give thanks to God for the saints who have gone before us in Christ Jesus because they are witnesses of his gospel, their very lives embodying and confessing the Christian faith. What is more, because they are the Lord's and are with him, they belong to us, and we to them, in the one body of Christ. So it is that we remember them and honor them in his name and for his sake. The question and the challenge is how we go about this commemoration and celebration of the saints within the life of the church in such a way that Christ the Lord is honored in them, that consciences are comforted by the Holy Spirit through this proclamation, and that faith and love are thereby strengthened to the glory of God the Father.

D. Richard Stuckwisch is Pastor of Emmaus Lutheran Church in South Bend, Indiana.

I. We Are Surrounded by So Great a Cloud of Witnesses

The first point is simply this: the commemoration of the saints begins not with us but with the Lord our God. We remember them by faith in his word because the Lord remembers them in mercy. The Father actively beholds them and receives them to himself in Christ his Son, and he gives them to us in love as our brothers and sisters in him within the household and family of God.

Over and over again, the Lord declares that he remembers his people, his saints. He remembers his covenant promises to Abraham and to his seed forever, as Moses and the psalmist pray, and as Mary and Zechariah sing and confess (Luke 1:54–55, 68–75). His remembering is not a mental recalling of something he "forgot" but a deliberate activity of love in which he keeps and carries out his promises, fulfills his covenant, and saves his people from sin and death. And as he remembers them, so does he reveal and give himself to them by speaking his word to them and by blessing them with his own holy name. In this way are they able to call upon him in prayer.

God's self-revelation is not only to and for his people; it also encompasses their history of faith and life in him. So the Holy Scriptures are the foremost commemoration of the saints. That is to say, we know and remember the saints of old because the Bible tells us so. It records the stories of the people of God, both collectively and individually (e.g., Psalms 105–106; Prov 10:7; Luke 1:48; Heb 6:12; 13:7). In this way, God remembers them for us and for our benefit so that we are able to remember them and learn from them as our fathers and mothers in the faith (Isa 63:11–14).

The stories of the saints in the Holy Scriptures are not shallow, superficial, or sugar-coated. They remember the people of God in both strength and weakness, not only in their faith and faithfulness but also in their faults and failings. It is the mercy of the Lord that shines through in every case as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies his people by the gospel of his forgiveness of sins and as he preserves them from Egypt through the desert into the good land he has promised.

We learn to know the Lord as he is for us from his dealings with those who have gone before us. So, for example, the repentance, reconciliation, and restoration of King David following his adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11–12) and of the apostle Peter following his denials (John 18:15–27; 21:7–17) are stories that confess the gospel to us and strengthen our faith. The Lutheran Confessions are able to cite these cases and point to

them because they are first held up for us in the Holy Scriptures (Ap XII 36). It is not accidental that remembering the saints is beneficial to faith and love. This is why the Bible commemorates them.

The great story arc of the Bible not only shapes the Church Year but also sets before us the lives and legacies of the saints in whom the Lord demonstrates the grace and glory of his gospel. That is so not only in the original record of events but then again in the way that subsequent Scriptures cite those earlier examples in their proclamation of God's word and promises. Consider how often the Psalms, the prophets, and the apostles recall the faith of Abraham, the faithfulness of Moses, the throne of David, and the righteousness of Job. So, too, Elijah, Elisha, and Jeremiah are all set forth as types of the Christ who was to come. And the life and ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, is actually the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1–4; John 1:1–8). The history of salvation, which is really the story of the Christ, is told and retold in the story of his saints already in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament and beyond. The promises of God are given to particular people in particular places and circumstances, and all of these particularities are taken up into the providential mercies of the Lord to proclaim the coming of the Son into history in the flesh. Everything is fulfilled in Christ Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the Son of David, conceived and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Luke 24:25–27, 44–47).

As the coming Christ is proclaimed in the lives of his Old Testament saints, so is the promise of the resurrection. Our Lord himself demonstrates that promise, and he commemorates the saints with the story of Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3). The God "of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," he says, is not the God of the dead but of the living (Luke 20:37–38). The patriarchs are not dead and gone, for the Lord is their God, and all live to him in the hope of the resurrection.

Many more examples could be given of scriptural commemorations of the saints. The Lord remembers Abraham and Sarah, and he calls on his people to do the same: "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you" (Isa 51:1–2). Moses is commemorated at the end of Deuteronomy (34:1–12), Enoch and Elijah are remembered as righteous men who walked with God (Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:1–12), and Moses and Elijah are recalled to witness the glory of Christ in his transfiguration (Luke 9:28–31). King David is remembered by the Lord and in the Scriptures not only for his fall and repentance but for his heart of faith and as a type of Christ. In fact, the coming Messiah is sometimes described as "David," the servant

of the Lord (Ezek 34:23–24; Ps 89:19–29). The righteous and long-suffering Job is commended by the Lord himself in the Old Testament (Job 1:6–8; 2:3) and remembered by James in the New (Jas 5:11). "Righteous Lot" is cited by Peter (2 Pet 2:7–8).

A number of the Psalms rehearse the history of Israel and recall the deeds of the patriarchs, prophets and priests, judges and kings (Psalms 78; 105–106). The Jews of the intertestamental period followed that precedent by honoring the heroes of the faith (Sir 44:1–50:24) and, especially, the martyrs of Judaism, such as the Maccabees (2 Macc 6–7; 4 Macc 5–17).[1]

The New Testament apostles certainly did inherit and continue the commemoration of the faithful departed, including catechetical rehearsals of the "great cloud of witnesses" (as in Hebrews 11). The saints of old, who lived and died by faith in the promises of God, are set forth as the legal testimony and evidence of his grace and faithfulness. By their example we are encouraged and strengthened in our own faith and life and, specifically, to join them in fixing our hope on Christ Jesus (Heb 12:1–2). Their witness also demonstrates the intimate connection between faith and the cross so that not only works of love but also persecution, suffering, and death are remembered and extolled as fruits of faith.[2]

With the coming of Christ into history, the object of faith becomes increasingly clear, as does the witness of his saints. Elizabeth and Zechariah, the parents of the forerunner, are described as "righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord" (Luke 1:6). Simeon is likewise "righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke 2:25); similarly, the prophetess Anna is steadfast in her fasting and prayers, serving night and day in the temple (Luke 2:37). The Lord reveals himself in mercy to these faithful men and women, and he reveals himself to us in them. Mary of Bethany, who anointed the Lord Jesus ahead of time for his burial, is commemorated wherever in the world his gospel is preached

[1] The commemoration of the Maccabees and other Jewish martyrs was influential on subsequent Christian practice, and it was sometimes included with the Christian remembrance of the Old Testament saints. However, it should be noted that the church's celebration of martyrs and other saints is distinguished by its confession of the cross and resurrection of Christ. The accomplished fact of the Lord's passion is a decisive line in the sand. It is definitive for the Christian liturgy.

[2] The deacon Stephen's preaching is another rehearsal of God's faithfulness in the lives of his past saints, with his own faithful service culminating in his martyrdom. His death echoes the cross and passion of the Lord Jesus while testifying to his resurrection and ascension (Acts 6–7).

(Matt 26:6–13; John 11:1–2; 12:1–8), and Joseph of Arimathea is likewise remembered for his reverent care of the body of Jesus following the crucifixion (John 19:38–40; Luke 23:50–53). Christian faith and love are always coming to rest and finding their focus in the body of Christ, crucified and risen.

The holy apostles, in addition to peers and predecessors, also point to themselves as examples of the faith. We are admonished to imitate the apostles as they imitate Christ (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1) because the word of God is not only preached and taught but also lived and suffered, especially by those who are called and sent to speak for the Lord. Consider the prophets, such as Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jonah, who embodied or enacted the very word they were given to proclaim.

The ministry of the gospel does not exist in practice apart from those who are actually called and sent to preach and administer the gospel (Rom 10:14–17). The Word, who became flesh for the redemption and resurrection of the body, cannot be detached from the life of the body. So the words and works of Christ Jesus are continued in the acts of his apostles and in the ministry of those who follow them. We hear and receive him in his ministers because he sends them to deal with us in his name (Matt 10:40; Luke 10:16; John 13:20). The Lord thus builds his church upon the foundation of his apostles and prophets, and Christ himself is their cornerstone.

Similar to King David, Peter is not only restored after his fall but established in a prominent position (John 21:15–19). Together with the other apostles, he is foundational to the faith and life of the church on earth (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14). One has only to think of Peter on Pentecost and in the home of Cornelius to recognize his pivotal importance (Acts 2:14–42; 10:1–11:18). Peter (the Rock) is a new Abraham (Isa 51:1–2; Matt 16:17–19), and the twelve apostles are collectively the patriarchs of a new Israel. Paul's conversion is another case in point (Acts 9:1–22; 22:3–21; 26:4–23; Gal 1:11–17). His itinerary of troubles suffered for the name of Christ testifies again to the central significance of the cross in the ministry of the gospel (2 Cor 11:16—12:10). Paul and Matthew both hold themselves up as recipients of God's mercy and forgiveness. Matthew the tax collector was called to become a disciple of Christ, an apostle and evangelist (Matt 9:9; 10:2–4). And Paul, the Pharisee and persecutor of Christians, was chosen by God to become the great apostle to the Gentiles as Peter was called to be the great apostle to the circumcised (1 Tim 1:15–16; Gal 2:7–9; 1 Cor 15:8–11).

What the holy apostles, evangelists, and prophets received and did and suffered by faith in the Lord has been recorded for posterity in the Holy Scriptures. Not only that, in addition to the past example of their lives, they also continue to serve the church even now and to the close of the age through their inscripturated preaching (John 20:30–31; 1 John 1:3–4; 2 Pet 1:12–15). God has chosen to give and preserve his word through the words and works of these men whom he called to preach and to write in his name. These preachers and their words, as well as the subjects of the stories they have told, are gifts of God whereby the Lord reveals himself and proclaims his gospel to us and all the world.

We do not simply remember these saints; we actually receive and learn Christ Jesus from them. As there were the Old Testament types of Christ in advance, so are there also these living icons of Christ from the New Testament onward. We learn of him from the apostles and evangelists, the pastors and teachers, the holy martyrs, and all the saints who have followed in his train.

These faithful people from throughout the ages are the good works of Christ Jesus, the fruits of his cross born of his sacrifice in his resurrection from the dead (John 12:24). And their good works, in turn, also follow after him as the produce of his cross (Rev 14:13). They are works of faith and love, including patience in affliction and the bearing of the cross in steadfast hope.

It is in this respect that Paul suffers for the church in his flesh and fills up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ (Col 1:24). There is surely nothing lacking in the Lord's atonement and no contingency on God's reconciliation of the world to himself in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:18–19). However, the fruits of Christ's sacrifice are still being produced as fruits of the tree of his cross. And the church on earth, which is the body of Christ, continues on a pilgrimage under the cross, bearing the cross and its fruits in the preaching, hearing, and confessing of the gospel. So do the saints suffer with Christ and share his afflictions, and he himself is persecuted by the world in their bodies (Acts 9:4–5) until all that remains to be filled up is completed (Rev 6:9–11).

Time would fail us to consider all the saints who have ever been. Besides, there continue to be more and more saints as time passes. But the precedent and pattern of the Holy Scriptures provide a way of thinking about the saints from throughout the history of the church on earth, and in that light we are able to identify and consider at least some of them for the edification of faith and life.

We do not limit our commemoration and celebration of the saints to those who are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, for we are confident that Christ continues to perform his signs in the presence of his disciples (John 20:30), to preach the kingdom of God in other cities and villages, even to the ends of the earth (Luke 4:43; Acts 1:8), and to send his messengers before his face to prepare his way wherever he will go (Luke 7:27; 10:1). Indeed, he has never failed to provide faithful pastors and teachers for his church on earth for the preaching of his word. According to his promise, we trust that he is present with those who preach and those who hear, with those who baptize and those who are baptized, and with his body and his blood in the Sacrament of the Altar (Matt 26:26–28; 28:18–20). Thus do we rejoice in his saints of all times and places, remembering them with thanksgiving before him.

II. We Believe, Teach, and Confess the Communion of Saints

Commemoration of the Saints in the Early Church

Already in the earliest generations of the Christian church, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna "commemorate" the apostles in their epistles. They cite their preaching, their letters to the churches, and their sufferings and death for the sake of the gospel.[3] Such examples are offered as instruction and encouragement, something the apostolic fathers who cite them also take to heart in their own discipleship. In time, Ignatius and Polycarp themselves become links in the chain of holy martyrs and are remembered and honored as such. Ignatius anticipates his own death in his letter to the Church at Rome, and Polycarp recalls it in his letter to the Church at Philippi. Decades later in the middle of the second century, after the elderly Polycarp was publicly martyred while serving as Bishop of Smyrna, the church there made a point of preserving the memory of that event both in writing and in worship.[4]

The document known as *The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* demonstrates a venerable precedent for the commemoration of the martyrs in the liturgical life of the church. In so far as it was possible, the body of the martyr was reverently laid to rest in a suitable place where the church would gather on the anniversary of his death, a day that was viewed as his heavenly

[3] Cf. *1 Clement* 5, 47; Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 12; Ignatius, *To the Romans* 4; and Polycarp, *To the Philippians* 3, 9.

[4] Cf. *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, ed. Paul Hartog (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

birthday (*dies natalis*).[5] Year after year, the holy martyrs were remembered with thanksgiving, their stories rehearsed and retold, not as mere pious nostalgia, nor simply as doxology, but as catechesis and training for martyrdom. The church was learning from the example of the martyrs to take up the cross and follow Christ in faith and love, in life and death.[6] Suffering and death are not valued for their own sakes nor deliberately pursued, but accepted according to the word and will of God and thus according to the gospel of Christ Jesus.[7] This document also clarified that even the greatest of the martyrs could never take the place of Christ, the Son of God, but that the martyrs are remembered in love and honored because of their love for him and their witness to his cross and passion.[8]

Another point that is clear in *The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, as also in the letters of St. Ignatius, is the close connection between the Eucharist and martyrdom.[9] Lutherans may be more inclined to think of this in terms of Holy Baptism because it signifies the dying and rising of repentance and faith. There is, however, no conflict or competition here. The one who is baptized with the Baptism of Christ is also then given to drink the cup of Christ (Mark 10:38–39), as both Sacraments find their fountain and source in the same cross and passion of the one Lord Jesus Christ. To share his death in Holy Baptism (Rom 6:3) and to eat and drink the fruits of his sacrifice in the Holy Communion (Heb 13:10–13) is to bear his cross as a disciple, whether for life or death (Phil 1:21–24; Rom 14:7–9). So, too, the communion of saints is rooted in Holy Baptism and centered in the Holy Communion of Christ's body and blood (Eph 4:4–6).

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[5] Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17.3; 18.3; 21.

[6] Cf. Robin Darling Young, *In Procession before the World: Martyrdom as Public Liturgy in Early Christianity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001); William C. Weinrich, "Death and Martyrdom: An Important Aspect of Early Christian Eschatology," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66:4 (2002): 327–338; Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Candida R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012).

[7] Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 1.1–2; 2.1; 19.1; 22.1.

[8] Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17.2–3; also, Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 4 vols., trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 3:448–450.

[9] Cf. Ignatius, *To the Romans* 4; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14–15; and William C. Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom: A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Contexts of Persecution and Martyrdom in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 124–145.

The saints in heaven and on earth are all one body in Christ because they all partake of his one body and drink of his one cup, which is the New Testament in his blood (1 Cor 10:16–17). In the Sacrament, the church of all times and places is gathered together around the Lamb upon his throne in the midst of his people (Rev 5:11–14). It should come as no surprise, therefore, that from early on the saints have been remembered especially at the Lord's Altar.[10] As the church grew, and as the number of martyrs increased, many of them were named in eucharistic prayer. In subsequent generations, the mortal remains of the most notable martyrs were interred beneath the altar (perhaps in view of Rev 6:9), a practice that certainly confessed a connection between the Sacrament and the saints.

The commemoration of the saints is embraced by and taken up into the eucharistic remembrance of Jesus. As Christ remembers us with his word and with his body and his blood on earth, and as he remembers us before the Father in heaven with his ongoing priestly intercessions for us (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), so does the Father remember us and all his children in Christ, his Son. We, accordingly, remember him by faith, by receiving his gifts with thanksgiving and praise, and by calling on his name. In this way and by these means, we live as members of one body in Christ Jesus, bound together with the Father and the Spirit in his holy flesh and precious blood, and so also bound to one another in him and to his Christians of all times and places.

Medieval Developments in the Veneration of the Saints

As the gifts of the Spirit in Corinth could become an embarrassment of riches (1 Corinthians 12–14), so did veneration of the saints blossom and expand in ways that were sometimes hard to contain.[11] From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages, there was an increasing development

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[10] See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), and Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts and Seasons in Early Christianity* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2011), 171–193.

[11] For helpful overviews and summary discussions of the materials briefly described in the following paragraphs, see Lawrence S. Cunningham, *A Brief History of Saints* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); Richard M. Nardone, *The Story of the Christian Year* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1991); Michael Perham, *The Communion of Saints* (London: SPCL, 1980); Patricia A. Sullivan, *Why We Venerate the Saints* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2012); and Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't, and Why* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

from the honor of local martyrs to the commemoration of confessors and other saints on a wider and wider scale.

As the age of persecution gave way to the legalization of Christianity, the desert monastics came to be viewed as a kind of living martyr. Especially after the *Life of St. Anthony* by St. Athanasius, more and more of those monastics were held up for imitation while they lived and remembered as examples after they died. Bishops and confessors were likewise honored, as well as the apostles and evangelists, and over time the greatest theologians of the church.

In the meantime, the stories of the earliest martyrs were being collected and published in order to promote their remembrance more broadly. Unfortunately, the stories were not always accurate or true. Some of the martyrologies were blatantly fictitious and fantastical, but it was often the case that the more far-fetched the better in popular appeal. On the other hand, with the growing influence of Rome in the West, especially from the twelfth century onward, papal canonization became the norm instead of the exception to local recognition of the saints. That development probably helped to curtail some of the extravagance, but it also contributed in its own way to the burgeoning number and popularity of the saints.

With more and more "universal" saints to consider in addition to the veneration of local favorites, there was a loss of clarity and focus. The caveat of *The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* (17.2–3) that our Lord Christ could never be replaced by his saints was lost in the avalanche of saints, both historic and fictional, competing for attention and sometimes for cash. There were certainly abuses in theology and practice, especially in connection with the invocation of the saints, the notion of purgatory, the sale of indulgences, and the supposed treasury of "surplus" merits.

The Lutheran Reformation and the Saints

By the sixteenth century, both Rome and the Lutheran reformers recognized that there were too many commemorations of varying degrees and multiple abuses in the cult of the saints, including fictional stories and fake relics, and the medieval equivalent of television evangelist hucksters.[12] Aside from the obvious matters of purgatory, indulgences, and

[12] See *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992); Maxwell E. Johnson, "The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary: A Lutheran Reflection," in *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 415–427;

merits, there was disagreement on one point in particular. The invocation of the saints had developed and increased over time to the degree that, in popular piety and practice, it was preferred to the intercession of Christ. Luther himself had grown up with this and was very much aware of such reliance on the saints. The Lutherans at Augsburg, while commending the example of the saints, rejected the invocation of the saints as idolatry (AC XXI). In response to this evangelical critique, the papal theologians vigorously defended and encouraged the invocation of the saints, insisting on its appropriateness and faulting the confessors for denying the practice. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (XXI) repeated the critique of invocation, especially because there is no word of God commanding it and no promise of God attached to it, not to mention that it so easily lends itself to the false worship of the saints in place of Christ.

The Apology, nevertheless, teaches a threefold honor of the saints that is rightly exercised to the glory of God and for the strengthening of faith and life in Christ. In the first place, we give thanks to God for giving the saints to his church on earth as servants of his word and of their neighbors. Second, we also strengthen our faith by considering examples of the Lord's mercy upon the saints who have gone before, saints who were called to repentance and received the forgiveness of their sins for the sake of Christ. In them we see his mercy toward us who are saved in the same way by his grace through the gospel. Finally, we also honor the saints by the imitation of their faithful example within their respective vocations and stations in life (Ap XXI 4–6).

Echoing the Apology, Martin Chemnitz responded to the Council of Trent with a thorough critique of the invocation of the saints, not only in theory but with an extended discussion of many actual texts that were in use within the Roman Church. He traced the development of the practice from its earliest beginnings to the extremes it had reached by the time of the Reformation. He affirmed the prayers of the saints and angels in heaven for the church on earth but denied that we should pray to them for help or intercession since there is no word of the Lord instructing us to do so. Yet, Chemnitz gave a pointed defense of the Lutheran veneration of the saints, indicating that it is not only appropriate but godly and right to

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Cunningham, *A Brief History of Saints*, 54–77; Sullivan, *Why We Venerate the Saints*, 79–95; and Nardone, *The Story of the Christian Year*, 101–119.

remember them with thanksgiving to God.[13] In his discussion of the Eucharist, he likewise approved the commemoration of the saints therein.[14]

Elsewhere, Chemnitz and his colleagues demonstrated that we remember and honor the fathers with thanksgiving by learning from them and by regarding them critically but also charitably.[15] What they have done and said well should be praised and valued, and where they have erred or fallen short in their theology and practice, we should quietly cover them in the mercies of Christ Jesus. One finds examples of this approach in the Formula of Concord and its Catalogue of Testimonies. The same basic principle should be applied in our consideration of the sixteenth-century reformers as well.

Given Luther's often feisty criticisms of the prevailing practices and superstitions associated with the cult of the saints in his day, it is easy to suppose that he, at least, saw no use in remembering them at all.[16] What he rejected, though, was not commemoration of the saints per se but the fables, legends, and superstitions about the saints that had come to dominate the piety and worship of the church and that had crowded out the gospel and faith in the gospel of Christ. Outside the polemical context, Luther contributed to a positive evangelical commemoration of the saints. He preached for a number of the traditional festivals and wrote a preface for a book on the lives of the fathers by one of his students.[17] His earliest hymn commemorated Hendrick DeVoes and Jan Van Esschen who were martyred as "Lutherans" in 1523.[18] And in 1525 he honored Henry van Zutphen, another "Lutheran" martyr, in the style of traditional martyrolo-

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[13] Cf. Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 3:353–507.

[14] Cf. Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 2:501–503, 513.

[15] For example, see Martin Chemnitz, "Treatise on the Reading of the Fathers or Doctors of the Church," *Loci Theologici*, 2 vols., trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 1:27–33.

[16] See Martin Luther, "Concerning the Order of Public Worship" (1523) and "An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg" (1523), in *Luther's Works*, American Edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986), 53:14, 22–23. Hereafter abbreviated as AE.

[17] Robert Kolb, *For All the Saints: Changing Perceptions of Martyrdom and Sainthood in the Lutheran Reformation* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 11–40.

[18] Cf. Martin Luther, "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun" (1523), AE 53:211–216. For further discussion of the hymn and the history behind it, cf. T.H.M. Akerboom, "'A new song we raise'. On the First Martyrs of the Reformation and the Origin of Martin Luther's First Hymn," *Perichoresis* 4:1 (2006), 53–77.

gies.[19] If one thinks about Luther's preaching and teaching in general, one finds that he remembers the saints in the way that Holy Scripture does. He preaches on Christmas, for example, by considering the stories of Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, the Shepherds, and the Magi.[20]

The festivals included in the Lutheran church orders of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were limited in number and in scope, focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on the biblical saints of the New Testament. The list of such occasions varied from territory to territory, but they were by no means rejected in the decades following the Reformation. They languished, however, along with many other traditional practices, in the ensuing centuries in which Pietism and Rationalism held sway.[21]

It was during the Lutheran confessional and liturgical revival of the nineteenth century that Wilhelm Löhe of Neuendettelsau, Germany, one of the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod, contributed significantly to a renewed awareness and commemoration of the saints. He produced a conservative revision of the traditional sanctoral calendar for use in the home, at school, and in the life of the church.[22] Featuring saints from throughout the church's history, one for each day of the year, Löhe's calendar was intended for the teaching and formation of Christians in faith and life. Where he found it necessary to replace some of the more questionable names from the old Roman calendars, he preferred biblical saints, as well as women for the sake of the deaconesses.

Commemoration of the Saints in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Clearly drawing from the same traditional sources as Löhe, or perhaps directly from his calendar, the *Lutheran Annual* of the early Missouri Synod—for decades, first in German, then in English, fully into the 1940s—reflected an evangelical catholic sensibility. After that point, from the 1940s into the 1960s, the *Lutheran Annual* became increasingly narrow

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[19] Cf. Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1914), 18, 224–240.

[20] Cf. *Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, edited by Roland H. Bainton (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1997).

[21] Roger D. Pittelko, *The Saints' Days of The Lutheran Liturgy* (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, June 1958).

[22] Cf. Wilhelm Löhe, *Haus-, Schul- und Kirchenbuch für Christen des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*, Zweiter Theil. (Stuttgart: Verlag von S. G. Liesching, 1859), and *Martyrologium: Zur Erklärung der herkömmlichen Kalendernamen* (Nürnberg: Verlag von Gottfr. Löhe, 1868).

and parochial in its daily commemorations. It still included something for every day of the year, but instead of a history of the church catholic it read more like a family scrapbook of the Reformation and of the Missouri Synod, featuring multiple events in Luther's life and presidents of LCMS schools.

The 1960s and 70s brought further adjustments to LCMS consideration of the saints. To begin with, the annuals began turning back to a broader catholicity, with fewer references to Missouri Synod events and personalities and more historic saints from the early and medieval church. However, negative reactions to the calendar of commemorations proposed for *Lutheran Book of Worship* in the 1970s resulted in a greatly reduced calendar in subsequent annuals and in *Lutheran Worship* (1982).[23] It is a shame that the LCMS responded to legitimate concerns by resorting to an opposite extreme.[24]

Lutheran Service Book has remedied the impoverishment and has provided the LCMS with a newly revised and greatly expanded calendar of feasts, festivals, and commemorations.[25] Along with an increased number of New Testament figures, *LSB* features the notable inclusion of Old Testament saints in its calendar of commemorations. To do so is not without precedent in the history of the church, though it has been more common in the East than the West. Of course, the Holy Scriptures commemorate the saints of the Old Testament, as previously noted, and both Löhe and the early LCMS *Lutheran Annuals* included them as well in their sanctoral calendars. Yet, it is significant to find them in *LSB*, broadening our perspective on the scope of the church.

Careful consideration was given to past precedents, both Lutheran and "ecumenical" or catholic, in developing the *LSB* calendar. The goal was not innovation but a deliberate identification with the history of the church on earth, to which we also belong as members of one body in Christ. At the

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[23] *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House; Philadelphia: Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, 1978); *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982).

[24] The author recalls from his reading and research of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship archives in the course of his dissertation research that the inclusion of commemorations in *LBW* was due in part to the influence of Roger Pittelko, whose S.T.M. thesis was on the Lutheran commemoration and celebration of the saints from the Reformation onward. See Roger Pittleko, *The Saints' Days of The Lutheran Liturgy*. Pittelko, however, is certainly not to blame for all of the particular choices in the *LBW* calendar, a number of which were questionable at best.

[25] Cf. *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), x–xiii.

same time, as compared to the biblical, patristic, and medieval saints commemorated in *LSB*, the Lutherans included from the Reformation period and beyond may be understood as another kind of "local" saint that has also been important throughout the history of the church. There is indeed a place and a purpose for both the universal and the parochial in our sanctoral cycle. *Lutheran Service Book* endeavors to balance the two, to reintroduce a broader awareness of the church catholic and to facilitate the actual commemoration of the saints among us.

III. Fix Your Eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Faith

With all of the saints who have gone before us in the faith and confession of Christ and with all who believe and are baptized into him, we are, in fact, one body in Christ, in heaven and on earth. We should be careful, then, not to make too sharp a distinction between the saints who have died and those who are still on their pilgrimage either alongside of us or elsewhere in the world. In this case, too, there is a need for balance, lest we emphasize the one at the expense of the other. Those who have departed in the faith are not dead and gone but are with the Lord and are of one Holy Communion with us in him. They rest from their labors while they also eagerly await with us the resurrection of all flesh and the consummation of all things (Rev 6:9–11; 14:13).

We live and die in the hope of the resurrection because Christ is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25–26). He is the firstborn from the dead and the firstfruits of the new creation that he should be the first of many brothers (1 Cor 15:20–23; Rom 8:29; Col 1:18; Rev 1:5). It is for this reason that we await with confidence and actively confess the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, since it is already begun in the body of Christ. As we share his cross and resurrection by our Holy Baptism (Rom 6:3–9), so do we confess his cross and resurrection in the face of the grave as we bury our loved ones and as we remember the saints.

The festivals of the saints are celebrations of the resurrection, rooted in the bodily reality of the incarnation of the Son of God (1 Corinthians 15). We remember and learn from their life in the body because their bodies are redeemed for the life everlasting in the body of Christ Jesus. So do their works follow after them as the fruits of their faith and the faithfulness of their Lord.

The example of the saints is not bland or generic but concrete, tangible, personal, and specific. They are living stained-glass windows through whom Christ shines on us in a panoply of colors, living icons of his grace,

mercy, and peace. We do believe, as the apostles testify, that Christ has manifested himself and his glory in them and that his Holy Spirit has been at work in them, bearing the fruits of his cross in faith and life (2 Thess 1:10; Eph 2:10; Gal 2:20).

In the perseverance of the martyrs and in the steadfast faith of all the saints and confessors, we perceive the gracious presence of Christ Jesus. That point is acknowledged and emphasized in *The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* and in other early martyr accounts.[26] We recognize the same principle in those who were not put to death for their Christian faith and confession but who bore the cross in whatever place and in whatever ways the Lord called them to glorify his name. To remember the faithful departed with evangelical thanksgiving is comparable to a Lutheran funeral. It focuses on Christ Jesus but without ignoring or denying the particularities of the individual Christian. This commemoration of the saints is an extension of the honor that we rightly give to pastors, parents, and other persons, each within his own office and station in life. In each case, we believe and confess that what these faithful people do according to God's calling and command really is the work of God himself. Thus, we also recognize that Christ and his Spirit have accomplished the purposes of God in the lives of the saints who have gone before us in his word and faith.

Moreover, the sanctoral cycle provides an excellent means and opportunity for the teaching and learning of church history, geography, and doctrine. It is also a pedagogically powerful way to emphasize Christian vocation, both in general and in particular. There is a need, in this latter respect, for more female saints from a variety of appropriate vocations, occupations, and stations in life, as well as more saints of either sex who have served as exemplary laymen, both married and unmarried.

To remember and give thanks for the saints of old is also a reminder and encouragement to love, appreciate, and care for the body of Christ here and now. It would be hypocritical to venerate the saints who have gone before us while neglecting and forgetting the saints the Lord has placed beside us in this life. But it need not be a choice between one or the other. As we recognize and rejoice in our connection to all saints in the one body of Christ, all the more so should we follow the good example of past saints by loving and serving and caring for our brothers and sisters in Christ in our own place and time. The faith and faithfulness of the faithful departed within their vocations and stations in life teaches us to be

[26] For example, cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2.2–3; 3.1.

likewise faithful in our duties and responsibilities on behalf of our neighbors, especially our fellow members of the household and family of God.

IV. Then Let Us Keep the Festivals to Which the Lord Invites Us

It is our goal and desire to remember the saints and to learn from them, not in competition with Christ but in confession of him, without detracting from the Sundays and seasons of the Church Year but complementing its liturgical contours and rhythms, enriching its practice of daily prayer. Of special importance is the celebration of the feasts and festivals of Christ and of those saints who are part of the gospel itself. The Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, and the holy apostles are as integral to the story of Christ as his nativity, Baptism, cross, and resurrection. Each of these people and events are but the brilliant facets of a single diamond in which we behold the light of the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

To avoid a distortion of this central focus on Christ, it is helpful to discern the relative priority of festivals. All of them have something worthwhile to offer, but not all of them are situated as close to the heart of the matter. Even the venerable Feast of the Annunciation gives way to Holy Week and the Octave of the Resurrection.[27] The Visitation of our Lord defers to Pentecost Day or the Feast of the Holy Trinity in those years when they coincide. In such cases, the lesser festival may be postponed to the day following the feast of Christ, depending on the life of the congregation.

We should bear in mind that Sunday, the Lord's Day, is a festival of the resurrection in its own right. Especially during the festival seasons of the Church Year—from Advent until the Day of Pentecost—the Sundays should generally be preserved in their integrity and not replaced by sanctoral festivals. These seasons, which are so pointedly governed by the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, are defined by the Sunday Propers and depend on them for their character and movement. Thus, during the Time of Christmas and the Time of Easter, the festivals of the

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[27] The following rubric is provided for the Feast of the Annunciation in *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*: "It is appropriate to observe this feast day in all its fullness during Lent. However, according to historical precedent, when the Annunciation falls during Holy Week or on Easter Day (or also on the Fifth Sunday in Lent in the One-year Series), it should not be observed at those times but may be transferred to a weekday following the Second Sunday of Easter" (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 960.

apostles and evangelists would best be celebrated during the week where possible. Perhaps a particular weekday, such as Wednesday, might be designated for the observance of any festivals that occur in a given week. Or the "eve" of a festival might be kept in order to work within the usual rhythms of parish life.

During the Time of the Church, sometimes known as "ordinary" time, that is, from Holy Trinity until the beginning of Advent, one might consider celebrating the festivals that occur on Sunday. It really depends on the circumstances of the congregation. To celebrate each of the festivals on its own appointed day is the ideal, and where that can normally be done, it seems less compelling to set aside the regular Sunday Propers in order to make room for the festivals on the Lord's Day. But where it is simply not possible to keep the festivals during the week, then an occasional observance every five or six years when they fall on a Sunday might be best. Celebrating the congregation's "name day" (or patron feast) where pertinent is usually recommended. How can St. Matthew Lutheran Church, for example, not celebrate the Festival of St. Matthew?

Also, thinking about the Time of the Church, the post-Pentecost "tides" provide some contour, nuance, and movement through the long green stretch of "ordinary" Sundays. These "tides," which hinge upon several key festivals and commemorations, were integral to the earliest developments of the Western lectionary for the latter half of the liturgical year. In the Gregorian lectionaries, series of readings were assembled for blocks of Sundays following the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul at the end of June, St. Lawrence in mid-August, and St. Cyprian in mid-September,[28] although Lutherans have generally given more attention to St. Michael and All Angels in late September than to St. Cyprian.[29] In some places, the Feast of St. Martin in early November marked the beginning of a six- or seven-week fast, which contributed to the liturgical development of Advent.[30] These divisions can still be of some use and benefit to us: from Holy Trinity to St. Peter and St. Paul the Apostles; to St. Lawrence the Martyr; to St. Michael and All Angels; to the Feast of All Saints; and then

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[28] Cf. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 6 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 3:169–175.

[29] For example, cf. Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 540.

[30] Cf. Martin Connell, *Eternity Today: On the Liturgical Year*, 2 vols. (New York: Continuum, 2006), 1:68–71.

several weeks counting down one year into the next, in anticipation of the Lord's Advent.

The progression of these post-Pentecost "tides" corresponds in its scope and sequence to the host of those who join us in praising the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Te Deum Laudamus: Trinity Tide is followed by the tides of the Holy Apostles, the Holy Martyrs, and the Holy Angels. The liturgical year crescendos with the Feast of All Saints and then segues back into Advent as we await the coming of the Lord in glory for the judgment of the living and the dead.

Without pressing any sort of artificial "thematic" upon the Sunday Propers, the "tides" extend the emphases and sensibilities of the sanctoral cycle into the seasons of the Church Year in much the same way as the Proper Prefaces and the seasonal Graduals (in the Three-Year Lectionary) do. In fact, if you take note of the Graduals in Series C, you will be able to see how they move through the post-Pentecost tides.[31] One can likewise use the Proper Prefaces to identify the tides.[32]

In a more general way throughout the year, the Ordinary of the Divine Service, the Eucharistic rites, and the canticles of the Daily Office, along with many of the church's historic hymns, all confess an active awareness and appreciation of the great cloud of witnesses with which we are surrounded. The Proper Prefaces for Eastertide, apostles and evangelists, and All Saints' certainly do this, as do the Pre-Sanctus and the Sanctus ("with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven . . ."). Accentuating these aspects of the liturgy and pointing them out in preaching and catechesis can help Lutherans who have been uncomfortable with remembering the saints to appreciate them.

As far as preaching itself is concerned, it will always focus on Christ as the true and only God and Savior. But, in doing so, it will also include a proclamation of the saints as servants of the same Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:5). On festival days, in particular, the preacher will grapple with the

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[31] Series C is specifically noted here, because the Graduals for Series A and B were inadvertently retained from *Lutheran Worship* instead of being revised and adjusted in connection with the new *LSB* three-year lectionary.

[32] So, for example, the use of the Proper Preface for Holy Trinity throughout Trinity Tide; the Proper Preface for apostles and evangelists throughout "Apostles' Tide" (from late June to early August); one of the Common Prefaces for "Martyrs' Tide" (early August to late September); the Proper Preface for St. Michael and All Angels throughout "Angels' Tide" (late September to late October); and the Proper Preface for All Saints' though the final Sundays of the Church Year.

appointed Propers, the Psalms and readings of Holy Scripture, the prayers and hymns of the day, all in relation to the narrative history, life, and legend of the celebrated saint.

Obviously, some saints are better known than others, but there are a variety of ways to approach this. With respect to those apostles about whom we know very little from the Scriptures, such as St. Philip and St. James, St. Simon and St. Jude, their festival days are an opportunity to emphasize the apostolic office and ministry. Even their legends can point to the significance of these men, who did in fact go and preach in particular places and times. Considering their traditions while distinguishing such things from the word of the Lord can help us to think of the holy apostles as real men of flesh and blood. With Peter and Paul, Mary Magdalene and the Blessed Virgin Mary, John the Baptist and John the apostle and evangelist, the details of these saints are the very portrait of Christ to be considered and savored on their respective festivals.

Certain other feasts and festivals are especially well suited to the emphasis of particular doctrines that may not be dealt with so directly elsewhere in the lectionary or Church Year. For example, the Feast of the Annunciation is an ideal time to emphasize the incarnation of the Son of God. The Feast of the Epiphany teaches the manifestation of God in the ministry and mission of the gospel and in the external means of grace. The Ascension of our Lord is the flip side of his Incarnation and Epiphany, in which we find the sanctification and salvation of our human flesh and blood in the crucified and risen body of our merciful and great high priest: he became like us that we might be like him and live with God in him. The Feast of the Holy Innocents is an opportunity to address the sanctity of human life as well as the way that God accomplishes his purposes by way of the cross and suffering in the midst of tragedy. For Luther, the Holy Innocents also testify to the faith and confession of infants and young children.[33] St. Joseph of Nazareth is surely one of the best examples anywhere of what it means to be a faithful husband and father. St. Timothy and St. Titus, likewise, are fine examples of what it means to be a faithful bishop or pastor.

From week to week throughout the liturgical year, it is a salutary practice to commemorate the saints in the Prayer of the Church on the Lord's Day within the normal and normative context of the Divine Service. Aside from a general reference to all saints, the saints to be remembered in the coming week can be named in the prayers on the preceding Sunday, along

[33] Cf. Martin Luther, "Concerning Rebaptism" (1528), AE 40:254–256.

with any of the faithful who have departed this vale of tears in the preceding week. This practice emulates the historic naming of the saints at the Eucharist without intruding upon the consecration of the Sacrament. The saints can likewise be readily included by name in the Litany at Evening Prayer.

The commemoration of the saints finds an especially appropriate and salutary place in the daily prayer of parish life: at gatherings of the congregation, whether for Matins or Vespers, for meetings or other activities; in the daily or weekly chapel of the Lutheran day school; in the opening or closing of catechesis classes; and in the prayer and catechesis of the Christian home and family. The *Treasury of Daily Prayer* was specially designed to encourage and facilitate the remembrance of the saints on the part of parents with their children.[34]

There are numerous other ways and means of exercising a healthy remembrance of the saints in the patterns and practices of the Christian life. Gathering works of art, iconography, and symbolism for the saints, for example, is a salutary practice. These various depictions and representations are quite interesting and instructive, often insightful and thought-provoking. For those who are visual learners, such images are a powerful medium. Commending particular saints as exemplars for confirmands (along the same lines but in addition to a "confirmation verse") can also be particularly beneficial. The strength of a real human example with a life and a story to consider and think about should not be overlooked.[35] In a similar way, parents can mark and observe the "name days" of their children, and their own name days, too, for that matter, even if the namesake was previously unknown or coincidental. Making these connections to the saints who have gone before us is edifying, as it gives flesh and blood to Christian faith and love.

Aside from the links of namesake, the commemoration of laity from a variety of vocations and stations in life offers profound examples for "ordinary" Christians within their own places and occupations. Think of the remarkable benefit to be found in remembering child martyrs such as

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[34] *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, ed. Scot A. Kinnaman et al. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008).

[35] This has been my own pastoral practice for many years now, and many of the young people have so embraced the connection that they have subsequently added the name of "their saint" to their own name.

St. Lucy and St. Agnes, as our children are growing up in a hostile world.[36] Considering those who have gone ahead of us on the same path provides compelling incentive and encouragement to vocational faithfulness in our own season, for they demonstrate that the confidence and peace of faith in the gospel produces patience, perseverance, and the Christian fruits of love and mercy.

V. Conclusion: That Christ Be Manifest in His Saints

By whatever ways and means we go about it, we remember the saints, give thanks to God for them, and learn from them because we recognize the life and Spirit of Christ Jesus in their lives of faith and love. It is the head of the church who is manifested in the members of his body, and he is glorious in all his saints. As he has redeemed them with his holy and precious blood and his innocent suffering and death from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, so do they praise and magnify him in life and death in the sure and certain hope of his resurrection from the dead. Across this great multitude of saints, which no one can number, Christ is all and in all.

As the Scriptures instruct us, we are encouraged by the example of the saints who have gone before us in the faith and who are with the Lord and now rest from their labors. We are strengthened by their fellowship in the body of Christ so that we do not grow weary or lose heart but run the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. With those who have suffered for his name's sake in the past, we also are conformed to the image of his cross, so that we might know him and the power of his resurrection, for by the evidence and testimony of so great a cloud of witnesses we do know the hope of his calling, the riches of the glory of his inheritance in all the saints, and the surpassing greatness of his power to all who believe.

To him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever. To which the holy evangelists say, "Amen," and the holy apostles fall down and worship (Rev. 5:14).

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[36] The recent martyrdom of children (among others) in Iraq has been a sobering reminder of the violence facing Christians in this hostile world, but it has also been a strong encouragement for the church to remain steadfast in the face of death.

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The Missouri Synod and the Historical Question of Unionism and Syncretism

Gerhard H. Bode Jr.

When The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was organized in 1847, the founders adopted a constitution containing conditions of membership. In order to join the Synod and maintain fellowship with it, prospective members (in 1847 this meant congregations and pastors) would be obliged to accept a series of terms. These included requirements such as acceptance of the Scriptures as the written word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice, and subscription to the Lutheran Confessions as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of God's word. Immediately following this first condition (which is regarded as the Synod's confessional basis) was the renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description. Required also among the conditions of membership were the regular call of church workers, exclusive use of doctrinally pure agendas, hymnbooks, and catechisms in churches and schools, and regular procedures for receiving members into the Synod. These conditions have been maintained with few changes to the present day, and congregations, pastors, and other servants in the church are still required to hold to them if they wish to enter the Synod and retain membership in it. These conditions reveal much about how the founders of the Synod understood what it means to be church, what it means to be a confessional, Lutheran church, and what it means to be a member of that church.

This study will focus on the second condition of membership, the one that follows immediately after acceptance of the Synod's confessional basis, that is, the renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description. In particular, the historical background and the original meaning and purpose of this phrase in the Synod constitution will be examined.[1] I will attempt to paint with broad strokes some of the chief theological concerns of the Synod founders regarding the true unity of the church and its confession by addressing three basic questions. First, why is the renun-

[1] In 2011, I was asked by the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters to draft a historical study of this part of the constitution. That study examined the question of the understanding of unionism and syncretism through the first forty years of the Synod's history. This paper will draw from the findings of that study.

Gerhard H. Bode Jr. is Associate Professor of Historical Theology and Archivist at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

ciation of unionism and syncretism in the Synod's constitution? Second, how did the founders understand the concern for it? Finally, why does it matter for us today?

Periodically during its history, the Synod has addressed these questions with greater interest and attention than at other times. The goal of this study is to further the ongoing discussions about these important questions.

I. The Historical Background and the Concern about Unionism and Syncretism

The concern of Lutherans about the mixing of churches and doctrines originates in the sixteenth century. While the external mingling of churches or confessional bodies was perhaps less a problem in the early period of Lutheranism, syncretism was, nevertheless, a relatively familiar concern to Luther and other Lutheran reformers. The early Missouri Synod theologians also would have been familiar with the seventeenth-century Syncretistic Controversy and the discord it caused among Lutherans at that time.[2] This controversy resulted from the attempt of some Lutheran theologians to forge confessional unity between the Lutheran and Reformed churches in the hope of an eventual reunion with the Roman church. One of the goals of the proponents of this effort was to find common ground in the councils and doctrines of the early church and to achieve consensus through a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of faith. Opponents charged that the attempt was actually a mixing or blending of doctrines, resulting in a false unity and a loss of the true teachings of the Scriptures. The question of both *Kirchenmengerei* (the blending of churches) and *Glaubensmengerei* (the blending of doctrines)

[2] "Der Calixtinische Synkretismus," *Lehre und Wehre* 23 (1877): 8–15, 55–57, 76–89, 116–119. This article by an unidentified author discusses the differences and similarities between the "syncretism" in the seventeenth century and the "unionism" in the nineteenth century. For a sense of how the early Missouri Synod theologians understood Luther, the Confessions, and the Lutheran dogmaticians in support of their position on unionism and syncretism, see C.F.W. Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office*, trans. John T. Mueller, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), especially Thesis VIII; C.F.W. Walther, *The True Visible Church: and, The Form of a Christian Congregation*, trans. John T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), especially Thesis XXI of the former and § 32 of the latter; Johann W. Baier and C.F.W. Walther, *Joh. Guilielmi Baieri Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag, 1879), 3:665–672; and Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–1957), 3:419–427.

remained a topic of concern for Lutheran churches well into the nineteenth century and beyond, both in the German lands and in North America.

The Union Movement in the German Lands

The union movement in the German lands in the nineteenth century had a profound impact on those Lutherans who immigrated to America and founded the Missouri Synod. The influences of the Enlightenment and Rationalism caused some theologians in Germany (Lutheran and Reformed alike) to deliberate on what was the true heritage of the Reformation and what were the essential articles of the evangelical faith and life. The result was a newfound emphasis on a common faith and mutual love, encouraging the union of both Lutheran and Reformed churches. This "reawakening" of religion and reassessment of the Reformation's impact coincided with the revival of what was perceived to be the true Christian fear of God and love of the church in the years following the devastation and disruption of the Napoleonic wars. In these circumstances, many in the German lands felt a desire for Christian concord and unity. The purpose of the state, in part, was to engineer greater political unity and national solidarity through the unification of religion within the state.

This movement toward reunion involved both the external unification of churches long separated by confessional divides as well as the internal blending of doctrines. In many cases, what was agreed upon as the doctrinal foundation were the most basic Christian, creedal teachings. The other "non-essential" doctrines were often set aside, regarded as remnants of old doctrinal controversies now overcome through goodwill and love. Doctrinal differences were obscured as confessional consciences declined.

The desire for unity was expressed most dramatically, and with great effect, through the program of unionizing churches throughout the German lands, the most significant being in the largest of the German territories, Prussia.[3] The founding of the "Prussian Union" church was celebrated as part of the festivities commemorating the 300th anniversary of the Reformation in 1817. In almost every case, these unions brought Lutheran and Reformed churches into one united church, sometimes

[3] For example, the churches in the territory of Nassau were united by a general synod in August 1817. A month later, Friedrich Wilhelm III, the Calvinist King of Prussia, began his drive to forge the new "Evangelical Church of Prussia." Additional union churches were organized in Rhineland-Palatinate (1818), Hanau and Fulda (1818), Anhalt-Bernberg (1820), Waldeck, Pyrmont, and Baden (1821), Hesse (1818–1823), and Dessau (1827). Pressures toward unification were strong in other German territories, as well.

called an "Evangelical" church. Use of a "union" agenda was often required in church services. In many instances, these ecclesiastical unions were initiated—and enforced, if needed—by the state, often with the cooperation of church leaders.

Reaction to the union movement was strong in both Lutheran and Reformed circles. On the part of Lutherans, the Confessional Revival maintained that true unity in the church was based on the truth of God's word alone. Representatives of the Confessional Revival coined the term "Unionism" to identify not only the union movement in the German lands but also its effects. They saw grave dangers in the secular government's effort to merge the Lutheran and Reformed churches into a union. First, they stressed that the government had no role in determining the content and practice of faith; such was a violation of God's two kingdoms. The second danger was even more serious in that the union movement, with its compromising of doctrine, attacked the truth of God's word and threatened the gospel. Confronted by these problems, the Confessional Revival as a movement sought to restore true doctrine and practice to the Lutheran Church through fidelity to the Scriptures and a revitalized adherence to the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions, as well as to the theology of Luther and the Lutheran Orthodox theologians. Only in this way, it was believed, could the Lutheran Church be preserved.

American Lutheranism and the General Synod

In the American setting, the situation was slightly different for Lutherans in the early nineteenth century.[4] Many who had immigrated to America in the previous centuries had become Americanized, especially in the years after the founding of the republic. Free from government intrusion, Lutherans saw possibilities for the church in this new country not found in Europe. Some Lutheran church leaders, also influenced by Pietism, Rationalism, and doctrinal indifference, saw an opportunity for the Protestant churches to unite in a way previously impossible. One prominent example was Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799–1873), leader of

[4] It was not uncommon for pastors in nineteenth-century America to serve congregations of "mixed" confession, congregations comprised of German immigrants from both Lutheran and Reformed backgrounds. Various reasons led them to form united congregations, among them doctrinal indifference and the lack of pastors. In some cases, the congregations might subscribe to both the Augsburg Confession and the Reformed Heidelberg Catechism. See William W. Schumacher, "Unionism and Syncretism in the LCMS Constitution: Historical Context and Interpretive Development," in *Witness & Worship in Pluralistic America*, ed. John F. Johnson (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 2003), 52.

the General Synod (founded in 1820), who wanted Lutherans to have a voice that would be fraternal toward other Protestants.[5] In 1838, he appealed for an "apostolic Protestant union," an ecumenical proposal for all Protestants in America to join together in working for the promotion of Christianity. In particular, Schmucker believed this approach would mean greater effectiveness in reaching out to the ever-growing number of immigrants in America, many of whom were not affiliated with any church. In keeping with this spirit, in 1839 the Foreign Mission Society of the General Synod proposed a union with the German Reformed Church in America.[6]

The General Synod engaged in relationships with a number of non-Lutheran churches at several levels. This included the exchanging of delegates with other church bodies, altar and pulpit fellowship, and joint participation in tract societies, mission societies, Sunday School unions, and more. For example, in the 1820s and 1830s the General Synod received as advisory members pastors from the Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and German Reformed churches. In return, pastors of the General Synod were received as advisory members (delegates) of the Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and German Reformed churches. The Lord's Supper was celebrated jointly by the Lutherans and others at some of these gatherings. At the same time, Lutherans from the General Synod preached in Methodist and Reformed congregations. Consideration was given to a joint hymnal project between the Lutheran and Reformed churches. In 1845 the General Synod in its convention officially sanctioned the celebration of the Lord's Supper with other churches as well as the exchanging of members. Likewise, ministers in good standing were authorized to pass from one body to another upon application and receipt of a certificate of ministerial standing.[7]

Schmucker's vision of "American Lutheranism" was one that saw a form of Lutheranism based on the Augsburg Confession as the foundation and key to greater Protestant unity in America. However, his *Definite Synodical Platform* of 1855 included the "American Recension of the

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[5] The delegates at the founding meeting of the General Synod could agree only that the Synod would be Lutheran in name, and they made no identification at all with the historic Lutheran confessions.

[6] Adolph Spaeth, *Charles Porterfield Krauth*, 2 vols. (New York: Christian Literature Co, 1898), 1:332.

[7] *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Convention of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, Convened in Philadelphia, May 16, 1845* (Baltimore: Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1845), 30.

Augsburg Confession," which deleted "errors" from the Augustana and defended their recension.[8] The document proposed that this revision be the new standard of faith, a new confession, for the General Synod. This move was a decisive attempt to halt the increasing influence of the Lutheran Confessional Revival in the General Synod.

Lutherans recently emigrated from the German lands often saw the position of the General Synod to be un-Lutheran and quickly saw commonalities—especially with regard to doctrine and practice—between it and the union churches in Germany. Many of these Lutheran immigrants were influenced by the Confessional Revival to some degree, and they often decried the situation in the American churches as similar to that which they had fled in Europe. Their chief goal was to maintain a pure confession of faith and to preserve the Lutheran Church; thus, opposition to unionism in American churches was the natural result.

Some Lutherans in America were influenced in their views of the church by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), for whom the church was, above all, a fellowship, or *Gemeinschaft*, of believers. If the church was essentially an association of people, it was based on common piety or ethics. Whereas Luther had derived his understanding of fellowship from what the church is, namely a *koinonia* called together by the Holy Spirit, Schleiermacher derived his understanding of the church from what fellowship is, a community of like-minded believers voluntarily acting together. This view would not necessarily regard the church as a community of saints under one head, Christ. Schleiermacher's understanding of the church held sway among many in American Lutheranism at the time (as it still does today). In short, the General Synod's basis for fellowship and unity was its understanding of church as an association related to religion or piety, whereas the future Missouri Synod would see the basis for fellowship and unity as the understanding of church as the congregation of saints gathered by the Holy Spirit, believers in Christ, among whom the word of God is purely preached and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution (AC VII). Certainly, this fundamental difference in the understanding of the church impacted the question of relationships among Lutherans in America at the time. It was predicated upon the different interpretations of both the Scriptures and the Lutheran

[8] Benjamin Kurtz (1795–1865) also had a role in the drafting and was a champion of the *Definite Synodical Platform*. He was a pastor in Maryland and president of the General Synod for a time. He too was a strong exponent of the General Synod's "American Lutheranism."

Confessions, as well as differing understandings of what it meant to hold to the Scriptures and the Confessions as a Lutheran church.

II. Developments at the Eve of the Formation of the LCMS

In 1845, less than two years before the organization of the Missouri Synod, three of the key figures in its early history—Wyneken, Sihler, and Walther—each took a firm stand against unionism and syncretism in American Lutheranism. Each of their efforts highlights some of the key reasons why the renunciation of the blending of churches and the blending of doctrines across confessional lines would be included in the Missouri Synod's constitution. And their positions say something even more significant about the Synod's early understanding of the church and its confession.

Wyneken and the General Synod

In 1843, Friedrich Conrad Dieterich Wyneken published his influential booklet *The Distress of German Lutherans in North America*.[9] In addition to raising the alarm about the critical need for pastors and missionaries for service among German immigrants on the American frontier, Wyneken also decried the poor conditions of the churches in America. Associated at the time with the General Synod,[10] Wyneken criticized the indifference in doctrine and practice he observed in the Synod as well as increasing influences of unionism and revivalism within it. That message struck a chord with Lutherans in Germany, and several theological journals there attacked the General Synod for encouraging the union of Lutheran and Reformed churches in America. Although intended for audiences in Germany, Wyneken's booklet was also published in the United States in 1844 and soon gained the attention of—as well as a determined response from—the leaders of the General Synod.

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[9] F.C.D. Wyneken, *Die Noth der deutschen Lutheraner in Nordamerika: Ihren Glaubensgenossen in der Heimath an's Herz gelegt* (Besonderer Abdruck aus der Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche, herausgegeben von Professor D. Adolf von Harless, Februarheft 1843) (Erlangen: Theodor Bläsing, 1843). The work was also published in the United States the following year: *Die Noth der deutschen Lutheraner in Nordamerika*, ed. Friedrich Schmidt (Pittsburg: Druckerei der Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, 1844). See also *The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America*, trans. S. Edgar Schmidt, ed. Rudolph Rehmer (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1986).

[10] Wyneken was a member of the new Evangelical Synod of the West, which was part of the greater General Synod.

In 1845, Wyneken was an elected delegate to the General Synod convention. Arriving several days after the convention had begun, Wyneken found that the Synod had already passed a resolution requesting one of its committees to defend the General Synod against his accusations.[11] The Synod maintained that the charges of unionism, heterodox doctrine, and erring practice were false and that Wyneken had deliberately instigated the issue. In response, Wyneken, on the last day of the meeting, proposed an alternate resolution to the convention. He suggested that the General Synod send its official writings—including the works of its theologians Schmucker and Kurtz, copies of its newspapers, theological journals, and other books in which the doctrine and practice of the Synod were presented—to Lutheran theologians and journal editors in Germany. Let them scrutinize and so confirm the orthodoxy of the Synod before the Lutheran Church there! The General Synod, not wanting to deal with Wyneken's proposal, tabled it. Wyneken then offered a second proposal that called on the General Synod publicly to condemn all the aforementioned official writings, including the works of Schmucker and Kurtz, and renounce them as heretical and aberrant teachings.[12]

In order to defend itself against those questioning its theological position, the leaders of the General Synod drafted a letter to the Evangelical (Union) churches in Germany. The letter, signed by Schmucker, Kurtz, and other theologians, informed the Germans that, in effect, the General Synod stood on common ground with the Union Church of Germany. The leaders of the General Synod considered this relationship with the German

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[11] *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Convention of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States Convened in Philadelphia, May 16, 1845*, 35.

[12] The minutes of the General Synod meeting do not record Wyneken's proposals. However, the official journal, *Hirtenstimme*, reported that "Pastor Wyneken of Baltimore spoke out on a number of occasions against the doctrine, practices, books and newspapers of the Lutheran Church and threatened to give evidence of the same." It added that, when Wyneken made his first proposal of sending printed materials to the Germans for scrutiny, Schmucker, Kurtz, and the others, "listened good-naturedly to this funny notion and tabled it." (Theodore Engelder, "Why Missouri Stood Alone," *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century,* ed. W. H. T. Dau [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922], 113.) In addition, Wyneken himself published a description of the events at the Synod meeting in the *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* 7 (1845): 92. See Johann Christoph Wilhelm Lindemann, *A Biographical Sketch of the Honorable American Evangelist Friedrich Conrad Dieterich Wyneken*, trans. James P. Lanning (Fort Wayne: Walther Library, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1995), 20–21, and Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod 1847–1947* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 62–63.

churches so important that several of the leaders, including Schmucker and Kurtz, traveled to Germany to deliver the letter in person.[13]

After the scene at the May 1845 convention, Wyneken withdrew from the General Synod. He regarded his own actions against the Synod in almost militant terms. In a letter to Löhe, he expressed his feelings about the situation:

> As an honest man and a Christian, I wished to declare war against her [the General Synod], although it may seem silly to her since I am only one insignificant individual. I desired to tell her in advance that I would do all in my power to oppose her influence, especially that I would warn against her, so that the few in Germany who are on the side of the truth do not bother with her.[14]

On receiving Wyneken's letter, Löhe remarked: "Wyneken is herewith beginning a war which he may carry on with the deepest peace of soul, a war in which all true children of the Lutheran Church will have to join him."[15]

Wyneken's stand, then, highlights what happens to the church's confession under unionistic and syncretistic influences. Genuine Lutheran doctrine and practice are diminished, error results, and the church is harmed. The fact that these problems were occurring not only in the German churches but also within synods in America raised serious questions among many Lutheran immigrants. Repudiating unionism and syncretism and their effects would become a matter not only of importance but of urgency among those who would found the new Missouri Synod.

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[13] The letter was published in Germany in the *Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche* 11, no. 4. Löhe also published a report on the General Synod's letter, noting the visit of the General Synod leaders to Germany. Löhe added that the letter intended to defend the Synod against the accusation of laxity (*Laxheit*) in doctrine and confession but failed to accomplish its objective and rather confirmed the perception about the unionistic tendencies in the Synod (*Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika* 6 [1846]: 48).

[14] Georg J. Fritschel, *Quellen und Dokumente zur Geschichte und Lehrstellung der ev.-luth. Synode von Iowa u. a. Staaten* (Chicago: Wartburg Press, n.d.), 44; citation in translation from Baepler, *A Century of Grace*, 61–62.

[15] Fritschel, *Quellen und Dokumente*, 61–62.

Sihler and the Guiding Principles for Establishing Orthodox Synods of the Lutheran Church

In September 1845, representatives of the Lutherans from Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, along with Wyneken himself, met in Cleveland to discuss their future plans. At that meeting, nine pastors, including Wilhelm Sihler and Johann Adam Ernst, signed a "Document of Separation," stating their withdrawal from the Ohio Synod and the reasons for it. The men perceived that the Ohio Synod held to a lax confessional position and engaged in unionistic practices, especially with regard to the sacraments.[16] The Ohio Synod's refusal to address the concerns of these pastors caused them grief, yet they maintained that they were compelled to leave for the sake of their consciences.[17] Officially, at this point, these men were no longer a part of any synod or church body. Not surprisingly, they desired to organize a new synod that would be truly Lutheran.

In December 1845, Wilhelm Sihler stepped further into the fray. He published an article in *Der Lutheraner* that gives insights into his thinking about the state of American Lutheranism at the time. In the article, Sihler described the conditions of the Lutheran churches in America and tackled the problem of organizing a true Lutheran synod in a country where, in contrast to the German lands, the separation of church and state was the norm. Clearly, it would be impossible to transplant an ecclesiastical

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[16] At the time, the Ohio Synod did not pledge its ordinands to the Lutheran Confessions. The official agenda of the Synod, in particular, some of its formulas for the administration of the Lord's Supper and Confession and Absolution, were perceived to be Calvinistic. In addition, the Ohio Synod permitted its pastors to serve Reformed congregations or joint Reformed-Lutheran congregations. At the same time, the signers of the "Document of Separation" protested the encroachment of English and the displacement of the German language in the Ohio Synod seminary in Columbus. The text of the "Document of Separation," including the names of the subscribers, is translated and printed in *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, ed. Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 143–146. Sihler originally published the document in Pittsburgh in the *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* 21 (December 13, 1845). That the document and the concerns raised in it about unionistic practices in the Ohio Synod were a matter of importance for Lutherans in America is demonstrated by that fact that the text was reprinted by both Walther in *Der Lutheraner* 2, no. 11 (1846): 42–43 and Löhe in his *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika* 4, no. 2 (1846): 4–8.

[17] Writing in 1851, Sihler said, "God is my witness that my testimony against the Ohio Synod sprang from honest zeal for the honor of God and the welfare of the Church. If synod had received our first request with only some measure of good will, the whole situation to-day might be different." (Quoted in Engelder, "Why Missouri Stood Alone," 116.)

structure into the American landscape as it had been established by the governments in Germany. Lutherans in America faced numerous challenges, Sihler observed, among them the temptation to enter a union with the Reformed under the pressures of modernity (including the union on the basis of mutual love) and doctrinal indifference. Due to the ignorance of some Lutherans, false teaching had entered the churches, Lutherans were unable to defend their own doctrines, and the truth unto salvation was being abandoned. Sihler noted especially the influence of Reformed theology on the Lutheran doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in which cases the Lutheran teaching was often diminished or lost.[18] He added that nearly half of the Lutherans in America, and almost all the English-speaking Lutherans, belonged to the "so-called" Lutheran General Synod. Sihler explained that while its origins were in a church that had once held fast to the true teachings of the Lutheran Confessions and once had the true teaching on the sacraments and the Office of the Keys, it had now fallen away and taken up the impure teaching of the Reformed and the Methodists. At the same time, the General Synod had yielded wholeheartedly to the movement toward the false union so prevalent at the time. Sihler minced no words: in this falsehood Satan himself poses as an "angel of light." This temptation, Sihler maintained, "our church" must resist by the grace of God, and, as the bearer of the pure word and sacraments, it must shake itself out if its slumber and keep watch against this threat. He noted that other Lutheran synods not connected to the General Synod also professed publicly to hold to the Lutheran Confessions yet did not practice in accord with that teaching, instead using Reformed or Evangelical formulas for the administration of the sacraments. Sihler asserted that the problem with these churches was the failure to adhere to Lutheran doctrine and practice:

> Again, a part of these synods pledges itself outwardly to the entire confessions of the Lutheran church, yet does not require firm subscription to them at ordination, adheres to a Reformed and United formula for the administration of the Lord's Supper, distributes also the Lord's Supper without discretion to Reformed and Evangelicals and thus promotes the shameful unionism and church mixing [*Unirerei und Kirchenmengerei*] of our day. But the worst thing is that they [the unionistic synods] reject the earnest pleas of some of their

[18] In particular, Sihler was concerned about the language used in the distribution formula for the Lord's Supper. The Ohio Synod authorized a formula which included in the words of institution the phrase, "Christus spricht" ("Christ said [this is my body…]"). This same phrase was used in the Prussian Union agenda in an attempt to find common ground between Lutheran and Reformed teachings on the Lord's Supper.

> members for correction of the problem and for the preservation and aid of the church even in the most desperate state, and thus in any case will remain in confessional indifference and indolence.[19]

Sihler's 1845 stand, then, emphasized that the true unity of the church is destroyed by the very thing claiming to bring unity: the forging of church union on the basis of something other than agreement in true doctrine. Sihler's influence in the conception of Missouri Synod polity and his identification of the dangers facing a true Lutheran church in America are significant. His concerns about unionism and syncretism would eventually be expressed in the Missouri Synod's constitution.[20]

Walther and the True Church

In late May 1845, the same month as Wyneken's stand at the General Synod convention, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was engaged in a series of heated written exchanges with a German Reformed pastor in St. Louis.[21] The pastor, E.L. Nollau, had written a pamphlet defending the union churches in Germany and stating that Walther's critique in *Der Lutheraner* of the union movement represented "a narrow-minded, unevangelical, and dubious bias." The attack got personal: Walther was reproached for his "pharisaical arrogance," and for being "unscrupulous" and "intolerant." Then the gloves came off as Nollau started in about

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[19] Sihler, "Welches sind die leitenden Grundsätze zur Bildung rechtgläubiger Synoden der luth. Kirche in hiesigen Landen?" *Der Lutheraner* 2, no. 8 (1845): 29; author's translation.

[20] The 1846 draft constitution includes a section at the end titled "Erläuterungen," or explanations of certain articles of the constitution. In this section, an explanation is given for Article V, §14 stating that the Synod stands in accord with Augsburg Confession, Article VII, that uniformity in ceremonies is not essential. However, the Synod noted that it deemed uniformity in ceremonies wholesome and useful, lest the weak stumble, so that the appearance of innovation may be avoided, and because of the situation in American Lutheranism where the Reformed influence on ceremonies was pronounced. This article and the lengthy explanation appended to the 1846 draft (which was also printed in *Der Lutheraner* 3, no. 2 [1846]: 9) seem to reflect closely the sentiments of Sihler in his article on the guiding principles for the establishment of a synod. (Cf. "[Erläuterung zu] Cap. V. §14 'gedrungen wird' [3]," *Die Verfassung der deutschen evangelisch- lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten 1846*, 12–13.)

[21] C.F.W. Walther, "Antwort auf die neueste Vertheidigung der Union," *Der Lutheraner* 1 (1845): 78–80, 82–84, 86–88, 95–96, 97–100; 2 (1846): 11–12, 26–28, 47–48, 51–52.

Martin Stephan and how more spiritual tyrants like him were in the offing.[22]

Walther replied with a series of nine articles against this most recent advocate of the union. He explained that the Evangelical Lutheran Church was the true catholic church on earth, while the Reformed Church was not part of the true church but, rather, a sect. It had separated itself from the true church and had institutionalized its unique identity by its false doctrine.[23] Union of the Lutheran and Reformed churches would result in error, false doctrine, and sectarianism. At the same time, Walther stressed, the goal is the preaching and hearing of the pure teaching of the Gospel, regardless of the name of the earthly church:

> Our objective is not to ensure that all Christians accept a so-called Lutheran church order and Lutheran ceremonies, that they assemble themselves into a Lutheran synod, call themselves Lutheran and subscribe to the Lutheran Symbols, whether they take them to heart or not. No, we are not fighting for an external structure with a "Lutheran" signboard on the front. The object of our struggle is nothing other than the true faith, the pure truth, the unadulterated gospel, the genuine foundation of the apostles and the prophets, where Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone—the jewel entrusted to the true church of all times—which she has handed down to us through the centuries and often preserved with the shedding of streams of her blood, and is now entrusted also to us.[24]

Walther continued to articulate his understanding of the nature of the church in the years that followed. Developed on the basis of his theses presented at the Altenburg Debate in 1841, Walther drew up nine theses on the church in 1851 to refute the attacks of J.A.A. Grabau.[25] The Missouri Synod approved Walther's theses on *Kirche und Amt* as "the voice of our church on the question of church and office."[26]

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[22] Walther, "Antwort auf die neueste Vertheidigung der Union," 1 (1845): 78–80.

[23] Walther, "Antwort auf die neueste Vertheidigung der Union," 1 (1845): 99.

[24] Walther, "Antwort auf die neueste Vertheidigung der Union," 1 (1845): 100; author's translation.

[25] Johannes Andreas August Grabau (1804–1879), the head of the Buffalo Synod, opposed Walther and the Missouri Synod on the doctrines of the church and the ministry. Grabau maintained that the proper organization for a Lutheran synod should include pastoral supremacy and a centralized form of government.

[26] "Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt," as Walther entitled his exposition of the theses in book form in 1852.

The eighth of Walther's theses "On the Church" (*Von der Kirche*) includes a discussion of the relationship of Christians and the Christian church to heterodox churches or sects, and considerations for fellowship or separation:

> Although God gathers for Himself a holy church of elect at a place where His Word is not taught in its complete purity and the Sacraments are not administered altogether according to the institution of Jesus Christ, if only God's Word and the Sacraments are not denied entirely but both essentially remain, nevertheless every believer is bound, at the peril of losing his salvation, to flee all false teachers, avoid all heterodox congregations or sects, and confess and adhere to orthodox congregations and their orthodox preachers wherever such may be found.[27]

Walther maintains in this thesis, and in his further exposition of it, that children of God may be found in churches that are heterodox, or even heretical, and also that the true church remains there in the pure preaching of God's word and administration of the sacraments. Nevertheless, Walther emphasizes that Christians must, for the sake of their own salvation, flee from all false prophets and avoid fellowship with heterodox congregations or sects. At the same time, Christians, for the sake of their salvation, are obliged to acknowledge orthodox congregations and remain with their orthodox preachers. Walther explains in his exposition of the thesis that this teaching is the command of God, who "in His holy Word commands us to flee and avoid false teachers and their false worship."[28] True confession of faith in Christ and rejection of the perversion of God's word is essential: "Hence, every Christian is in duty bound, at the peril of losing his salvation, publicly to renounce [*loszusagen*][29] those who, as he knows, pervert Christ's Word and publicly to acknowledge and adhere to those who, he knows, publicly witness to Christ and His truth."[30] Walther also stresses that "God's Word also declares very emphatically that a

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[27] C.F.W. Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry. The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office*, trans. John T. Mueller, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 91.

[28] Walther, *The Church and The Office of The Ministry,* 106. Walther has an extensive list of Scripture passages supporting this teaching, including Deut 13:1–3, Matt 7:15, Matt 24:23–24, Acts 20:30–31, and Rom 16:17–18.

[29] This is an infinitive form of the verb related to the noun [*Lossagung*] used in Article II, §3 of the 1847 Constitution. See the text of the Constitution below.

[30] Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry*, 127.

Christian should have fellowship with those who confess the true faith and beware of causing divisions and schisms, be it by word or deed."[31]

Even while the immediate purpose of writing *Kirche und Amt* was to refute the arguments of Grabau, this summary of Walther's position may be seen, at least in part, as a further explanation of what was intended in the 1847 constitution. The fact that the Synod in convention endorsed Walther's theses on *Kirche und Amt* just a few years after the constitution was adopted is another matter to be considered. Walther provides a theological analysis of the question of fellowship with heterodox or heretical congregations even while he does not describe in detail the situation in American Lutheranism. Walther's stand, then, highlights the nature of the church as God's holy church, the true church, where God's word is preached and taught in purity and where his sacraments are administered according to the institution of Jesus Christ.

The experiences of Wyneken, Sihler, and Walther in 1845 were only a small part of the making of these men as pastors, theologians, and churchmen. Yet, in the stands they took against what they regarded as unionistic and syncretistic tendencies in American churches, we can see how they were developing their conceptions of the relationship between the church and its confession. Founded on God's word, the Lutheran Church could not depart from that word and still remain a true church. Striving to preach and teach God's word in purity, it could not permit another word (e.g., rationalism or doctrinal indifference) to take hold in the church. Recognizing that true unity in the church is that which God establishes, it could not allow itself to become a false union. Wyneken, Sihler, and Walther knew that holding fast to the word of God and embracing the Lutheran Confessions in word and deed was the key to the survival of the Lutheran church in America. This was the way to safeguard the true unity of the true church.

III. The Drafting of the First Missouri Synod Constitution

Having established contact with the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, representatives of the Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio group traveled to St. Louis in May 1846 to discuss the possibility of organizing a new synod.[32]

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[31] Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry,* 127. Walther again offers a series of Scripture texts in support of this teaching, e.g., 1 Cor 1:10–13, Eph 4:3–6, and 1 John 2:19.

[32] Representing the Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio pastors at this meeting were: W. Sihler, J.A. Ernst, and F.J.C. Lochner; and representing the Saxons in Missouri were: J. F.

At this meeting, the joint parties, working for an entire week on the project, produced a draft of a synod constitution and made copies for distribution and review by both groups.[33] C.F.W. Walther also published the full text of the draft constitution in *Der Lutheraner*, the Lutheran newspaper in St. Louis of which he was the editor.[34] The draft constitution produced at this May 1846 meeting is important because it became the foundational document, with only minor revisions, for the constitution adopted by the Synod the following year.[35] The two groups of Lutherans met again in Fort Wayne in July 1846. This meeting allowed additional representatives of the Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio Lutherans to meet the Saxons from Missouri and to participate in the discussions regarding the draft constitution and the proposed organization of a synod. Finally, on April 26, 1847, twelve pastors representing fifteen German Lutheran congregations from Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan met in

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Buenger, O. Fuerbringer, G.H. Loeber, E.G.W. Keyl, T.C.F. Gruber, and C.F.W. Walther. For Lochner's description of the visit and the meetings, see "Rev. F. Lochner's Report on His First Contacts with the Saxons," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1934): 77–81, and *Moving Frontiers*, 146–148.

[33] After the meeting in St. Louis, pastors Lochner and Craemer, and others who were still members of the Michigan Synod, attended the meetings of the Michigan Synod, which had resolved to draft its own constitution. Lochner, after consulting with his fellow Löhe emissaries, presented his copy of the draft constitution from the St. Louis meeting to the Michigan Synod for discussion. The members of the Michigan Synod reviewed the St. Louis draft by individual paragraph. However, Lochner reports that the draft was not well received: "In the debate on such paragraphs as confession [the confessional basis], the relation to heretical groups, serving mixed congregations, confessional ceremonies, etc., not only did the ignorance of some members become apparent, but also, more and more, the un-Lutheran, unionistic attitude of the synod. Finally the discussions were dropped . . ." ("Rev. F. Lochner's Report on His First Contacts with the Saxons," 81). It seems clear that many of the members of the Michigan Synod did not share the views of Lochner (and others from the Löhe group) concerning the confessional basis, unionistic practices, and heterodox teachings. At that meeting of the Michigan Synod, pastors Lochner, Craemer, and others presented their own declaration of separation from the Michigan Synod.

[34] *Der Lutheraner* 3, no. 1 (1846): 2–6. The draft constitution was also published as a separate document in St. Louis: *Die Verfassung der deutschen evangelisch- lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten* (St. Louis: Weber & Ohlshausen, 1846).

[35] Gustave Polack has provided side-by-side English translations (prepared at the time by Concordia Historical Institute assistant curate Roy Suelflow) of both the May 1846 draft constitution and the 1847 constitution adopted by the Synod. The texts reveal no differences between the two documents in regard to Article II, §3; however, Polack's translation of the 1846 draft does not include the footnote discussed below. Gustave Polack, "Our First Synodical Constitution," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1943): 1–18.

Chicago and formally founded the new Synod. At this first convention the constitution was approved and adopted.

The pertinent text from the constitution is provided below, both in the original constitution of 1847 and in its most recent form.

1847 Constitution *Article II, §3*	*2013 Constitution* *Article VI, §2*
Separation from all commixture of Church or faith, as, for example, serving of mixed congregations by a servant of the Church; taking part in the service and Sacraments of heretical mixed congregations; taking part in any heretical tract distribution and mission projects, etc.[36]	Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as: a. Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church; b. Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession; c. Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities.[37]

The conditions for membership in the Synod Constitution, including the clause renouncing unionism and syncretism, reflect some of the original reasons for forming the Synod. The Synod was founded to ensure, for example, "The preservation and furthering of the unity of the pure confession (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10) and to provide common defense against separatism and sectarianism (Rom. 16:17)" (Article I, §2). In

[36] Polack, "Our First Synodical Constitution," 3. The original German text for this portion of the 1847 constitution is as follows: "Lossagung von aller Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei, als da ist: Das Bedienen gemischter Gemeinden, als solcher, von Seiten der Diener der Kirche; Theilnahme an dem Gottesdienst und den Sacramentshandlungen falschgläubiger und gemischter Gemeinden, Theilnahme an allem falschgläubigen Traktaten- und Missionswesen, u.s.w." *Die Verfassung der deutschen evangelisch- lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten*, (St. Louis, 1847). The original document is in the archives at the Concordia Historical Institute.

[37] The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Handbook: Constitution, Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2013), 15.

addition, the clause corresponds with several of the functions of the Synod laid out in Article IV; to cite only the first, "1. To stand guard over the purity and unity of doctrine within the synodical circle, and to oppose false doctrine."[38]

A careful examination of how the clause requiring the renunciation of "Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei" is placed in the Synod Constitution is instructive. The positioning of the clause within the list of conditions for membership in the Synod is noteworthy since it is the immediate context of the clause. The series of paragraphs begins with the confessional basis of the Synod: first, acceptance of the Scriptures as the written word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and life, and second, acceptance of the Lutheran confessional writings as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the word of God. Immediately following this doctrinal basis of the Synod is the renunciation of unionism and syncretism, the serving of mixed congregations, and the participation in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox or mixed congregations, heterodox tract and mission societies, etc. Subsequent to this clause is the pledge to use doctrinally pure church books, such as agendas, hymnals, and catechisms. The overarching concern expressed in this listing of conditions is the maintenance of pure Lutheran doctrine and practice. This pledge pertains both to the individual level (congregations and pastors) and to the corporate level (the Synod), which is an expression of the church's unity.

What are the underlying reasons for the conditions? The drafters of the constitution are not explicit in their reasoning here; however, certain factors are clear. First, the confessional basis sets down the doctrinal standard of the Synod. Subscription to the Confessions is unconditional. As C.F.W. Walther made clear, the object of this subscription is the doctrinal content of the Confessions:

> An unconditional subscription is the solemn declaration which the individual who wants to serve the Church makes under oath 1) that he accepts the doctrinal content of our Symbolical Books, because he recognizes the fact that it is in full agreement with Scripture and does not militate against Scripture in any point, whether that point be of major or minor importance; 2) that he therefore heartily believes in this divine truth and is determined to preach this doctrine without adulteration. Whatever position any doctrine may occupy in the doctrinal system of the Symbols, whatever the form may be in which

[38] Quotations are from the 1847 Synod constitution (Polack, "Our First Synodical Constitution," 2–3).

> it occurs, whether the subject be dealt with *ex professo* or only incidentally, an unconditional subscription refers to the whole content of the Symbols and does not allow the subscriber to make any mental reservation in any point. Nor will he exclude such doctrines as are discussed incidentally in support of other doctrines, because the fact that they are so used stamps them as irrevocable articles of faith and demands their joyful acceptance by everyone who subscribes to the Symbols.[39]

The concern about the renunciation of unionism and syncretism is consistent with the unconditional nature of the confessional subscription required in the Synod. Members (congregations, pastors, et al.) pledge to hold to the confessional basis of the Synod; failure to keep the conditions automatically means a violation of the confessional basis. The concern here is perhaps less about unionism and syncretism per se, and more about what unionism and syncretism do, namely, effect the intrusion of false teaching and practice into the church even while claiming to establish unity in it.

True acceptance, then, of the Scriptures and the Confessions as stipulated in the confessional basis means the renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description. In turn, the renunciation of unionism and syncretism helps to safeguard the confessional basis, even as it flows out of it. In the case of a pastor, engaging in unionistic behaviors and embracing syncretistic teachings also means the violation of his ordination vows, which include acceptance of the confessional basis. At that point, the nature of the problem extends beyond Synod fellowship and involves a conflict with the word of God.

The Synod and its members cannot engage in false unity because such is contrary to the word of God, harms the consciences of the weak, and threatens the true gospel in the church. In addition, such activity violates the unity of the pure confession of the Synod as well as its trust.

IV. Conclusion

The founders of the Missouri Synod took seriously the question of the unity of the true Christian church. They knew the one church is the body of Christ, and they knew the true church was founded on the word of God.

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[39] C.F.W. Walther, "Why Should Our Pastors, Teachers and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings of Our Church: Essay Delivered at the Western District Convention in 1858," translated and condensed by Alex Wm. C. Guebert, *Concordia Theological Monthly* 18 (1947): 242.

The founders of the Synod also took seriously the question of the church's doctrine—the true testimony of the Scriptures. There could not be disagreeing doctrines in the one, true church, and for that reason they handled carefully questions of unity in the church and fellowship with those who embraced a confession contrary to their own. The chief problem with *Kirchen- und Glaubensmengerei* was not simply that it was rationalistic or indifferentistic but that it was theologically wrong. It was against God's word and against the Lutheran confessional writings.

Clearly, the founders of the Synod were not afraid of union or fellowship with others; they actively sought it out and forged it in the organization of the Synod in 1847. For decades afterwards, they continued to strive for unity among the various Lutheran churches. What they sought to avoid, however, was union at the expense of pure doctrine and practice in keeping with that doctrine. They regarded unionism and syncretism as serious threats to the church and its teaching as well as to the faith and life of its members.

Perhaps the greatest threat of unionism was the forging of "unity" on the basis of something other than pure doctrine. Syncretism aided this process, along with doctrinal indifference. Such "unity" was not true unity in the church because it was not grounded in what the church truly is, namely, the body of believers in Christ among whom the word of God is purely preached and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution. If the intention or motivation for involvement with other churches was to forge union on the basis of something other than agreement in doctrine, then the response of the Synod's founders to that involvement was clear: avoid the erring brother, lest we compromise the true teaching of God's word. If the intention was to bear witness to the truth of God's word and the gospel, then they endeavored to reach those who taught contrary to that word so that they might have a positive influence. Nevertheless, the teaching of God's word must never be compromised.

At its founding, the Synod strove to bear witness to the truth of God's word and to establish true unity where possible. If true unity could not be attained, the Synod, to some extent, used the same approach with other Lutheran or non-Lutheran groups that it used within itself as it relied on the power of God's word to convince them. Refuting false teachings and practices might be necessary, but it was God's word to which the appeal was made. This effort was born out of sincere conviction that Christians, as the body of Christ, are called to proclaim God's word, to teaching and practice in accord with that word, and to a persuasion based on and informed by it alone.

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Doctrinal Unity and Church Fellowship

Roland F. Ziegler

Discussions on church fellowship are a perpetual feature of life in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Walther's *Church and Ministry* contains a lengthy discussion on church fellowship, and papers on church fellowship and communion fellowship have been issued by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) since its foundation in 1962, showing that this is an issue on which the Synod has not come to rest. This study will look at the meaning of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession with some annotations on the nature of doctrine, spelling out some of the consequences of this article for the Lutheran Church today.

I. The Origin of the Question: Augsburg Confession, Article VII

Though the discussion of doctrinal unity and church fellowship does not constitute a specifically Lutheran doctrine, Lutherans are, nonetheless, especially fixated on this question. There is, after all, no church that does not believe that there has to be at least some agreement on doctrine for fellowship between church to exist. For other churches, questions of church polity play a significant part in their discussions of unity in the church. The most famous example is, of course, the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of the papacy as serving the unity of the church. Traditional Roman teaching speaks of the unity of the church together with the unity of faith; all members of the church believe what the church tells them to believe. Added to this is the "unity of communion," namely, "the subjection of the members of the Church to the authority of the bishops and of the pope" and the "participation in the same cult and in the same means of grace."[1] For still others, liturgical uniformity has been a significant aspect of the unity of the church; one may think of the role the

[1] Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1957), 303. Cf. the dogmatic constitution "Pastor aeternus" of Vatican I (DH 3060).

Roland F. Ziegler is the Robert D. Preus Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Book of Common Prayer has played in the Church of England.[2] Lutherans have neither a church polity that unites them, nor are they united through a uniform liturgy. What keeps them together, according to their self-understanding, is unity in doctrine, and what drives them apart is disunity in doctrine. The origin of this stance, historically, is found in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, "Concerning the Church." The Latin reads in translation:

> Likewise, they teach that one holy church will remain forever. The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.[3]

The decisive words in the Latin are *pure docetur*, *recte administrantur*, and the phrase *consentire de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum*.[4] The first question, though, concerns the phrase *doctrina evangelii*. What, exactly, is meant by this term?

II. The Meaning of *doctrina evangelii*

As a comparison of the German and Latin texts of AC VII reveals, *doctrina* is not simply the modern word "doctrine." Rather, the German has the word for "preaching" in the place of *docere* and *doctrina*. Thus, one school of thought views AC VII to be aiming not at a consensus on certain doctrines but rather at a consensus in the act of preaching. Both teaching and the administration of the sacraments are seen as acts of the church.

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[2] Even though the liturgy is of supreme importance for the Eastern Orthodox Church, there can be a diversity of rites within it, as the example of the Western Rite shows. But there is also opposition to this within Eastern Orthodoxy.

[3] All English translations from the Book of Concord are taken from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, tr. Charles Arand et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); hereafter, Kolb/Wengert.

[4] The German says that it is enough for the true unity of the church that "einträchtiglich nach reinem Verstand das Evangelium gepredigt und die Sakrament dem gottlichen Wort gemäß gereicht werden." *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963). All citations of the Latin or German texts of the Book of Concord are taken from this source. Kolb/Wengert translates: "that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word."

Thus, the question of agreement aims not at a doctrinal statement but at what is going on in the local church.[5] The foundation of the church as church, that is, the preached gospel and the administered sacraments, and the foundation of the unity of the church are the same.[6] This implies that differences in doctrine are no longer church dividing.

This interpretation was put forth already in the nineteenth century by Albrecht Ritschl. Ritschl opposed confessional Lutherans of the nineteenth century who taught that unity in teaching or the Confessions was a prerequisite for church fellowship.[7] For Ritschl, AC VII does not mean that agreement in all the articles of the Augsburg Confession is necessary for the true unity of the church.[8] Ritschl wants to emphasize *doctrina **evangelii***, not ***doctrina** evangelii*. For him, the confession and the word of God are not to be equated. Confession is a human product; the word of God is the power of God. The word of God is not identical with human knowledge of it.[9] The doctrine of the gospel is the human effort to speak the gospel, that is, the divine, gracious will. As such, it is the mark and foundation of the church.[10] Ritschl accused the confessional Lutherans of his time of destroying this distinction between the word of God and confession or doctrine and thereby of propagating an error analogous to the Roman Catholic teaching on grace and freedom. Another consequence of this understanding, according to Ritschl, is that a closed theological system,

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[5] Cf. Edmund Schlink, *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnissschriften*, vol. 8, *Einführung in die evangelische Theologie*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1946), 270.

[6] This opinion has been put forth by Karl Barth and many theologians influenced by him. See, e.g., Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, vol. 1, bk. 2, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, Part 2* (Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1938), 859. Other theologians include, e.g., Hans Joachim Iwand. See Eeva Martikainen, *Evangelium als Mitte: Das Verhältnis von Wort und Lehre in der ökumenischen Methode Hans Joachim Iwands* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989), 33–38; Hermann Diem, *Theologie als kirchliche Wissenschaft: Handreichung zur Einübung ihrer Probleme* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1951), 268. See also Hans-Peter Großhans, *Die Kirche*: *Irdischer Raum der Wahrheit des Evangeliums* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 112.

[7] Albrecht Ritschl, "Die Begründung des Kirchenrechtes im evangelischen Begriff von der Kirche," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Freiburg i.B.: J. C. B. Mohr, 1893), 100–146. For a summary of the view of the Confessions in confessional German theology of the nineteenth century, see Holsten Fagerberg, *Bekenntnis, Kirche und Amt in der deutschen konfessionellen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1952), 135–193.

[8] Albrecht Ritschl, "Die Entstehung der lutherischen Kirche," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Freiburg i.B.: J. C. B. Mohr, 1893), 180.

[9] Ritschl, "Entstehung," 126.

[10] See Ritschl, "Entstehung," 177, and Ritschl, "Begründung," 124–125.

such as in the Formula of Concord, becomes necessary for the church and that for church fellowship there must be agreement in doctrine, not only in the fundamental articles of faith.[11] The source of such an understanding Ritschl finds not in Luther but, rather, in the later Melanchthon. The way to the Formula of Concord was therefore paved by Melanchthon's theological methodology and ecclesiology as it developed after 1530. A doctrinal understanding of the *doctrina evangelii*, though, is not to be found in AC VII. The list of articles of faith as they were enumerated in the Schwabach Articles, one of the sources of the Augsburg Confession, was not taken over by Melanchthon. Rather, AC VII is closer to the Torgau Articles with its focus on the gospel in the narrow sense as an effective means of representing Christ.[12]

It is necessary to revisit this old controversy because Ritschl's position has been prevalent ever since. Karl Barth and his students, especially, have followed a similar argumentation, as did Gustav Aulén.[13] In North America we find it in Gritsch and Jenson's book on Lutheranism, in Gerhard Forde, and in David Truemper, the late professor at Valparaiso.[14]

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[11] Ritschl, "Begründung," 126–127. Here he names Thomasius as a representative of this view (Thomasius, *Das Bekenntniß der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in der Consequenz seines Princips*, [Nürnberg: Verlag von August Recknagel, 1848], 43).

[12] Ritschl, "Begründung," 132.

[13] "The unity of the Christian church is not a uniformity in doctrine. The Gospel is the unifying factor for the church, but it is not a finally formulated, doctrinal authority. If a finally and irrevocably fixed system of doctrine were proposed as the basis of unity, it would lead to an intellectualized orthodoxy and a false objectivity. But such false objectivity turns and becomes the exact opposite." Gustaf Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), 341.

[14] Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). Gritsch and Jenson repeatedly proposed that AC VII is referring to the preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments, not to a teaching about the gospel and the sacraments. For them, therefore, the adverbs *pure* and *recte* are tautologies: the gospel is either gospel or not gospel, the sacraments are either sacraments or not sacraments. Melanchthon is not defining a consensus that can be quantified. Gritsch and Jenson state, "An ancient misinterpretation of 'the church is . . . where the gospel is purely preached' attends wrongly to these tests, to make it mean 'the church is that ecclesiastical body, or sum of these ecclesiastical bodies, with a right doctrinal position.' There are indeed right doctrinal positions, and they are important in various connections, some of them organizational. But AC 5 [*sic!*] is not at all about the doctrinal status of any organization; it is about what happens or does not happen in some gatherings of people" (132–133). Forde writes: "What the *satis est* calls for is agreement not on a whole list of things or doctrines, but on the specific activity of teaching (preaching) the gospel and administering the sacraments according to that gospel." Gerhard Forde, "The Meaning

The second school of thought on the meaning of AC VII sees the necessity of a doctrinal consensus, not just an agreement in the preaching of the gospel, but restricts it to a consensus on what the gospel (in the narrow sense) and the sacraments are. This is the interpretation and the ecumenical model that was first proposed by some theologians of the Prussian union and much later by the Leuenberg Agreement (1973), by which the churches that subscribed to it entered into full church fellowship.[15] With ninety-four member churches, it is not a minor federation. Two sister churches of the Missouri Synod, the Evangelical Church of Lithuania and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, have signed the Leuenberg Agreement and are member churches of the "Community of Protestant Churches in Europe."[16] The Leuenberg Agreement was also influential in the ecumenical dialogue between Lutherans and churches of the Reformed tradition in North America. The Leuenberg Agreement itself does not refer to AC VII, but it takes up the language of "agreement in the right teaching of the Gospel, and in the right administration of the sacraments" which is the "necessary and sufficient prerequisite for the true unity of the church."[17] In a later document by the Leuenberg Fellowship, "The Church of Jesus Christ," published in 1995, the reference to AC VII is made explicit.[18] It is clear from the Leuenberg

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of Satis Est," in *A More Radical Gospel. Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 169. He also writes: "What we are to agree about is the activity of preaching the gospel in its purity and administering the sacraments accordingly as gospel." Gerhard Forde, "Lutheran Ecumenism: With Whom and How Much," *A More Radical Gospel. Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 183.

[15] E.g., Julius Müller; cf. Klaus-Martin Beckmann, *Unitas Ecclesiae: Eine systematische Studie zur Theologiegeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1967), 98.

[16] See http://www.leuenberg.net/mitgliedskirchen, accessed January 2, 2014.

[17] Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, "Leuenberg Agreement," §1, in *The Leuenberg Agreement and Lutheran-Reformed Relationships: Evaluations by North American and European Theologians*, ed. William G. Rusch and Daniel F. Martensen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 145.

[18] Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft, *Die Kirche Jesu Christi: Der reformatorische Beitrag zum ökumenischen Dialog über die kirchliche Einheit* [The Church of Jesus Christ: The Contribution of the Reformation towards Ecumenical Dialogue on Church Unity], ed. Wilhelm Hüffmeier, Leuenberger Texte 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 1995), 119. Cf. also the latest document of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, *Schrift, Bekenntnis, Kirche: Ergebnis eines Lehrgesprächs der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa* [Scripture, Confession, Church: Result of a Doctrinal Discussion in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe], ed. Michael Bünker, Leuenberger Texte

Agreement, that "gospel" is here understood in the narrow sense. The later document, "The Church of Jesus Christ," states that consensus in the gospel consists in the "common expression of the appropriate understanding of the gospel as the message of God's justifying action in Christ through the Holy Spirit;" and "in the common conviction that the 'message of justification as the message of God's free grace is the measure of all the church's preaching' (LA 12)."[19]

In North America, we find this interpretation in the ecumenical dialogues of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) that led to the establishment of church fellowship with denominations of the Reformed tradition. The document *A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today*, published in 1993, states:

> For Lutherans, the *satis est* of *Augustana* (CA 7) affirms that there is an essential core, a foundational understanding of gospel and sacraments, on which agreement, *consensus*, must be reached for the unity of the church to be discerned in several church bodies. The German form of the article speaks of the "harmonious" (*einträchtig*) preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments. There is no insistence on full agreement in all matters. Rather the *satis est* denies any expansion of the necessary agreement beyond the core, i.e., fundamental truths and institutions of the communion of saints called into existence by the gospel.[20]

A third interpretation of AC VII states that the required consensus consists in "recognizing the Holy Scriptures as the norm and standard of teaching and in regarding the Lutheran Confessions as the correct

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14 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013): "The Leuenberg Agreement declares community between churches of different confessions in the conviction that the diversity of the Reformation confessions does not exclude their common witness to the Gospel, but rather challenges them to common confession. The *one* Gospel can be expressed in different linguistic forms (cf. LA A5). Therefore the Leuenberg Agreement states: 'In the sense intended in this Agreement, church fellowship means that, on the basis of this consensus they have reached in their understanding of the gospel, churches with different confessional positions accord each other fellowship in word and sacrament and strive for the fullest possible cooperation in witness and service to the world'" (73).

[19] *Die Kirche Jesu Christi*, 120.

[20] *A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today: The Report of the Lutheran-Reformed Committee for Theological Conversations, 1988-1992*, ed. Keith F. Nickle and Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 33.

exposition of the Scriptures—that much and not more."[21] This means that other questions that are not addressed in the confession should not be divisive. This was the position of the old United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA). The "Washington Declaration" of 1920 states:

> In the case of those Church Bodies calling themselves Evangelical Lutheran, and subscribing the Confessions which have always been regarded as the standards of Evangelical Lutheran doctrine, the United Lutheran Church in America recognizes no doctrinal reasons against complete co-operation and organic union with such bodies.[22]

This position was later continued by the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) while, as we stated above, the ELCA has a different ecumenical model.[23]

A fourth understanding of AC VII is that the consensus necessary for the unity of the church consists in everything that the Scriptures teach. Such a position was proposed by Franz Pieper. In his essay "On the Unity of Faith," delivered to the convention of the Synodical Conference in 1888, Pieper states in Thesis I: "By unity in the faith we understand the agreement in *all* articles of the Christian *doctrine* revealed in Holy Scripture."[24] In support of this thesis, Pieper quotes not only AC VII, but also Article X of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord (§31). This interpretation has been continued by Robert Preus, Ralph Bohlmann, and Kurt Marquart, who also take FC SD X 31 as a commentary on AC VII. The text of FC SD X

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[21] John H. Tietjen, *Which Way to Lutheran Unity? A History of Efforts to Unite the Lutherans of America* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 151.

[22] *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America*, ed. R. C. Wolf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 350.

[23] Edgar M. Carlson, "How the LCA Understands Consensus in the Gospel as the Basis for Fellowship," in *The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church, [Summary Report]:[from an Official Study Conducted by the Division of Theological Studies, Lutheran Council in the USA during 1972-77]* (New York: Lutheran Council in the USA, 1978), 30. In the twentieth century, this position was also endorsed by Hermann Sasse in 1952. See Hermann Sasse, "Über die Einheit der Lutherischen Kirche," *in In Statu Confessionis*, vol. 2, *Gesammelte Aufsätze und kleine Schriften* (Berlin und Schleswig Holstein: Verlag Die Spur Gmbh & Co. Christliche Buchhandels KG, 1976), 254.

[24] Franz Pieper, "Von der Einigkeit im Glauben," in *Verhandlungen der zwölften Versammlung der Evang.-luth. Synodalconferenz zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 8. Bis 14. August 1888*, 6–35 (St. Louis: Luth. Concordia Verlag (M.C. Barthel, Agent), 1888), 6. Author's translation; emphasis original. The entire essay is available in an English translation in *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison. ([Fort Wayne]: Lutheran Legacy, 2009), 571–599.

31 reads: "For this reason the churches are not to condemn one another because of differences in ceremonies when in Christian freedom one has fewer or more than the other, as long as these churches are otherwise united in teaching and in all the articles of faith as well as in the proper use of the holy sacraments." The allusion to AC VII is unmistakable, except that here, instead of "the teaching of the doctrine of the gospel," the text reads "in teaching and in all the articles of faith." Thus, as the argument goes, the doctrine of the gospel and all the articles of faith must be understood synonymously as the summary of Christian teaching or the gospel in the wider sense. This interpretation was attacked by David Truemper. While he agreed that the terms are synonymous, he understood "articles of faith" to mean the gospel in the narrow sense.[25]

III. An Evaluation of the Interpretations of AC VII

Regarding the interpretation of AC VII as the acts of preaching the gospel and administrating the sacraments, several objections may be raised. First, the Latin qualifiers *pure* and *recte* speak against such an understanding.[26] Second, the gospel is not simply a freeing speech act; it has content. The sharp distinction between the gospel as the efficacious communication of the forgiveness of sins through an act of God, not an act of man, and doctrine as a human reflection on the witness of the revelation, either as an ongoing process or also as the result in propositional statements, owes more to Ritschl and his antimetaphysical bias and, in the twentieth century and beyond, to Barth's understanding of the word of God and doctrine than to either Scripture or the reformers.

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[25] See David Truemper, "How Much Is Enough?," *Missouri in Perspective* 6 (1979): 23, 5–6 and David Truemper, "The Catholoicity [*sic!*] of the Augsburg Confession: CA VII and FC X on the Grounds for the Unity of the Church," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11, no. 3 (1980): 11–23.

[26] Elert writes: "But that Melanchthon was by no means willing or able to let a general promise to preach the Gospel be what was required to establish agreement—as Ritschl declared—can be seen from the fact that although his first draft of the seventh article contained a formula that could be interpreted in this way, he gave an exact definition of this formula in the final version." Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 272. He continues: "No mere reciting of the Gospel contained in the Holy Scripture gives one assurance with regard to the basis of church unity; this must be done by the 'exposition' (*Auslegung)*, the understanding of the Gospel which can be recognized when the doctrine of the church is examined. This is what the aforementioned additions—'rightly' (*recte)* and 'true' (*vera*)—express. And the Augsburg Confession formulates what the evangelicals mean by the right doctrine of the Gospel" (273).

Such a distinction between the gospel and doctrine results in a near separation of the two, which is problematic. How can the identity of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments be ascertained except through a description of what the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments are? And what is such a description but a form of doctrine? Is it possible to agree in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments but to have a different understanding of what the gospel and the sacraments are? With attendant confusion and inconsistency, yes; but, normally, what one believes will inform how one preaches and administers the sacraments, and how one preaches and administers the sacraments will, in turn, shape what one believes.[27]

Thus, I agree with those authors who take "the doctrine of the gospel" to imply also content, the teaching about the gospel, not only the act of preaching.[28] Therefore, both the "preaching" of the German text and the "teaching" of the Latin text must be taken seriously. To say that *docere* simply equals preaching, as Maurer and many others do, is insufficient. Theodor Mahlmann showed in a detailed study of the meaning of the word *doctrina* that its semantic field encompasses the meanings of an act of teaching, the subject matter, and that which is taught. According to Mahlmann, all of these meanings come into play in AC VII, as well.[29]

In the second understanding of AC VII, namely, that consensus concerning the gospel in the narrow sense and the doctrine of the sacraments is necessary, at least the connection between the preaching of the gospel and doctrine is seen. But is this understanding—that only an agreement in fundamental articles (to use the terminology of later orthodoxy) is necessary for the unity of the church—tenable? Looking at the Lutheran separation from Rome in the sixteenth century, one could argue that it was

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[27] I am not endorsing the maxim *lex orandi statuit legem credendi* without qualification. This principle, if taken as saying that doctrine is subordinate to the liturgical life of the church, works only in a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox setting, where the life of the church has a built-in infallibilty. Liturgy by itself does not validate dogmatic statements because liturgy can go horribly wrong, as the abomination of the Roman mass shows. Both liturgy and preaching are subject to Holy Scripture and must be evaluated by it.

[28] See, e.g., William Ernst Nagel, *Luthers Anteil an der Confessio Augustana: Eine historische Untersuchung* (Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1930), 94.

[29] Theodor Mahlmann, "Doctrina im Verständnis nachreformatorischer lutherischer Theologie," in *Vera doctrina: Zur Begriffsgeschichte der Lehre von Augustinus bis Descartes: L'idée de doctrine d'Augustine à Descartes* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009), 204.

indeed disagreement concerning the gospel in the narrow sense and the understanding of the sacraments that disrupted the church's unity. Similarly, the breaking point between the Lutherans and the Reformed was the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, the Formula of Concord not only deals with question like these but also contains articles on the descent into hell and predestination, both of which are not fundamental articles. Moreover, Article XII, "Concerning Other Factions and Sects That Never Subscribed to the Augsburg Confession," illustrates what sort of consensus in doctrine the authors of the Formula deemed necessary for church unity. The article provides a long list of the doctrines of the Anabaptists, "which [are] not to be tolerated or permitted in the church, or in public affairs, or in domestic life" (FC SD XII 9). Then the article continues with a rejection of the errors of the Schwenckfelders and the teachings of the new Arians and Antitrinitarians (FC SD XII 28–40). Therefore, since the authors of the Formula are disinclined to be in the same church as these false teachers, it follows that agreement on the christological and trinitarian dogma of the church must also be part of AC VII's consensus required for church unity—that is, if one assumes a continuity and doctrinal harmony between the Formula and the Augsburg Confession.[30] Finally, the declaration at the end of this article is telling:

> All these and similar articles, and whatever other further errors are attached to these or follow from them, we reject and condemn as incorrect, false, heretical and opposed to the Word of God, the three Creeds, the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Catechism of Luther. All upright Christians would and should avoid them if they hold dear the welfare of their souls and their salvation. (FC SD XII 39)

It appears, though, that either "gospel" and "doctrine of the gospel" in AC VII either do not mean the same thing or that gospel in both places is

[30] This point was made by John Theodore Mueller, "Notes on the 'Satis Est' in Article VII of the Augustana," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 18 (1947), 409. Likewise, Schlink writes: "Even though in the statements of the Augsburg Confession about the unity of the church, no direct mention is made of the unity of creed [rather, of 'confessions' since the German reads 'Bekenntnis'], this unity is incomparably more urgent than uniformity in external ordinances. For the confession is nothing but the formulation '*consentire de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum*' (AC VII 2), which, though considered sufficient, is yet demanded as necessary for the true unity of the church. The confession is nothing but the unanimous fixing of the '*pure*' and '*recte*' of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in accordance with the Scriptures." Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 206.

to be taken as the gospel in the wide sense. If one takes it as the gospel in the wide sense, then AC VII no longer mentions the gospel and the sacraments as those instruments through which faith is given and the church as the congregation of believers is constituted. To overcome this challenge, Robert Preus suggested two different meanings, namely, that "gospel" is to be understood in the narrow sense and "doctrine of the gospel" in the wide sense.[31] It may sound somewhat forced to assume such a difference, but Preus points to AC XXVIII 5, where the word "gospel" is used in both the wide and narrow sense in close proximity. Thus, it would not be completely without precedent in the Augsburg Confession.

Kurt Marquart has repeatedly proposed a different interpretation.[32] He holds fast to the same meaning of "gospel" and "doctrine of the gospel." He understands both usages to be the gospel in the narrow sense—a gospel, though, that includes the entire creed. Nevertheless, Marquart concludes that since, in practice, the gospel is distinct from the law but can never be separated from it, "it comes to the same thing whether the Gospel in AC VII is taken in its narrow or wide sense."[33]

Marquart raises the important point of the coherence of the gospel with the biblical message. The gospel in the narrow sense can be expressed in a short, simple formula, as the Augsburg Confession does: "namely that God justifies not on account of our merits, but those who on account of Christ believe that they have been received in grace on account of Christ" (AC V 3; author's translation). But should this mean, for example, that questions regarding the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and Christ's resurrection are excluded from the pure teaching of the gospel? Obviously, the gospel is not purely taught when the eternal sonship of Christ is denied because then "Christ" means something else. Moreover, as the debates on free will after Luther's death show, the gospel also makes certain statements about man's condition that, when denied, lead to a false understanding of the gospel. Thus, even though the doctrine of the loss of the image and likeness of God through the fall and the loss of free will is certainly not gospel in the narrow sense, it is nevertheless necessary in order to preach the gospel purely. The same is true for the right administration

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[31] Robert Preus, "The Basis for Concord," in *Doctrine is Life: Essays on Justification and the Lutheran Confessions*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 353.

[32] Kurt E. Marquart, "Augsburg Confession VII Revisited," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 (1981): 17–26; Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance* (Fort Wayne: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 53–55.

[33] Marquart, *The Church*, 55.

of the sacraments. The sacraments are not rightly administered according to Christ's institution when there is no instruction on the sacrament. Likewise, a church that does not practice closed communion or a church that communes members of heterodox churches does not administer the Lord's Supper according to Christ's institution. Thus, one does not need to accept Preus's interpretation of assuming two different meanings of "gospel" and "doctrine of the gospel" in order to avoid a reductionistic understanding of the consensus necessary for church unity.

Thus, AC VII necessitates agreement in all the articles taught in the Augsburg Confession. But can agreement be restricted to that, as many have held? With this question comes the debate on the question of *de jure* and *de facto*, terms that refer to the confessional commitment of a church body. All Lutheran church bodies have some kind of subscription to the Lutheran Confessions in their constitutions. Is such a subscription both necessary and sufficient, or are there also specific requirements concerning how this confessional subscription shapes the life of the church? The dangers on either side are obvious. If one stresses the *de jure* aspect, the Confessions might be legally binding but, nevertheless, a dead letter in the life of the church. On the other hand, if one stresses *de facto*, then any deviation from the Confessions at any place in a church would mean that the consensus is broken and fellowship is destroyed.

A pure *de jure* point of view is incompatible with AC VII in which the content and action of teaching and administrating the sacraments are indistinguishable. An agreement on a confession that is functionally inert does not constitute a consensus on the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Further, since the church is always under attack by the devil, false preaching and errors in the administration of the sacraments cannot be shut out entirely. The question, then, is how a church is to deal with false teaching. There are those in the church who are charged with distinguishing between pure doctrine and false doctrine, namely, bishops. The controversies after Luther's death that led to the Formula of Concord demonstrate that false doctrine must be identified, that a process must be established to bring about unity in doctrine, and that those who disagree must finally be deposed and fellowship with them severed. Such a process takes time, though, and to discern when there is no longer *casual* intrusion of error in a church, as the *Brief Statement* of 1932 put it, is not always an easy task.[34]

[34] "The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine

Nevertheless, can the public doctrine necessary for the unity of the church be restricted to the doctrinal content of the Book of Concord? Based on the understanding of the authority of the word of God in the church articulated in the Confessions, the answer must be no. Rather, the church is bound to everything that God has said in Holy Scripture.[35] The Scriptures are the pure fountain of Israel, "according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated" (FC SD Summary 3). The Confessions are not sufficient in that they do not say everything concerning all teachings. They address the issues of their time and are also a clear articulation of the gospel. Nevertheless, if one restricts the necessary unity in teaching to what the Confessions say, then one declares everything else the Scriptures say to be unnecessary for the unity of the church, even if there is within the church a teaching that is blatantly anti-scriptural. But the toleration of anti-scriptural teachings would directly contradict the authority of Scripture in the church. Therefore, since the church cannot tolerate anti-scriptural teachings, it also cannot limit the meaning of the "pure teaching of the gospel" to only those things said in the Confessions. It must include everything that Scripture teaches. The Confessions' main interest is in the distinction between divine doctrine and human teachings. Never do they entertain the idea that some teachings in Scripture are optional for the church.

IV. Fundamental Considerations in Regard to Doctrine

What is meant by doctrine? First, as mentioned above, doctrine can mean both teaching as an act and that which is taught. According to the latter definition, doctrine is everything that is taught in the church; accordingly, it encompasses also dogma and confessional documents. Doctrine as "the faith" (*fides quae*) deals with the gospel and consists of that which is taught in the church by those who are called to do so—pastors publicly and all Christians privately. Dogmas and confessions are doctrines that are formally adopted to guide the teaching of the church and to exclude false teachings from the life of the church.

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which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20:30; 1 Tim 1:3." Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), §29.

[35] It is of course understood that the church reads the Old Testament through the New Testament and that it understands the center of the teaching of Scripture to be the gospel of Jesus Christ.

On one level, this teaching or doctrine is not identical to the Scriptures. It can use different words than the Scriptures use, it is produced by human beings, and it is fallible. It is also not identical with the Scriptures in the sense that the church's doctrine could ever replace the Scriptures.

On the other hand, there is also an identity of Scripture with doctrine. The church is commanded to speak and teach the word of God; thus, her preaching and teaching must, under certain conditions, be the word of God. For Barth, the witness of the church is never identical with the word of God. Because God is free and is never under our control, we cannot make him speak by saying certain words. For Lutherans, a distinction has to be made. If we talk about God giving his Spirit, here the *ubi et quando visum est deo* ("where and when it pleases God") of AC V has its place. But concerning the content of what is said, man can speak the word of God. In that sense, God has put himself into man's hands. Divine doctrine is identical with the word of God, or Scripture, in its propositional content (what it says).

Thus, the church's teachings claim to be what the Lord is saying today. Doctrine also claims to be identical with the teachings of the church of all times since orthodox Christianity does not believe in an ongoing revelation in the sense that new things are being revealed. The revelation of God, in regard to content, is completed with the end of the apostolic age. The teaching of the church does not have any authority in itself but has all its authority from Scripture. As such, the church's teaching is the interpretation of Scripture and must show its identity in its content. But in this identity of content, it participates in the authority and efficacy of Scripture because it too can be called the word of God.

V. The Relationship between Gospel and Doctrine

One of the recurring themes in the discussion of AC VII is the relationship between gospel and doctrine. The first interpretation given above, namely, that AC VII only requires that the gospel be preached and the sacraments administered, creates not only a distinction but a separation between the gospel and doctrine. The gospel here is not defined primarily as content but as a specific communication from God to man in which God gives faith and man trusts in the promise of the gospel. As such, the communication of the gospel is in God's hands and cannot be effected by man. The gospel is, thus, a revelatory act of God. Doctrine, according to this position, on the other hand, is a human enterprise, the reflection on the gospel. Doctrine can be learned; it can be taught. Doctrine aims at understanding; the gospel aims at faith. If the gospel is identified with

doctrine, then faith is intellectualized and becomes an act of human reason. Such would, of course, be contrary to the Small Catechism, which teaches that we cannot believe in Jesus Christ by our own reason or strength.

Here the long shadow of Karl Barth looms large over Lutheran theology. His interest was to maintain that God reveals God so that all human words can be a witness to the revelation, the medium, if and when it pleases God to use them, but that even the Scriptures are not simply the word of God in a static sense. Neither is doctrine.[36]

Lutheran theology understands the word of God and, thus, the gospel differently than Barth. For Barth, the word of God is an event in which God communicates to man. As such, it is always salvific. That the communication happens is up to God; man cannot make God communicate in any way. Thus, no human word can be identified with the word of God. For Lutherans, however, there is a difference between the word of God and the salvific effect of the word of the God. A sentence can be the word of God, but it does not always result in a communication that is salvific. Rather, God works faith where and when it pleases him. Nevertheless, there is an identifiable and stable content to the word of God.[37]

The gospel in the narrow sense is, of course, more than content, more than a proposition, but it is not less. The gospel has a content, a referential aspect, and even though its proper form is that of a promise, not of a propositional statement, it implies propositional statements. In the New Testament one finds the gospel not only as a promise but as the story that is the foundation of the gospel in history, namely, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Moreover, one finds reflection on the meaning and implications of the gospel, especially in the epistolary literature. This teaching of the gospel in its comprehensive sense in the New Testament is "doctrine," and, as such, it is binding for the church of all times. Doctrine

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[36] Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik 1:2*, 852.

[37] Barth does not believe that any word will serve as the human word in which God's speaking happens since the church only has the promise of biblical preaching and because the primary form of the word of God is Christ, who is witnessed to in the Scriptures. But the decisive act is the witness of the Scriptures, not the handing down of content. There is, nevertheless, a structural similarity to Lutheran theology here. The distinction between law and gospel and its proper application in concrete situations has the character of an event. It is not enough to say what the law and the gospel are in a given situation. They must be appropriately applied. The gospel said to the unrepentant sinner so that it confirms him in his sin is not a proper preaching of the gospel; in fact, it is not a preaching of the gospel at all.

is not first and foremost a human reflection on the Christ-event or the gospel. Rather, it is the background, foundation, and implication of the gospel as given in Holy Scripture. All teachings in the church are bound to this divinely-given doctrine because they can and ought to be evaluated by the teaching of Scripture. However, the Lutheran Confessions also believe that there can be teaching that, though it does not say everything that the Scriptures say, is identical with the Scriptures in regard to its content and can, therefore, be used to evaluate the preaching and teaching in the church. "Since for thorough, permanent unity in the Church it is, above all things, necessary that we have a comprehensive, unanimous approved summary and form, wherein is brought together from God's Word the common doctrine, reduced to a brief compass, which the churches that are of the true Christian religion confess . . . " (FC SD Summary 1).[38]

VI. Doctrine and the Church

Since the church is the assembly of believers in which the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered, and since the preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments are mandates, the test of a faithful church is whether she does what she is mandated to do. Therefore, the doctrine of a church, as the actual proclamation and content of the church's preaching, must be in harmony with Scripture. Unscriptural proclamation and teaching is sinful and constitutes a form of disobedience to the Lord on the part of those who are responsible for the church's teaching. This ultimately includes all members since not only pastors and church officials, but all Christians, have a duty in regard to the public teaching of a church.[39] False teaching and the toleration of false teaching is a sin, and those who are guilty of it must be called to repentance. It is, therefore, quite obvious that a church that consistently advocates and preaches false doctrine is unfaithful to her Lord and cannot be recognized as an orthodox church but must be regarded as a false church. This is harsh language and might sound unloving and judgmental to the refined

[38] F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau, ed., *Concordia Triglotta: Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, deutsch-lateinisch-englisch* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).

[39] All Christians are told to beware of false prophets (Matt 7:15). It is a characteristic of Christians that they listen to Christ's voice alone, not to the hireling (John 10:4). "And as other Christians are obliged to censure the rest of the pope's errors, so must they rebuke him when he avoids and obstructs the church's inquiry and true judgment" (Tr 56). See also C. F. W. Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry: The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office*, trans. John T. Mueller, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 330ff.

theological mind, but Christians *must* judge doctrine, and what other standard is there to judge doctrine than the word of God? If they find false doctrine, what else can they say than that such is an act of unfaithfulness to the church's Lord? And what else can they do in the face of manifest sin and impenitence, when false doctrine is defended, but pronounce the sentence of the law and retain sin? The unity of the church is a unity of faith, created by the gospel. It cannot subsist but as a unity in the word of God; therefore, those who reject the word of God sin against the unity of the church. Consequently, there can be no church fellowship between an orthodox church and heterodox church bodies. Rather, an orthodox church must call the members of a heterodox church to repentance.

VII. Agreement in Doctrine as Essential for Church Fellowship in the New Testament

But is all of this faithful to the New Testament? Does not the New Testament offer a plurality that would contradict such a demand for doctrinal unity?[40] Has not historical-critical exegesis shown the disparate and theologically contradictory nature of the New Testament, not to speak of the Old Testament? This depends on whether there is doctrinal unity in the New Testament—and in the entire Bible—or if there are contradictory theologies within it. Because the New Testament, however, is not simply an assemblage of early Christian documents but the work of the Holy Spirit as the chief author, there are no contradictions in it.

Two passages concerning doctrinal unity shall be referenced here. First, one passage often quoted in this context are the final words in the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Christ's mandate to his church is that she keep everything that he has commanded (Matt 28:20: διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν). A christological understanding of the Scriptures implies that this refers not only to Christ's teaching before his ascension but also to his teaching through the apostles and the teaching of the Old Testament. Everything in Scripture that the church is mandated to preach has, therefore, to do with Christ's teaching—indeed, with Christ and the gospel in the narrow sense.[41]

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[40] See Jörg Baur, "Lehre, Irrlehre, Lehrzucht," in *Einsicht und Glaube: Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 231.

[41] See Wilhelm M. Oesch, "Göttliche Lehre nach den Lutherischen Symbolen," in *Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura: Grundzüge lutherischer Theologie* (Gr. Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung, 1996), 257.

Second, Paul's battle for the one gospel demonstrates that doctrine is important. In Romans 6:17, for example, he writes: "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed" (NASB). Paul talks about the τύπος διδαχῆς, the form of doctrine, to which the Christians have been committed. This most likely refers to some sort of baptismal creed or creedal statement.[42] Thus, to become a Christian is to be committed to a creed, a doctrinal statement.

Because there is a distinct τύπος διδαχῆς, the apostle can then exhort the Romans at the end of the letter to avoid those who make dissensions against the doctrine they have learned (Rom 16:17). Thus Ernst Käsemann, not known as a hardline confessional Lutheran, writes:

> The apostle speaks of the faith which is believed and which is imparted and received in the form of a fixed tradition of which important parts may be found in 1 Cor 11:23, 15:1. This can and must be learned. There are opponents who are trying to replace this tradition by another one. To that extent Paul furnished the impulse to the fact that the Pastorals can speak of "sound doctrine" and appeal to it. As noted earlier, the gospel is more than the kerygma. It is the norm of this and from this angle it becomes doctrine.[43]

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[42] Käsemann writes: "In this light it makes good sense that the reference is not to the giving of the tradition to the baptized but the commitment of the baptized to the tradition. The attraction expressed by τῷ τύπω . . . εἰς suggests a Jewish form of expression for the commitment of a student to the teaching of a rabbi . . . If this is not the point, it should be considered that faith means more than personal engagement. Eph. 4:5 with its threefold acclamation, which probably derives from the act of baptism, shows that steps had to be taken quite early against heretical doctrines of salvation. Romans as a whole gives evidence of the process of linking proclamation with a clear interpretation of the gospel and presupposes not uniformly established but christologically centered confessions which serves the same purpose. Τύπος διδαχῆς corresponds in antithetical parallelism to the Jewish μόρφωσις τῆς γνώσεως καὶ ἀληθείας of 2:20, which likewise means commitment to specific teaching. As the baptized is committed to the Lord, he is also claimed for a creed . . . which sets out in binding form the significance of this Lord." Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 181–182. See also Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Frieburg i.B., Basel, Wien: Herder, 1977), 209.

[43] Käsemann, *Romans*, 417. See also Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, 447–448, and Gerhard Delling, *Wort Gottes und Verkündigung im Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk Verlag, 1971), 122.

Far from being against the New Testament, the concern for adherence to the true teaching and the avoidance of all false teaching is present throughout the New Testament.[44]

VIII. Conclusion

The unity of the church is given by her Lord. It is a unity of the Holy Spirit and of faith. Therefore, it is also a unity of faith in what the Holy Spirit, the principal author of Holy Scripture, has said. Any rejection of the word of God penned by the Holy Spirit through the human authors is a not only a sin against the divine majesty but also a violation of the unity of the church. Such a sin cannot be ignored by the church but, like any other sin, must be named, and the person must be called to repentance. If the call to repentance is not heeded, then the sin must be bound.

Churches might be more or less consistent in their call to repentance. An orthodox church is a church that preaches the gospel purely and administers the sacraments according to their institution, which includes everything the Holy Spirit has revealed. An orthodox church is also vigilant and practices brotherly admonition toward those who do not preach the gospel purely or administer the sacraments according to the institution, and if necessary, calls them to repentance. This is done out of love for them and the congregations that are led astray by them. No one has a built-in inerrancy; thus, one should be ready not only to give admonition but also to receive it. It serves well to remember these words of Jesus: "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt 7:12, NASB). In this respect, Barth was right with the view that pure doctrine is a process. Though the content of pure doctrine is given to us in Holy Scripture and is in that sense *not* a process, the church is called to evaluate her practice and be purified by the word of God continually.

This attitude is sometimes derided as "incessant self-purification" and can then be associated with all kinds of psychological disorders. Most would not think that a daily shower is "incessant self-purification" but a rational way to deal with dirt and sweat. Whether something is excessive depends first on the situation, second on the goal. Regarding the situation, is The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod being contaminated by false doctrine, or is it cruising through life on the auto-pilot of orthodoxy? It seems the first is true because the church is made up of sinners living in a sinful world. Regarding the goal, is unity in all the articles of faith

[44] Other passages that speak to this include 2 John 9–11 and 2 Tim 3:16–17.

something the church desires, as it is required by the Lord of the church? Hopefully all can answer yes to this. Therefore, concern for pure doctrine and continual vigilance against false doctrine are completely appropriate and necessary if a church wishes to remain orthodox.

But does such an approach to doctrine paralyze a church and prevent it from reaching out? In response to this, one might ask whether the concern for personal hygiene prevents one from living a full life. Apart from pathological examples, the answer is, of course, no. Doctrinal purity serves the mission of the church since the mission of the church is to preach God's word, not human words. Since life is short, one must evaluate how he spends his time, but to strive to preach the gospel *purely* or simply *to preach* the gospel are hardly alternatives. In the end, of course, this is a question of how each person will fulfill the duties of his *Stand*, or estate, and of his place in the church. Every member of the church is to do his part so that the doctrine is kept pure, and each has a duty to the end that the gospel is preached to both unbelievers and believers. This means that Missouri Synod Lutherans should continue to study and grow in the knowledge of God's word and to work in their immediate context, that is, their circuits and districts, so that doctrine and the discussion of doctrine take their rightful place. When there is a question of false doctrine, we must be in conversation with our erring brethren and never tire in our effort to convince the brother or congregation of the error. And when no remedy is found, then it is necessary for the Synod to deal forthrightly with manifest heresy.

The traditional position of the Lutheran Church that the word of God and only the word of God is preached in its fullness might seem daunting or impossible. Nevertheless, this is God's mandate, and only this has God's promise. Easier ways, devised by men, are born out of unbelief and cater to the weakness of the flesh. The church needs to be encouraged not to despair and give in to the pragmatic, minimalistic understanding of doctrinal unity and church fellowship. Either the word of God, and thus God himself, unites us and keeps us in this unity, making us his church, or a mixture of a minimalistic consensus and some historical and sociological factors unites us. In the latter case, the church might still be among us if the gospel is preached, but we have become a false church.[45]

[45] See Peter Brunner, "Die Kirche und die Kirchen heute: Thesen zu einer konkreten Ekklesiologie und einem oekumenischen Ethos," *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* 8 (1954): 243.

A topic such as that is, first and foremost, a call for reflection: do we actually take doctrine as seriously as we confess we do? Is this reflected in our preaching and teaching? Do we seek unity of doctrine inside and outside of our fellowship, or have we conceded defeat and chosen to live with separations and disunity? Striving for unity is not easy; it is emotionally draining and, on the surface, is not as rewarding as many other endeavors, but it is necessary. Doctrinal controversy and the battle against false teachings is a part of the life of the church, just as it was part of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles.[46]

[46] See Wilhelm M. Oesch, "Kirche und Einheit der Lehre II," in *Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura. Grundzüge lutherischer Theologie* (Gr. Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung, 1996), 92.

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A Light Shining in a Dark Place: Can a Confessional Lutheran Voice Still Be Heard in the Church of Sweden?

Rune Imberg

In *Hamlet* we encounter one of Shakespeare's most famous expressions: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." My task is not to comment on the situation in Denmark but rather the one in Sweden. Of course, there are many elements that can be described as rotten, both in the country as such and in the Church of Sweden. A female bishop was recently elected archbishop, which to all confessional Lutherans is a catastrophe. Furthermore, in the election process she was very vague in her theological statements. For example, she did not even want to state openly that Jesus of Nazareth is superior to Muhammad. She was not the only one; at least four of the five candidates for archbishop were very vague in their dogmatic statements.[1]

The reaction that biblically conservative Lutherans from Sweden normally get when describing this situation to Lutherans from the United States is understandable: why don't you just leave the national church? Why haven't you already left it and created another church body? Such questions are, of course, very relevant, but there are several reasons why many confessional Lutherans still belong to the Church of Sweden. The primary one is that they see their call from God to be that of a light shining in a dark place.

If such an exodus of confessional Lutherans from the Church of Sweden should already have taken place, the natural time, historically speaking, would have been in the early 1960s when the first female pastors were ordained within the Church of Sweden. In fact, dozens or even hundreds of pastors and many thousands of laymen were ready at that time for such a departure to take place. Many people in Sweden were inspired by the disruption that took place in Scotland in 1843, when the

[1] The details of this process are well documented in the Swedish press in autumn 2013 (e.g., in *Kyrkans tidning*).

Rune Imberg is Senior Lecturer in Church History and Dean of Research at Församlingsfakulteten (Lutheran School of Theology) in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Free Church of Scotland was formed.[2] But one man, more than any other person on the conservative side, worked against a split, trying to do what he could to preserve the unity of the church, waiting for better times to come. This Moses who was not yet ready to leave Egypt is well known among American Lutherans: Bishop Bo Giertz.[3]

Why did Giertz not initiate an exodus? Did he make a mistake, or was he led by God in deciding to take up a spiritual fight within the church, one that is still being waged? While there are no definitive answers to these questions, the historical development of Christianity in Sweden does provide insights that may help us understand better the church's situation today.

I. The History of Christianity in Sweden

When studying the history of Sweden, it is important to note one fact: Sweden was not Christianized like Italy, Spain, or other countries that belonged to the Roman Empire. By the time the countries of northern Europe came into existence, the Christian ideology was already present by way of Christian mission work; thus, Christianity influenced the creation of the nation. Sweden received its first bishop and diocese in Skara approximately one thousand years ago! The church province of Lund, comprising all of northern Europe, was established in 1103. The church province of Uppsala, consisting of six to seven dioceses, was created in 1164, with a French monk as archbishop. Yet Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, was founded some ninety years later, around 1250, though no one even knows the precise date.

It is no coincidence that all Nordic countries have some sort of cross in their flags. Even if some so-called kings existed before the mission period,

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[2] Lay leaders who were influenced by the Scottish development included David Hedegård (1890–1970), editor of *För Biblisk tro*, and Axel B. Svensson, lay preacher and journalist and leader of the mission society Swedish Lutheran Mission (*Missionssällskapet Bibeltrogna Vänner*) from 1911 to his death in 1967.

[3] Among those believing a split was necessary was one of Giertz's closest friends, Rev. Gustaf Adolf Danell, Dean of Växjö (Cf. Erik Petrén, "Bo Giertz och Kyrklig Samling," 378, in Rune Imberg, *Talet om korset: Guds kraft: till hundraårsminnet av Bo Giertz födelse* [Göteborg: Din Bok & co, 2005]). Dag Sandahl explains how and why Giertz worked to defend church unity and not create any split ("Bo Giertz och kampen om kyrkan" in Imberg, *Talet om korset*, 365ff.). Danell was interested in following the line of the SELK in Germany and was influenced by Franz Pieper in the LCMS (Oloph Bexell, *Präster i St. Sigfrids stift.3*, 44ff.). Why the SELK never came to influence the Swedish situation is an interesting question that has yet to be investigated.

it was Christianity that influenced the creation of these nations. And one element in particular that gave the king extra legal authority, the coronation, developed according to biblical and ecclesiastical categories.[4]

It is often said that Gustav Vasa, who ruled from 1521, and as king from 1523 to 1560, made Sweden a Lutheran country. This statement is not true. While the Reformation in Denmark under the leadership of the king only lasted some fifteen years and was completed in 1536, a similar process in Sweden took more than seventy years.[5]

During certain periods of Vasa's rule, he assisted the Lutheran reformers, but during other periods he tried to exert control over them.[6] In 1539, two of the three Reformation leaders were condemned to death then later pardoned. The Reformation in Sweden took a long time to be victorious, partly because the king considered the Lutheran bishops to be too independent.[7]

After the reign of Gustav Vasa, who often promoted his own causes more than Lutheran theology, Sweden had four consecutive non-Lutheran kings. Erik XIV, who had Calvinist leanings, was deposed by his brother Johan III, a Reform Catholic who tried to create a reunion with the Roman Catholic Church. Johan's son Sigismund, also the king of Poland, was a staunch Roman Catholic. He was deposed by his uncle Karl, who was more Calvinist than Lutheran.

Against the pressure of a Romanizing king (Johan III) and the Calvinistic influences of another (Karl), who was inspired by the development on the Continent and in England, a majority of the clergy and some bishops, together with a number of lay Christians—noblemen, magistrates in the

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[4] Cf. Bo Giertz, *Christ's Church: Her Biblical Roots, Her Dramatic History, Her Saving Presence, Her Glorious Future*, trans. Hans Andrae (Eugene, Oreg.: Resource Publications, 2010), 74–86.

[5] In fact, Sweden's first truly Lutheran king, Gustavus Adolfus II, did not come to power until 1611.

[6] For the following discussion, see Åke Andrén, *Reformationstid*, Sveriges kyrkohistoria 3 (Stockholm: Verbum, 1999).

[7] This complex development is brilliantly described by Bo Giertz in his novel *Tron Allena* ("Faith Alone") (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1943). Naomichi Masaki deals with parts of this confusing period in his thesis, *He Alone Is Worthy!*, where he shows how the Swedish reformers succeeded in proclaiming the gospel also through the liturgy. See Naomichi Masaki, *He Alone is Worthy!: The Vitality of the Lord's Supper in Theodor Kliefoth and in the Swedish Liturgy of the Nineteenth Century* (Göteborg: Din Bok, 2013).

cities, and peasants—led the Reformation in Sweden (including modern Finland) to victory.

During this period, the Church of Sweden produced two brilliant Lutheran documents: the *Church Order of 1571* and the decision of the Uppsala Synod of 1593. The latter defined Sweden as a Lutheran country. This decision went against the policy of *cuius regio eius religio* that dominated the political landscape in Europe, and occurred just months after a Roman Catholic became king in Sweden. The process of Sweden's unification as a Lutheran nation at the end of the 1590s came under the leadership of a number of Lutheran pastors and bishops, together with a number of laymen, who defeated the will of several kings.[8]

The seventeenth century brought a period when the country was formed by Lutheran orthodoxy, which influenced everything from church life to social life and culture. Many of the church leaders from this time were quite impressive in their activities and theological knowledge, even by modern standards.[9] But silently, orthodoxy began to be threatened, and the church appears not to have recognized this. The orthodoxy itself began to become legalistic and rationalistic, and the church as such became heavily dependent on political power, namely, the king.

Following the defeat of the Swedish armies by Russia, beginning in 1709, and the death of King Charles XII in 1718, the Swedish people grew weary. They were not only tired of wars but also of a rather rigid orthodoxy and autocratic parish pastors who exercised great power in the local community. Up until the early 1700s, Sweden had been one of the most Lutheran countries in the world, characterized by a consensus culture that slowly began to break up. Lutheran orthodoxy still remained dominant for a time, but the Enlightenment began to influence the higher classes.[10] When Pietism appeared, a typically Swedish theological synthesis came into existence, namely, "mild orthodoxy."

Gradually, from the eighteenth century onward, the divisions within the Church of Sweden increased. The Enlightenment became dominant,

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[8] With pride Bo Giertz referred to this development in *Christ's Church*; cf. also his *Herdabrev* ("pastoral letter") that he wrote upon becoming bishop in 1949.

[9] Consider bishops like Johannes Rudbeckius (Västerås, d. 1646); three archbishops in Uppsala, Olaus Svebilius (d. 1700), Eric Benzelius the elder (d. 1709), Haquin Spegel (d. 1714); and Jesper Swedberg (Skara, d. 1735), who promoted mission work in North America among not only colonizing peasants but also native Indians.

[10] Rationalism became—and remains to this day—an important element in Swedish culture.

and most of the church leaders belonged to the "neology" faction. In Giertz's famous novel, *The Hammer of God*, the young Pastor Savonius is a typical exponent of the neologist's way of thinking.[11] One also finds a peculiar Swedish mixture of Orthodoxy and Pietism, called *gammalpietismen* ("Old Pietism"), in *The Hammer of God*. The farmer's wife Katrina and some of the laymen in the first novella belong to that group, and after a while Savonius joins their ranks.

In the early nineteenth century, Sweden began to experience a number of revivals. The first ones, in general, strengthened the Church of Sweden spiritually, especially the revivals connected with Schartau, Rosenius (who also appears in *The Hammer of God*), and Laestadius. However, a number of figures connected with other revivals started to break away both from Lutheran theology and from the Church of Sweden. In *The Hammer of God* we meet all sorts of Christians, especially Baptists and people following Waldenström of the *Mission Covenant*.[12] They wanted to follow the Bible closely but quite rapidly became very un-Lutheran. Nevertheless, it was at this time that neology was weakened and a kind of confessional revival appeared.[13]

In the late nineteenth century, a Swedish cultural battle began that influences the situation to this day. Rationalism, with roots going back to neology but also being a kind of secularized orthodoxy, became increasingly important. Agnosticism and atheism began to influence the cultural elite. Liberal and socialist thinkers criticized Christianity as being out of date. The idea of a "general development" was influential, and when it joined forces with anthropological influences from Rousseau—namely, that man might have a number of problems, but is, basically, not a sinner—the result was a toxic ideological brew.

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[11] Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, trans. Clifford A. Nelson, ed. Hans Andrae (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2005). Originally published as *Stengrunden* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1941). See also Masaki's critical description of the *Liturgy of 1811*, a typical example of bad neology, 52–53.

[12] Four critical references to the Baptists causing a rift in church unity are missing in the American editions. See also Rune Imberg, "Bo Giertz's *The Hammer of God* in English," *Lutheran Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2014): 288–289.

[13] Masaki describes this development and the influences from Germany (especially Luther and Kliefoth) and from Sweden itself (the Reformation and neo-orthodoxy) in chapter 5 of *He Alone is Worthy!*.

A modernist way of thinking began to influence the country through the universities of the church.[14] The young Pastor Torvik in *The Hammer of God* (chapter 7) is a brilliant depiction of how confused a pastor in the early twentieth century could be when entering his ministry.

II. Giertz's Battle within the Church of Sweden

Toward the end of the 1920s, Bo Giertz appeared on the scene. He and many with him began to perceive that the Church of Sweden was not created by man but had its roots in the apostolic church, that it had a rich heritage from the medieval centuries, and that it had rediscovered the gospel through the Reformation. He was influenced by new trends in Swedish academic theology (as promoted, for example, by Fridrichsen and Linton) but also by a number of revivals, including the high church movement (Gunnar Rosendal), older revivals (Schartau, Rosenius), and also the Young Church Movement and the Moral Re-Armament (M.R.A.).

In book after book, Bo Giertz voiced these re-discoveries: *Christ's Church* and its companion volume *Kyrkofromhet* (Church Piety) in 1939, *The Hammer of God* in 1941, *Tron Allena* (Faith Alone) in 1943, and his *Herdabrev* (pastoral letter to the clergy and congregations in the diocese of Gothenburg) in 1949. Thousands of pastors and laymen were inspired by him.

In 1949, Giertz became bishop of Gothenburg. He was appointed by a Labor Government that previously had wanted to disestablish the church but now preferred to take control of it. As bishop for twenty-one years, Giertz fought a radical battle against the politicians on every front: preaching the gospel, visiting congregations, and encouraging Christians.

For theological reasons, Giertz wanted to maintain the church's unity at almost any cost, which is in line with his thoughts from 1939, as expressed in *Christ's Church*. Reluctant to be involved in an exodus from the Church of Sweden, he did whatever he could to avoid causing a break without violating his conscience, hoping that God would intervene. However, as I understand it, he did not recognize until it was too late that he had been deceived. He also made some personal misjudgments. This is important to know when asking why he did not lead an exodus in 1960.

To begin with, Giertz was misled or deceived by politicians and other church leaders. The Minister for Church Affairs promised solemnly in 1958, before the decision was made to begin ordaining women, that the

[14] Today, almost all pastors within the Church of Sweden are trained mainly in the now-secular universities.

position of the minority would be respected (by way of a "samvetsklausul," a conscience clause). The politicians believed that the minority, which opposed the ordination of women, would eventually give up or die out. When that did not happen, they removed the conscience clause in 1981 by abolishing the law that Parliament had made in 1958.[15] From that point on, the standing of the minority was legally undermined, and pastors and laymen from the conservative Lutheran side could be accused of sexual discrimination for opposing the ordination of women. Later, in October 1993, after the last confessional bishop retired, the bishops decided not to ordain any male candidates who would not accept the ordination of women.[16] The compromise that Bo Giertz had been involved in creating lasted barely three decades. Given how events unfolded, certain passages in *Christ's Church* look rather naïve when read today.[17]

History shows that this misjudgment on the part of Giertz had radical consequences. Biblically speaking, he forgot to a certain extent the teaching of St. Paul in Ephesians 6, namely, that Christians fight a battle against spiritual powers. Simply being a good swimmer does not guarantee success; if the current is too strong, even the good swimmer goes under. Giertz did not understand, in this case, to what extent the developments in society would influence the church. He also made a mistake on a more personal level, believing that his friends on the other side of the debate had the same ethical integrity as he. As time went on, a number of them changed their opinion, gave up the fight, became silent, or simply went into retirement, and the men filling their shoes did not respect the compromises that had been made with the confessional minority. Giertz's tragic mistake was that he trusted his adversaries and failed to take the skepticism among his advisors seriously. In his later years, he could only with sorrow recognize his mistake.[18]

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[15] This strategy was even disclosed publicly before it took place in the Swedish Government Official Reports of 1981. *Statens offentliga utredningar 1981*, 20: 12.

[16] Concerning the 1993 events, see Rune Imberg, "Från Stockholm 1911 till Göteborg 2005 via Kenya," in Beijer, Birgersson, and Okkels, ed., *Lyda Gud mer än människor: Festskrift till Arne Olsson* (Göteborg, Missionsprovinsen i Sverige och Finland, 2010), 37–38.

[17] See Giertz, *Christ's Church*, 84–86; see also Dag Sandahl, "Bo Giertz och kampen om kyrkan," in Imberg, *Talet om korset,* 355–367.

[18] See interview by Fredrik Sidenvall with Bo Giertz in Eric R. Andrae, *A Hammer for God: Bo Giertz: Lectures from the Centennial Symposia, and Selected Essays by the Bishop* (Fort Wayne: Lutheran Legacy, 2010), 324–327.

By the time of his retirement as bishop, Giertz understood the direction in which the Church of Sweden was headed. Politicians, with support of liberal church leaders, had taken control of the church.[19] He had been fighting a battle that, humanly speaking, was already lost.

So what did Giertz do? He wrote his third and final novel, *The Knights of Rhodes*.[20] This book, which describes the battle in the 1520s between Christian knights and the Muslim Sultan Suleiman, ends with a total defeat of the Christians. The book is interesting from a number of perspectives, but one of the lessons, in the context of this discussion, is that a lost battle is not fought in vain if, while fighting, one remains faithful to the Lord's call and to his commands.

To summarize the novel, the Knights lost Rhodes to a Muslim ruler, but through their fight a forthcoming Turkish invasion was delayed, which meant that southern Europe was saved. Many of the defenders were faithful to their assignments, even if it meant dying at their posts, something which often happens in wars. Some soldiers die, but because of their fight, a number of other soldiers and civilians survive. Thus, one may lose the battle and yet assist others in winning the war.

III. Why Not Just Leave the Church of Sweden?

Confessional Lutherans in Sweden today have, humanly speaking, lost most of their battles. They are marginalized. Their theologians cannot be ordained, and their pastors cannot become bishops or even senior pastors. Moreover, the spiritual life in many congregations is often in terrible shape.

But though they are few, they still carry the torch from the past, often a quite glorious past. Their spiritual forefathers preached the gospel handed down from the apostles and led people to Christ. In a number of ways they proclaimed the truth like the prophets of the Old Testament, even when

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[19] For a general description of these events, cf. Per-Olof Sjögren, *Kyrkans politisering* (Uppsala: 1975); Bernt Ralfnert, *Kvinnoprästdebatten i Svenska kyrkan i perspektivet kyrkastat* (Malmö: Ralfnert: 1988); Rune Imberg, *Biskops- och domprostutnämningar i Svenska Kyrkan 1866–1989* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1991); Daniel Alvunger, *Nytt vin i gamla läglar. Socialdemokratisk kyrkopolitik under perioden 1944–1973* (Göteborg: Församlingsförl., 2006); and Ingmar Brohed, *Religionsfrihetens och ekumenikens tid*, Sveriges kyrkohistoria 8 (Stockholm: Verbum, 2005).

[20] Bo Giertz, *The Knights of Rhodes*, trans. Bror Erickson (Eugene, Oreg.: Resource Publications, 2010). Originally published as *Riddarna på Rhodos* (Stockholm: Askild & Kärnekull, 1972).

they could see the destruction coming. Thus, they have an obligation to keep this Lutheran heritage alive.

But, one might ask, would not leaving the Church of Sweden be the best way to carry out this obligation? Perhaps it would be, but when one studies the history of the Swedish church, a strange pattern may be observed. A number of Christians, both Lutherans and non-Lutherans, have indeed left the Church of Sweden, and the results, in general, have not been very encouraging. Quite often they resemble the Israelites who tried to force Jeremiah to go to Egypt (Jeremiah 42–44). Perhaps Giertz saw this, both concerning his own time and the years to come.

The first ones to leave were the Baptists in the 1850s and Mission Covenant Christians in the 1870s. These Christians wanted to live pure Christian lives in accordance with New Testament directives. Yet today, many of the most liberal Christians in Sweden belong to these two denominations.

In the early 1970s a number of confessional Lutherans also began to leave the Church of Sweden. According to them, Bo Giertz was too liberal and too compromising. Their solution was found rather in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Today they are, at most, a few hundred persons. They are divided into several groups and have a number of congregations with only a few dozen members in each.

IV. Two New Lights Appear in the Darkness

As described earlier, the situation for confessional Lutherans in the Church of Sweden grew quite dire by the end of 1993. Nevertheless, just a few weeks before the decision of the bishops to cease ordaining conservative male candidates, a new theological institution in Gothenburg began its work. While the darkness increased, a new light could be seen: the Lutheran School of Theology. Two decades later, this light continues to grow in importance. Theological training is ongoing, with students now able to receive theological training that is recognized as being equivalent to a bachelor's degree in theology. God is doing wonders!

In 1998, Bishop emeritus Bertil E. Gärtner, Giertz's successor as bishop, assisted two African Church leaders in ordaining two Swedish missionaries in Gothenburg. The official reaction from the Church of Sweden was aggressive as it threatened to defrock Gärtner. Had he continued ordaining confessional Lutheran men, such would definitely have been the outcome, but in that case many Christians would have followed him into exile. He was, however, not ready to take this step, although it is clear that such

ordinations are in accordance with the Lutheran confessional documents (Tr 66). Thus, there was neither an exodus in the early 1960s led by Bo Giertz nor one in the late 1990s led by Bishop Gärtner.

Something very unexpected happened, however, only a few years later. Though there was no organized exodus, a radically new structure began its existence in 2003. In order for conservative candidates to be ordained as pastors, a number of pastors and laymen formed the Mission Province. The first bishop was consecrated in 2005, and others have followed him. To date, some ten pastors have been ordained in the Mission Province for service in Sweden and some twenty within the sister organization in Finland. In Sweden the Mission Province is growing slowly, in Finland rapidly. Most of the members within the Mission Province still belong to the Church of Sweden, while others belong only to the Mission Province. That these pastors have been sent out and are doing their work is also a wonder of God.

V. The Future

Thus far, no organized exodus of confessional Lutherans from the Church of Sweden has taken place. Meanwhile, the national church seems to be approaching its collapse, unless God works a miracle. But some confessional voices are still heard within the Church of Sweden and others within the Mission Province. As long as God allows us to work, we will continue to proclaim the gospel and the victory of Christ in whatever capacity we are able.

The structure of the Mission Province is surprising to many people while a provocation to others. Living as it does in strange times, the church must sometimes resort to unorthodox solutions. When Dr. Torbjörn Johansson, a faculty member of the Lutheran School of Theology in Gothenburg, read this manuscript, he pointed out an interesting parallel to the Swedish situation. It concerns Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor who was born a few months after Giertz and who faced similar problems of a secular society that wanted to take over the church.[21] In Bonhoeffer's case, the increasing Nazification of the church in Germany impelled him to join the Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche*), which grew out of the Barmen Declaration. This was a movement within the national church (*die Deutsche Evangelische Kirche*) that protested against and tried to hinder the adjust-

[21] For more on the remarkable similarities between Giertz and Bonhoeffer, see Rune Imberg, "Bo Giertz och Dietrich Bonhoeffer—en 'parallellbiografi'," in Imberg, *Talet om korset*, 28ff.

ment of the church to National Socialism. Consequently, it was not an independent church standing at the side of the "Reichskirche" (Nazi Church). Bonhoeffer wrote about this in a letter to Henry Louis Henriod, dated July 12, 1934:

> There is not the claim or even the wish to be a Free Church beside the Reichskirche, but there is the claim to be the only theologically and legally legitimate evangelical church in Germany, and accordingly you cannot expect this church to set up a new constitution, since it is based on the very constitution, which the Reichskirche has neglected.[22]

In many ways, the Mission Province resembles the Confessing Church at the time of Bonhoeffer.

Concerning the Church of Sweden, one can say that she has in many ways a glorious past. We are proud of all the good that is found in the church where God called us to serve. Perhaps an exodus should have taken place some fifty or fifteen years ago. But it did not, and the important thing today is not to rely on hindsight in order to place blame.

Confessional Swedish Lutherans are like the biblical remnant. Our task, then, is to continue to fight the good fight (1 Tim 6:12, 2 Tim 4:7), taking care of the inheritance that has been given to the saints (Jude 3), even if many "Christians" want to hinder us and drive us out of our church (3 John 10). We must do this work in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2).

Perhaps I will one day be defrocked by the Church of Sweden, like many of my colleagues within the Mission Province, or perhaps I will one day recognize that I finally have to leave the church in which I was baptized and ordained. But until that day comes, I will continue to fight for the truth, both within the Church of Sweden and in the Mission Province. Many others are like-minded. We confessional Lutherans in Sweden are not many, but we know that we live by the victory of Christ.

While we wait for his return in glory, we continue to train theologians at the Lutheran School of Theology in Gothenburg, ordaining and sending out pastors through the Mission Province in Sweden to proclaim the

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[22] Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Henry Louis Henriod, July 12, 1934, in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 13: London, 1933–1935*, ed. Keith Clements, trans. Isabel Best (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 179.

saving gospel. Daily we do the work of the Lord, acknowledging that the church of Christ will never be defeated. It lives daily by the victory of Christ. And we know one more thing: we confessional Lutherans are the true Church of Sweden. We who stand firmly on the ground of the biblical and apostolic teaching and the Evangelical Lutheran confessions are the true Church of Sweden, and our call is still to be a light shining in the dark.

So yes, a confessional Lutheran voice will still be heard in the Church of Sweden. How long, only God knows. But though we are a small remnant, we say with St. John: "This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4–5).

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Cultural Differences and Church Fellowship: The Japan Lutheran Church as Case Study

Naomichi Masaki

Cultural differences. One could argue that such things make life more interesting. While such differences are frequently noticeable within Western culture, they pale in comparison to the differences between Western and Eastern cultures. Professor Masao Takenaka (1925–2006), a disciple of H. Richard Niebuhr and one of the best-known ecumenical theologians from Doshisha University in Kyoto, compared, for example, the different approaches that Westerners and the typical Japanese take when looking at the moon. The expression, "the man in the moon," Takenaka explained, would indicate for those from the West "the state of a man who is living in isolation and has no relational existence."[1] Thus, with the advent of the space age, the moon became the object of inquiry and calculation, prompting such questions as "When can I go there?" and "How much will it cost?" The Japanese, on the other hand, Takenaka continued, would think of the moon "not as a cold object without an intimate relationship, nor as an object to exploit or conquer, but as a personal companion."[2] Such a peculiar Japanese sensitivity may also be illustrated by a poem of the well-known Zen priest Dogen of the thirteenth century (1200–1253), which Yasunari Kawabata (1899–1972) quoted in his speech at the award ceremony of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968:

> In spring the cherry, in summer the cuckoo,
> In autumn the moon, in winter the snow, clear cold.

The beauty of the four seasons that is evoked in this poem with manifold forms of nature is so very different from an observation of an Indian friend, who once said: "We have four seasons, too. We have a warm season, a hot season, a hotter season, and the hottest season." If one were to inquire about the weather in a place like Tanzania, asking what clothing

[1] Masao Takenaka, *God Is Rice: Asian Culture and Christian Faith* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 9.

[2] Takenaka, *God Is Rice*, 9.

Naomichi Masaki is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Director of the Master of Sacred Theology program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

would be appropriate for a visit, the response would likely be one of astonishment: "That's hard to say, since we never give any consideration to the temperature." Indeed, given that the temperature in Tanzania hovers between 70 and 90 degrees every day of the year, Tanzanians simply have no concept of four seasons and thus no need for any weather forecast.

As interesting as the topic of cultural differences might be, the goal of this study is to consider what relationship, if any, exists between cultural differences and church fellowship. To accomplish this task, the concrete example of the move toward the ordination of women in the Japan Lutheran Church will be examined, asking whether the current state of affairs is the result solely of theological disagreement or whether cultural issues in the age of "ecumenicity, globalization, and secularization" are also, to some degree, a catalyst for this position.[3]

I. The Current State of the Question

More than a decade ago, the Japan Lutheran Church (NRK) began to explore the possibility of ordaining women into the pastoral office.[4] After years of discussion and debate, a resolution implementing this change will likely be presented at the NRK's next general convention in May 2014.[5] Should this proposal be adopted, more than forty years of pulpit and altar fellowship between the NRK and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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[3] The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt GmbH, 2013), 11.

[4] "Nafzger: Talks on women's service 'off to good start'," *Reporter*, March 4, 2009, http://blogs.lcms.org/2009/nafzger-talks-on-womens-service-off-to-good-start; accessed December 16, 2014; "JLC, LCMS reps to continue talks on ordination of women," *Reporter*, December 23, 2009, http://blogs.lcms.org/2009/jlc-lcms-reps-to-continue-talks-on-ordination-of-women; accessed December 16, 2014; "JLC, LCMS reps plan fourth round of talks," *Reporter*, March 10, 2010, http://blogs.lcms.org/2010/jlc-lcms-reps-plan-fourth-round-of-talks; accessed December 16, 2014.

[5] This essay is based on a paper that was delivered at the 37th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, in January 2014. At the NRK's subsequent convention in May 2014 President Kumei explained to convention that in view of the ongoing discussions between leaders of the NRK and LCMS that the executive committee of the NRK had determined not to place the matter of women's ordination on the convention agenda for action or even for discussion. The same convention elected Rev. Shin Shimizu as new President after President Kumei had served the maximum number of terms. *Kyokai Dayori* [Japan Lutheran Church Monthly Newsletter] no. 586 (June 2014): 3.

(LCMS) will come to an end. This is a sensitive and pressing issue, not least because of the fact that numerous joint mission and evangelism projects will most likely be adversely affected.

During its current triennium, the NRK is walking together as the body of Christ under the theme: "If one member suffers [πάσχει], all suffer together [συμπάσχει]; if one member is honored (glorified) [δοξάζεται], all rejoice together [συγχαίρει]" (1 Cor 12:26). How fitting this theme is for us also. Obviously, a resolution to ordain women into the office of the holy ministry is not perceived by our beloved colleagues in the NRK as suffering; yet for us in the LCMS it is. We are deeply concerned about how they are proceeding down the current path, and we plead to the Lord that our brethren in the NRK would reconsider their direction, to the end that we may "rejoice together" in true unity of doctrine and confession.

Despite these current tensions, the relationship between the LCMS and the NRK is, at the present time, excellent. In the aftermath of the devastating tsunami that struck Japan in March 2011, our church bodies experienced a tremendous opportunity to work together to bring relief to the countless people who lost their homes, their livelihoods, and, in many cases, beloved family members.[6] This joint relief effort prompted our synodical leadership to resume their careful work in addressing the issue of fellowship with the NRK. Even as we lend our prayerful support to that endeavor, it is incumbent upon us to consider what exactly is taking place in the Japanese context.

What, in particular, has led to the proposal of women's ordination in the NRK? Do cultural differences factor into this development, or is it a matter of theology? Is it because in a mission field evangelism and mission receive higher priority than doctrine, or is it because our witness has been

[6] In June 2011, I accompanied LCMS President Matthew Harrison on a tour of the devastated areas, serving as both his assistant and translator. In April 2013, I provided the same services for Dr. Albert Collver, LCMS director of church relations, and the Rev. Randall Golter, who at that time was director of international mission. During both trips, I witnessed the cordial relations that were experienced between the two church bodies. In September 2013, President Yutaka Kumei of the NRK presented a valuable biblical print by the artist Sadao Watanabe as a gift from the NRK to President Harrison upon the occasion of his reelection as president of the LCMS. For a description of this high point in relations between the two church bodies, together with a photo, see http://blogs.lcms.org/2013/harrison-receives-print-from-japan (accessed December 8, 2014). Since this time, President Kumei has been succeeded by President Shimizu.

too weak over the course of many decades?[7] Are we to adjust our way of thinking to conform to the so-called "post-Constantinian" or "post-Christendom" age, modifying our approach to church fellowship?[8] Should we advance from "traditional ecclesiology" to so-called "contextual ecclesiologies"?[9] Are we supposed to consider Christianity first and Lutheranism second in those places where the Lutheran church is young and small? Should we construct an Asian theology, or even a Japanese theology, and adopt, for example, Masao Takenaka's way of contextualization, which changes "the bread of life" into "the rice of life"? Or is now, perhaps, an appropriate time to review our past practice of church fellowship by bringing it into the light of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions?

Hermann Sasse once wrote that church fellowship is broken either by the sin of lovelessness or by the intrusion of heresy into the church.[10] In the situation at hand, it is clear that lovelessness is not the issue. This leaves the intrusion of heresy as the only other option, according to Sasse's line of thought. Is this really the case? If so, have cultural differences played any role in this development? In the end, what vital lessons are to be learned?

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[7] Hermann Sasse, *Luther and the Ecumenical Creeds* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1965). Sasse lamented when he reflected on the inability of the World Council of Churches to confess the ecumenical creeds.

[8] See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 420–432; Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1991), 8–29; Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006); Yasuo Furuya, *Nihon no Kirisuto kyo* [Christianity in Japan] (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 2003), 268–277.

[9] See a proposal as such in Robert Kolb and Theodore J. Hopkins, ed., *Inviting Community* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2013). Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2002) places under the section of "Contextual Ecclesiologies" such chapters as "The Non-Church Movement in Asia," "Base Ecclesial Communities in Latin America," "The Feminist Church," "African Independent Churches' Ecclesiology," "The Shepherding Movement's Renewal Ecclesiology," "'A World Church,'" and "The Post-Christian Church as 'Another City.'"

[10] Hermann Sasse, "Theses on the Question of Church and Altar Fellowship," in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letter by Hermann Sasse, vol. 1 (1927–1939)*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison et al. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 333.

II. Church Fellowship Is Altar Fellowship

Church fellowship is always altar fellowship.[11] This is the Lutheran confession, drawn from Scripture and the Book of Concord. Church fellowship as altar fellowship is not something the church creates or establishes, but it is a joyful recognition that the same gift of the Lord that has been given to one church body has also been given to another church body. We simply become aware of this fact with thanksgiving, acknowledging that the Lord has done wonderful things among the people of God in other places. Furthermore, church fellowship is always connected with what the Lord does at the Table; it never strays from his gift-bestowing service in the Holy Communion. At the Lord's Altar, those to whom our Lord gives his body and blood are "*koinoniad*" by that body and blood.[12] To be together at the Lord's Table is to be in church fellowship. There is one Christ, one Spirit, one gospel, one Baptism, one Table of the Lord, and one church. Ever since the time of the daily services of Israel with the *Shema Israel*, the people of God have confessed the oneness of the Lord in the sense of his fullness and aloneness. God's oneness is not an expression of his ontological and static existence, after the manner of Greek philosophies, but it is a confession of the dynamic and gift-giving Lord who wishes to deal with us by speaking to us, forgiving us, blessing us, dwelling among us, keeping and preserving us all the way (FC SD VIII 77–79). We are given no other God but Jesus, fully God and fully human. He alone is our Savior; he alone is the Lord. Jesus alone went to Calvary to achieve our salvation. He alone distributes that salvation to us now through the means of grace that are served by the *Gnadenmittelamt* ("the office of the means of grace") that he instituted precisely for the delivery of his gifts.

If all theology is Christology and all Christology is ecclesiology,[13] then all Lutheran theology is centered around the doctrine of the means of grace. The maxim *ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia* ["where Christ is, there is the church"] of Ignatius of Antioch (Smyr. 8:2) captures the fact that where Christ is delivering his gifts, where the distribution of the means of grace is

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[11] Cf. Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966).

[12] Norman E. Nagel, "Confessional Communion: Altar and Church," in *Inter-Christian Relationships* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1994), 39–40.

[13] These two theological statements can be considered to be self-evident. From among my colleagues, an example of someone who stresses "all theology is Christology" is David Scaer. An example of someone who emphasizes that "all Christology is ecclesiology" is William Weinrich.

going on, there the church is (AC VII). As in any article of the faith, what Jesus says is of primary importance and the point of departure. The *satis est* ["it is enough"] of Augsburg Confession VII "defends us against the demand for something more than the dominicals, what our Lord has mandated and instituted, what he says, does, and gives."[14] Only what our Lord says and does is sure and certain. Of this faith speaks with completeness and aloneness of the Lord's dealing with us. *Satis est* may not be interpreted as Gospel minimalism, as if to pit the gospel and the sacraments against any other doctrine or practice in the church. Rather, *satis est* places the dominicals against whatever the church has added in the course of her history. Luther was right when he observed that "doctrine must be one eternal and round golden circle, in which there is no crack; if even the tiniest crack appears, the circle is no longer perfect."[15] The doctrine of church fellowship is a means-of-grace doctrine. Likewise, the doctrine of the office of the holy ministry is a means-of-grace doctrine. Since both are mandated by the Lord Jesus, we are not given to confess them in a qualified or fractioned way. What our Lord has achieved on the cross, the means through which he delivers his gifts, the instruments he uses for the distribution, and the κοινωνία that results among those who have received the common gifts; we are not given to confess all of them in terms short of what our Lord would have us confess. "As always problems arise when there is a refusal of the gift the Lord is giving."[16]

III. The Genesis of the Question of Women's Ordination in the NRK

The discussion concerning the ordination of women in the NRK began in 1970 when one of her congregations (Bibai St. John Lutheran Church) petitioned the NRK's Executive Committee to issue an official protest against the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) for ordaining a woman.[17] The JELC's decision was deemed offensive because the NRK had

[14] Nagel, "Confessional Communion," 43.

[15] Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians" (1535), *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986), 27:38.

[16] Nagel, "Confessional Communion," 41.

[17] See the Common Statement of the NRK and the LCMS concerning women's ordination in *Kyokai Dayori* [Japan Lutheran Church Monthly Newsletter] 547 (December 2010): 11. The JELC's decision to ordain women into the pastoral office coincides with the American Lutheran Church's (ALC) formal approval of the same at its national convention in 1970. That same convention also adopted a policy on "Sex, Marriage, and Family," which stated that homosexuality was not considered a sin and

entered into pulpit and altar fellowship with the JELC in 1966. The two church bodies had reached an agreement that same year to train their pastors jointly at the seminary in Tokyo.

The JELC comprises two-thirds of the Lutheran population in Japan. It is the oldest Lutheran church body in Japan (1898), which began in 1892 as a mission of the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South (USELC), a predecessor body of the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) and later the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). The LCMS had a plan to send its first missionary to Japan in 1895, but for reasons unknown to this author, Shigetaro Mizuno, a Japanese-American graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, then in Springfield, was never called and sent.[18] It was only after World War II that the LCMS, along with other Lutheran churches, began to send missionaries to Japan (the LCMS in 1948), resulting in the formation of the NRK in 1968.

IV. The NRK and the JELC in the History of Christianity in Japan

In order to understand better the context of church fellowship between the NRK and the JELC, it is important to review briefly the history of Christianity in Japan, a history that can be divided into three periods: 1) the arrival of Jesuit missionaries who worked in Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; 2) the Meiji Restoration of 1868 to the end of World War II; and 3) post-World War II. Within these divisions, the origin of the JELC falls in the second period, when a large number of Protestant missionaries came to Japan from the United States. The history of the NRK belongs in the third period, when another large wave of missionaries arrived immediately after the war.

During the first phase, Francisco de Xavier (1506–1552) and his followers gained more than 750,000 members within a half century, taking advantage of the political and economic relationship between Portugal and Japan. However, once the new Shogun government reunited the country

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also allowed for "a woman or a couple" to "decide responsibly to seek an abortion." See Board of Social Ministry, Lutheran Church in America, *Social Statements of the LCA* (1970), as cited by Robert Preus in "Fellowship Reconsidered: An Assessment of Fellowship between the LCMS and the ALC in the Light of Past, Present and Future," in *Doctrine Is Life: The Essays of Robert D. Preus on Justification and the Lutheran Confessions*, ed. Klemet I. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 324–325.

[18] Arthur H. Strege, *The Japan Mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 1948–1953*, trans. The Committee on Historical Compilation of The Japan Lutheran Church (Tokyo: The Japan Lutheran Church, 1992), 9.

after a long period of civil war, Christians suffered severe persecution, similar to that of the early church. Many were martyred; others were burned at the stake and even crucified. Buddhism and Shintoism joined hands for the purpose of expelling Christianity from the land. The Shogun government issued a series of new laws to make certain that no one in Japan would remain Christian. As a result, during the period of a national isolation policy from 1633 to 1854, Japan was not only non-Christian but an unwaveringly anti-Christian nation. While the anti-Christian laws were banned in 1873, the culture and worldview of most Japanese people have, nevertheless, remained hostile to the Christian faith to this day. Thus, Christianity suffers from a combination of the results of this historical background and from the secularism, materialism, and post-modernism common to all developed countries.[19]

During the second phase, which followed the Meiji Restoration, three characteristic groups emerged in Japan. In 1872, Masahiro Uemura (1857–1925) formed Nippon Kirisuto Kokai (The Ecumenical Church of Christ in Japan) in Yokohama as the first Protestant congregation in Japan. As the name of the congregation indicates, this group downplayed doctrinal differences in favor of a broad-minded ecumenism, reflecting theological attitudes of the missionaries from New England Congregational Puritanism, Presbyterian Calvinism, and Methodism. In 1886, Danjo Ebina (1857–1937) established Nippon Kumiai Kyokai (the Congregational Church in Japan) in Kumamoto and Kyoto, teaching the biblical criticism of the Tübingen school that was introduced by missionaries of the *Allgemeiner evangelisch-protestantischer Missionsverein*. Finally, in the early 1900s, Kanzo Uchimura (1861–1930) founded the Non-Church Movement in Sapporo, placing greater emphasis on the Bible in a neo-orthodox manner.[20]

Throughout the second and the third phases, the churches in Japan continued to absorb the theological currents of the day. On the one hand, the rise of nationalism during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 and

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[19] Concerning the history of Christianity in Japan, see Arimichi Ebihara and Saburo Ohuchi, *Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi* [The History of Christianity in Japan] (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1980); Akio Doi, *Nihon Purotesutanto Kirisutokyoshi* [The History of Protestant Christianity in Japan] (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisutokyodan Shuppansha, 1970); Kazuo Shono, *Nihon Kirisutokyoshiwo Yomu* [Reading the History of Christianity in Japan] (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1997); and Hiroko Unuma, *Shiryo ni yoru Nihon Kirisutokyoshio* [The History of Christianity in Japan through Historical Documents], 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Seigakuin University Press, 2006).

[20] When the so-called Uemura-Ebina debate on Christology emerged in 1901–1902, it was basically a battle between higher criticism and neo-orthodoxy.

the ecumenism of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 reinforced the direction of theological accommodation and the social gospel. On the other hand, leading theologians of the West left such a strong impact in Japan that an intrinsic Japanese way of doing theology never developed. During the post-war era, the main theological figure in Japan shifted from Ernst Troeltsch to Karl Barth. And from the 1960s to the 1980s, the theologies of Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr became popular.[21] It is notable that in the third period the Lutheran theologian Kazoh Kitamori (1915–1998) was able to criticize the dualism of liberalism and Barthianism alike through his study of Luther.

When the first Lutheran missionaries arrived in Japan in 1892 from the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South, nationalism was rising and liberal theology had just been introduced. In the midst of such an environment, missionaries of the United Synod in the South remained fairly conservative. James Augustin Brown Scherer was one of these missionaries. Having been influenced by Edward Traill Horn, his legacy is a translation into Japanese of Luther's Small Catechism as well as the first twenty-one articles of the Augsburg Confession. Rufus Benton Peery was another brilliant young pastor. Having graduated from the General Synod's Gettysburg seminary, he translated the Common Service into Japanese. Yet another missionary, Charles Lafayette Brown, received his theological training from Mt. Airy, the General Council's seminary in Philadelphia.[22] An interesting figure is Jens Mikael Thøgersen Winther (1874–1970), who came to Japan from the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (UDELC).[23] Having received a pietistic

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[21] Cf. Makito Masaki, "The Use of Luther's Theological Anthropology in Addressing Current Japanese Thought," STM thesis, (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, 1992), 36–62; *A History of Japanese Theology*, ed. and trans. Yasuo Furuya (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997).

[22] Scherer, Peery, and Brown all graduated from Roanoke College.

[23] Jens Mikael Thørgersen Winther (1874–1970) devoted his long life to the missionary work in Japan, serving during the periods of 1898–1921, 1927–1941, and 1950–1970. The Christian influence of his home, and especially of his mother, made a deep impression on him. He said:

> It belongs to my childhood's most pleasant memories that my mother took me on her lap and told me about the Savior in words which were intelligible and had power to warm the child-heart. At this time, too, she caused a desire to rise in my heart which has grown since then. When speaking about the Savior she always sought to make it plain to me that it is a great privilege to be born in a Christian land, where the Gospel is preached and heeded; while so many millions of men still know nothing of the "name whereby we must be saved."

training at Trinity Seminary in Blair, Nebraska, Winther was welcomed by Peery and Brown because they saw "no essential difference" in his theological position.[24]

The JELC seems to have inherited her mother church's practice of church fellowship. The embracement of Winther may be a good illustration. Another example is the merger in 1963 with the Tokai Lutheran Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC, Norwegian), one of the predecessors of the ALC. As Andrew George Voigt has demonstrated, the USELC, which had strived to remain Lutheran, though with a pietistic bent, practiced for the most part the Akron-Galesburg Rule.[25] When the USELC was reunited with the General Synod and the General Council to

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> Still resound in my ears the oft-repeated words, "When you have grown up you must go out to the heathen and tell them about your Jesus." (Rufus Benton Peery, *Lutherans in Japan* [Newberry, S.C.: Lutheran Publication Board of the United Synod, 1900], 86–87)

He had in his mind to become a missionary in the future when he served as a school teacher. Then a request came to him from the Lutheran Missionary Society in West Slesvig, Germany, to go as a missionary to China with one of their men, Frederik Nielsen, who had come home because of ill health and was then returning. Winther accepted it at once and started for China with Nielsen by way of the United States. They stopped to visit Danish missionary friends in the US where the older missionary became sick again. When it became evident that he could not return to China, the mission society then decided to send Winther to Japan. Winther then studied theology at Trinity Seminary in Blair, Nebraska, and under its founder and professor, Peter Sørensen Vig, and was ordained. In Japan, Winther was involved in the foundation of the JELC's theological seminary in Kumamoto (now in Mitaka, Tokyo), while also serving as a parish pastor. Except for a few years when he was back in Denmark, probably for his children's education, Winther continued to serve in Japan until the Second World War when all the missionaries were expelled. Even after his wife died in 1949, he returned to Japan on his own at the age of 76 and taught at Kobe Lutheran Bible Institute and Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary until his death in 1970. He is buried in Kobe. This author has a childhood memory of meeting with him in his 90s. He was a man of character and was exceptionally respected among his students in Kobe. A biography was written about him in Japanese, and a documentary was filmed and broadcast nationwide.

[24] Peery, *Lutherans in Japan*, 89. The accounts of Scherer, Peery, Brown, and Winther are found in this book, 73–90; Christian M. Hermansen, "Danish Mission in Japan—the Beginnings," 79–105; *Ruterugakuin Hyakunen no Rekishi*, ed. Naozumi Etoh and Yoshikazu Tokuzen [One-Hundred-Year History of Lutheran College] (Tokyo: Lutheran College, 2009), 18–32.

[25] A. G. Voigt, "The United Synod in the South," in *The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1923), 175–204.

form the ULCA in 1918, it chose to abide by the Savannah Resolution of 1934, namely, that as long as Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions are upheld, doctrinal consultations and other preliminaries are not necessary for full mutual recognition among Lutherans.

It is striking that the NRK and the JELC declared pulpit and altar fellowship in 1966, three years before the LCMS came into church fellowship with the American Lutheran Church (ALC, 1969–1981). Since the JELC embraces traditions of both the LCA (ULCA and USELC) and the ALC (UDELC and ELC), it comes as no surprise that its church fellowship was practiced either in the spirit of the Savannah Resolution or the policies of the American Lutheran Council (full church fellowship on the basis of "sufficient" unity of doctrine and practice),[26] or both. The question is why the NRK did not carry out its mother church's (i.e., the LCMS) doctrine and practice of church fellowship, which calls for complete agreement in doctrine and practice before establishing church fellowship. One of the reasons must lie in the fact that from the outset the LCMS missionary effort had maintained a working relationship with the JELC. Another important factor is that the NRK had cooperated with the JELC in training its pastors, including sending their students to each other's congregations for field work and vicarage.

It is no wonder that the NRK's confessional fellowship with the LCMS has gradually weakened, especially since 1966, given that their future pastors have been educated at the feet of the JELC faculty, whose higher degrees have been earned at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, Luther Seminary in St. Paul, and The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, now all institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).[27] According to the current academic catalog, exegetical courses are taught on the basis of the higher critical method, and instruction in liturgical courses follows the agenda of the modern liturgical movement from Rome and Canterbury. In addition, there is a marked absence of courses on the Lutheran Confessions, except for one on the Augsburg Confession, which is taught in the historical department. In the ordination liturgy of the NRK, there is no place where the candidate pledges himself to the Old and the New Testaments as the word of God or to all ten

[26] Fred W. Meuser, "Pulpit and Altar Fellowship among Lutherans in America," in *Church in Fellowship: Pulpit and Altar Fellowship Among Lutherans*, ed. Vilmos Vajta (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 6–9.

[27] *Ruterugakuin Hyakunen*, ed. Etoh and Tokuzen, 109. An exchange of faculty has also been taking place between Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary and these seminaries in Chicago, St. Paul, and Philadelphia.

documents contained in the Book of Concord. The expression that is used in the pledge is the vague language of "the confession of the church."[28]

V. The Decision at the Third General Convention of the NRK

At the Third General Convention in 1974, the NRK resolved not to protest publicly against the JELC by accepting the theological opinion of then president Kosaku Nao (1906–96).[29] Nao's argument included the following four points.[30] First, after declaring that the preaching of the gospel is the foremost task of the office of the ministry, he gave an exegetical study of 1 Timothy 2:11–14 and 1 Corinthians 14:33–38. Concerning the first text, Nao explained that Paul was teaching about husband-wife relations within the society of that time. Concerning the second text, he understood that "wives" (which he did not take as "women") should not gossip in the church and that people should wait their turn to prophesy in the meetings for the sake of good order. With these interpretations, Nao concluded that preaching by women is not forbidden. Second, Nao made a judgment that the question of the ordination of women belongs to the "dogmatic category" of *adiaphora* since Scripture does not forbid women to preach. Third, Nao concluded from these two

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[28] The Joint Committee on Liturgy and Agenda of The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and The Japan Lutheran Church, *The Lutheran Church Agenda* (Tokyo: The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1996), 204. The ordination vow in this common liturgy of ordination in the JELC and NRK does not include a pledge to believe and confess the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments to be the inspired word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the three Ecumenical Creeds as faithful testimonies to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, rejecting all the errors which they condemn, and the confessional documents that are contained in the Book of Concord to be a correct exposition of Holy Scripture and correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church *because* they are in accord with the word of God. All the above confessional statements are absent in this ordination liturgy, which simply asks the candidate, "Will you preach the word of God according to the confession of the church and administer the sacraments according to the ordinance of Christ?"

[29] Dr. Nao appears in the history of the LCMS's mission in Japan almost from the very beginning. According to the account of Arthur Strege, it was a trip to Japan taken by Dr. O.H. Schmidt, the executive director of the board of missions of the LCMS, that prepared the way for the first missionary, William Danker, to be sent to Japan. Nao accompanied Schmidt on his trip to various parts of Japan, serving as a translator. See Arthur H. Strege, *The Japan Mission of The LCMS 1948–1953*, 14. Nao, who was ordained in 1942, was a pastor in the JELC until his transfer to the NRK at the end of the decade.

[30] Kosaku Nao, "'Demand for Protest Regarding Ordination of Women' by Bibai St. John Church," JLC 3rd General Convention, Appendix J, Women's Ordination, April 27–29, 1974.

points that there was no reason for the NRK to protest against the JELC because they had ordained a woman into the ministry for the purpose of maintaining good order in their church. And finally, Nao maintained that even though the JELC had approved the ordination of women, pulpit and altar fellowship could continue because church fellowship is retained on the basis of agreement on basic doctrine and not on "absolute uniformity in all matters."

A number of theological issues are involved in Nao's presentation. First, his point of departure was not the mandating words of Jesus on the office of the holy ministry. Lacking in his consideration is how our Lord achieved forgiveness on the cross and how he continues to deliver it through the means of grace and the office that serves them. By starting with the apostle Paul and not our Lord Jesus, the most vital point of the gospel ministry was missing, since Paul was the recipient of the office while Jesus alone is the author, giver, and doer of it.

Second, Nao's study lacked an exhaustive or comprehensive exegesis. Basically, he dealt briefly with only two Pauline passages. He did not take into consideration such important factors as Paul's apostolic authority, the order of creation, the cultural contexts of Ephesus and Corinth, and the liturgical settings of the texts. His approach was a legalistic one, attempting to ascertain whether or not the Scriptures had any rule that prescribed preaching by women.

Third, Nao's presentation did not include any reflection on the enormous contributions women have made in the history of the church in terms of the expansion of the Gospel.[31] He did not interact with the various views of women's ordination in either old or new secondary literature.

Fourth, the document did not indicate any evidence that Nao had seriously considered the question at hand in light of the Lutheran Confessions. It appears that Nao followed the way of the Iowa Synod in the nineteenth century rather than that of Missouri—namely, that only that which the Lutheran Confessions specifically discuss is binding, rather than whatever is revealed by God in the Scripture. There are two allusions to the Book of Concord in Nao's study. One is the notion of *adiaphora*, discussed without reference to the Formula of Concord, Article X. The other is the use of a term from Article VII of the Augsburg Confession.

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[31] Cf. William Weinrich, "Women in the History of the Church: Learned and Holy, But Not Pastors," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1991): 263–79, 512–16.

Concerning Formula of Concord X, the confessors make a distinction between divine and human order, that which was mandated and given by the Lord and that which has been introduced by the church. The latter is to be exercised in Christian freedom in service of the gospel. But good order is not maintained in the church when that which is conceived of as an *adiaphoron* goes against the divine order, such as certain rites and ceremonies that the church had introduced to merit forgiveness of sins. In the case of the ordination of women, then, even if a scholar has come to understand that it is an *adiaphoron*, such a conclusion will not serve the gospel because it undermines both the Lord's mandate of the delivery of the gospel through the apostolic office and the biblical portrait of the relationship between Christ and the church. For the confessors, the maintenance of good order in the church is not the primary reason for the existence of the office of the holy ministry. Rather, as Martin Chemnitz repeatedly taught, the weightiest reason for ordination is that our Lord himself wishes to be there in the office and carries out the ministry himself.[32] To interpret the ordination of women as an *adiaphoron* disrupts the coherent way the Lord has arranged for the delivery of the gospel. To reduce this for the sake of good order confesses the office of the holy ministry to be less than what Christ has instituted it to be for the church.

Concerning the use of Augsburg Confession VII, agreement on *basic* doctrine as the basis for church fellowship is a misuse of this article. Again, such a view is closer to the position of the ALC than that of the LCMS. A similar notion was employed in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in 1999 by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), as well as in the recent document by the same, *From Conflict to Communion* (2013).[33] If ordination is understood as a mere ceremony instituted by men (AC VII 3), then Nao's argument would have support from the *Augustana*.

Fifth, Nao's basic argument looks very similar to the reasoning employed by the ALC in 1970 and the LCA in 1972 in introducing the

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[32] Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 2 vols., trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 2:699, reprinted in *Chemnitz's Works*, vol. 8 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 1315; Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 29–30; Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 4 vols., trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 2:692.

[33] *From Conflict to Communion*, 19, 53.

ordination of women, as David Scaer noted already in 1972.[34] While the LCMS, at its conventions in 1969 and 1971, repeatedly opposed the ordination of women as doctrinally contrary to the Scriptures, the ALC's booklet *The Ordination of Women* (1970) concluded that there was nothing in Scripture commanding nor forbidding the ordination of women.[35]

Why the LCMS mission board at that time appears to have raised no concerns about its sister church's conclusion is a good question. Perhaps it had to do with the state of theological education at the LCMS's own seminaries in the 1960s. The establishment of church fellowship with the ALC in 1969 may have affected it also. That the LCMS stayed in church fellowship with the NRK when the NRK launched church fellowship with the JELC in 1966, and even after the LCMS-ALC church fellowship ended in 1981, indicates the LCMS's theological inconsistency.

Why the NRK decided to follow, practically speaking, only one man's theological opinion for such a crucial matter is puzzling. Nao's distinguished stature as one of the founding fathers of the NRK, a nationally recognized Hebrew scholar, and the holder of the presidency at the time likely affected the NRK's decision. It is notable, however, that Nao had received his basic Lutheran education from ALC and LCA seminaries (Pacific, Philadelphia) and that he was an ordained clergyman in the JELC before becoming a pastor in the NRK. He must have been well aware of what was going on in the ALC and LCA, especially of their discussions on the ordination of women around 1970. It is quite possible that he was sympathetic to the communion to which he had once belonged.

VI. The Repeated Proposal at the NRK's General Convention (2002–2014)

As of 1974, the NRK's all-but-official position was in favor of the ordination of women.[36] Since there were no female seminary students, they

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[34] David P. Scaer, "May Women Be Ordained as Pastors?" *Springfielder* 36 (September 1972): 92. Cf. Robert D. Preus, "Fellowship Reconsidered," in *Doctrine Is Life*, 324–326.

[35] Raymond Tiemeyer, *The Ordination of Women: A Report Distributed by Authorization of the Church Body Presidents as Contribution to Further Study, Based on Materials Produced through the Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 49. It appears that Nao used this document as the main source of his argument. His interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11–14 and 1 Cor 14:33–38 agrees with John Reumann's interpretation presented in this booklet (11–15).

[36] This means that as of 1974, twenty-six years after the beginning of LCMS missions in Japan (1948), eight years after full pulpit and altar fellowship was

did not immediately attempt to make a change to the bylaws by deleting the word "male" as a qualification for clergy membership. In 2002, however, things changed. A female member of the Suginami Seishin congregation[37] expressed a desire to become a pastor. Accordingly, the congregation submitted a proposal that year at the Twelfth General Convention to open the door for her future ordination.

At the convention, rather than discussing the theological implications of such a change, the potential damage to the church relations with the LCMS dominated the deliberation. In the end, it was resolved to table the motion until the following convention and, in the meantime, to examine the issue further. Meanwhile, a significant motion submitted by the NRK's executive committee was adopted by the convention, namely, to establish an office of deaconess. This action is notable because the office of deaconess in the NRK is not a lay office but an ordained one. With this resolution, therefore, the NRK had opened the door further for the full pastoral ministry of women.

At the Thirteenth General Convention in 2005, the proposal on the ordination of women was resubmitted by the same congregation. Again, the motion was declined out of concern for the partnership with the LCMS. However, in the following year the female student completed her theological training program. Subsequently, the NRK called her into the newly-established office of deaconess and ordained her to serve at Ohmiya Zion Lutheran Church.

At the Fourteenth General Convention in 2008, this Ohmiya Zion Lutheran Church now submitted the proposal for the bylaw change on the basis of their deaconess's achievements in her service at the congregation.[38] The motion was declined yet again because the NRK administration had

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established between the NRK and the JELC (1966), together with the agreement on cooperation in pastoral education at the joint seminary (1966), and six years after the NRK became a self-governing church body (1968), the NRK was already in favor of the ordination of women. In subsequent years, the NRK became self-supporting (in 1977) and gained associate membership in the Lutheran World Federation (in 1999), in addition to membership in the International Lutheran Council (in 1993).

[37] Rev. Shinri Emoto served as pastor of Suginami Seishin Lutheran Church from 2000 to 2010. He also served as vice president of the NRK (2008–2011) and currently holds the position of general secretary (since 2011).

[38] The ALC's *The Ordination of Women* booklet (1970) also suggested that the authority of the pastoral office is not to be judged according to gender but according to the level of dedicated service of the one who holds the office. *The Ordination of Women*, 18.

not yet held discussions with the LCMS administration concerning the issue.

During the years 2009 and 2010, the NRK finally held official conversations with the LCMS, with leaders of both church bodies meeting four times (February 3–6, 2009, in Hakone; September 8–11, 2009, in St. Louis; February 3–4, 2010, in Yokohama, and August 30–31 in Tokyo). The result of these meetings was not promising when viewed from the perspective of the LCMS since the NRK did not alter its view concerning the ordination of women.[39]

Two things from these conversations are notable. The first is the paper delivered at the second round of discussions by Dr. Masao Shimodate, the former director of the NRK's theological training program and instructor in New Testament at the joint seminary (1993–2008). In his essay, titled "Ministry in the New Testament (mainly in Pauline Theology) with some Views of Women's Activities," Shimodate at once dismissed the distinction between the pastoral office and the priesthood of all believers, making use of such theologians as Eduard Schweizer, Rudolf Sohm, Adolf von Harnack, Ernst Käsemann, and even Krister Stehdahl.[40] His point of departure in understanding the ministry in the New Testament was Paul and not Jesus. Paul's teaching on *diakonia* and *charisma* and the interchangeability of the two are primary for Shimodate. All the baptized are, therefore, "*charisma* bearers" and "*diakonia* performers" at the same time. Both baptized men and women are "office bearers" according to his interpretation of 1 Peter 2:5, 9 and Galatians 3:28.[41] Indeed, the eschatological order of the new creation (1 Cor 14:40) calls for the presence of a man and a women at the altar, both ordained, and with equal dignity.

The evaluation of Nao's opinion of 1974 may similarly apply here to Shimodate's claims: one may observe a faulty starting point, a lack of the mandating words of Jesus, the use of higher criticism as the method of

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[39] See the official common statement after the fourth consultation, published in *Kyokai Dayori* (Japan Lutheran Church Monthly Newsletter), no. 547 (December 2010): 12.

[40] Specific references include Ernst Käsemann, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (Naperville, Ill: Allenson, 1964), 63–94; R. Eduward Schweizer, "Ministry in the Early Church," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992): 835–42; and Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). Tiemeyer, *The Ordination of Women*, cites Krister Stendahl on page 36.

[41] Again, Tiemeyer, *The Ordination of Women*, uses the same New Testament passages on pages 22–23.

study, and the absence of dogmatic, historical, and confessional considerations.[42] Much of Shimodate's argument is also found in the aforementioned booklet, *The Ordination of Women*, which Nao also appears to have used in 1974.[43]

Another notable point from these rounds of talks is the NRK's articulation of the two main reasons for ordaining women. The first is the need for female workers in the church in light of the change in society with regard to women's status[44] and the need for reaching out and caring for women. The second concern is the small size of congregations in the NRK, which can afford only one paid worker.

In the November 2010 issue of *Kyokai Dayori*, a report of the special pastoral conference of the NRK held on November 9, 2010, was published.[45] Having informed the pastors of the result of the four rounds of discussions with the LCMS, the executive committee indicated its determination to move forward with the ordination of women for the sake of the proclamation of the gospel, even at the cost of the discontinuation of church fellowship with the LCMS. The administration also reported that both church bodies desired to remain in cooperative relations in mission and ministry notwithstanding. The opinions of the pastors were divided. Some stated that the NRK should ordain women in light of its church fellowship with the JELC, while others promoted a continued study on the issue. Still others were of the opinion that the NRK should not ordain women because the cost of termination of church fellowship with the LCMS would be too high. In addition, some pastors advocated the *status quo* because a woman already served as a pastor, practically speaking, in the office of deaconess.

At the Fifteenth General Convention in 2011, the proposal for women's ordination was submitted by the executive committee. The convention was once again divided because of the implications for the NRK's relationship with the LCMS. The motion was tabled until the NRK could discuss the

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[42] There are also similarities between the method, sources, and conclusions of those who promote the "everyone a minister" ideal and the proponents of the ordination of women.

[43] See note 35 above.

[44] In Japan, the right of vote was granted to women in 1945, and in 1986 the Equal Employment Opportunity Law was passed in parliament.

[45] *Kyokai Dayori* 546 (November 2010): 5–6.

matter with the LCMS's new administration, specifically with President-elect Matthew Harrison.[46]

VII. Cultural Differences in Church Fellowship?

We have observed the issue of cultural differences and church fellowship through the concrete example of the LCMS's relationship with the NRK. On the surface, the question of the ordination of women appears to be one of survival for the small church body. The demand for the continuation of partnership with the LCMS may be seen in this light. But theologically speaking, the matter goes deeper. Without recognizing it, perhaps, the NRK has adopted the modern mission effort that is characterized by both pietism and the Enlightenment.[47] That the NRK still wishes to join hands with the LCMS in evangelism and missions even after church fellowship is discontinued indicates that for them church fellowship has become a matter of *fides qua creditur* ["the faith by which it is believed"] rather than *fides quae creditur* ["the faith which is believed"].[48]

The cultural intrusion first took place when the virus of the higher critical methods of biblical interpretation invaded the NRK's exegetical task. Scriptural authority was undermined and confessional subscription was impoverished, both of which are evidenced in the current seminary curriculum and ordination liturgy. The cultural invasion also became recognizable when the NRK first articulated a position in favor of the ordination of women by copying the argument of the ALC and the LCA in the early 1970s. The agreement on *basic* doctrine is not at all consensus in all its articles. If there is any consensus between the NRK and the JELC, it is a joint commitment to historical criticism,[49] just as a joint commitment to the modern liturgical movement has resulted in greater consensus on the so-called Eucharist than on the doctrine of the ministry between the LWF and the Roman Catholics, as demonstrated in *From Conflict to Communion*.

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[46] *Kyokai Dayori* 552 (May 2011): 4–5.

[47] Hermann Sasse, "The Question of the Church's Unity on the Mission Field," *Logia* 7 (Holy Trinity 1998): 56–57.

[48] Ronald Feuerhahn, "Church Fellowship," in *Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord: Essays in Honor of Glen Zweck on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday* (Houston: Zweck Festschrift Committee, 2000), 53.

[49] Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, vol. IX, ed. Robert Preus (Fort Wayne: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 89–90.

In the NRK, we have not seen extreme examples of contextualization, such as substituting the phrase "rice of life" in place of "bread of life." But if the basic idea of contextualization is a shift from the Enlightenment way of *applying* certain theories into practice to the post-Constantinian *supremacy* of practice and pragmatism over doctrine, then the change is merely in what comes ahead of the doctrine: philosophy or the social sciences.[50] For a small church body, anything that would help the church grow is welcomed. But in this, again, practice has priority over doctrine. When doctrine is marginalized, the cultural discussion always helps, as for example, when egalitarian culture and society are cited as reasons for ordaining women. The devil always seeks to twist doctrine to accommodate Jesus to the religious and cultural environment. The effort of detaching church fellowship from altar fellowship is the result of making what Jesus says and gives secondary.

In the second century, the Valentinians, Marcionites, Montanists, and orthodox Christians did not say to each other: "for the sake of the church's mission, let us bury our differences." Similarly, in the fourth century, Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites, and Pelagians did not reach an agreement by saying, "so that we can better witness to the world, let us ignore doctrinal differences." Church fellowship is a doctrinal issue and not a cultural one, just as the ordination of women is a doctrinal question and not a cultural or practical one alone. What is true in America is true also in Japan; if the church really does stand and fall with the article of justification, then it stands and falls with this article in Sweden, in Tanzania, in Russia, in Haiti, in America, and in Japan.[51] There is no German, Spanish, English, French, or Japanese gospel. There is no faith that is peculiar to any race or culture. There is only true or false Christian faith. There are only true or false Lutherans. There is one Christ, one Spirit, one Baptism, one Table of the Lord, and one church.

The NRK's consideration of women's ordination has played out in the realm of ethics rather than doctrine. Their foremost concern is the likely break in fellowship with their former mother church, even though the pastors seem to struggle to substantiate their earlier decision on this

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[50] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 420–432.

[51] Hermann Sasse, "The Lutheran Confessions and the Volk," in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters*, vol. 1, trans. Matthew C. Harrison and others (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 128–131.

question.[52] Perhaps it may be helpful, if there is still time, to sit down with our beloved brethren and help them to see that the ordination of women is a doctrinal issue. And if it is a doctrinal issue, then the very gospel is at stake, as each article is interrelated in an organic whole. On the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, we can discuss the relationship between the ordination of women and the doctrine of justification, sanctification, Christology, church, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the ministry, and so on.[53]

At the same time, we should consider at least two important questions. In the first place, we need to understand better the doctrine of church fellowship so that we do not repeat the mistake we made with the NRK. We failed to help them recognize how church fellowship with the JELC would have detrimental consequences. We did not encourage them to reconsider their belief that the ordination of women is merely an *adiaphoron*. In the second place, we should make every effort to unite our doctrine and practice among ourselves.[54] In church relations, it is harmful when the church's confession is inconsistently presented to others. A clear and unified theological message is always called for.

VIII. Conclusion

At the beginning of this essay, we observed Hermann Sasse's thought that church fellowship is broken either by the sin of lovelessness or the intrusion of heresy. Our case indicates that what unites the church is not love but doctrine. Cultural factors are diagnosable as running in the way of the law. Church fellowship lives or wanes by the confession of the gospel, that is, the confession of Christ. We do not unite churches by what we do; rather, only what he gives unites us.

"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor 12:26). We repentantly pray that the Lord may rescue us from the separation of brethren. May the fruit of our missionaries' hard labors in Christ over so long a time ever remain and even

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[52] Cf. Louis A. Smith, "How My Mind Has Changed," in *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, 3rd ed., ed. Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 512.

[53] An enormous assistance may be given by the readings in *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*.

[54] Klaus Detlev Schulz, "Confessional Fellowship as Practiced in Foreign 'Mission' Settings," in *Contemporary Issues in Fellowship: Confessional Principles and Application,* ed. John A. Maxfield (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2004), 109–11.

flourish again! May the Lord ever sustain us in the same gospel and sacraments that we preach and teach!

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The Christian Voice in the Civil Realm

Gifford A. Grobien

In a day when Christendom is fast dissolving, if not already a memory, and in which governments deny the rule of reason, not to mention the divine law, some Christians find themselves yearning for a situation described, many say, by Luther himself: "I would rather be ruled by a wise Turk than by a foolish Christian." That is to say, the faith and confession of one who governs is not as important as his justice and prudence. One problem with this quotation, however, is that Luther never actually wrote it.[1] There is one particular instance where Luther says, "It is said that there is no better temporal rule anywhere than among the Turks. . . . But we must admit that there is no more shameful rule than ours." However, this is an isolated rhetorical device used in his letter *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* in order to emphasize the necessity of the reform of political rule in Germany.[2] When the broader scope of Luther's view of the Ottomans is surveyed, especially in the representative treatise *On War against the Turk*, it becomes apparent that he warns against their rule and urges both prayers and military action for protection against them.[3]

Nevertheless, the appeal of this apocryphal saying raises the question of whether its underlying sentiment has merit. Does the faith of a ruler matter as much as his prudence? Does the failure of our country's Christian heritage to retain significant moral influence even in such basic areas as marriage and the life of the weak and defenseless indicate that Christianity matters less than good moral sense? Approaching these questions confessionally, we recall the Lutheran understanding of political

[1] For a thorough discussion of this apocryphal saying and Luther's view of Islamic rule, based on evidence from his writings, see Gene Veith, "Luther's 'Wise Turk' Quote That He Didn't Say," Cranach: The Blog of Veith, posted August 31, 2012, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/geneveith/2012/08/luthers-wise-turk-quote-that-he-didnt-say/ (accessed January 6, 2013).

[2] See, e.g., Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986), 44:203 (hereafter AE).

[3] AE 46:155–202.

Gifford A. Grobien is Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

government and the Christian's relation to it. Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession affirms lawful civil ordinances and encourages Christians to participate in civic responsibilities. Article XXVIII confesses that church and civil powers should not be mixed. The church is concerned with forgiving sins through preaching and the administration of the sacraments, while the political authority is to make, execute, and judge civil law. These two powers are to be "held in honor and acknowledged as a gift and blessing of God" (AC XXVIII 18). Likewise, in the treatise *Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed*, Luther refers to two governments or kinds of authority, the ecclesial and the civic. The ecclesial government rules over the soul and eternal life, while the civil government rules over temporal matters such as bodily life and property. The authority of ecclesial government is the word of God alone, while the authority of the civil government is the wisdom of the men who hold the office. Strictly speaking, neither Luther nor the Confessions speak of two kingdoms, as though there were different regions or subjects under each authority. Rather, all men are subject to both kinds of authority. Further, the two different kinds of authority are not law and gospel, for both the law and the gospel rule in the church, even though the primary function of the law in the church is different from the law's function in civil government. Thus, all men are subject to both law and gospel under civil and church government. The distinction is that civil authority rules over temporal, bodily matters to enforce outward social order, while church authority rules over the soul and eternal life by calling to repentance, forgiving sins, and bestowing new life in Christ.

Civil authority, according to Luther, is itself to be ruled by an understanding of the law and should exercise this law according to love and wisdom. This is in contrast to rule by force, tyranny, and capriciousness.[4] While one could argue that a wise unbeliever would be a better ruler than a foolish Christian, a ruler is much more likely to be wise if he is a Christian. A truly Christian ruler, at least, would seek to have his understanding enlightened by God, to humble himself, and to use his position to serve and benefit those he governs. And only a Christian truly knows how to love, one of the virtues Luther attributes to a wise ruler.

Luther acknowledges that there are "very few who would also like very much to be Christian princes and lords."[5] Therefore, rather than focusing on hypothetical questions regarding which kinds of public

[4] AE 45:118.

[5] AE 45:118.

servants are better than others, questions of what the church can confess and do in the current political situation in which she finds herself will be addressed here. "Church" here signifies the body gathered around Word and Sacrament whose ministers speak publicly on her behalf. When the church does not speak publicly, regularly, and clearly, society grows ignorant of true Christianity, substituting civil religion for true religion. Moreover, public, regular, and clear speech and activity are not a mixing or usurping of temporal rule, but the church living humbly, charitably, mercifully, and steadfastly as the body of Christ on earth. Christian public speech and action err neither in overstepping the boundary of the church nor in timidly doing too little; rather, such speech and action are the proper vocation of the church on earth. From the setting of the congregation and perspective of the church, the most important question is not how to find the best politicians and promulgate the best laws in an attempt to improve society, but how the church is to speak clearly and act faithfully, whether or not these words and actions garner sympathy from the political community.

I. Religion in the Context of Political Liberalism

The contemporary American, liberal political system differs greatly from Luther's context. Understanding the unique factors of political liberalism and their relation to religious expression helps one to understand the role of the church in this context. The term *liberalism* does not mean the more liberal people of a society or political spectrum, or parties with the name "Liberal"; it refers instead to the political philosophy or perspective that claims to value liberty and fundamental civic rights and freedoms. Because of the importance of individual freedom, rational discourse, in order to share the ideas of free individuals, is also highly valued within liberalism. Among secular liberals, a corollary to the primacy of rational discourse is the claim that religious discourse is problematic in the public square. Religious discourse is not rational but based on faith in revelation and is, therefore, inaccessible to those outside of the faith. In this view, religious claims should not be determinative in making civil law or public policy. Religious voices need not be excluded or suppressed from the public square, so long as they do not impinge on others' "essential constitutional liberties."[6] Yet, in circumstances where policies and law are

[6] John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," in *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 611, quoted in Rupert J. Read, "Religion as Sedition: On Liberalism's Intolerance of Real Religion," *Ars disputandi* 11 (2011): 86.

being established, only claims grounded by reason should be admissible. Religious points of view that can be translated from religious language to secular, rational language would be acceptable. These views would not be limited by the language of revelation or by religious rituals but would have appeal beyond their religious context to those using mere reason. Such appeal gives them force in the public square and soundness for public policy. A translation from faith to reason requires religious people to "cultivate the epistemic virtue to reflect on their religious conviction from an outside point of view and . . . to express it through a secular vocabulary."[7] Alternatively, religious adherents may even express their views in religious language by assuming a forthcoming translation, that is, that somewhere along the line their views will be translated to secular terms, even if this translation is done by someone else.

Christians confess that all truth comes from God, whether through reason or revelation, so that reason and revelation are not in conflict with each other. If this is the case, one could argue that the demand for translation is acceptable.[8] Yet there are at least two challenges to this view. First, while reason properly exercised does not contradict revelation, reason is rarely exercised properly. Reason injured by sin is not always able or willing to discern or receive truth; neither is it always willing to accept truth presented in revelation. Thus, because of the fallen nature of reason and the recalcitrance of human beings to refuse to recognize their fallen reason, the truth of reason and revelation often appears to be varied. Furthermore, knowledge obtained through reason is shrouded by sin and thereby fragmented and wrong in some ways. In spite of the agreement of truth in revelation and reason, there remains the difficulty of demonstrating the rationality of religion to the world. This difficulty is the fundamental stumbling block to the reception of religious claims in the public square.[9]

Second, by demanding that religious claims be translated to the language of public reason, political liberalism is implicitly demanding that religion conform to its standards. Liberalism presumes superiority. It recognizes no distinct value in the revelatory, dogmatic, spiritual, or ethical claims of religion. Religion is reduced to ceremonies and rituals that

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[7] Bernd Irlenborn, "Religion in the Public Sphere: Habermas on the Role of Christian Faith," *Heythrop Journal* 55, no. 3 (2012): 434.

[8] Irlenborn, "Religion in the Public Sphere," 435.

[9] Irlenborn, "Religion in the Public Sphere," 438.

have no meaning and that cannot be discerned or attained through reason.[10]

There is a further challenge in liberal political systems. Constitutional structures tend to dull the distinct voices of various groups. Toleration, generally accepted as a good political practice, encourages the multiplication of interest groups. In order to produce new legislation and public agreement of policies, these many groups must work toward various compromises. The compromises, however, work against the unique voice of each group. In a liberal system, groups are not coerced into accepting views contrary to their values, but refusal to compromise typically results in marginalization. In order to have some voice, even if it is a tempered one, the distinct views of various groups are sidelined in the name of progress.[11] Indeed, some supporters of the liberal political model encourage the participation of fundamentalist and extreme groups in the mainstream conversations and processes of society because it tends to temper their views. Congress itself, as holding the legislative power, "molds the activity of religious leaders and does so in a way that makes their lobby efforts more broadly palatable."[12] Thus, a liberal system, especially one that demands translation of religious language, leads either to compromise or to marginalization.

II. The Religious Character of the State

Modern political liberalism, furthermore, reveals itself to be a kind of "secular fundamentalism," a religion of sorts.[13] Ideally, we imagine in the modern liberal state that the government serves the people by exercising political authority on its behalf. The government serves at the will of the people. In practice, modern states develop institutions and a corresponding identity that are distinct from the people. Even if the government claims an attitude of benevolence, the governmental and social institutions that grow up in liberal, bureaucratic states reduce the government's accountability toward the people. A distinction between the people and the state opens up.

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[10] Read, "Religion as Sedition," 87.

[11] Michael Edwin Bailey, "The Wisdom of Serpents: Why Religious Groups Use Secular Language," *Journal of Church and State* 44, no. 2 (2002): 267.

[12] Allen D. Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 158, cited in Bailey, "The Wisdom of Serpents," 268.

[13] Read, "Religion as Sedition," 93.

In such situations, the state depends on loyal citizens in order to perpetuate its authority. State authority still derives from the people, not because the government stands in the stead of the people and serves them, but because the state has garnered a sufficient loyalty from the people to execute certain policies and agendas. "[T]he state depends on the loyalties of its citizens in order to continue to exercise the authority it claims over them."[14] In order to encourage and retain these loyalties, states support practices—even rituals—that form citizens toward state loyalty. Formation is the cultivation of qualities that aim at certain goods and that are cultivated by practices that pursue these goods.[15] Patriotic practices such as reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, singing the national anthem, flying flags, and reciting the stories of patriotic heroes like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are parts of a nationally formative liturgy.[16] Many of these patriotic rituals are not ancient practices but originated in the nineteenth century in an attempt to develop the national identity of people over and against local and concrete identities (e.g., ethnic, religious, economic, or regional).[17] Contemporary news contributes to a national grand narrative, highlighting those events that loyal citizens should deem important.[18] Such narratives, rituals, and practices form the people with the kind of habits and imagination that are loyal to the state. "The character formation the state enacts, therefore, is oriented towards the privileging of state ends."[19]

Practices formative for identifying with the state try to mimic certain aspects of formation along ethnic, economic, or religious identities, yet there are important differences. These latter, concrete identities nurture what we might call traditional goods: marriage and procreation, occupations that contribute to others in a community, the organized self-defense of a people, practical education, and reconciliation with God in Christ. In traditional societies, government also supported such goods, yet

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[14] Craig Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist: Christian Formation against the State," *Political Theology* 12, no. 1 (2011): 50.

[15] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 52.

[16] William T. Cavanaugh, "The Liturgies of Church and State," in *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 116.

[17] Eric Hobsbawn, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 10–12.

[18] Cavanaugh, "The Liturgies of Church and State," 117.

[19] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 50.

in modern liberal states, national goods are becoming increasingly abstract and idealized. Liberty and justice in eighteenth-century America meant, among other things, the right to own property, the right to work to develop wealth, and the right to equal justice under the rule of law—an existential justice that would be experienced before a jury. Even when these rights were not extended to all, or were violated, they were meaningful—for the farmer who could own land, the artisan who could sell his craft, the minuteman who could own and carry a firearm, and the citizen whose voice and vote had impact.

What, however, is the meaning of liberty and justice today? Certainly the concrete aspects have not yet been lost. Americans own land, buy and sell, own firearms, and vote, but the concepts of rights are increasingly distanced from daily life. Liberty and justice are part of a rhetoric of the ideas of liberty and justice. They refer not just to property or equal protection under the law, but to the liberation of other nations, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, to a freedom of any sort of expression, even if such expression is deviant action, and to the implied immunity of the American state from critique. Finally, liberty and justice mean different things to different people, and each person, when he hears these terms, begins to fill them in with what he conceives to be their meaning. Less and less are they connected with common, concrete realities of economy, defense, and ordered political rights.

If the state is successful at abstracting political goods, it immunizes itself from particular forms of life that people may take; it places itself beyond the criticism of smaller communities that would be oriented around local, parochial social goods, such as property, guns, independent occupations, and particular kinds of education.[20] Thus, the successful abstraction of political goods undermines, makes obsolete, or dissolves these concrete community goods.

On the surface, however, it appears that the opposite is true. The state claims that all people have rights and may pursue them, and that it will not interfere with these rights. In reality, the state supplies and enforces the "forum in which these competing rights and interests are negotiated."[21] As a referee of the debate over goods, the state increasingly determines that no particular conception of goods is permitted to dominate or win out over other conceptions. The state actually works against a clear answer to the questions over what is good in order to maintain a public atmosphere

[20] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 52.

[21] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 52.

of unlimited expression. Thus, the public sphere is an arena for perpetual debate, not a forum for reaching conclusions about what is good. People and social institutions are encouraged to pursue their particular goods privately, but conclusions over concrete goods are excluded on the grounds that they restrict the freedoms of others.[22]

If the state is actively working against the articulation of and establishment of particular, concrete goods, and instead encouraging the perpetuation of discussion and disagreement, the state is supporting a shell of goodness rather than good itself. This formal good promoted by the state Craig Hovey labels "independent moral freedom."[23] Freedom of choice is greater than actually making a choice. That is, the potential for greatest possibility is valued more than actually choosing a direction, a choice which by nature excludes other options. In this way, dissent in the modern state is valued because it verifies and validates the state's claim that individual freedom is the one public good. Dissenters are upheld as modeling this good of the state, yet the content of their proposals may be downplayed or ignored. In fact, the call of the dissenters can never be acknowledged as a true good because this would limit the possibilities of freedom available to the public by closing off these possibilities in favor of one or another good.[24] Hovey writes, "Liberalism can tolerate religions only if they either strip themselves of 'intrinsic' aspects (i.e., are no longer truly a way of life, and are therefore in the end of no deep significance for their practitioners), or if their 'intrinsic' aspects are basically unthreatening to liberalism. . . ."[25] Thus, modern states form citizens to pursue their goods privately by claiming that they do not form citizens toward goods but merely referee the right to pursue their goods privately. State institutions maintain their authority by "guarding against competing notions of good and value in the public domain."[26]

Therefore, the state's control of public debate and rationality has elevated the abstract concept of independent freedom to the highest good, while practically limiting the place of other goods in the public conversation. Freedom as an abstraction really means freedom as "indeterminable,"

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[22] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 53.

[23] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 54–55.

[24] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 55–56.

[25] Read, "Religion as Sedition," 92.

[26] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 53.

except to each individual.[27] Freedom has taken precedence over goodness, for freedom has become undefined, while goodness is determined by the passions and proclivities of individuals unbounded by moral conversation. Such freedom of choice dominates not only in politics and economics but also in religion, so that the truth about God is also avoided in favor of the concept of "god." The concept "god" is then defined by each person; god becomes what each person makes or conceives one's god to be. God becomes a mere symbol, used in the public square and in political contexts, but only to have the definition of god filled in by each person who hears the term. Thus everyone can be satisfied, for the god honored by the government appears to be god as each person conceives of him in his heart. By forbidding the definition of god, the state approves of all definitions except those that would actually confess a God to whom people are accountable.[28] The self-idolatry of this situation is evident.

There is still a further threat of idolatry residing in the state itself. A truly just and free country requires more than just majority rule. It also includes affirmation of human rights, constitutionally determined limits on state power, equal protection under the law, independent courts, free press, educated citizens, a vital, independent private sector of society, the tolerance of loyal opposition, and the like. Some of these, such as human rights, appeal to a different authority than the government, such as natural law or God. Different authorities also demand distinct institutions, such as the church, family, or even workers clubs or social clubs. Without these kinds of institutions independent from the state, without a structured place for appeal external to the state, there is only tyrannical statism. The state becomes the only power structure. With the reduction of authority to one institution, the state, a society becomes inherently intolerant, excluding all points of view that challenge, conflict with, or oppose the state position.[29]

In excluding other institutions, whether local, social, religious, or occupational, the state assumes the roles of these other institutions. The greatest threat is when the state replaces religious life, for the undefined god-concept is filled by the state and its actions. In the United States, this is complicated by the heritage of American exceptionalism: the national perception that the United States has a unique moral, political, and eco-

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[27] William T. Cavanaugh, "Messianic Nation," in *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 92–93.

[28] Cavanaugh, "Messianic Nation," 93.

[29] D.A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 149–153.

nomic status among all countries to exemplify and promote the free and democratic society. America's economic strength, unparalleled military power, and successful political institutions—both domestically and in comparison with other countries—lead many Americans to accept these systems with little criticism or question. Furthermore, the United States actively promotes and asserts its ways abroad. While few acknowledge as much, this attitude and these actions assume a god-like character of superiority, extension, and immunity from judgment by other points of view. In spite of rhetoric that acknowledges freedom of worship, the American experience demonstrates "the taking over of the omnipotence and omniscience of God by the political authority." Rhetorically, the undefined god is whoever (or whatever) one wants it to be. Pragmatically, the undefined god is redefined as the state.[30]

The result is the American civil religion that ritualizes and idealizes the American state. Yet it is a state that is not truly political in the sense of being a community of citizens, for it fails to nurture concrete goods oriented around daily life. It is a state that has made itself the god of a religion by making transcendent its core value: independent freedom, by which its citizens are free to pursue whatever things give them pleasure and to worship whatever god they desire, so long as this god corresponds to the omniscient, omni-competent, and all-determining state. This god of the state comes complete with its own liturgy of allegiance, anthems, symbols, and prayers.

III. The "Two Kingdoms" Revisited

The call for the church, then, is not that she be subsumed into the idolatry of the state, but that she call it to account. Robert Benne suggests rejuvenating the doctrine of the two kinds of authority in order to activate Christian participation in politics. He reminds us that the underlying concern addressed by the doctrine is that the world not be mistakenly ruled by the gospel, and that the gospel not be confused with the law in ruling the church.[31] It does not mean that religious views may not be expressed or used as reasons in the public square. He encourages Christians to know that their political concerns are not so out of touch that Christians would immediately be removed from office simply for expressing their views, or

[30] Cavanaugh, "Messianic Nation," 94–96.

[31] Robert Benne, "How Should Religious Convictions be Expressed in Political Life?," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 51, no. 2 (2012): 106.

that their policies could have no appeal, or that they can have no influence in politics.[32]

Benne further warns against what he calls "straight-line thinking" from theological convictions to uncompromising political policies. To expect to impose the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount, replete with debt forgiveness, pacifism, and widespread socio-economic benefit plans, as a political policy is naïve and unloving. He notes that there are equally straight-line thinking policies on the right: policies to prohibit abortion, issue education vouchers, and strengthen the military.[33] This disagreement among Christians indicates to Benne that political ideology dominates faith, with religion merely being co-opted for political purposes.[34]

To avoid such co-opting, Benne advocates what he calls "critical engagement." He emphasizes that Christians and non-Christians should work more deliberately in using reason and experience to transition from theological or philosophical convictions to public policies.[35] In this move from core convictions to policies, Christians may come to different conclusions due to their varying capacities for prudential judgment, genetic inclinations, integrity, ordering of values, psychological states and convictions, predispositions to certain policy agendas, and situations.[36] These differences should be respected and used as opportunities for further discussion, not division.

Furthermore, Benne argues, Christians should bring to bear in their political vocations the "moral and intellectual" tradition of Christianity, as well as a character renewed by Christ. Christians have greater insight into the world than non-Christians because they have more than reason and experience upon which to reflect; they also have the revelation of Scripture and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.[37] This does not mean that Christian revelation and convictions should be implemented in a straight-line fashion, but that Christian truth should be presented for critical reflection by those engaged in policy-making.

What Benne suggests fits well into political philosophical arguments that are respectful of religion, even while wanting religious claims to be

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[32] Benne, "Religious Convictions in Political Life," 106.

[33] Benne, "Religious Convictions in Political Life," 107–108.

[34] Benne, "Religious Convictions in Political Life," 108.

[35] Benne, "Religious Convictions in Political Life," 108.

[36] Benne, "Religious Convictions in Political Life," 109.

[37] Benne, "Religious Convictions in Political Life," 109–110.

made in a way that is accessible to reason. These views often call for sustained, deliberate, reflective dialogue in the pluralistic public square. Yet Benne does not address the underlying problem: he suggests nothing to mitigate the hegemony of the state. While compromise is the way of temporal politics, state-managed public debates that marginalize the church's voice tempt the church to change her voice. The voice of reason and policy described by Benne risks overshadowing the voice of truth.

IV. The Church as Divine Ordinance

This public-private divide imposed upon religion by the state should be challenged by the church. The church should speak and act like the church as her first priority and be less concerned with how the public receives this voice. One of the ways the church does this is by nurturing her communal identity apart from the state or political authority. As noted above, modern identity that is heavily influenced by the private-public split tends to see only two universal social units: the individual and the state. Yet this conception of society overlooks the ordered communities into which God has placed human beings: besides the political community, there is also the church and the household, which itself may be subdivided into family and economy. One may recognize these ordered communities as what Luther called the three estates or orders.[38] Bonhoeffer referred to them as "mandates" in order to emphasize their dynamic nature over against those who abused this teaching by justifying "the static elements of order" per se rather than the divine authority behind the orders.[39] In the theology of the divine orders, human sociality is not reduced to the individual and the state but exists as church, as family and economy, and as political society. Note here especially that political society does not require the modern conception of the encompassing, bureaucratic state, but rather authority that restrains and inflicts temporal punishment upon outward wickedness and that supports the common good.

Thus, a community of people consists not only of individuals in relation to the state but of people relating to each other in and through the orders of church, family, work, and government. One order does not have priority or primacy over the others, nor is one or more of the orders optional. Each exists according to God's command in this world; each exercises authority in a certain way and in mutual relation with the other. The church proclaims the revelation of God and offers to all men the

[38] AE 38:364–365; cf. AC XVI.

[39] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Clifford Green (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 389.

means of salvation in Christ. Even from a more political perspective, religion gives meaning to life that secular philosophy is no longer able to give, especially in the face of "contemporary existential and social pathologies."[40] In the family, a man and woman are joined as one flesh and normally bring forth offspring to be raised and educated under the authority of the father. In work, people possess and labor with the matter and produce of creation in order to provide particular goods for others. And in government, the wicked are punished, and the church, family, and work are regulated to serve the common good. Again, no one order may usurp the authority of another without forsaking its own authority. Each order has a unique, indispensable role to play in the world.

One way to understand the unique authority and contribution of the orders is to borrow from political philosopher Jeffrey Stout's conception of social practices. Although his understanding of "social practice" may be transient and has no mandate underlying its permanence, it compares in significant ways with the divine orders or mandates. For him, a social practice is a cooperative activity that produces goods for the participants and that forms the participants to appreciate the goods and to improve in their ability to achieve the goods. Striving according to the practice's standards of excellence develops both understanding of the purposes of the activity and human powers to achieve the standards. Social practices reveal the goods valued by practitioners and the accompanying virtues exercised by these practices that are needed to attain the goods. Social practices often bring forth institutions that recognize, define, and formalize the standards of excellence and goods of a practice.[41] For example, the social practice or divine mandate of work has all sorts of institutions that are founded to support different occupations, improve skills and temperaments suitable for the occupation, and to better achieve the fruits of labor. Such institutions include schools, employment, certifications, quality control, labor unions, companies and corporations, and so forth. Marriage and family are their own institution, which causes people to realize and to appreciate the goods of human love and service and leads to the procreation and education of children. The goods of the church include knowledge of the divine word, the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and growth in good works, all of which are institutionalized in the liturgies, classes, associations and reconciled relationships of the church.

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[40] Irlenborn, "Religion in the Public Sphere," 435.

[41] Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals and their Discontents* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 274. Cf. Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 187.

It is important that the institutionalization of the divine mandates help to develop not only the attainment of goods but their appreciation. Untutored little children appreciate very little the benefit of sacrificial love and service for others. But as they spend months and years in a family, experiencing the benefits of mutual love and being taught to act in love, they begin to appreciate and embrace the practices of love and service. Newlyweds may have a deep sense of the good of sacrificial love, but they experience it and appreciate it in a new and deeper way through the one-flesh union of marriage.

Because the attainment and appreciation of goods is connected to certain practices and institutions, the preservation of goods requires the preservation of corresponding practices and institutions. The good of forgiveness and eternal life does not remain outside of the church. Creativity and production, as well as associated virtues such as industry, self-discipline, and patience, would be greatly weakened without work. And an appreciation for life (as presented in little children) and longsuffering love for others would be severely injured without marriage and family.

V. The Public Church

The church, therefore, is not just one voice among many in a secular political system. It is not a group for social activism. The church is its own distinct community and order alongside of and in partnership with the temporal political community. The church is not private, even when it gathers as two or three in a home or in the catacombs. Because the church is public, it cannot be coerced out of the public realm; rather, it engages with others in the public realm, even those who are not part of the church.[42] We can even understand the church as having political form, not exercising the temporal authority of the government, but as a gathering of members into a communal body—the body of Christ. "Christian living cannot simply be written off as dissent within a framework that works to enlist dissent in underwriting the state's superiority."[43] Even if the church is dismissed, excluded, or persecuted by the state, the church must recognize that "its polity does not exist *primarily* to dismantle the state or oppose state formation but it exists first to serve its own stated ends."[44]

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[42] Steven Kettell, "On the Public Discourse of Religion: An Analysis of Christianity in the United Kingdom," *Politics And Religion* 2, no. 3 (2009): 426.

[43] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 65.

[44] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 65.

The end or purpose of the church militant is to be a people in this world gathered around Word and Sacrament, forgiven of sin, reconciled to God, and sanctified for good works. The church has practices that form members toward these purposes. Theologically, we understand that these are more than just practices; these practices are means of grace, means of salvation, means of sanctification. Some of these practices or means are: gathering around, preaching, and listening in faith to the Word of Christ; receiving Holy Baptism; communing in the body and blood of Christ; confessing sin and receiving absolution; and exerting oneself in holiness in order to love and to serve others. By being formed in the church, "Christians . . . positively resist being formed by the state."[45] This may mean greater and greater marginalization. Faithful Christian living may lead to political change, or it may not. The book of Revelation suggests that faithfulness often will lead not to political change but to marginalization. Yet, when the church recalls that she is to confess and act faithfully, and not ultimately to bring political change, she will be ready not only for marginalization but for martyrdom.

Martyrdom signals the impotence, not of the church, but of the state. Whatever it may threaten, in the end, the state can only kill the body. Yet, it cannot even take away the body. The martyred Christian still has his body for the resurrection; he still has life in Christ. Martyrdom reveals the people of the church to be formed differently from the state, in direct opposition to the claim that only the state can form people. Martyrs reveal the empty violence of the state and the people of the eternal kingdom.[46]

There is yet a fight to be made in the temporal kingdom. There may be periodic political improvements, and the church should not shirk from seeking these within the context of faithful confession and faithful action. Since January 1, 2014, for example, the doctor who has performed surgical abortions in Fort Wayne in recent years is no longer permitted to carry on his gruesome trade since no local physician is willing to extend hospital privileges for his patients—a requirement recently enacted in Allen County.[47] We thank God and the steadfastness of faithful Christians who have brought this about. Such fruit comes from faithfulness, from an unwillingness to compromise, and from an unwillingness to be co-opted as an approved dissenter in the system of state idolatry. Such faithfulness, at

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[45] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 65.

[46] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 67.

[47] As of this printing, the situation is unchanged. Allen County remains free of surgical abortion providers.

times, even means being willing to translate the language of faith into the language of reason. Yet this is done rightly only when the translation does not attenuate the meaning. Such faithfulness may even mean that Christian politicians in the act of legislating may need to compromise with their secular counterparts. Yet such compromise should never be presented or understood as satisfactory to the church.

Such faithfulness is formed by a life centered in the congregation, living in and from the divine service, and being faced by others with true needs to whom we humble ourselves in true service. Such faithfulness more often than not suffers dismissal, exclusion, and marginalization at the hands of secular society, for Christians forsake the celebration of individual freedom of choice—the secular good imposed by the state—giving up the so-called freedom of possibility in order to live in the certainty of Jesus Christ.[48] When the church disregards state goals, when it refuses to be co-opted into the state enforcement of so-called rights, even in dissent, it actually embodies a "formation impossible even for states."[49]

In this way the church lives in the world. Thanks be to God when a faithful Christian serves in political office. Thanks be to God when a wise man serves in political office. How much better it is when the man is both wise and a Christian. Yet whether or not such a situation occurs, the church is ordered to live and remain until the end of this world, standing in relation to the government but never being subsumed into government; speaking the truth to the government and never compromising her voice for political gain; and acting in humble service toward all men, whether that is in harmony with the state or whether it leads to a martyr's death.

[48] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 65.

[49] Hovey, "Neither Cyclops nor Sophist," 66.

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Lutheran Clichés as Theological Substitutes

David P. Scaer

For some time I wrestled over whether this paper should be called "Lutheran Clichés as Theological Substitutes" or "Lutheran Distinctives as Theological Substitutes. This topic came to mind from attending meetings and hearing phrases that often appeared to be little more than a rehearsing of clichés pretending to be theology. Clichés have value. Use the proper one and membership in the guild is assured. It starts at the seminary as students take over the language of their instructors without really knowing what it means.

Like Jesus, the church has both divine and human natures. We believe in the church, as the creed says. Its divine origin and essence are revealed, not seen. A church's human side can be seen in its congregations, districts, and synods, which can be analyzed. One congregation or synod is not like another. Each has its own personality. A pastor leaving his first assignment for another soon learns that each congregation has its own DNA. A church's boundaries are set by commonly held beliefs, but its external character is shaped by family ties, ethnicity, similar vocations, geography, and a shared history. Thus, a church can be defined by its culture, that is, sociologically. About this Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher had something to say.[1] His definition may skirt the biblical understanding, but it does comport with the reality in which pastor and people confront each other. A community church's membership is determined more by place of residence than by faith, but even churches with confessions are in some sense community churches.

Any group can be recognized by the words and phrases frequently used by its members. A common discourse makes a group cohesive and intentionally or unintentionally serves as a barrier to nonmembers. So congregations and synods are bound together by a common language or discourse that serves as their set of distinctives. Entrance into the commu-

[1] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H.R. Mackinto and J.S. Steward, 2 vols. (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), 676–687.

David P. Scaer is The David P. Scaer Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology and Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

nity requires knowledge of the discourse. These observations are hardly profound and are as true for informal gatherings of retirees gathering for morning coffee, for example, as they are for professional associations of architects, physicians, attorneys, or clergy. Each guild has its distinctive discourse that is often as instinctive as it is cognitive. Terms can be used without attention to precise meaning. Certain phrases sound good, simply because they have been heard so often.

A Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) pastor from northeastern Indiana claims that many LCMS congregations are not that distinct from congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).[2] While this observation is general enough to avoid serious challenge, a congregation-by-congregation survey might show that just the opposite is true. Though congregations in each synod may use the terms "justification" and "the priesthood of all believers" in their discourses, substituting gender neutral language in speaking of God and human beings has substantially altered the discourse in the ELCA so that congregations of one synod can be recognized as increasingly different from the other. Pastors in their persons are as much a part of community discourse as are the words they speak, perhaps more so. Thus, women clergy presiding at the altar and standing in the pulpit make visible the different discourses separating ELCA and LCMS congregations. Discourses that take place at an ELCA convention call for social justice, while increasingly those at an LCMS convention call for doctrinal unity.

One purpose in establishing any group is assuring unity of discourse, so that its members say the same thing. This is also true of political action groups. Someone calling for gun control would probably no longer be welcome in the National Rifle Association. That said, within the larger communities of discourses there are interest groups, each with its distinctive discourse. They do not represent opposing theologies but show how a group works towards what each considers the perfection of the church. Discourses at gatherings of individuals associated with *Gottesdienst*, Lutheran Concerns Association, the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations, and the Pastoral Leadership Institute are not interchangeable. Pastors and laity will gravitate to communities where the discourse is familiar. Dissatisfaction with discourse in the ELCA was a

[2] "Matthew Becker Says That Many LCMS Congregations Look, Feel and Sound Like Many ELCA Congregations," *Christian News* 51 (November 25, 2013): 15. This was taken from the ALPB Forum blog of November 13, 2013.

reason for the formation of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), which is still forming its own distinct discourse.[3]

Going from one discourse group to another presents its own problems. Non-Lutherans joining our congregations will be at a loss for a time as to what is happening in our services, but this is also the case in joining any community. Catechesis is nothing else than familiarization with the community discourse. Leaving one church for another requires commitment to a different belief system, the creedal or confessional aspect, but it also requires adjustment to the discourse of the new community, its cultural side. Lutherans converting to Catholicism may still think in Lutheran terms. Those brought up as Baptists and Methodists often do not get the hang of what being Lutheran means. Non-Jews who convert to Judaism are never really full members of that community. One is born a Jew, and the same holds true for Roman Catholics. Membership in religious communities is based not only on beliefs but also on a cultural substructure acquired through upbringing in the community. Old habits die slowly, if they die at all. Conversions may never be total. Every group has its own linguistic shorthand. Newly enrolled seminary students are often at sea for the first two terms until they familiarize themselves with the community discourse. Single words and short phrases substitute for fully developed concepts. For example, the Latin *una sancta* grammatically might mean a holy woman, but in its everyday use in theology it is shorthand for the church. Two-source and two-document theories of the origins of the Gospels are familiar to New Testament scholars but perhaps not even to those specializing in other areas of theology. Without knowing a community's shorthand, one is hard-pressed to know fully what is going on.

Defined discourse is not unique to Christianity. Masons are held together as a community by a discourse of secretive codes designed to keep nonmembers at bay. This is their form of closed communion. Pastors leaving one church tradition for another because of doctrinal reasons soon realize that their new affiliation is held together not only by common beliefs but by a distinctive discourse that is at first strange to them. Clergy leaving the LCMS in the 1970s, especially the older ones, were never really at home in the ELCA. By including the words "in exile" in naming their theological institution, "Christ Seminary in Exile" (abbreviated Seminex), the St. Louis seminary faculty majority saw themselves in exile from the

[3] Paul Ulring, "Who speaks for you?," *Lutheran Core Connection* (December 2013): 1–3.

mother church, hoping for a return to Zion. Those who switch their memberships between congregations of the LCMS and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod may not have anticipated that the members of these two conservative Lutheran bodies think differently. Members of the newly formed NALC may have separated themselves from the ELCA, but similarities remain. First loves are not forgotten. Even when community bonds are irreparably dissolved, the exiles still hope to pray next year in Jerusalem. Knives detaching the cultural umbilical cords rarely cut cleanly.

Hasidic Jews and the Amish are monolithic in discourse and appearance. The LCMS with its commitment to the Book of Concord and a shared history rooted in the Wilhem Löhe colonies in Michigan and Martin Stephan's Perry County experiment in Missouri is, in comparison to most Protestant groups, monolithic. Outsiders have a general idea that we are conservative, and members of one congregation are easily assimilated into another. Half a century or so ago, the LCMS was even closer to monolithic perfection, but for the most part we still are of one mind. In contrast, the ELCA, with diverse origins in multiple synods, some going back to the colonial period, possesses a built-in tolerance for diversity in its discourse. This diversity allowed for a less acrimonious parting of the ways in the formation of the NALC than what the LCMS experienced in the 1970s. A reverse action took place when LCMS members helped form the ELCA. Dissidents detached themselves from the LCMS discourse, but they carried with them the style of that LCMS discourse in how they imposed their agenda on the new church. They remained Missourians not in what they believed but in the intensity of that belief.

In spite of differences from one group to another within the LCMS, the overarching discourse holding us together remains similar from congregation to congregation. In hearing certain doctrinal expressions in our theology and sermons, we assure ourselves we are in the right community; common discourse necessary for the unity of community, however, does not come without its drawbacks. Through repetition, the chief determinative distinctives within the common discourse morph into clichés whose meaning is assumed. Clichés, or what we call Lutheran distinctives, take on a sacred character with diplomatic immunity from analysis. An all-time favorite is the universal priesthood of believers that is substituted for the phrase "royal priesthood," which in 1 Peter 2:9 refers to the divine election of the church but is widely understood as a principle of congregational organization. Holding that some passages of the Bible are clearer than others, the *sedes doctrinae* is cliché and stands at odds with Luther who held that all Scriptures were clear. Arguably cliché is the

Reformation principle *sola scriptura*. Clichés come and go. Now in vogue is "first-article Christianity," whose meaning is more often assumed than defined. Should it be defined, it would be hardly distinguishable from conservative eighteenth-century Unitarianism. Other clichés are "foretaste of the feast to come," the "word of promise," and "go in peace and serve the Lord."

Code words in a discourse serve as passwords for entrance into the community, even when they are not understood. After the controversies of the 1970s, such words as inspiration and inerrancy moved to the top of the list marking one as a conservative. Use the words and one gained entry into the community ascendant at that time, or so, at least, one colloquy candidate thought. To pass, the applicant answered every question with the word inerrancy, even when the questions had nothing to do with the Bible. This is an extreme example of a community's cliché detached not only from meaning but also the proper theological context. In most cases, code words or clichés surface in the appropriate environment but may still suffer from lack of meaning. Frequent repetition of key words and phrases in a community's discourse erodes meaning, and a community's distinctives devolve into clichés. Some distinctives can be negative, like expressing one's opposition to the higher critical method, even though one such method does not exist. At best it is an umbrella term for acceptable and unacceptable methods of biblical interpretation, but it is good to be against it.

For some time, I have toyed with idea of gathering clichés frequently used at church gatherings and publishing them for the benefit of those desiring to be more deeply involved in the community we call the LCMS. Their use would also help for advancement in the ranks. This is hardly a new idea. About a half century ago, a Methodist clergyman with tongue in cheek wrote *How to Become a Bishop without Being Religious*.[4] It was once on the reading lists distributed by my colleague John T. Pless and recommended with good purpose. What passes as religious talk or theology is often little more than finding the right cliché. A reminder to pursue this compiling of LCMS clichés came with the publication of *The Tyranny of Clichés*, written by *New York Times* best-selling author Jonah Goldberg.[5] Politicians thrive on such clichés as social justice, environmental concerns, political correctness, and fairness. Their meanings are assumed but not

[4] Charles Merrill Smith, *How to Become a Bishop without Being Religious* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965).

[5] Jonah Goldberg, "The Tyranny of Clichés: What Does 'Social Justice' Mean?" *National Review* 64 (May 14, 2012): 30–32.

defined and, when defined, spawn several definitions. Asking about the meaning of a cliché exposes one as a neophyte.

Clichés, nevertheless, are not without their benefit. They provide the raw data for the discourse on which communities are built and the fuel for programs, be they political, corporate, or churchly. In his lectures for his course on Lutheranism in America, Concordia Theological Seminary president Lawrence R. Rast Jr. rehearses some past LCMS programs that promised to set the world on fire. I wonder how many remember the synod evangelism program "Each One Reach One" and whether anyone knows what it meant or whether it worked. Meanings of clichés acquired through etymology are often not only wrong but annoying. You have heard that "synod" means walking together. No, it doesn't. It means coming together, an assembly. Left unsaid is that the one telling us this contrived meaning wants us to march to his drumbeat. Through repetition, clichés take on a life of their own and, should they survive, become sacred. Like a geometric theorem, the truthfulness of a cliché rests in itself and is immune from analysis. In dogmatics this is called *autopistia*, a proposition or belief that needs no analysis because it is true in itself, at least until someone tells the emperor to look around for his clothes.

C. S. Mann, author of a previous edition of the Anchor Bible Commentary on Mark and a one-time speaker at the Concordia Theological Seminary symposium, once gave me a type-written paper entitled "A Theological Firestorm." Lost for several years, it surfaced last spring in the storage boxes in the garage, and its discovery was welcomed with great joy. Described on the tattered paper—now photocopied for safe keeping—was the description of a fictitious meeting of representatives of various religions that was disrupted by a fire. The reaction by each group reflected its core self-understanding. For the Christian Scientists the fire was an illusion. Fundamentalists saw the fire as the wrath of God. Roman Catholics passed the collection basket for a rebuilding campaign. Congregationalists said, "Every man for himself." Methodists pondered the fire for its implications for the blessed assurance. The association of women clergy asked if the fire was gender neutral. Baptists were heard asking where the water was, and "the Episcopalians formed a procession and walked out singing a suitably lugubrious hymn." "The Lutherans decided that the fire was against either a) law, or b) the Gospel; and was in any event unlawful."

As trivial as this story is, it pinpoints what each group holds as essential, and this determines the character of that group's discourse. What Lutherans call the chief doctrine, i.e., justification, or as it is also called, the

law and the gospel, defines the community discourse in regard to biblical interpretation and preaching and provides the standard for evaluating other doctrines. Attempts to understand the words of Jesus as eucharistic, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53), are refuted because only faith and not the Lord's Supper is required for salvation. Thus, an entire chapter that speaks of eating and drinking flesh and blood must be about faith, so Luther argued.

Not only is law and gospel the standard for interpreting the Bible, but it is used as an outline for preaching. This was recently the case with four students in a preaching competition. Each was given a pericope from a different Gospel, but each sermon followed the outline of the law first, followed by the gospel. In hearing that the conclusion for the second sermon was identical to the first, the listener knew what to expect in the remaining two. In each case, the Lutheran distinctive of law and gospel took precedence over what each evangelist might have had in mind. It would be difficult to see how the law-gospel paradigm was a factor in how the evangelists composed their Gospels. Mark's ending of the women running from the tomb afraid hardly looks like gospel, at least according to the dogmatic definition. If there is a unifying principle, that principle is Christ, but each Gospel is unique in format, content, theological perspective, and conclusion. Law and gospel is not meant to be considered as a doctrine among others; rather, it shows how God works in the individual.[6] It is neither a literary device nor a way of ranking the importance of doctrines.

Consider the case of the St. Louis faculty majority who in 1971 affirmed justification but were not able commit to the historical character of the virgin birth and the resurrection.[7] With its affirmation of justification, the Fact Finding Committee wrote:

> We praise and thank God that we can report that our church has been spared many of the theological aberrations that plague Christendom today. The Fact Finding Committee found no evidence that any professor at the seminary teaches false doctrine concerning such great

[6] See Hans-Peter Grosshans, "Lutheran Hermeneutics: An Outline," in *Transformative Reading of the Gospel of John*, ed. Kenneth Mtata (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2012), 23–46, esp. 36.

[7] Non-Lutherans are also aware of our dependency on law and gospel. In meetings with the late Carl F.H. Henry and Kenneth Kantzer, the great Evangelical theologians of the last century, I was struck by how much they knew about law and gospel as the heart of Lutheran theology.

> doctrines as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, justification by faith, or the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, etc.[8]

In this sensitive situation, the committee had to be as generous as possible, but the report gives the impression, though it might not have been its intention, that the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and justification by faith can be held apart from affirming the historicity of Jesus, including the virgin birth, his miracles, and his resurrection. This raises the question whether the doctrine of justification should have precedence as the chief doctrine over the historical character of Jesus' incarnation, miracles, resurrection, or other events in his life. A church, even a Lutheran one, can survive as Christian with a false or inadequate definition of justification or no definition at all, but it cannot be the church if the historical character of Jesus and especially his resurrection are made optional. At least this is what Paul thought. Without the resurrection the Corinthians would still be in their sins (1 Cor 15:13–17). Resurrection was the doctrine on which justification depended. It was the prior doctrine and not the other way around. Justification is the goal and purpose of preaching and theology, not its beginning. If justification did not require belief in the resurrection of Jesus, then for some the gospel's freeing from the law became an argument for the ordination of women (Gal 3:23–29). In these two cases the chief doctrine became the only one.

The importance of law and gospel for the NALC was seen in its August 2012 convention, at which non-Lutheran and Lutheran theologians lectured on the topic.[9] Since non-Lutherans do not operate with this distinctive, reports that this multi-denominational approach was less than fully successful were not surprising. Leave Lutherans to themselves and the discussion fares no better. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson begins her essay "Law and Gospel (With a Little Help from St. John)" with what she calls "five typical misreadings of law and gospel across Lutheran history."[10] Add to this several competing definitions of justification in the LCMS and the every-five-year international Luther conference debates on how the reformer understood justification. Here is the irony: the distinctive

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[8] Paul A. Zimmerman, *A Seminary in Crisis: The Inside Story of the Preus Fact Finding Committee* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 225.

[9] These essays were published in *Preaching and Teaching the Law and the Gospel of God*, ed. Carl Braaten (Dehli, NY: American Lutheran Publicity Books, 2013).

[10] Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, "Law and Gospel (With a Little Help from St. John)," in *"You Have the Words of Eternal Life": Transformative Readings of the Gospel of John from a Lutheran Perspective,* ed. Kenneth Mtata (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2012), 84–92, esp. 85.

determining the character of Lutheran discourse has no one meaning among those who insist on it, but it remains the one distinctive that holds Lutherans together. Cliché triumphs over substance, culture over doctrine.[11]

Justification was for Luther the standard not only in dispensing a eucharistic understanding of John but also in determining the worth of the biblical books. Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Peter, and the Gospel and first epistle of John formed his inner canon. Nevertheless, this did not deter him from preaching on Sundays from the appointed Gospels, of which Matthew and Luke had the lion's share. For his sermons he did not resort to the epistles that articulated for him and for Lutherans after him justification as the chief doctrine. Here is a conundrum. If we hold to the now widely-held scholarly view that the Gospels were written after the epistles, this raises the question of why Paul's doctrine of justification is not spelled out in the Gospels, or at least had little or no influence on them. If the reverse is true, that one or more of the Gospels were written first before the epistles, then the doctrine of justification was Paul's reflection on the narrative of the life and death of Jesus.[12] Paul came to his doctrine of justification in his conflict with the Judaizers in Galatia, and then towards the end of his life he wrote his magnum opus on justification in his letter to the Romans.

Paul and Luther were alike in that their doctrines of justification came from their personal experiences (though they were different). What Paul said about justification came from his reflection on how he had persecuted the church (Gal 1:23). Luther's articulation sprang from an intense guilt of not fulfilling the law. For each, justification was a solution to a dilemma, but Paul's authority to formulate this doctrine came from his being made

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[11] Justification was defined as the chief doctrine by Lutherans in the Reformation in their conflict with the papacy and, after the first article, was the subject of the remaining twenty-seven of the Augsburg Confession. This doctrine is what Lutherans are all about, but ironically it has become a doctrine over which Lutherans cannot agree among themselves. Disagreements surfaced even during Luther's lifetime and were resolved by the Formula of Concord, but that was not the end of it. At its 1963 Helsinki convention, the Lutheran World Federation could not come to an agreement on justification. Lutherans and Roman Catholics have disagreed more over justification than any other doctrine, so working to overcome age old differences was welcomed. However, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999) became a cause of further dissension among Lutherans and dissatisfaction among Catholics.

[12] This was Luther's view. See Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986), 35:118 (hereafter AE).

an apostle by God and Jesus whom God raised from the dead (Gal 1:1). Narrative about the historical event precedes justification and not the other way around, and so justification follows resurrection. This is spelled out in 1 Corinthians 15:14, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." Paul's hearers were justified not when they learned of the doctrine of justification but when they heard and believed about Christ's death for sins and resurrection.[13] From my experience, Lutheran pastors find it hard to resist the temptation to superimpose Paul's doctrine of justification on the content and outline of the sermons based on the gospels. Attempts to find Paul's doctrine of justification in the gospels are unconvincing. Offered as one example is the account of the tax collector who returns to his home justified (Luke 18:10–14).[14] Rather than Jesus explaining how God justifies through faith, he directs the hearers to the self-degrading posture of the tax collector who, in asking God for mercy, shows he is justified.[15] While the conclusion of the account, "for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted," shows how the law destroyed the tax collector's self-esteem and how he was accepted or justified by God, at a deeper level the words describe Christ's humiliation in being accused by the law and his being rescued by God through his resurrection from the dead. Law and gospel in the life of the Christian correspond to Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Christology is the prior reality and justification is the subsequent one. Christology is the foundation and content of preaching and justification the result. Letting justification be detached from the historical component in Christology allowed the Fact Finding Committee to commend the St. Louis faculty majority for holding to justification in spite of their allowing doubts about the virgin birth and resurrection. Rather than seeing the Antichrist as the denier of justification, the term is better applied

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[13] Had Paul's opponents in Galatia not attributed salvation to works of the law, he may not have articulated justification then, but it would have happened sooner or later. By nature man takes credit for who he is and what he does. Works righteousness adheres to our existence, so this doctrine would have to be spelled out. But for both Paul and Luther, circumstances in their lives were the cause for their articulation.

[14] For a discussion of the different perspectives on justification, see David Morlan, "Luke and Paul on Repentance," in *Paul and the Gospels: Christologies, Conflicts and Convergences*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Joel Willitts (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 114–145.

[15] For a discussion of how this parable can be considered forensically, see Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke: 9:51–24:53*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 684–685. Just correctly understands the passive form δεδικαιωμένος as God who justifies, but whether this can be extended to incorporate the Pauline sense of "hav[ing] been declared righteous" is another matter.

to those theologians who since the Enlightenment "do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (2 John 7).

Unquestionably, Lutheran distinctives are rooted in the books Luther favored. He writes,

> Therefore John's Gospel is the one, fine, true, and chief gospel, and is far, far to be preferred over the other three and placed high above them. So too, the epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter far surpass the other three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In a word St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine.[16]

Part of the equation is his view of the Gospels:

> Thus the gospel is and should be nothing less than a chronicle, a story, a narrative about Christ, telling us who he is, what he did, said, and suffered—a subject which one describes briefly, another more fully, one this way, another that way.[17]

Luther set the terms for hermeneutics with the principle that Scripture is its own interpreter, *scriptura sui ipsius interpres*, but with James the interpreting Scripture was Paul, and so Luther concluded that "nothing of the nature of the gospel is in [James]."[18] Had Luther measured James not by Paul but the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, he might have come to a different conclusion. Maybe not. In judging James, Luther used Reformation principles, which are themselves clichés, and *sola fide* took precedence over *sola scriptura.* Justification had become not only a homiletical principle but a hermeneutical one in interpreting the Bible.

It was not that Jesus had nothing to say about forensic justification. His perspective, however, was eschatological, with believers appearing before him as the judge, who in hearing an account of their works would pronounce the verdict. Jesus entered his ministry as this judge. At least this is how John the Baptist described him, holding a winnowing fork in his hand to sift chaff from the grain (Matt 3:12). After Peter's confession, Jesus makes this explicit, "For the Son of man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will judge all people according to their

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[16] AE 35:362.

[17] AE 35:117–118.

[18] AE 35:117–118.

deeds" (Matt 16:27).[19] Judgment as justification finds its longest discourse in the account of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31–46) and is at the heart of the Lord's Prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt 6:12), the only petition to be immediately reinforced by Jesus' commentary, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (6:14–15). Just as Jesus saw justification in terms of the reward distributed at the judgment, so he saw justification as sacramental. The request in the Fourth Petition for supernatural bread is inseparably linked by an "and" (καί) to the Fifth Petition's request for forgiveness.[20] In receiving the bread, sins are forgiven.

Clichés have a way of dominating the conversation, with the result that one is seen as more important than another. For Lutherans, these clichés have to do with justification. Assign a seminarian a sermon from one of Paul's epistles, and he envisions a marvelous doctrinal discourse. Give him a pericope from a Gospel, especially the Sermon on the Mount, and he runs to Paul for relief. In facing James, Luther looked to Paul for help and then cut his losses by dismissing the epistle. James did preach Christ, but Luther did not see it. Or at least James did not measure up to Paul, and we are forever condemned to hearing the cliché that the treatise written by Jesus' brother is an epistle of straw. Luther did not see that James's self- identification as "the servant of Jesus Christ as Lord and God" (James 1:1)[21] easily matched Thomas's confession "my Lord and my God." James had a marvelously all-embracing understanding of faith: "My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory" (James 2:1).

Rather than coming to terms with a writer's intention, one chooses the cliché that best preserves one's self-interests, and so Luther was no different than the rest of us. But the whole procedure is hardly allowed since Jesus leaves no hint that we are to value any one word of his over another. In fact, he said the exact opposite (Matt 7:24–26; 28:20). Luther said that our failure to understand the Scripture "is not due to the obscurity of Scripture, but to the blindness or indolence of those who will not take the

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[19] τότε ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν πρᾶξιν αὐτοῦ.

[20] AE 8:258. "For the sacraments have their efficacy from the wounds and blood of Christ."

[21] Author's own translation.

trouble to look at the very clearest truth."[22] Luther deviated from his own principle, and in some cases the Pauline distinctive or cliché won out. Clichés, however, are what theological life is all about. Clichés are persistent and resist extinction. One group values one set of clichés over others, and diametrically opposing theologies can find shelter under the same cliché. Such was the situation in the LCMS as early as the 1950s and still is today among Lutherans. Justification must be preserved at all costs, even if we disagree or ignore the fact that we may disagree on the deity of Christ, his resurrection, and the miracles. If Lutheran distinctives morph into clichés, so can any other term, including the name of Christ. Frequent mention of the word of Christ in a sermon does not make it Christological, and its absence does not make it non-christological. James used the word "Christ" of Jesus twice. Jesus never used it of himself.

For good or for bad, cliché is part of life in the church, and the task of theology is to sift through the clichés to separate the wheat from the chaff. Eighteenth-century theologians kept the Lutheran distinctives, but in dissembling their meaning, what was Lutheran was lost. Honor for being the master of clichés belongs to Schleiermacher, who reassembled discarded Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican distinctives into one unified theological program. Christian distinctives made his program look Christian, but it was not truly Christian. Such is the character of the cliché that it allows the hearer to supply his own meaning or no meaning at all.

Though we might be cliché preachers and theologians holding on to our distinctives for dear life, Luther was not—at least most of the time. One distinctive for him was that John 6 was not eucharistic, a position around which his faithful followers have clinched such tight fists that it has been canonized as Lutheran cliché. However, Luther did locate the Lord's Supper in John. He writes, "Among the papists this word has remained: 'The sacraments flowed out of the side of Christ.' For the sacraments have their efficacy from the wounds and blood of Christ. Therefore this is a good and godly saying."[23]

Closing an essay with a biblical reference is cliché in itself, but try one of these two. Of the making of clichés there is no end (Eccl 12:12) or chase out the old cliché and it returns with seven other clichés more meaningless than itself (Matt 12:45; Luke 11:26).

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[22] AE 33:27.

[23] AE 8:258.

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Theological Observer

Go On

[This speech was delivered at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, for the May 23, 2014, commencement ceremony. The speaker, the Rev. Dr. Ulmer Marshall Jr., was granted an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree at the same ceremony. The Editors]

To President Rast, the Board of Regents, members of the faculty, staff, alumni, friends, parents, and, most of all, to our graduates of 2014: I want to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Rast and the faculty for inviting me to be the commencement speaker. Thank you.

Statistics tell us that graduates do not remember what was said at their graduation. So, I am going to give you two little words to hang everything on, "Go on." If anybody asks you years from now, "What did Pastor Marshall speak about?" you can tell them, "Go on." "Well, what did he say?" "Go on!"

As I bring you a word of encouragement today, I have decided to give you the same charge that God gave Joshua and the Israelites: Joshua, chapter one, verses one through five. When God spoke these words to Joshua, the children of Israel were probably experiencing an inner crisis. For you see, Moses was dead. The Moses who had been the one man courageous enough to confront Egypt's power structure, armed with nothing but his staff, an edict from God, and a directive to Pharaoh, "Let my people go," that Moses was dead.

The loss of a leader of Moses' stature is bad enough, but when the loss occurs at a critical stage in a people's history, when it occurs at a turning point of a people's life, that loss is magnified. You see, the children of Israel were about to embark on the second phase of their journey toward freedom; that phase was to capture the land of Canaan. They now stood looking over the Jordan River, standing between the slavery of Egypt and the freedom of Canaan, thinking about the challenges, the battles, and the struggles that were before them and knowing that whatever they faced this time, they would have to face without the seasoned, fatherly leadership of Moses. You, too, stand at the beginning of a new career, knowing that the challenges, battles, and struggles you will face, you will have to face them without the faculty there to hold your hand.

The God who first spoke to Moses through the burning bush, the God who had guided him, directed him, and upheld him during all those moments of crisis in the wilderness, the God about whom David said that he "shall neither slumber nor sleep," was far from being dead. This same God spoke to Joshua, "So lift up your head and look around you. There is still a job to be done, there is still a charge to be kept, there is still responsibility to be discharged. So get up from where you are, you and all this people. The land that I promised your ancestors remains to be conquered, the wilderness has yet to be cleared, the cities still must be built. So arise, you and all this people, and go over the Jordan into the land of promise. Every place that the soles of your feet shall tread upon will be yours. Every piece of land that your eyes shall rest upon from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same will be yours. No man shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. So, arise, we say to you today. Arise, there are still souls to be won, there's still God's work to be done and Satan's kingdom to be torn down.

Now don't think that this is going to be easy. Sometimes you will give your best, and your best won't seem good enough, and you will begin to wonder if you really are called to this work; but just *go on*. Sometimes you will go out of your way to help people, and the very ones you have tried to help the most will be the first to turn their backs on you; but just *go on*. Sometimes when you try to stand for what's right, it will seem as if you are standing by yourself. But don't worry about it; just *go on*. Sometimes it will seem as if the system will destroy you, but just *go on*. In spite of the high mountains, *go on*; in spite of the deep valleys, *go on*; in spite of the wide rivers, *go on*. In spite of being betrayed by friends, and rejected by relatives, and railed by your enemies, I say to you, *go on*.

Sometimes people will get mad at you and fight what you are trying to do for them; sometimes your staunch supporters will become discouraged and fall by the wayside; sometimes people will get mad and quit—but you just *go on*.

As God spoke to Joshua, so God speaks to you today. When you are overwhelmed by life's problems and life's setbacks; when you have tried to be good pastors, deaconesses, teachers, professors, good leaders, good Christian men and women, good husbands and wives, and it seems as if the devil has made a shambles of your work, your lives, your homes, your marriages; when the responsibilities are great, the odds against you are overwhelming, and you are most aware of your own weakness and shortcomings—God speaks to you simply with a word of persistence: "Don't give up. Keep on fighting. Keep on trying. Just *go on*." In spite of

the stumbling blocks thrown in your way and the ditches that have been dug and snares that have been set, just *go on* anyhow. *Go on*, even though many false prophets shall arise and deceive many and lead many astray. Even though iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold, you just *go on* anyhow, because the person who endures to the end shall be saved.

I know sometimes you will feel like saying, "How can I go on Lord? I am all alone. It is just me, alone. The challenges are too great, the opposition is too powerful, and I am too weak and powerless." It is at that moment that God will speak to you the words he spoke to Joshua: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you nor forsake you." What God was saying to Joshua is, "You don't understand who it is that is talking to you. I am the one who causes to be what is. Before there was a when or a where or a then or a there, I was. It is I who stepped out into the darkness, into the bleakness of chaos, and said, "Let there be light." It is I that spat out the seven seas, it is I that carpeted the earth with grass, it is I that dotted the hills with trees and flung the stars into the Milky Way. It is I. It is I who told Abraham to go. As I have been with others, as I have upheld others, as I have fed others, as I have led others, so I will be with you. I will never fail you nor forsake you."

You can *go on* because God is your protector, because Jesus is your traveling companion, because the Holy Spirit is your comforter and guide. Therefore, no matter what happens from day to day, *go on*. No matter what foes appear in battle array, *go on*. No matter who tells you that you cannot make it, you know in whom you have believed, so *go on*, trusting in the Lord. When you have been falsely accused and are being persecuted for righteousness' sake; when jealous-minded, vindictive spirits, petty souls, and unconverted hearts cast your name out as evil, trust in God and *go on*. David said about it, "In all my born days, I've seen a lot of things happening in this world, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor God's children begging bread."

Sometimes, like St. Paul, we may ask, "Lord, how can I go on when I have this thorn in my flesh and in my soul that keeps me from doing what I want to do and being what I ought to be? Three times I have besought you in prayer that you would remove this thorn from the flesh." God speaks to you the same as he spoke to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, and my strength is made perfect in your weakness."

If you *go on*, depending upon sufficient grace, trusting in the promises of God, looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith, and

being kept by the power divine, one of these old days you will reach the promised land. You will cross over the Jordan River. Jericho's wall will fall down before you. One of these days, you will reach the end of your journey, and you will hear the master say to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," and you will claim the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus our Lord. Good evening now, God bless you. *Go on* in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

Ulmer Marshall Jr., Pastor
Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Mobile, Alabama
Bethel Ev. Lutheran Church, Point Clear, Alabama

Inaugural Speech for the Robert D. Preus Chair

[On May 22, 2014, the Robert D. Preus Chair in Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies was dedicated, and Dr. Roland Ziegler was named as the first holder of this endowed Chair. The following is his inaugural address for this auspicious occasion. The Editors.]

Dear Mrs. Preus, members of the Preus family, dear alumni of Concordia Theological Seminary, members of the Board of Regents, President Rast, members of the faculty, and dear students!

It is a great honor to be the first incumbent of the Robert D. Preus Chair in Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies. With this chair, Concordia Theological Seminary and the donors who made this chair possible are honoring the memory of Robert Preus. Dr. Preus was not the longest serving president of this institution; in this respect he is second to Reinhold Pieper (1892–1914). But he has left a deep impression on this institution. The nestor of our faculty, Dr. David Scaer, was his student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where Dr. Preus started his academic teaching in 1957. Dr. Scaer has many times in conversation and in his writings expressed what he owes to Robert Preus. Early in his tenure as president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Dr. Preus brought onto the faculty of this institution some of the bright young lights he knew as his students. One of them is still with us, Dr. William Weinrich. Many others were called during his tenure and are still teaching at our seminary. President emeritus Dean Wenthe and President Lawrence Rast were his students. So, even though he did not found a "Preus school," this seminary would not be what it is without his teachings and his administrative

leadership. And, last but not least, LCMS President Harrison was another of his students who was formed by his teaching.

Time is too short to give a full appreciation of Robert Preus. The late Dr. Kurt Marquart, another one of his students who was brought to the faculty by Dr. Preus, described as the two main themes of Preus's work the doctrine of Scripture and the doctrine of justification. Dr. Preus began his scholarly career with his book *The Inspiration of Scripture* on the doctrine of inspiration in the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy. During his life, he showed the continued relevance and fruitfulness of engaging Lutheran Orthodoxy without being an uncritical repristinator. He thus became a world renowned expert on the field of Lutheran Orthodoxy; his books are still standard reference works on this topic. In the controversies in the Missouri Synod, he defended the biblical and confessional understanding of Scripture as the verbally inspired and inerrant word of God against the inroads of a lower view of Scripture and a false interpretation of Scripture as it was put forward by higher criticism. For the Nineteenth Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions in 1996, the series of symposia he inaugurated, he was scheduled to present on the topic of "Luther's Doctrine of Justification and Rome." What he would have said we can know from his last book—posthumously published and edited by his sons Daniel and Rolf under the title *Justification and Rome*—in which he engaged the early drafts of the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," authored by Rome and the Lutheran World Federation. Thus, Dr. Preus still teaches the church through his publications. Many of his articles dealing with Scripture, the confessions, and justification have been collected in the two volumes, *Doctrine Is Life*, edited by his son Klemet.

What does the establishment of the Dr. Robert D. Preus Chair in Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies mean for this seminary? It shows that we heed the admonition of the author of the letters to the Hebrews when he wrote: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow" (Heb 13:7 KJV). Melanchthon confesses in the Apology against the Roman understanding what it truly means to honor the saints. As he put it in the Apology, we give thanks to God that He has given teachers to the church. We are strengthened in our faith because we see that grace superabounds. And finally, to honor them is to follow their example, "first of their faith, then of their other virtues, which people should imitate according to their

callings" (Ap XXI 4–7).[1] In thankfulness for the work of Dr. Preus, this seminary declares its intention to continue his work.

Robert Preus confessed the faith unabashedly in the controversies of his time. He clearly upheld the distinction between the word of God and the word of man, so that in the church nothing but the word of God is preached, because nothing but the gospel can comfort the consciences with the forgiveness of sins. Christ alone is Savior, and man is justified before God only because of the righteousness of Christ won on the cross and received in the gospel by faith alone. The confessions of the Lutheran Church are a true exposition of Scripture and bind us to this center of the Christian faith.

In his inauguration address as President of Concordia Theological Seminary Dr. Preus stated:

> The struggle and the suffering to achieve it [i.e., Concordia, oneness in doctrine] is always worth it. For unity in the pure doctrine of the Gospel is not only a basis for all preaching and teaching and evangelism and love and work in the church, as our Lutheran Reformers never tired of stressing. It is also an end in itself, the highest worship and service of God, the noblest hallowing of His name. How is God's name hallowed, Luther asks in our Small Catechism. And the answer: "When the word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also lead a holy life according to it." This seminary is dedicated unashamedly and unabashedly to the preaching and teaching of the pure doctrine of the Gospel and all its articles. And this seminary is dedicated to unity in this doctrine, complete unity and unanimity, unity in the faculty, unity in the student body, in our congregations and our synod. That is what is meant by our very name, Concordia. And to retain this unity shall remain a goal of this institution.[2]

In this same address, he described the mission of the seminary in these words:

> We seek to inculcate not merely facts, but faith; to teach not merely ethical principles, but love; to impart not merely information, but dedication, commitment. Commitment to what? To our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, of course. And to His Gospel, the good news, the never changing, always relevant good news, of what He has done to

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[1] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 238.

[2] Robert D. Preus, "Inauguration Address," *Springfielder* 38, no. 2 (1974): 92.

> save us and all the world. And to the only source of this Gospel, the written Word of God, Scripture. And to our Lutheran Confessions as a true and correct summary and exposition of the biblical Gospel and all its articles.[3]

These words have lost nothing of their relevance in the forty years since they were spoken. This seminary has been committed to this task ever since because these words articulate what it means to be a confessional Lutheran seminary. And with the establishment of this chair this seminary shows that it continues this confessional commitment, for this commitment is not to some historical oddity, but to the gospel itself.

There is one aspect of Dr. Preus's work not yet mentioned: his interest in Lutheranism worldwide and in missiology. The Doctor in Missiology program, now the Ph.D. in missiology, was established during his presidency. His last major paper, "The Theology of the Cross," was delivered at the Second Confessional Congress, March 14–18, 1994, in Matongo, Kenya. He was proud of his Norwegian heritage, but that was far from any parochialism or any notion that Lutheranism is just for people of a certain culture or ethnicity. Since the gospel is for all people, we owe it to all people to bring the pure gospel and the rightly administered sacraments to all people. As Dr. Preus wrote in his article, "The Confessions and the Mission of the Church": "The passion for the Gospel is the passion for souls, and this is the essence of the spirit of mission. Therefore we have in our Lutheran Confessions with their burden for the teaching and proclamation of the Gospel the authentic Lutheran mission affirmations."[4]

I am honored and humbled by this appointment. I take it as a call to me and to all of us to honor Dr. Preus by following his example in our vocations: to be faithful to the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant word of God, to joyously join in the confession of our fathers as we find it in the Book of Concord, to honor the fathers of the seventeenth century by reading and engaging them, to critically engage and confess the faith in the theological confusion of our time, to be a debtor of the gospel both among those with whom we live and to those abroad, and thus to heed the admonition of the apostle and honor the motto of Concordia Theological Seminary: ΚΗΡΥΞΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΛΟΓΟΝ—Preach the word (2 Tim 4:2).

Roland F. Ziegler

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[3] Robert D. Preus, "Inauguration Address," *Springfielder* 38, no. 2 (1974): 93–94.

[4] Robert D. Preus, "Confessions and the Mission of the Church," *Springfielder* 39, no. 1 (1975): 33–34.

The Restoration of Creation in Christ: Essays in Honor of Dean O. Wenthe

During the Symposia gathering in January 2012, the seminary faculty announced its intention to honor their colleague Dean O. Wenthe with a festschrift to commemorate his fifteen-year tenure as president of Concordia Theological Seminary (1996–2011). This collection of essays, titled *The Restoration of Creation in Christ: Essays in Honor of Dean O. Wenthe* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), was fittingly described at that time by Dr. Arthur Just, one of the editors of the volume:

> As a Biblical theologian, you have taught us about the sacramentality of God's good creation, about Torah and temple and the land and even prophets like Jeremiah, how stuff matters as a means to deliver to us promises that are concrete and real and even infinite. How often we heard you proclaim that through the *viva vox Jesu* God restores his creation. How often we heard you proclaim how, in Christ, we have "real life" in a "real world" constituted by a "real presence." Your critique of culture through real life in Christ focused our minds on the restoration of creation through Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, and the ongoing restoration of that creation in the sacramental life of the church. So even our new curriculum, that does theology through the pastoral acts, accented the *viva vox Jesu* as that voice is embodied in word and water, in bread and wine.

Two years later, again at the seminary's annual Symposia, the completed festschrift, published by Concordia Publishing House, was presented to Dr. Wenthe. Contributors to the collection include a wide array of colleagues representing the honoree's wide-ranging spheres of influence in the church during his forty years of service. The table of contents follows.

Paul J. Grime

Incarnation as the Perfection of Creation

Though March 25th, the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, is set aside for commemorating the incarnation, for practical and historical reasons this is done on December 25th as the day on which the Word made flesh appeared. Standard for the church's definition of incarnation is John 1:14, "the Word was made flesh," but this doctrine can be drawn from the other Gospels. For Matthew, the unborn infant in Mary's womb is Emmanuel, God-with-us (1:23); for Luke he is the Son of the Most High and the Lord (1:32, 35, 43). Strikingly in Mark, the demons are able to see through the veneer of Jesus' humanity to recognize that Jesus the Nazarene is the Holy One of God (1:24). The word incarnation is derived from the Latin word "in flesh" and is most recognizably used in the Nicene Creed, *incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine*. The one who is God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, of one substance with the Father "was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary," that is, he was made flesh, body and soul, flesh and bones. Earlier creeds did not make a distinction between the conception of Jesus, the actual moment of the incarnation, and his birth. Most of us probably don't either. Early Christians simply said "he was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary." Since this could be misunderstood—Mary and Holy Spirit being equal partners—later creeds attributed Jesus' conception to the Holy Spirit alone and his birth to Mary. Incarnation was also a matter of faith; Mary believed what the angel told her. "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Since she was the first to put faith in her unborn son, God made flesh, she may rightfully be called the first Christian. In theological terms incarnation precedes justification in time and importance.

Following the biblical concept of time, modeled after the Genesis creation days, Christmas begins at sundown on December 24 and runs until sunset on December 25. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day constitute one holiday, two bookends on either side of one celebration. A Vespers, an Evensong, or a Divine Service can be held in the early evening of December 24th, ideally a festive Divine Service at midnight, with lights blazing, choirs singing, and trumpets blaring to proclaim the advent of God on earth. All this to be followed by an early morning Mass on Christmas Day, signifying the dawn has come in full splendor in Jesus Christ, the Brightness of the Father, the Dayspring from on High, the glorious Sun of Righteousness. It is unlikely that a pastor with the sole responsibility for his congregation can accomplish three sermons in the space of twelve hours and still another perhaps just a few days later. All

our attention at Christmas, however, must be on how the fullness of God, that is, everything that God is, dwells in the infant Jesus (Col 1:19). The philosophical question of how the infinite God can be embraced by a finite man and in the even more finite infant, a question that may never have been valid to begin with, has been answered in God becoming flesh in this child. Apart from Jesus all our thoughts about God border on speculation.

With the entrance of sin into the world, the harmony between the Creator and creature was replaced by what appeared to be an unbridgeable distance that is now erased by the incarnation. In the God-Man becoming sin for us, we become righteous in him (2 Cor 5:21). Further knowledge of God is given to us in the humiliation of that God-Man, what the creed describes as the *homo factus est,* "he was made man." Incarnation bridges the distance between heaven and earth; thus, the humiliation of the incarnate God makes him approachable. The one who is meek and lowly of heart invites the heavy burdened to come to him, and in coming to him we find God. "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt 11:27). In recognizing the great mystery of the incarnation that God is veiled in flesh, we peer into the greater trinitarian mystery of the Father giving of himself by eternally begetting the Son. The one who is begotten by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary was first "begotten of his Father before all worlds." By recognizing the man Jesus as God, we come to know the Father and then the Spirit. Out of love, the Father eternally begets the Son and extends that love to us by sending him into the world (John 3:16). God's begetting the Son is an eternal action taking place before and apart from time. His conception by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, the second action, takes place in time. In giving of himself both in eternity and time the Father provides a model of our giving ourselves for others. Now we are able to understand that the two great commandments of loving God and the neighbor are not laws in the sense of the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments but a description first of what God is as love and does in loving us, and then our loving him. God's love is never self-directed in the sense that he loves himself, but the love of each divine person is directed to the others. God loves those who are undeserving and helpless, and in loving us recognizes us as his neighbors. What he asks of us in loving others, he asks of himself. Thus the incarnation and humiliation provide the ethical and moral foundation of how we are to relate both to God and to one another.

In the child laid to rest in Mary's arms, God is finally and permanently found. Before the incarnation, God's dwelling with man was sporadic. At one time the tabernacle was the divine residence and at another time the temple, but these were temporary arrangements. Ichabod, one of Samuel's sons, says it all, "The glory has departed from Israel!" (1 Sam 4:21). From Jesus God's glory never departs because he *is* the splendor and the glory of the Father. Isaiah saw God's glory fill the temple, but Jesus is the greater temple that completely encapsulates God's glory; from the temple of his body that glory will never leave. In the nine months from Jesus' conception to his birth, the majesty of God in its fullness was found in Mary's womb. In greeting her cousin, Elizabeth recognized Mary as the mother of the Lord of hosts (Luke 1:42), the God before whose terrifying appearance flying seraphim covered their eyes. God's appearance evoked terror in Isaiah, who cried, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isa 6:5). Now the tables are turned. The terrifying God of Isaiah 6 is found in the Virgin's child (Isa 7:14). He who lived in an unapproachable glory has come to us as Emmanuel, God with us. Not without reason we address this God who took on flesh in the Virgin, but now clothes himself in bread and wine, with the song of the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth" (Isa 6:3). Should Mary be honored as the first Christian, then Elizabeth is the third Christian in recognizing Mary as the mother of God. Joseph qualifies as the second Christian.

Alongside our devotion to the Christ child, a parallel Christmas takes place from late October to the end of December. One can only take so many drummer boys and milking maids. Clement Moore's eight tiny reindeer have been replaced by a red-nosed one. In spite of sincere attempts to put Christ back into the Christmas out there, it will not happen because he was never there, at least not in the way he is in the church. It seems the media go out of their way each year to make fewer references to Christ's birth. It is politically correct to wish others a Happy Holiday instead of a Merry Christmas. A secularization of the holiday gives us Christians an opportunity to define who Jesus really is, an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss. We do not want what the world thinks about Christ to be confused with what we confess. Germans know of a fictional *Christkind* who is neither divine nor human, who brings presents at Christmas. Such a Jesus is something like a Martini, a bit of dry vermouth mixed with gin or vodka. Each one mixes Jesus to taste. Mixing divine and human elements to create a Jesus who is neither God nor man was at the heart of the ancient heresy of Eutychius. At the other end of the

spectrum was the equally destructive heresy of Nestorius, who held that the divine and human natures of Jesus lay side-by-side but never came together. For Nestorius, God and man were joined in Jesus at the hip. In Jesus lived two different persons, each with a separate center of consciousness. What was human in Jesus was not permeated by the divine, which in turn was not permeated by the human. Like cheese on a slice of bread, the divine and the human natures touched each other but one really never became part of the other. True to his own argument, Nestorius refused to call Mary *Theotokos*, the Mother of God. Mohammed took the heresy one step further in making God so separate and transcendent that a real incarnation could not take place and in fact did not. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary but was not God's Son. Islam is a religion of revelation but not redemption. One's fate depends not on a redemptive act like the incarnation but on what Allah decides.

Typically at Christmas and Easter, articles appear in popular magazines debunking traditional views about the biblical Christmas and pretending to provide details about Jesus' life from documents claiming to come from the apostles. Depictions of Jesus in these articles are taken from the work of scholars who claim they can distinguish what is inauthentic in our Gospels. They impose their own ideologies on what they think Jesus should be. Some say we will never know what a kind of person Jesus really was or that perhaps he never really existed. All we have in our Gospels is what his followers said about him. This type of thinking can often be found in college religion courses. Such approaches are based on the presupposition that the supernatural is out of bounds to historical research, and the God-question with the incarnation is pushed to the side. The only thing they will grant is that the coming of God in the flesh is a matter of faith and not history. Another presupposition is that the past can never be fully recovered. Taken to a logical conclusion, we know nothing from the past for certain. Call it historical agnosticism. In these scholarly attempts to find Jesus, called quests for the historical Jesus, there are, however, a few bright spots. Bypassing historical questions of the person Jesus, some scholars look at the New Testament as a record of who first-century Christians thought he was. They have concluded his followers gave him the same worship that they gave God. In the eyes of many people, Jesus and God were on an equal plain.[1] All this is amazing since

[1] Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006).

idolatry of any kind was disallowed by the Jews in the first commandment. But worshiping Jesus was exactly what these Jewish-Christians were doing. They believed he was God. Now comes the question of whether the idea that Jesus was divine originated with his followers or whether it is more likely that Jesus convinced others he was God because of what he said of himself and did?.

We agree with the old Fundamentalists and present-day Evangelicals in insisting on belief in the Virgin birth. Such things as the incarnation, the humiliation, and the exaltation of Jesus are not open to examination, but had DNA testing been available, it could have shown that his matched his mother's. Jesus' birth of the Virgin has theological implications in that his origins are not only from earth but heaven. He was like us but not identical with us. He was made in our likeness, having the form of a human being, "ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπωνγενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος" (Phil 2:7). Had he come from heaven in a body God created specially for him, he would not have been flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. In making something entirely new, God would have rejected his own creation. In Jesus' conception by the Spirit and his birth from the Virgin, God was affirming his creation and allowing both heaven and earth to claim him. By taking our flesh upon himself, Jesus shares in our misery and death, and we share in his resurrection, ascension, and sitting at God's right hand (Eph 2:6). In his remarkable hymn, "See, the Lord Ascends in Triumph," Christopher Wordsworth speaks of

> " . . . rais[ing] our human nature
> On the clouds to God's right hand;
> There we sit in heavenly places,
> There with [him] in glory stand.
> Jesus reigns, adored by angels;
> Man with God is on the throne."[2]

By incarnation, God places his deity within our humanity and, in turn, places our humanity on God's throne. Jesus' conception and birth belong to our history, and his incarnation propels our history to the final judgment.

If God does not exist (atheism) or if we can never know whether he does (agnosticism), then incarnation is not an issue.[3] Hinduism, in finding

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[2] *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 494:5. [henceforth *LSB*].

[3] The question of whether there was an incarnation was set off by Bishop John T. Robinson in *Honest to God* in 1962 and was revived by the publication of *The Myth of God*

the divine at various levels in everything, looks like an excessive form of polytheism, though it really is a subtle form of atheism. If everything is God or part of God in some sense, then no one, not even Jesus, can be the only and unique Son of God. Unsurprisingly, Christians in India are persecuted because the doctrine of the incarnation insists on the uniqueness of Jesus. Notwithstanding the achievement of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in singing Christmas carols, Mormonism is a form of polytheism or atheism. In a world where all can become gods, Jesus being God the Son is only qualitatively different from what others can achieve. Buddhism, which may be as much a philosophical way of living as it is a religion, does not allow for belief in a god according to the traditional definition. Buddha may be considered a god because he discovered the secret of life. Christians in the Reformation tradition see the uniqueness of Christianity in its doctrine of justification, but this honor might rightfully be shared with the incarnation, the doctrine that God became flesh in Jesus.

Just as the east is far from the west, so things of the flesh are opposed to those of the Spirit. We do not, however, want to become too Scrooge-like in detaching ourselves from all things worldly.[4] In fleeing from the holiday season to pursue things spiritual, we might find ourselves denying the creation in which God became incarnate. God not only pronounced his creation good seven times but in the incarnation gave promise of its reconstitution to a creation superior to the first. Besides all that, in forming Adam from the dust of the ground, God showed that he likes getting his hands soiled, which is exactly what he did in the humiliation and crucifixion of his Son. While the commercial Christmas lasts two months from October into December, many churches are less serious and have cut back or even eliminated church services to accommodate holiday schedules. Sadly, or perhaps fortunately, more carols may be played in the malls than sung in some churches. Thanksgiving has already slipped out of our grasp, so that it goes by the common name "Turkey Day," a day on which we do everything but acknowledge that everything we are and have

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Incarnate in 1977. It was followed a year later by *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, edited by an avowed agnostic Michael Goulder, a collection of nearly thirty pro and con essays. Noteworthy was the vigorous debate it stirred up in the United Kingdom, something that would be unlikely today, thirty-four years later.

[4] Well known is that Christmas was outlawed in Puritan New England in the seventeenth century. Nathaniel Philbrick, *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War* (New York: Viking Penquin, 2006), 128. Fortune was sent with supplies for the Cape Cod colony and brought "Strangers," those not committed to the Pilgrim way of life. They celebrated Christmas as they had done in England, by playing, leading Governor Bradford to confiscate the athletic equipment!

comes from God. In adjusting the sacred calendar to accommodate non-Christian definitions of Christian things, we are saying that who God is in Jesus is not all that important. To affirm the incarnation as the center of our faith, we should make our Christmas celebrations in the church as long and robust as possible. In spite of the abuse the world heaps on our liturgical calendar, Christmas gives us an opportunity to assess who Jesus is. What we do in the church at Christmas is not so much a party but a celebration with liturgy, ancient hymns, traditional carols, and preaching.

Traditional liturgical services have an advantage over unstructured worship as a continuation of the past. We are doing many things that can be traced back to post-apostolic and apostolic era churches. Each part of the liturgy is given a meaning. For example, the congregation standing for the Holy Gospel reading is a recognition of the gospel, because in it God is not speaking through the prophets but through his Son (Heb 1:1–2). Bowing the head and genuflecting is traditionally done during the creed, but there is a difference of opinion whether it should occur at the words "he was conceived by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary" or at "and was made man," the *homo factus est*. The answer to this question carries theological weight. Incarnation means that God took on human body and soul without the ravages of sins, but humiliation means he was made like us sinners. He was made in the likeness of men (Phil 2:10). Incarnation means that God became man and that by this action the humanity of Jesus was totally permeated by the deity. Incarnation allows for humiliation but is not synonymous with it. The typical metaphor for incarnation is a branding iron glowing with fire or sponge or piece of cloth totally soaked with water. As no part of the cloth is without water, so no part of Jesus' humanity is without deity. God's assuming a human form does not compromise his deity. John may be referring to the transfigured glory of the man Jesus in writing that he was among those who beheld the glory of the one made flesh (John 1:14). In the transfiguration, Jesus looked like God, which of course he was. A similar depiction of the incarnation in all its glory is found in the book of Revelation. "His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire (Rev 1:14), language strikingly similar to how the transfiguration is described. As extraordinary as the transfiguration appearance of Jesus was, equally extraordinary or even more so was the appearance of the God-Man Jesus Christ as a sinner. As Paul says, he took on "the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7), which is expressed in the creed's phrase *homo factus est*, "he was made man." All of us are humiliated, brought to our knees, at one time or another in our lives—it comes with the turf of being a sinner—but the humiliation of Jesus was profound, because

it was the humiliation of the God-Man that ended not in a normal death but one by crucifixion. The man Jesus divested himself of divine appearance and privileges that were his by right, and in their place he took on the form that possessed characteristics that made him indistinguishable from us. Rather than seeing Jesus' humiliation as a contradiction within God, it is how God is known.[5]

While incarnation takes place in Nazareth, at a particular moment in time when God became man (*incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancti ex Maria Virgine*), it is extended into our own time first by our baptism in which the Spirit, by whom the Son of God became incarnate by the Virgin Mary, makes us God's children and hence brothers and sisters of Jesus (Gal 6:4). Our baptismal day is our own Christmas, the day on which we put on the flesh of the one who was made flesh, and in this action he makes us one with him. In baptism the incarnate and crucified one comes with his Father and the Holy Spirit to live with us and within us, and thus we know God as Trinity. Since by incarnation Christ has become our brother, we may now address God as "Our Father who art in heaven." Martin Luther in his hymn rendition of the Nicene Creed, "We All Believe in Our True God," said that the one who possessed an equal Godhead, throne and might with the Father was "made flesh, our elder brother."[6] Of course Jesus said as much. Those who do his Father's will are his brothers and sisters (Matt 12:50). After his resurrection, Jesus might have called his disciples on the carpet for denying and deserting him, but amazingly he called them his brothers (Matt 28:10).

Holy Communion also extends the incarnation into the congregation. At Trinity Lutheran Church of Flatbush in Brooklyn, where my father served as a lifelong pastor, a faithful member refused to attend the Christmas midnight communion service. For her such a sad ritual was out of place. She saw the Lord's Supper in terms of "on the night on which [Jesus] was betrayed," a ritual in preparation for death. Now, there is something to this. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26), death as an atonement for sin, but it also brings the incarnation to reality for the congregation. Incarnation makes Jesus' atonement by death possible; thus, in the sacramental elements he comes to us as the man in whom God is

[5] While Lutherans generally translated the Greek μορφή with "form," the Reformed use "essence," as does the NIV, which is widely used in Evangelical circles. The Reformed scholar Joseph H. Hellerman argues for the Lutheran position. "ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ as a Signifier of Social Status in Philippians 2:9," *Journal of the Evangelical theological Society* 52, no. 4 (2009): 779–797.

[6] *LSB* 954:2.

with us, Emmanuel, the incarnate God. Jesus' promise to drink of the Eucharistic cup in the kingdom of his Father (Matt 26:29) is fulfilled in the Holy Communion first after his resurrection with his disciples and then in every subsequent celebration. His closing words, "Lo, I am with you until the end of the age" (Matt 28:20) are more than his claim to omnipresence. It is the actualization of his name, Emmanuel, because in the Eucharist he is God-with-us, body and soul, flesh and blood, both as the host at the table and the very sustenance for our bodies and souls. Early Christians set aside each Sunday to commemorate Jesus' resurrection, but the Sunday celebration of the Holy Communion commemorates the incarnation, a weekly Christmas, if you will. For the first centuries Christians did not make pilgrimages to the Holy Land because the Lord's Supper was their Nazareth, their Bethlehem, their Jerusalem, where the Lord was conceived, born, died, and rose again. By the incarnation what Adam lost in his transgression was restored in Jesus, so that ordinary things are released from Eden's curse to become vehicles for the flesh and blood of the incarnate God to come to us. This Sacrament is a kind of secondary incarnation, though we should hardly speak in such terms. Incarnation is also a matter of the Holy Spirit, who perfected the primordial ancient chaos (Gen 1:2). He who proceeds from the Father and Son, and with whom together he is worshiped and glorified, focuses his action on one cell, one particular ovum of the Virgin Mary, and in this action "the Word was made flesh." Through the incarnation he becomes the Spirit of Jesus, and, in being sent into the world by the crucified and resurrected Word made flesh, the Spirit's person and work are defined alone by Jesus. He takes what belongs to Jesus and declares it to us (John 16:24) and accompanies the Sacraments that flow from Jesus' side as water and blood (John 19:30, 34). The Spirit, by whom the Son of God took on flesh, encases himself in Baptism and the Supper, and so the incarnation realizes itself for us in the sacraments. Luther placed the origin of Holy Communion one step backwards in the incarnation. In his eucharistic hymn "O Lord, We Praise Thee," he prays that the body "born of Mary" and blood of Jesus might plead for us in every "trial, fear and need."[7]

Incarnation not only has spiritual but material benefits. In the incarnation the Creator identifies with us and reclaims his creation for us who are Christ's brothers and sisters. Paul says, "All things are yours" (1 Cor 3:21). Thus, we Christians do not even pretend to engage in the hypocrisy of projecting a holiness or sanctification that is superior to that of others; neither do we exclude ourselves from a full enjoyment of the

[7] *LSB* 617:3.

material world. We are privileged with a blessed overindulgence. Luther admitted that now and then he may have had a few too many beers—and why not? Incarnation is our claim on the world. Those who do not come to terms with the incarnation in knowing God cannot look beneath the surface of the creation to see the Creator. Their engagement with world is superficial and their enjoyment of its pleasures last only a short time. For them, life is a succession of mental hangovers with delusions quickly following ecstasy. They see their past in a primordial cell from which they have evolved by chance; their future is described by the most miserable verses from Ecclesiastes so that they see no difference between their lives and those of animals (Eccl 3:21). For them the world is autonomous, self-contained. What they see is all they get, and so they work to get as much as they can and ignore the inevitable—that in the end it all will be taken away. Our view of life is determined by the incarnation, in which we see that God has transformed the world so that we see him as Creator. Hence, incarnation has cosmic dimensions:

> [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, . . . all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col 1:15–17)

Though only at the resurrection will the world be fully ours, we assert our claim to what God has created and redeemed by enjoying it to the extent that our resources and deteriorating bodies allow. Perhaps Jesus probably was thinking of how we Christians would or at least should celebrate the incarnation when he said of himself, "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds" (Matt 11:19; cf. Luke 7:34). Jesus' abandonment in the face of his own death was his own confession that after being raised from the dead, a world of excessive pleasure and joy lay before him. Not without reason Jesus used a wedding feast as a description of the life to which we look forward (Matt 22:1). The weeks leading up to our annual observance of the Nativity are a time of partying, eating and drinking, a general carousing, often without purpose, straining even the most physically fit bodies and occasionally resulting even in vehicular deaths. We Christians don't party, we celebrate as a statement of faith that by the incarnation God vanquished Satan's hold on this world and has taken to himself the world that rejected him. In the Bible the word "flesh" belongs to the unholy triad of "the world, the devil, and our flesh" that oppose God (Jas 3:15). Flesh will not inherit God's kingdom (1 Cor 15:50) and flesh cannot recognize who Jesus

really is (Matt 16:17), but in the incarnation Jesus takes on our flesh, retrieves the world from Satan, and returns it to us in the Sacraments. Easter is also a holiday of the incarnation. By raising Jesus from the dead, God recognized that the God-Man made atonement for sin and laid the foundation for perfecting his creation begun in the incarnation. Easter is the middle point between incarnation and the perfection of creation.

So incarnation should also be understood as a celebration of creation in terms of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and the Lord's Prayer, "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10). In the beginning, God was at home on the earth as he was in heaven. Heaven is God's throne and the earth his footstool (Is 66:1). Genesis 3 changed all that. For the sake of Adam, the ground was cursed and the "and" in between "the heaven and the earth" was removed. In Christ, God put the "and" back between heaven and earth, but this could only be done by reclaiming the world from Satan who had set himself as its god (2 Cor 4:4). The Lord's Prayer provides the blueprint of how this would be accomplished by the incarnation. God's name, his kingdom, and his will were firmly established in heaven but met resistance everywhere on earth. In the Lord's Prayer we pray that what is ordinary in heaven could be commonplace on earth. Through the incarnation, the foundation for cosmic restoration was laid and completed by the resurrected Jesus, who proclaimed that "all authority [was] given to [him] in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18). God's work of renovation begun in Christ continues in his church. God has heard our prayer "on earth as it is heaven" and has answered it. Heaven and earth are reconciled. They are brought together. In the Old Testament, God was already answering the Lord's Prayer in bringing the world to himself by choosing Israel, but his successes were sporadic. Each success was followed by failure as Israel was gradually reduced from a nation to a remnant of one man and that one man was Jesus Christ who was God's new Israel (Matt 2:15). Luther's great hymn "A Mighty Fortress" put flesh on these words of the Lord's Prayer, "on earth as it is heaven." Satan appears invincible and devils fill the earth, but on to the earth steps an ordinary looking man who, upon closer examination, happens to be the Lord of hosts.[8] Then Luther adds this kicker: apart from this man, Jesus Christ, there is no other God. Luther was probably not thinking of Matthew in describing Jesus as the Lord of hosts, but the idea is found in the opening narrative of Matthew's Gospel that the infant Jesus is Emmanuel. Jesus, the God-with-us, who rescued Israel from its enemies, saves his people from their sins (Matt 1:21). There was never a question

[8] *LSB* 657:2

that the Son of Man had authority in heaven (Mark 2:10), but by his death he established it on earth. Now God is as much at home on earth in his church as he is in the heavens. Isaac Watts caught this in "Joy to the World."[9] Heaven and nature sing together because the curse that brought thorns has been lifted. Fields, floods, rocks, hills, and plains join the heavens in one united chorus. Incarnation is simply another way of saying that heaven and earth have come together in Jesus with the promise of a complete restitution on the Last Day. A world captured by Satan is returned to us by Jesus, and so Christmastide has become for us a season of a celebration. God has vanquished Satan hook, line, and sinker. Fishing terms might seem inappropriate to describe God becoming flesh, but that is how the ancients saw it. Hidden in the humanity of Jesus was God entrapping Satan like a worm covering a hook that lodges in the fish's mouth to catch it. Ancient theologians may have stretched the worm, hook, fish analogy a bit far because God defeats Satan not with trickery but by his righteousness. In fact, the analogy could be totally false in that the devils saw Jesus as the incarnate God long before anyone else did (Matt 8:29). However, the ancients correctly saw the incarnation as God appearing as an ordinary man to destroy Leviathan, the ancient Serpent, who from the beginning deceived the world.

Christians who do not see beyond Christmas to Lent and Good Friday will never know what God purposed in the incarnation, but on the other hand, without a full and robust understanding of the incarnation, the meaning of Good Friday is not grasped. Without the incarnation, the death of Jesus appears as a tragic miscarriage of justice or as the death of an innocent but feckless man who did not exercise his legal options to avoid execution by crucifixion. Humanly speaking, escape was possible. Without the incarnation, Jesus' death would have no value for others, and if it did, its value could not be understood as a full atonement for sin. Its value would rest in the magnanimity of God, who was willing to accept a partial payment in place of the full price. It would be as if God took pennies on the dollar for the debt we owed him. But that is not the way it was. God had no other choice but to accept the death of Jesus as a full and complete atonement for sin because by the incarnation the death of Jesus was the death of God and, thus, had an infinite value. To put it crassly, the incarnation put God in a box. He had to accept Jesus's death as a full atonement and forgive all. Had God not accepted Jesus' death as an atonement for all sin, he would have denied his own righteousness, for God had to release the world from its curse and us from the sentence of death. It was not a

[9] *LSB* 387

matter of his free will. For pedagogical purposes God's works of creation, redemption, and sanctification are attributed separately to each of the three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but this does not do justice to understanding the incarnation as a trinitarian event initiated by the Father and effected by Spirit. Finding God in Jesus' humanity precedes our knowing him as Trinity. Our creeds present God as he is in himself, Father-Son-Holy Spirit, but the Gospels begin with Jesus as God or the Son of God before presenting the Father as God. In Matthew, the Father is implicit in calling Jesus out of Egypt (2:15) and at his baptism (3:17), but he is only made explicit in the Sermon on the Mount (5:16). Luke identifies the sources for his Gospel as the eyewitnesses of the word, that is, Jesus (1:2). In John, the Word is introduced before God (1:1). Incarnation is the threshold to knowing God as Father. God does not come to the world apart from Jesus. There are no end-runs around Jesus. In her womb Mary carries the eternal, infinite God. The manger becomes God's throne. Again, we reference Luther in his translation of the ancient Latin sequence:

> "All praise to Thee, Eternal God,
> Who, clothed in garb of flesh and blood,
> Dost take a manger for Thy throne,
> While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.
> Hallelujah!"[10]

It has been asked, "If Adam had not sinned, would God would have become incarnate?" Speculative questions do not in each case deserve definite answers, but John Duns Scotus may have been on the right side of the argument in holding that the incarnation had to happen. The presence of the tree of life showed that God intended something better for Adam. Eden was the testing place to see if Adam would recognize himself as the creature and God as the Creator. Of course he did not, but if he had, Genesis 3 would not have been the account of expulsion and death but Adam's elevation to a higher life in which he would have lived in an even closer communion with God. To paraphrase the creed, God "for us men would have come down from heaven and become incarnate." In spite of our sin, God through the incarnation almost puts us on par with himself. How much more would this have happened, had Adam not sinned. God's image in us could have been tweaked. We will leave the question at that point. A less speculative question is whether God had a choice in coming to save us. Could he have left us wallow in our sin? Was our redemption optional? Here we can say with a bit more certainty that our damnation was not an option for God. Had he not come to our aid, he would have relinquished his material creation to

[10] *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 80:1.

Satan and acknowledged Satan's claim as the god of this world. Genesis 3:15 is not so much a promise to our first parents of our salvation as it is a threat of judgment that the serpent will be destroyed—not by a show of divine omnipotence, but God beating Satan at his own game by using a man! For us this was a win-win situation. The God who was the creator of heaven and earth and allowed no other gods besides himself could not tolerate the serpent masquerading as god, claiming the earth as his own. Thus, the certainty of our salvation rests not in God choosing one option among others but in his being the God who tolerates no other gods. So incarnation is not first a matter of the second article of the creed, but the first article, because by it God succeeds in reasserting his control over his creation. God is not a monolithic monad, an infinite expanse of majesty and terror, but the tri-personal God with each of the three divine persons continually communicating with the other two. By the incarnation, that God brings us into the divine conversation with himself. In our hearing, the words of Jesus are the word of God. By our prayers, liturgies, and hymns we engage in the divine conversation. As in Eden, God is again socially comfortable with us, and by faith we are home with him. We are no longer aliens but members of the household of God (Eph 2:19).

What is intended in the incarnation may be summed up in the coming of the magi, at which time Jesus was perhaps six months old—a time when babies are forever hungry, waking up in the middle of the night, suffering in acquiring teeth, forever needing a diaper change. When the wise men came into the house of Mary and Joseph, they did not worship the God in heaven. They worshiped the παιδίον, the child that was indistinguishable from any other six-month old, a baby that was made in the likeness of other babies. Understand this and you know what the incarnation is. Now is the time to put your faith in the incarnation to the test. Lutherans are comfortable referencing the altar and the cross. Perhaps the next step is placing a creche in the church surrounded by Mary, Joseph, shepherds, magi, and animals. Then on Christmas, we place an image of the Christ-Child in the manger and kneel before it. This would carry the message that as God for us men and for our salvation, Jesus came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary. What a blessed idolatry that would be—God in the flesh.[11]

David P. Scaer

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[11] See David P. Scaer, *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics,* vol. 6: *Christology* (Fort Wayne: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1989). Especially note chapter three, "The Preexistence and Incarnation of the Son of God," and chapter four, "The Virgin Birth of Christ."

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Book Reviews

***The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition.* By James R. Edwards. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009. 402 pages. Softcover. $36.00.**

Having four evangelical accounts of the life of Jesus and how they relate to one another has provided grist for the church's mill since the earliest records of the post-apostolic church. In this volume James R. Edwards claims to offer a new paradigm specifically for the resolution of the Synoptic problem. He specifically engages the portions of Luke's Gospel that have no corresponding material in Matthew and Mark.

Although he acknowledges the Hebrew thought world lying beneath the Greek surface of each Gospel, Edwards notes that the subtext becomes more visible in Luke's Gospel. Thus, his thesis is that the high concentration of Semitisms in "Special Luke"—those portions of Luke that are not shared in common with Matthew and/or Mark—can be accounted for on the assumption that they derive from the original Hebrew Gospel.

Edwards spends the first three chapters noting the many references to the existence of *The Gospel to the Hebrews* in early Christianity. The list of early church fathers who make reference to and quote from this Gospel are impressive—Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, John Chrysostom, Jerome, and the Venerable Bede, to name only some—with Jerome providing at least twenty-four examples. The evidence is compelling not only for the existence of this Gospel but also for its high regard in the early church.

Many of these early church fathers held that Matthew was the author of this Gospel written in the Hebrew language. Edwards does not hold to this opinion but does see it as the source of the non-Markan portions of Luke. Thus, the existence of *The Gospel to the Hebrews* and its use by Luke helps to solve, at least in part, the Synoptic problem.

Edwards' research is thorough and intriguing, especially to one who has not even considered the existence of a Hebrew Gospel. In fact, I confess that this aspect alone captured my attention more than the discussion of its use by Luke. Following such compelling evidence, the question is not so much "Was there a Hebrew Gospel?" but rather, "When was it written and by whom?" An earlier date may place Matthew as writer with sections of Luke relying upon it. However, a later date (after the Synoptic Gospels), may point to a Gospel translated from a Greek source, perhaps even a

heretical gospel such as *The Gospel of the Nazarenes* or *The Gospel of the Ebionites.*

One concern with Edwards' work is that he assumes Markan priority over against Matthean. He does not give good reasons for this other than noting it as the opinion of the majority of scholars today. While this may be the case, this assumption becomes very important in Edwards' decision-making process and should be supported more fully. He goes to great length to prove the non-existence of *Q* ("*Adieu* to 'Q'," as he titles one of his chapters) and would be well served by providing more justification for following a Markan priority.

The author has provided an excellent, well-written volume that I found to be intriguing and thought-provoking. Anyone interested in New Testament textual tradition and the Synoptic problem should read this book.

Jeffrey H. Pulse

***The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus.* By Benjamin Fiore, S.J. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007. 253 pages. Hard-cover. $39.95**

This volume by Benjamin Fiore is the twelfth in the *Sacra Pagina* series, of which Daniel J. Harrington was the editor. Fiore is a Jesuit Priest, as was Harrington. Harrington, the editor of the series, was Professor of New Testament and Chair of the Biblical Studies Department at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, recognized as a leading modern scholar of the New Testament. Fiore is Pastor of St. Michael parish in Buffalo, New York. The book at hand was written when Fiore was President and Professor of Religious Studies at Campion College at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, a Jesuit university college, where he taught for twenty-five years.

The Pastoral Epistles is a relatively short work, treating the three books in 197 pages. For each section of the biblical text Fiore provides his own translation, followed by a section containing careful isagogical and exegetical notes. In the notes, Greek and Hebrew words are transliterated. Fiore pays attention to the frequency and context of important words, providing biblical citations for their use both inside and outside of the Pastoral Epistles, as well as in other ancient Greek writings. After presenting notes on the text, Fiore provides his interpretation of the text and concludes each

section with a helpful bibliography. The indices provided at the end of the book are complete and useful.

A unique aspect of Fiore's treatment of the text is his impressive command of ancient and classical texts, including early Christian and patristic texts that he brings to bear on his analysis, translation, and interpretation. In the author's preface he attributes this treatment to his desire to "expand [his] interest in Latin and Greek literature and culture into the area of biblical studies" (3). The author's academic background "focused on the world of the Greco-Roman moralists and rhetoricians and on how the New Testament writings, particularly the Pauline correspondence, reflected these" (3).

Regarding the Pastoral Epistles, Fiore finds that "the three letters weave creedal summaries and excerpts of other materials into the text. The explicit attention given to these, and the allusions to community officers and ecclesial procedures, suggest a level of organization and a history of Christian tradition that go beyond that evidenced by the other letters of Paul" (5).

As an example of his approach to the texts, the author details the development of a classical rhetorical device called a *chreia*, a "multipart exercise in the development of a theme," and identifies five basic components of the *chreia*. He then detects these hortatory elements in sections of the Pastoral Epistles and ties them to this classical method (1 Tim 1:3–20; 2 Tim 1:3–18; and 2 Tim 3:1–4:8) (16–17).

In keeping with the other *Sacra Pagina* titles, Fiore's treatment of the Pastoral Epistles is accomplished using critical methodology. As the editor explains in his preface, "The goal of *Sacra Pagina* is to provide sound critical analysis without any loss of sensitivity to religious meaning" (xi). Thus, Fiore regularly references "Q." The author accepts that there really was a man named Paul, but he dates the writing of the Pauline Epistles after Paul's death (21), proposing that the epistles were written by a member of the "Pauline community" (21). In a critical treatment of the Pastoral Epistles, the named recipients of the letters do not fare as well as Paul, the author allowing that both Timothy and Titus "might well be fictitious" (21). To "retain the aura of Pauline authorship created by the letter writer," however, Fiore treats the text as if it were actually written by Paul.

Thus, for Fiore, the Pastoral Epistles are writings of the Pauline community to model recipients, created as a vehicle for perpetuating the Pauline teachings and traditions: "This pseudonymous 'official' letter

presents the readers with two models: the addressee Timothy and the sender Paul" (34). This critical methodology allows Fiore to assert of the construction in Paul's opening greeting to Timothy—"from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord"—that "the title/name thus exalts Jesus to a level on a par with YHWH, though he is not entirely identified with YHWH" (33).

Similarly, in considering the "qualities of leadership candidates" as they are applied to the overseer/bishop in 1 Timothy 3:7, Fiore writes, "As is the case with other sayings, in the elaboration the author uses traditional material. No such saying has been found in secular Greek. Its origin with the author of the PE is unlikely . . ." (73). The author supports his position by citing the usage of specific Greek words that he finds to deviate from other New Testament books, including the epistles of Paul. In the same way, addressing the list of qualities necessary in elders in Titus 1:6, Fiore writes, "The list of qualifications closely resembles that for overseers at 1 Tim 3:2–4. The author is apparently using a church order source" (197).

The Lutheran reader who believes in the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture will find many of Fiore's interpretive conclusions unpalatable. Peter clearly identifies Paul's Epistles as Scripture in 2 Peter 3:16. One wonders, then, approaching the Pastoral Epistles as the assertions of the Pauline community and not as a divinely inspired text, how the author would treat the 2 Timothy 3:16 construction τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα (the sacred writings), or the clear assertion in the following verse that "every scripture passage is divinely inspired" (Fiore's translation of πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, 171).

For Fiore, πᾶσα γραφὴ refers only to the Old Testament Scriptures, which Timothy would have known from childhood (170), even though the context of 2 Timothy 3 and the theme of Timothy's charge to proclaim true doctrine against false teachers clearly points to New Testament Christian teaching. Recognizing this, the author holds that the Pastoral Epistles "maintain the Christian view that the Hebrew Scriptures, when read from a Christological perspective, provide saving wisdom. They offer the Christian an interpretation of the career and saving work of Jesus" (170).

For Fiore, critical dating would mean that at the time of Paul's writing 1 Timothy, Timothy would probably not have read or heard the Gospels according to Matthew or Luke, but that by the time of 2 Timothy, he would have read or heard Mark, or at least an early layer of "Q." This seems allowable under the "Two-Source Hypothesis" and its modern iterations. As assertions of the Pauline community to perpetuate Paul's traditions and

teachings, the Pastoral Epistles cannot be considered Scripture in the proper sense in Fiore's treatment. Much less possible is that Paul knew he was writing divinely inspired Scripture when he wrote Timothy and Titus since Fiore holds that the author was not Paul and that Timothy and Titus may not have existed.

Looking past the obvious deficiencies of a critical approach to Holy Scripture, there is much to be gleaned from Fiore's commentary. The original translation of the text that he provides is carefully rendered, and his notes on the translation are helpful. His structural analysis of the text and his far-reaching command of classical and ancient literature set his commentary apart.

Mark P. Braden
Pastor, Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church
Detroit, Michigan

***The Failure of Sex Education in the Church: Mistaken Identity, Compromised Purity*. By Linda Bartlett. Iowa Falls, Iowa: Titus 2-4Life, 2014. 252 pages. Softcover. $15.00.**

"For many centuries there was no sex education, yet children were conceived and their parents enjoyed the process" (207).

What method of sex education is best for the church? Bartlett argues that sex education has failed because of its myopic view of sex and sexual difference. The focus on sexual intercourse and sexual desire stimulates attention and curiosity toward sexual relations rather than directing young people to the broader vision of marriage and family. To modify or even to reform contemporary accepted sex education falls short of the church's mission. Instead, sex education in the church ought to be thrown out and replaced with comprehensive education in purity, manhood and womanhood, and the family.

Bartlett's fundamental criticism is that the church has adopted the language and view of the world regarding sex and identity. Language such as "I'm inherently a sexual being" or "children are sexual from birth" reinforces the secular fascination with sexual activity, sexual desire, and sexual attraction. If a person is sexual from birth, sexual expression is a right that need not be limited to marriage, and giving expression to sexual desire is acceptable and to be encouraged (93). In contrast, the church needs to re-invigorate the biblical understanding of sexual activity as subordinate to marital and parental identities. To resist defining a person

by his or her sexuality recognizes that natural inclinations might be expressed in a sinful way and affirms the fallen nature of human beings. Sex has a particular context for expression (in marriage) and a particular purpose (marital unity). Any sex education properly occurs subordinately to instruction in purity, marriage, masculinity, femininity, and parenthood. These identities, not sexual desires and activity, are definitive for the baptized (25–31).

Bartlett points to the encroaching influences of Carl Rogers' non-directive psychotherapy, contemporary humanism's vision of overthrowing familial relationships, and Alfred Kinsey's research on sexual behavior as providing the ideal underpinnings for sex education. As the church embraced sex education, it unwittingly opened the door to these influences as well. Bartlett does not set this forth as a kind of widespread or organized conspiracy. Rather, she demonstrates how the gradual establishment of these influences in secular life also led to their implicit acceptance by the church through the church's acceptance and promotion of sex education.

Rogerian psychology encourages people to access their inclinations as a kind of self-consultation with the specific goal of learning to "trust their impulses" (7–8). This diminished the traditional Christian concern that a person not naturally follow base impulses but discipline himself according to Scripture in order to identify and work against untrained passions rooted in original sin. Likewise, Kinsey's research was a catalyst for changing views about sex in the United States, views that also seeped into the church. Relying heavily on the work of Judith Reisman, Bartlett argues that Kinsey's work introduced and made acceptable the notion that children are sexual from birth (37–38). This does not mean simply that a child is a boy or girl, but that children "have the capacity for sexual pleasure and response" (35). Such a view led to the conventional wisdom that such innate sexual capacity ought to be affirmed and explored.

Some may want to criticize Bartlett for focusing on Kinsey's research, which is nearly seventy years old and has long since been advanced, both by supporters and detractors. Some may also want to dismiss her for relying on Reisman, who alleged that Kinsey himself experimented on boys and infants and/or hired or trained others to do so. However deviant one finds Kinsey's own sexual behavior, the Kinsey Institute has effectively denied Reisman's allegations (http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/about/cont-akchild.html). Nevertheless, Reisman's argument connecting Kinsey to fundamental changes in the American perspective on sex remains intact.

However, to focus on these elements is to miss Bartlett's argument, which is not about any of Kinsey's particular findings, some of which have fared poorly, some well, in subsequent secular research. Rather, Bartlett demonstrates that Kinsey's influence fundamentally changed the American perspective on human identity with respect to sex. Prior to Kinsey, sexual desire was one of many elements of human nature, and it was subordinate to one's masculinity and femininity and, most importantly, to standards of human relationships such as marriage. Since Kinsey, sexual desire has been expanded to the broad concept of *sexuality*, which is now regarded as so fundamental to human identity that each person is defined in part by his or her sexual desire (33–44, 91–98, 125–135). Although the term *sexuality* long pre-dates Kinsey, its American popular appropriation as referring to sexual character, capacity for sexual pleasure, or sexual orientation developed only after Kinsey. It gave expression to the post-Kinseyan view of an identity with or orientation toward sexual activity (69–72). This is readily apparent in the contemporary phenomenon of identifying a person as heterosexual, homosexual, or the like.

In contrast to this contemporary perspective, human identity is not based or centered on sexuality. First Corinthians 7 teaches that marriage—and therefore sexual relations—is not required, and Matthew 22:30 states that, in the resurrection, people "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." These passages indicate that human identity does not depend on sexuality, that is, sexual expression or capacity. That human identity does not depend on sexuality does not deny that each person is either male or female. It means, though, that the capacity for sexual desire and the need for sexual expression are not inherent to human identity. In the resurrection there will be no more need for sexual expression nor will the opportunity for it be available. Those resurrected, however, will still surely be human beings.

In contrast, sex education makes one's identity about sex and implies or teaches that pleasure is the purpose of sex (26). Whether secular or Christian, sex education tends to attenuate shame and to encourage an openness to sex in general by framing all things sexual as positive, rather than to distinguish the context and relationship in which sexual activity is good and when it is to be restrained. The generally open and positive presentation of sexual activity (in contrast to sex within marriage) tends to promote acceptance of all sexual behavior, even that which is immoral or harmful. Even among Christians, so-called safe sex becomes the last resort alternative for those who cannot control themselves. This alternative is presented as one that can be managed simply by a prophylactic without

giving due attention to emotional and relational injury. Although Christian sexual educators do not intentionally promote all of these, their adoption of sexual education methods and topics makes it difficult, in practice, to decouple completely these elements from one another (145–146).

Sex education typically introduces children to explicit language that desensitizes them to the embarrassment or shame that supports a more comprehensive purity. It undermines modesty (54, 59). Even abstinence-only sex education focuses on sex and how enjoyable it is. Although students are told to wait until marriage, education about sex has the effect of encouraging young people to think more about the pleasure of sex and, potentially, to lead them into temptation (139). Sex education with an abstinence emphasis can also imply to young people that any kind of sexual contact is acceptable, except coitus. So long as coitus is reserved for marriage, people may express their sexuality through other kinds of sexual contact (152–153).

The emphasis on technique may inhibit many married couples because they have come to view sex as performance aiming at pleasure, rather than a time of trusting intimacy. The focus is on reaching the greatest sexual stimulation, rather than union and intimacy, of which enjoyment is a fruit (208).

Bartlett emphasizes that none of this means that sex is dishonorable or shameful in itself. Rather, sexual—really, marital—relations, are so honorable that any corruption, degradation, or compromising of it is shameful. Sexual relations remain honorable and pure within marriage, and that is where they are to be practiced and, for the most part, discussed (159). In marriage, a husband and wife have the honorable freedom to explore, discuss, and express their sexuality in accordance with being made one flesh.

While *The Failure of Sex Education in the Church* is essentially a critique of sex education, Bartlett also discusses alternatives to sex education. Such alternatives shift the focus from sex to marriage. This helps young people to move away from an infatuation with sex and physical pleasure to the broader and deeper joys of marriage. It also helps to combat pressures to marry late, after establishing a career. Instead, young people learn that the benefits of marriage are greater than those of an education or career, and the joy and intimacy of a young couple maturing together as husband and wife is healthier than waiting to marry until one is independently established. Proper instruction in manhood and womanhood is concerned with helping young people "stand guard" against the flesh, to practice self-

control, and to understand comprehensively the place of sex in human life (98). Though not presented systematically, themes for alternative education, emphasizing purity, modesty, biblical manhood and womanhood, and marriage are treated in various places throughout the book (e.g., 99–110, 147–148, 179–186, 201–202, and 211–213). Bartlett also includes references for further study in these areas.

The Failure of Sex Education in the Church would be improved by a more organized presentation and the tempering of very occasional sensationalizing. Bartlett presents material by cyclical repetition, with each cycle further documenting and developing her argument. The reader must integrate each cycle with the previous to perceive the full force of Bartlett's argument. However, the reader's perseverance will be rewarded with both a heightened awareness of the matter and a desire to discover and implement alternatives. The occasional sensational tone may be excused because her argument holds true. *The Failure of Sex Education in the Church* is highly recommended for parents, lay leaders, pastors, and others interested in the topic.

Gifford A. Grobien

Luther's Works, Volume 76: Church Postil II. **Edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes and James L. Langebartels. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014. 500 pages. Hardcover. $54.99.**

The best thing one can do to learn how better to preach is simply to read good sermons and postils, and one will be hard-pressed to find better ones than those of Martin Luther.

Luther's postils are usually kinds of commentaries on the material to be preached rather than the sermons themselves, yet his style of commentary is not quite the same as what the modern reader might expect. His *enarrationes*, as they were also called, tend to blend formal commentary and expositional, hortatory turns of phrase that one might employ in the sermon itself. With Luther, you always get style and substance together.

Up to now, the most widely used of his postils translated into English was a compendium of eight volumes of church postils edited by John Nicholas Lenker and translated by Lenker and others. Originally published over one hundred years ago, their reprinting by Baker Book House (Grand Rapids, Michigan) in 1986 was in itself a great encouragement to read and consult Luther the master preacher in sermon preparation, especially for the pastor who uses the historic lectionary.

Now, thanks to Benjamin Mayes and James Langebartels, that encouragement is redoubled, for this volume and its companion (*Vol. 75: Church Postil I*, also published in 2013) not only contain better and updated translations of the postils in Lenker but, more importantly, Luther's own 1540 revisions of those sermons originally published between 1522 and 1525. The greatest weakness of the nineteenth-century Lenker edition is that it followed the trend set by Philip Jacob Spener's 1700 edition of ignoring Luther's mature form. This new edition presents the sermons in the order Luther originally intended, that is, with Epistles and Gospels interspersed and categorized in calendar order, another correction of Lenker, who had placed the Gospels in separate volumes from the Epistles. This *Volume 76: Church Postil II* is the Winter Postil (*75* is the Summer Postil) and takes the reader from New Year's through Lent.

Luther's approach to preaching is refreshingly free of extra-biblical vignettes and stories that have wearied listeners thought to be in need of trite illustrations for their enlightenment. Instead, what Luther provides is an abundance of *biblical* illustrations. Too often dismissed as something to be avoided, here allegorizing is nothing more than Scripture pressed into service as it was meant to be: Pharaoh bid the Egyptians to do as Joseph said to them (Gen 41:55), and so "must we all come to Christ" (18); though Moses' face (Exod 34:30, 33) needed a veil, "Christ's face, when He was transfigured, was . . . delightful" (48–49); the world rages against faith, just as "Cain wants to rule alone and to have his brother dead, so that he is no more [Gen 4:1–16]" (285); the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21–22) came to Christ because she "perceived her need, and for that reason she ran after the sweet fragrance (Song of Solomon 1[:3; 4:11])" (378).

For Luther, there is a proper use of allegory, which is "to interpret the Scriptures spiritually (as people say) through allegories, as St. Paul does" when finding Christ and the church in the types. "St. Paul calls this a mystery, that is, a hidden, secret meaning underneath the external meaning of the histories" (340). Yet allegorizing must always be done in service of the gospel, or else it becomes "babbling . . . good for killing time, if you have nothing else to preach." Better, says he, to "abandon such fables and remain with the simple teaching and meaning of Christ" (315).

The challenge for the preacher who would seek to replace the use of hackneyed vignettes with the kinds of biblical references that fill Luther's sermons is to become thoroughly acquainted not only with the particular readings appointed for the day but with all of the Scriptures, as these sermons show Luther clearly to have been.

The only criticism that could be offered of these volumes is a very minor one that could even be leveled to a degree against the Weimar edition itself—namely, the overuse of brackets. If the intention is to recover Luther's thought as he intended, even quotation marks around verbatim biblical references would need to be eliminated, for he did not use them. By supplying them, the Weimar editors removed Luther from his monastically learned employment of *enarratio,* which involved making even verbatim biblical phrases one's own. In fact, this is another notable and helpful stylistic element to be found in Luther's preaching. The Weimar quotation marks, which look literally rather like hen-scratching, could be slightly annoying to the Luther purist; these volumes have taken the hen-scratching to another level. Wherever words are supplied in English that are lacking in the original, they are bracketed; and the brackets seem to mar the page unnecessarily. Better to let Luther be Luther, at least in this reviewer's estimation.

On the whole, this volume and its companion are exceedingly helpful. In terms of scholarship available in English, the update is invaluable, and the continuing encyclopedia that is *Luther's Works*, a project begun in 1955 and renewed by Concordia Publishing House this past decade, is made the more venerable by this notable contribution. The world of Luther scholarship is indebted to Mayes and Langebartels for the accomplishment of this painstaking update.

Burnell F. Eckardt
Pastor, St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Kewanee, Illinois

***Paul's Letter to the Romans*. By Colin Kruse. Pillar New Testament Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012. 669 pages. Hardcover. $52.00.**

The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series aims to "make clear the text of Scripture as we have it" (xiv). It is designed with pastors and teachers of the Bible in mind. As such, the volumes in this series are written with a certain reverence for the word of God. Pastors who do not wish to wade through a sea of critical material to get to a theological gem will find these commentaries helpful. The PNTC commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans by Colin Kruse is no exception.

As far as commentaries go, Kruse, senior lecturer in New Testament at Melbourne School of Theology in Australia, has produced an above-average commentary on Paul's "most important piece of writing" (xvi). It

is based primarily on the NIV translation of the Bible. Before getting into the meat of the text of Romans, Kruse spends an appropriate amount of space on introductory matters. In addition to providing a summary of the letter's content (4–6), he also identifies for the reader some of the main theological themes in the letter (22–33). It is helpful, when reading any book of the Bible, to have a bird's-eye view of the material before delving into it.

For the sake of readability, and to keep with the flow of Paul's argument, the commentary uses additional notes to highlight topics that are of special importance. This allows the reader to read Kruse's exposition of Romans without getting distracted by tangential material. It also allows the author to delve more deeply into specific areas of interest. These additional notes are a helpful feature of this commentary. If one chooses, he can read further on topics such as "Natural Theology" (93–109), "The Nature of the Homosexual Practice Condemned by Paul" (109–115), "Baptism in the Pauline Corpus" (270–272), and many others. These notes provide, in effect, a "commentary within a commentary."

From a theological standpoint, it is hard to disagree with Kruse that "as far as Romans is concerned, the center, heart, and organizing principle of Pauline theology is the action of God through the person and work of Jesus Christ to deal with the effects of human sin, individually, communally, and cosmically" (33). Kruse defines justification as "God's gracious acquittal of guilty sinners" (27) and affirms the forensic character of justification.

Kruse views Baptism in less than sacramental terms. He comes close to a proper understanding of Paul's baptismal theology when he says, "It seems to be implied that our death and burial with Christ in baptism must be as real as the newness of life that it makes possible" (261). However, according to Kruse, Baptism for Paul is "part of the full conversion-initiation experience that involves repentance and faith in Christ expressed in submission to baptism on the part of the convert. . . ." (260). While seeking to remain faithful to the text, Kruse does not completely avoid a Reformed bias.

In one of his additional notes, Kruse discusses the "Identity of the 'I' in 7:7–25." He provides a survey of differing interpretations of Paul's use of the first person singular. Was Paul speaking about his own experience as a Jewish boy or describing his pre-Christian experience? Was he describing his experience as a Christian? Or, did Paul's use of the "I" in Romans 7 speak of Israel as a nation? Kruse is not favorable to the idea that is

traditionally held among Lutherans, namely, that Paul is describing his own struggles as a Christian. He seems to have difficulty reconciling Paul's words in 6:14 ("For sin shall no longer be your master") with Paul's description of the power of sin. He adopts the view that the "I" "denotes Israel's historical encounter with the law and her ongoing experience of life under the law" (321).

No commentary on Romans would be complete without an evaluation and critique of what James Dunn has called the "New Perspective" on Paul and the law by E.P. Sanders. Kruse provides an adequate appraisal of Sanders' examination of Palestinian Judaism as well as a summary of scholarly criticism of the "New Perspective." Kruse seems to lean in the direction of Sanders' critics, offering his own summary of the strengths and weaknesses of Sanders' arguments.

One of the strengths of Kruse's work is his ability to interact with Old Testament and Second Temple literature. In several places, he shows where Paul is alluding to earlier texts. Such interaction affirms that Romans was not written in a literary vacuum. Paul's teaching about Jesus, like that of other New Testament writers, is rooted in the Scriptures of Judaism. This is especially evident in Paul's identification of Jesus as "Son of God," "Christ," and "Lord." For Kruse, Paul's use of the title "Lord" underscores his deity, since the title 'Lord' refers to Yahweh in the Old Testament (47). For believers in Rome, where Caesar claimed to be the κύριος, Kruse believes that the confession of Jesus as "Lord" would have additional connotations. Jesus was thus "not only the Lord of individual believers, but also the one who would subdue all political as well as spiritual powers beneath his feet. . . ." (47).

Kruse can be commended for offering an exposition of Paul's letter to the Romans that is easily accessible to pastors and teachers of the Bible. It is scholarly without being overly critical of the text and takes into account recent developments in Pauline research. While some of Kruse's conclusions on doctrinal issues such as Baptism will not satisfy Lutheran pastors, there is much that would make it a useful addition to a pastor's library.

Paul L. Beisel
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Iowa Falls, Iowa

***Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship.* Edited by Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2012. 330 pages. Softcover. $22.00.**

The purpose of Allen and Ross' book is not to highlight the numerous and unique generation types within today's congregations and parishes (children, youth, young adults, middle adults, and older adults). Rather the authors' intention is to amplify how all ages and generations of individuals may mutually learn, live, and grow in faith together as the body of Christ. They indicate that far too often the church, especially since the late twentieth century, has over-emphasized the segregation of generations, with the result that mostly peers work, learn, and grow together. They mention that there is a modern tendency within some congregations to separate the worship or learning experiences of the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. They provide results of a very interesting study that compared the praying vocabulary of children who attended children's church to that of children who attended worship with their families.

The modern learning framework is flawed, according to Allen and Ross, depriving many people of the best opportunities to learn and grow in faith and wisdom from others of varying ages and experience. The authors spend an entire chapter discussing how education, factors of life-stage learning, and American individualism have affected the way the church views Christian formation today. They offer biblical and theological foundations that are compelling and support more intergenerational activity. Their sociological research and recent studies also indicate that people develop and mature best when all ages are present together, especially in worship. They reemphasize the value of learning wisdom from others and the importance of storytelling.

This is a refreshing book for pastors and church workers, especially those who serve smaller and midsize congregations in which ages, families, and generations vary dramatically. Even though some of their practical suggestions do not harmonize with normal Lutheran practice, there is much more to gain than lose in this text. Generation separation for Christian formation and worship is not the only or best way. In a broken world of single-parent and dysfunctional families, the need for belonging and support is heightened, especially for children. If a young person lacks a father or a mother, other role models of faith may encourage him or her. At the other end of the generational scale, in a society of greater mobility,

older adults have fewer opportunities for support, love, and bringing younger generations "to term" than they once did.

Consistently bringing various age groups together enables people to glean the best from one another, but the authors stress that the preparation to do such formation takes more time and hard planning. Since each generation has its unique tendencies, the authors stress and encourage the more difficult task, namely, educating many all at once and often using all five senses. The authors also provide useful resources on how to begin and sustain intergenerational formation. When all generations mutually love and support one another, the body of Christ is functioning well.

Timothy R. Puls
Director of Alumni and Church Relations
Concordia Theological Seminary

The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis. **Edited by Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes. Second Edition. Leiden: Brill, 2014. xii + 884 pages. Softcover. $76.00.**

This volume on the current state of textual criticism deserves to be read by all serious readers of the Greek New Testament. It is very helpful because it is more in-depth than a basic handbook on textual criticism and wider ranging than a text-critical study of a particular manuscript. It challenges the reader to think critically about the state of his or her critical edition of the Greek New Testament. Optimistically, this book has the ability to inspire a reader of the Greek New Testament to pay more attention to variant readings and appreciate them as more than mere "minor changes."

This collection of twenty-eight essays presents the *status quaestionis* for New Testament textual criticism. Various experts in the field present the current state of research in different avenues of textual criticism, presenting both the state of the scholarship and the types of studies that are being done. Each essay provides enough details on a particular aspect of textual criticism to explain the current state of research as well as to provide guidance for more in-depth analysis.

This volume, a second edition of an original festschrift for Bruce Metzger that was published in 1995, is, in reality, a new book. It includes thirteen of the original essays, though they have been significantly updated to the point of being rewritten. Further, eight of the essays have been replaced, one essay was removed from the original edition, and seven

new essays have been added. The changes take what was a 401-page book and more than double it to 884 pages. The revisions update the book to the current state of research and show how much progress has been made in the last two decades of textual criticism.

The essays have an interest in discussing both the available sources for textual criticism and current strategies for using those sources productively to analyze the texts with both the general criteria and eventual goal of the study. The essays range in topic from different sources for textual criticism (e.g., manuscripts, lectionaries, Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Gothic, and patristic citations), criteria for evaluating variants and similarities, relationships between manuscripts, the social world of early Christian scribes, current discussion about the goal of textual criticism, and historical discussion of what work has been done in the field in the past.

The value of the book is its breadth and depth. It is not a handbook and does not discuss the most basic elements of textual criticism; instead, it is directed toward the critical reader of the New Testament. Readers, then, will still need to master the prior work of Bruce Metzger[1] and the Alands[2] before approaching this volume. This is both the book's greatest strength and its weakness; it is very valuable for the careful reader of the New Testament but too in-depth, and not systematic enough, for the novice.

This book is a welcome reference volume for all serious students of the Greek New Testament. It will show them the state of scholarship on the topics while challenging them to think critically about the various sources from which the modern critical editions are currently built. Further, this volume will not only push readers to consider a number of early manuscripts of the New Testament but will also aid the reader to picture the social world of the early Christian scribe and challenge the reader to think very critically about the goal and process of textual criticism.

Benjamin J. Nickodemus
Adjunct Instructor of Theology
Concordia University
Portland, Oregon

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[1] Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[2] Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987).

***God's Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology*. By Frank J. Matera. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012. 283 pages. Softcover. $28.00.**

Frank J. Matera's latest work seeks to provide a summary of the main theological themes in the Pauline letters. His goal is to provide a coherent presentation, that is, one that explains how statements in the different Pauline letters are related and cohere with one another. The book works with all thirteen letters that bear Paul's name. Matera operates on the assumption that there is evidence that Paul was the author of 2 Thessalonians and Colossians. He is less certain about Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles, though he says that if he were to learn that Paul was the author, he would not be surprised. The result is a presentation of Pauline theology as it is found in the canon of the New Testament.

Matera has organized the book around two principles. The first is the theme of God's saving grace that Paul experienced in his call and conversion. The second is a set of three implicit narratives that Matera believes lie at the foundation of Pauline theology: 1) God's saving grace in Paul's life; 2) God's saving grace in Christ; 3) God's saving grace in the lives of those in Christ. These narratives structure the book as Matera first discusses Paul's experience of the Damascus Christophany and identifies it as the generative center of his theology. In the succeeding chapters the grace of God serves as the unifying theme as the book treats Pauline Christology, anthropology and soteriology, ecclesiology, ethics, and eschatology.

This book is the mature work of a scholar whose command of the material and clear writing produce both clarity for those seeking introduction to the themes of Pauline theology and also new insights for those who have worked with Pauline literature. Matera emphasizes that the occasional nature of the Pauline letters determines the varied ways in which Paul expresses his theology. He finds coherence rather than contradiction. Matera states his position on contested issues but does so in a way that alerts the reader to the fact that other opinions exist. The result is an excellent discussion of Pauline theology that will benefit pastors in their preaching and teaching.

Mark P. Surburg
Pastor, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Marion, Illinois

***The Spirit of Pietism.* By Robert J. Koester. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2013. 430 pages. Softcover. $39.99.**

Pietism is a subject that is discussed much but understood little. Because the topic is both enormous and difficult to define, there is great value in any work that strives to explain at least a part of it, especially one in English. Robert Koester's book is no exception.

Koester writes in a very popular style with a practical application in mind. While he is interested in the historical account of Pietism, his goal is clear when he asks: "Which factors [contributing to Pietism] are historically connected to German Lutheran Pietism and which are transcultural and would contribute to an outbreak of Pietism in any culture?" (11). In other words, while the history is important, Koester is more interested in diagnosing Pietism and thereby showing what things contributed to its emergence.

Thus, Koester's study is useful for anyone interested in learning more about Pietism but with an added interpretation of the information. For those who want a one-volume work on Pietism, this book satisfies that desire. Koester also provides a fairly extensive bibliography of secondary literature to facilitate further study.

The book itself is divided into three sections. In the first section, Koester discusses the historical background of Pietism, focusing on the factors that contributed to its appearance. In the second section, he discusses the two important early Pietists, Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) and August Hermann Francke (1663–1727). The third section treats Valentin Ernst Löscher (1673–1749). That this third section is the longest is not surprising, since Koester translated part of Löscher's critique of Pietism, *The Complete Timotheus Verinus* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998).

Two things, however, detract from this work. The first is Koester's continual reliance on secondary literature. While this is a popular work and primary material is not only seemingly endless but also frequently inaccessible to American readers, it can be discouraging for readers who are interested in reading further to see indirect citations throughout the work. Knowing where to look for primary material without having to consult another book first is always helpful.

The second is a problem true to any study of Pietism. Koester seems to function without a clear definition of what he means by "Pietism." Other scholars, whom Koester frequently quotes, are divided on an exact definition. Is Pietism just a German Lutheran phenomenon? Are all Pietists

alike? Can they all be classified under one term? Koester never defines exactly what he means by Pietism, so one may be left with the impression that all Pietists were alike or that Pietists essentially agreed with each other in everything.

Nevertheless, these two points should not distract from what is otherwise an excellent treatment of three important historical figures connected to Pietism. It can only help those interested to learn more about the movement and, hopefully, encourage them to read further.

Zelwyn Heide
Graduate Assistant, Department of Pastoral Ministry and Missions
Concordia Theological Seminary

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