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Errata

There is an error on page 339 in the research note by Benjamin T.G. Mayes, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession Comparison Chart," *CTQ* 80:3–4 (2016). A line was accidentally omitted. The missing line reads as follows:

Of Confession and Satisfaction [Triglot, etc.:] XII (VI) 1–81 [Tappert, etc.:] XII 98–178

CTQ 81 (2017): 195–211

The Ninety-Five Theses and Why They Are Still Important

Cameron A. MacKenzie

It is too bad that the Reformation began with the Ninety-Five Theses instead of the Heidelberg Theses,[1] or maybe even the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* from earlier in 1517.[2] In the Heidelberg Theses, delivered at a meeting of the Augustinian Hermits (Luther's own religious order) at the University of Heidelberg in April 1518, the reformer gives us plenty to chew on: the distinction between law and gospel, the denial of free will, and the theology of the cross—not to mention his rejection of Aristotelianism. And the earlier *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, prepared by Luther as an academic exercise for a student to defend, also rejects Aristotle and champions instead Augustine's theology of grace. Both of these, therefore, give us some good Lutheran doctrine with which to work. But no! For the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, we must begin with the Ninety-Five Theses.

The problem is not with their number. Academic disputations could certainly contain more than ninety-five theses.[3] The problem is their subject matter: the sale of indulgences. Indulgences were a big deal in 1517, but not so much today. They are still taught in the Catholic catechism,[4] so one can still acquire an indulgence if he wants. In fact, shortly after the College of Cardinals elected Francis as pope

[1] Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518): vol. 31, pp. 39–70, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE. *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009), 1:353–374, hereafter WA. For background, see Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985–93), 1:213–218, 231–235.

[2] Luther, *Disputation against Scholastic Theology (1517), AE* 31:9–16 (WA 1:224–28). Luther wrote these theses for a student, Franz Günther, who defended them on September 4, 1517, in connection with the requirements for his degree. See "Introduction," AE 31:6.

[3] The *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* has ninety-seven theses. In April 1517, Karlstadt had published the 151 Theses. Cf. Carter Lindberg, "Conflicting Models of Ministry—Luther, Karlstadt, and Muentzer," *CTQ* 41, no. 4 (1977): 37, 47n10; and see Ernst Kähler, *Karlstadt und Augustin, Der Kommentar des Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt zu Augustins Schrift* De Spiritu et Litera (Halle [Salle]: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1952), 8*–37*.

[4] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 411–413.

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on March 13, 2013, he made a plenary indulgence available for participating in World Youth Day, held in Brazil on July 23–28 that same year. The pope's indulgence promised to cancel out all temporal punishment for sin, and, if a person wanted to, he could apply the indulgence to the "souls of the departed faithful."[5] In some ways, it seems, Pope Francis is quite traditional after all.

Even so, however, indulgences are not what they were in 1500 when the demand was huge and they were used routinely to raise funds for major projects, like building a grand new church. One such fundraiser provoked the event that led to the Reformation. It all began with Luther's Ninety-Five Theses of 1517, which protested the sale of indulgences.

Why do we insist on the Indulgence Controversy as the start of it all? Maybe we should become revisionists and begin with something else! Unless we want to be postmodernists, however, for whom everything is just a matter of power or opinion, we have to reckon with the data, not least of all Luther's convictions about how it all began. The reformer himself identified the Indulgence Controversy as the beginning of all his troubles with the church establishment that ended up defining his career, and indeed his life and reputation. In the preface he wrote late in life for an edition of his Latin works, Luther insisted that he "got into these turmoils by accident and not by will or intention."[6] Well, then, if it wasn't intentional, how did it happen? Luther explained, "When in the year 1517 indulgences were sold . . . in these regions

[5] See "Pope grants indulgences for World Youth Day," *Catholic News Agency*, July 9, 2013, www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-grants-indulgences-for-world-youth-day. According to the official announcement, the pope attached the typical conditions for obtaining the indulgence: "The young people and the faithful who are adequately prepared will obtain the Plenary Indulgence, once a day and under the usual conditions (sacramental Confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer in accordance with the intentions of the Holy Father)." Those who were unable to make it to Brazil could still merit a plenary indulgence if they did everything the onsite participants were going to do, that is, participate "under the usual spiritual, sacramental and prayer conditions, in a spirit of filial submission to the Roman Pontiff . . . in the sacred functions on the days indicated, following the same rites and spiritual exercises as they occur via television or radio or, with due devotion, via the new means of social communication." Finally, the pope also promised a partial indulgence to Catholics who "in any place and between the indicated days, with a contrite heart raise devout prayers to God, concluding with the official prayer of the World Youth Day." They would, of course, also have to invoke "the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Brazil (with the title Nossa Senhora da Conceicao Aparecida) as well as other patrons and intercessors of the same meeting, that they may encourage the young to reinforce their faith and lead a holy life." A copy of the official prayer along with a pictorial list of the patrons and intercessors is available from the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Archdiocese of Sydney, "World Youth Day 2013—Official Prayer," iActive8 WYD RIO 2013, last edited May 8, 2013, www.xt3.com/wyd2013/library/view.php?id=10343&categoryId=54. For the story behind the title *Nossa Senhora da Conceicao Aparecida* for the Virgin Mary, see https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2016/09/03/160903a.

[6] Luther, *Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings* (1545), AE 34:328 (WA 54:180).

for most shameful gain . . . I began to dissuade the people and to urge them not to listen to the clamors of the indulgence hawkers."[7] Confident that the pope would be on his side, Luther addressed his complaints to the man principally responsible—Albert, the archbishop of Mainz—and begged him to stop the "shameless blasphemy" of the salesmen. However, when Albert failed to act, Luther went ahead and began publishing on the topic in order to show that "good works of love" were preferable to indulgences.[8] The reaction stunned Luther: "This was demolishing heaven and consuming the earth with fire. I am accused by the pope, am cited to Rome, and the whole papacy rises up against me alone."[9]

So it began, at least according to Martin Luther. However, he was not the only one to see it this way. Luther's friend and colleague Philip Melanchthon did so as well, as shown in a biography of the reformer that he wrote for volume two of Luther's Latin works shortly after Luther died. In his account, Melanchthon added a detail that has become emblematic of Luther's personal courage in taking on the establishment, namely, his posting the theses on the door of the Castle Church.[10] For at least four hundred years, artists have depicted Luther at the door of the church. In 1617, an anonymous artist prepared a woodcut of a dream that Frederick the Wise was supposed to have had, in which the elector saw Luther writing his theses on the door of the church and knocking off the pope's crown with his pen.[11] That depiction continued in 2003 when Joseph Fiennes portrayed Luther with his theses once again at the door of the church.[12] Yet, no matter how readily recognizable Luther's nailing of the theses is as the beginning of the Reformation, historians have been arguing about it now for more than fifty years—

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[7] Luther, *Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings* (1545), AE 34:329 (WA 54:180).

[8] Luther, *Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings* (1545), AE 34:329–330 (WA 54:180–181).

[9] Luther, *Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings* (1545), AE 34:330 (WA 54:181). A few years before, Luther had made a similar reminiscence. See *Against Hanswurst* (1541), AE 41:231–235 (WA 51:538–542).

[10] Philip Melanchthon, *History of the Life and Acts of Dr Martin Luther* in *Luther's Lives: Two Contemporary Accounts of Martin Luther*, trans. and annotated by Elizabeth Vandiver, Ralph Keen, and Thomas D. Frazel (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 19 (CR 6:162). Interestingly, Melanchthon does not actually mention the door, just the church. See also Volker Leppin and Timothy J. Wengert, "Sources for and against the Posting of the Ninety-Five Theses," *Lutheran Quarterly* 29 (2015): 374–376.

[11] See *Göttlicher Schrifftmessiger, woldenckwürdiger Traum, welchen der Hochlöbliche . . . Churfürst zu Sachsen . . . dreymal nach einander gehabt hat . . . , 1617, print,* The British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1434936&partId=1.

[12] *Luther*, directed by Eric Till, written by Camille Thomasson and Bart Gavigan (Eikon Film, NFP Teleart Berlin [I], NFP, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, 2003).

ever since the buildup to the 450th anniversary.[13] Since Melanchthon did not record this detail about the posting until after Luther's death, and since Luther himself never mentioned it, the authenticity of the event and its date (October 31) has become an issue for present-day historians.

Based on the extant evidence, one can make a case for or against Luther's posting the theses on the door of the church, but at least we know today that there were other contemporaries of Luther besides Melanchthon who made mention of it. In fact, one of them *was* in Wittenberg at the time—a choirboy who was around fifteen years old when the posting took place.[14] The truth of the matter is that it really does not matter whether Luther placed them on the church door, because, if he did, it was nothing special—just the regular way of making known to theological students and clergy that a disputation was being proposed.[15] Recall, too, that the university in Wittenberg was only about fifteen years old at the time and not especially prominent among the German universities;[16] thus, even if everybody who was anybody in Wittenberg became aware of the Ninety-Five Theses, it would have been of little significance. A posting on the church doors at Wittenberg would not have been a European phenomenon.

Much more significant was Luther's decision to write to Archbishop Albert about John Tetzel, the indulgence preacher, and about Albert's *Instructio Summaria* (instructions for the indulgence salesmen).[17] With his letter, Luther also enclosed a

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[13] Leppin and Wengert give Erwin Iserloh credit for initiating the controversy ("Sources for and against the Posting of the Ninety-Five Theses," 373). See Iserloh's *Luther zwischen Reform and Reformation. Der Thesenanschlag fand nicht statt* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1966), translated into English by Jared Wicks in *The Theses Were Not Posted: Luther between Reform and Reformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

[14] Timothy J. Wengert, "Georg Major: An 'Eyewitness' to the Posting of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses," in Joachim Ott and Martin Treu, eds., *Luthers Thesenanschlag—Faktum oder Fiktion* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 93–97. In the same volume, see also Joachim Ott, "Georg Rörer (1492–1557) und sein Nachlass in der Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Jena," 47–67. Rörer was not in Wittenberg in 1517, but he wrote about the posting in the early 1540s, when Luther was still alive.

[15] Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 1:200.

[16] For the founding of the university, see Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 1:117–121. It was the Reformation and the educational reforms accompanying it that led to the university's success. See Helmar Junghans, "Luther's Wittenberg," in Donald K. McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27.

[17] "For the average individual, 'mailing' a letter involved either paying someone to carry the letter, or sending it along with a friend headed in the desired direction. Carriers, bearers, messengers, or foot-posts, as they were variously called, were the lifeline between families and friends, court and country, and one nation and another" ("Letterwriting in Renaissance England," Folgerpedia, last modified November 22, 2016, folgerpedia.folger.edu/Letterwriting_in_Renaissance_England#Postal_.22Systems.22). In fact, during the sixteenth century, Franz von Taxis developed a messenger and delivery system in the Holy Roman Empire, but I do not know whether it included Wittenberg. See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Thurn and Taxis postal

copy of the theses. It was Albert who sent it on to the pope. Therefore, Luther's letter to the archbishop was certainly more important than the posting as a proximate cause of the Reformation. Interestingly, according to the letter itself, Luther sent it on October 31, 1517.[18] It seems that we are celebrating the right day after all, even if not precisely the right event that triggered the Reformation.[19]

In examining the theses themselves, we must ask, first of all: Why were they such a big deal? Again, the notion of preparing theses for a disputation at a university was not remarkable. University students and professors—and not just theologians—did it all the time, and would continue doing so.[20] According to Scott Hendrix, Luther prepared twenty sets of theses between 1516 and 1521. In the same period, his university colleague Andreas Karlstadt prepared almost thirty. In fact, in October 1517, Luther may have been following the example of Karlstadt, who (probably) had posted 151 theses on the door of the Castle Church in the previous April.[21] Even so, however, the Ninety-Five Theses were the beginning of something different—and something not intended by Luther—namely, the use of disputations as a tool for reforming the church. Beginning with the Ninety-Five Theses, the history of the Reformation is punctuated by sets of theses and accompanying disputations that helped either to advance or to retard the cause of reform in several places. From the Leipzig Debate (1519) to the Colloquy of Montbéliard (1586)[22] and beyond, theologians of all stripes prepared lists of propositions that became the

system," published September 3, 2010, www.britannica.com/topic/Thurn-and-Taxis-postal-system.

[18] For Luther's letter, see Luther, *Letter to Cardinal Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz* (1517), AE 48:45–49 (*Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. [Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1930–1983], 1:110–112, hereafter WA Br).

[19] Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 1:200–202, argues that Luther did indeed post the theses but probably in mid-November rather than on October 31.

[20] According to the introduction to AE 34 (p. xiii), the statutes for the University of Wittenberg of 1508 specified three kinds of disputations: (1) for receiving a degree; (2) festive and public disputations held every quarter; and (3) weekly circular disputations.

[21] Scott H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 61. See also Lindberg, "Conflicting Models of Ministry," 47n10. For Karlstadt and his theses, see Kähler, *Karlstadt und Augustin*, 8*–37*.

[22] The first of these, of course, featured Luther vs. John Eck on the power of the pope in the church (cf. Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 1:303–322). The second featured Théodore de Bèze (Reformed) vs. Jakob Andreae (Lutheran), principally regarding the Lord's Supper (cf. Jill Raitt, *The Colloquy of Montbéliard: Religion and Politics in the Sixteenth Century* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993]). This colloquy was recently published in English: Jakob Andreae and Theodore Beza, *Lutheranism vs. Calvinism: The Classic Debate at the Colloquy of Montbéliard 1586*, trans. Clinton J. Armstrong (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017). Of course, even after Montbéliard, there were additional disputations, for example, the Colloquy of Thorn in 1645. See F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. "Thorn, Conference of (1645)."

subject of debate between the parties and helped determine the shape religion would take in that place.

But once again, this was not really Luther's intention in drafting his theses; that is, he did not intend to start a reformation that would lead to his excommunication and the formation of churches in the west that were no longer in fellowship with the bishop of Rome. As he recalled in 1545, he wanted to do something about an obvious abuse in the church, the "clamors [*clamoribus*]" and "blasphemy [*blasphemiam*]" of the indulgence salesmen.[23] Indulgences *per se* had been bothering him for quite some time. According to Martin Brecht, he had been concerned about indulgences in relationship to sacramental penance for a while before October 1517.[24] As early as his first Psalms lectures (1513–1516), he had complained that people were trying to get into heaven too easily with indulgences.[25] This was because of indulgences that were available in Wittenberg. Then, in the summer of 1516, in the Romans lectures, he pointed out that indulgences served to build and decorate churches and multiply ceremonies, but that those who preached them were failing to tell people what they owed God.[26] He preached against them in a sermon of July 1516,[27] and in January 1517, he indicted preachers for preferring fables and indulgences to the preaching of the gospel.[28]

However, it was the papal indulgence, promoted by Archbishop Albert and sold by John Tetzel, that pushed Luther over the edge. By Easter 1517, the people of Wittenberg were running off to Zerbst and Jüterbog (each about twenty-five miles away) in the archbishop's domain to purchase indulgences and returning to Wittenberg to use them in the confessional. Luther obtained a copy of the instructions that Albert had issued to his salesmen and found them atrocious. For example, in Albert's instructions, the very first benefit promised from an indulgence was "the complete remission of all sins [*plenaria remissio omnium peccatorum*]," and through the forgiveness of sins, the indulgence also canceled "the punishment which one is obliged to undergo in purgatory."[29]

Horrified, Luther decided to call on his fellow theologians to address the abuses by defining the nature and purpose of indulgences more carefully than had Albert and Tetzel. He did this in the form of ninety-five propositions, each of them just a

[23] Luther, *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg* (1530), AE 34:29 (WA 54:180).
[24] Brecht, *Martin Luther* 1:183–190.
[25] Luther, *First Lectures on the Psalms* (1513–1516), AE 10:351 (WA 3:416).
[26] Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (1516), AE 25:409 (WA 56:417, 418).
[27] WA 1:424.
[28] WA 1:509–510.
[29] See "*Instructio Summaria*" in Peter Fabisch and Erwin Iserloh, eds., *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri (1517–1521)*, 2 vols. (Münster: Aschendorff , 1988), 1:264. For the English used here, see Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Reformation: A Narrative History Related by Contemporary Observers and Participants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 38.

sentence or two, that together formed the outline of an argument regarding the subject.[30]

As Luther insisted later, he did not intend his theses to be the last word on the subject of indulgences, but rather the first word.[31] That was how the system was supposed to work: others would respond with arguments of their own so that a clearer understanding of the nature, use, and limitations of indulgences would emerge.[32] Furthermore, he also did not intend them as an attack on the pope's position in the church, even if a number of theses asserted limitations on the pope's powers, especially over purgatory.[33] In fact, in his letter to the archbishop, he indicated the problem: "I bewail the gross misunderstanding *among the people* which comes from these preachers [of indulgences] and which they spread everywhere among common men."[34] Luther did not even mention the pope.

So, it was really his pastoral concern for "the poor souls [*infelices animae*]" whom the salesmen preachers were urging to buy indulgences that prompted him to write the theses. And the first misunderstanding he found among the people was that they "believe that when they have bought indulgence letters they are then assured of salvation." For Luther, such assurance was impossible—at least, that is what he thought when he wrote to Cardinal Albrecht in 1517: "No man can be assured of his salvation by an episcopal function. He is not even assured of his salvation by the infusion of God's grace. . . . Even 'the just will hardly be saved.'. . . And everywhere else the Lord proclaims the difficulty of salvation."[35]

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[30] It is obvious that there are groups of theses within the ninety-five, but historians differ on how to connect the groups. Brecht, *Martin Luther* 1:192–199, presents the argument of the theses by dividing the document into a series of small sets of theses (sometimes just two or three in a group and no more than fourteen). Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 6–8, uses rhetorical concepts to identify the different parts of the theses.

[31] "For they are disputations, not doctrine, not dogmas," Luther's dedication of the *Explanations* (published in August 1518) to Leo X (WA 1:528). See also Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, 66.

[32] The first sentence of the Ninety-Five Theses informs the reader that they "will be publicly discussed [*disputabuntur*] at Wittenberg" and the second sentence invites those who cannot be present to debate in person should "do so by letter" (Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* [1517], AE 31:25 [WA 1:233]). See also Brecht, *Martin Luther* 1:199–200, who points out that Luther intended an extraordinary disputation—one different from the three kinds mentioned in the university statutes (see above, n 21) but not unprecedented.

[33] See especially Theses 5–6, 20–22, and 25–26 (Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* [1517], AE 31:26, 27 [WA 1:233, 234]).

[34] Luther, *Letter to Cardinal Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz* (1517), AE 48:46 (WA Br 1:111), emphasis mine.

[35] Luther, *Letter to Cardinal Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz* (1517), AE 48:46–47 (WA Br 1:111).

In addition to the lies and exaggerations of Tetzel and company, Luther humbly but courageously added in this letter certain complaints about the instructions Albert (or at least his staff) had prepared for the salesmen, which promised "the blotting out [*delentur*]" of all purgatory punishments by means of purchasing an indulgence. Furthermore, if someone applied an indulgence to someone else already in purgatory, he himself did not have to be contrite or make confession. All he had to do was put his money in the chest. Thus, the advertising jingle so often quoted in accounts of the indulgence traffic, "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs"[36]—whether Tetzel himself used it or not—was thoroughly grounded in Albert's instructions.[37]

Only in the conclusion to his letter, practically a postscript, did Luther even mention the Ninety-Five Theses. "Were it agreeable," Luther wrote, ". . . you could examine my disputation theses, so that you may see how dubious is the belief concerning indulgences, which the preachers propagate as if it were the surest thing in the whole world."[38] Once again, Luther did not mention the pope's prerogatives. They turned out to be a part of his concern but not the reason for his concern. Indulgences were the problem.

That means, now, that we have to say something about indulgences if ever we are going to understand Luther's theses. So what was an indulgence? To begin with, it was a term associated with the sacrament of penance,[39] especially with the third part of the sacrament, namely satisfaction. The first two parts were, of course, contrition (the proper attitude with which the penitent was to make his confession) and then confession itself, that is, auricular confession, a recounting of sins made to a priest. In response, the priest would pronounce absolution and specify works

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[36] See, for example, Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1950), 78. See also Thesis 27 in the ninety-five (Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* [1517], AE 31:27–28 [WA 1:234]).

[37] Hillerbrand, *The Reformation*, 38, 41 (Fabisch and Iserloh, *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, 264, 269) and Luther, *Letter to Cardinal Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz* (1517), AE 48:46, 48 (WA Br 1:111, 112).

[38] Luther, *Letter to Cardinal Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz* (1517), AE 48:48–49 (WA Br 1:112).

[39] "Penance" has a long and complicated history through the course of the Middle Ages. For a brief introduction to this history, see James R. Ginther, *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), s.v. "Penance." For a more thorough treatment of this history, see Bernhard Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), especially pp. 156–193, and Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977). For the Reformation specifically, see Thomas Tentler, "Penance," in Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), hereafter *OER*.

of satisfaction, determined by how bad the sins were.[40] As of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the church required the faithful to make such a confession at least once a year.[41]

But works of satisfaction—the third part of the sacrament—could be burdensome and could really pile up, since the life of an ordinary Christian was filled with sins, to each of which a sacramental satisfaction was attached even if not yet confessed. Moreover, when confession time rolled around, it might not even be possible for a penitent to remember all of his sins. Nonetheless, he still had to pay the penalty for them. Mortal sins, if not confessed, could send you to hell; but venial sins, with satisfaction lacking, would send you to purgatory. So, that is where the vast majority of Christians were thought to end up when they died—purgatory, a place of punishment, a place of final purging from sin before entrance into heaven.[42]

In order to mitigate such punishment, the medieval church offered indulgences. An indulgence was a cancellation of some or all of the penalties that still belonged to sin—not the guilt of sin that Christ took away and from which the priestly absolution released the Christian, but the penalties attached to every sin and suffered by the faithful either here or hereafter in purgatory.[43] Clergymen of various ranks (especially bishops and archbishops) could offer indulgences, but only the pope could offer a *plenary* indulgence, that is, complete cancellation of all punishments still attached to the sins of the baptized. Pope Innocent III (r. 1198–1216) limited the indulgences granted by bishops to just forty days,[44] but this did not keep indulgences from becoming ubiquitous by 1517. As is well-known, for example,

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[40] Wengert, *Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses*, xvii. In his *OER* article "Penance," Thomas Tentler maintains that by the late Middle Ages, priestly absolution had emerged as a fourth and most important part of the sacrament of penance.

[41] Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 25.

[42] *Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology,* s.v. "Purgatory." See also *OER*, s.v. "Purgatory." Jacques Le Goff's *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) is a fascinating study of how the idea of purgatory developed over the course of the Middle Ages in popular belief and practice that culminated in Dante's literary description.

[43] It is also true, of course, that churchmen—including popes—did not always observe the restriction of indulgences to punishment but instead promised forgiveness of guilt as well. See *OER*, s.v. "Indulgences" and Robert Horst, Gerhard Krause, Gerhard Müller, and Siegfried Schwertner, eds., *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977–2007), 348, s.v. "Ablass" (hereafter *TRE*).

[44] Bernd Moeller, *Die Reformation und das Mittelalter: Kirchenhistorische Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 55. Bishops could also grant an indulgence of a year to someone for attending the dedication of a church (William Kent, "Indulgences," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910], available online from New Advent, www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm). Cardinals could grant one for one hundred days and papal legates one year and one hundred days (*TRE*, s.v. "Ablass").

viewing the entire relic collection of Frederick the Wise at the Castle Church in Wittenberg could earn a person thousands and thousands of years off from his purgatory time.[45] This, of course, illustrates another point: indulgences were not used only for monetary gain; they also encouraged pious activities like pilgrimages and prayers.

Pope Urban II (r. 1088–1099) is often described as the first pope to offer a plenary indulgence.[46] He did this in order to encourage soldiers to participate in the first crusade. As one historian put it, "Urban's indulgences were authoritative declarations that the crusade would be so arduous and unpleasant that it would make good all penance owed to God by individual sinners."[47]

But once it was believed that a pope could cancel penance in exchange for a crusade, what about doing so for other pious acts, like monetary support for the crusade? By the thirteenth century, crusade preachers were aiming at such donations as well as actual recruits. Interestingly, however, according to R. N. Swanson, at first, "It was [still] necessary to take the cross to receive the indulgence, the obligation to serve in person being then commuted or redeemed by a money payment."[48] Obviously, where there's a will, there's a way, and the sale of indulgences became a fundraiser—especially for major projects like repairing roads and bridges, or building and restoring churches, in addition to crusades.[49]

In 1300, Boniface VIII (r. 1294–1303) revolutionized the practice of plenary indulgences by promising them to those who observed a "Jubilee Year" properly. This proclamation began a practice that survives to the present. In fact, the year 2016 was also a Jubilee Year (December 8, 2015–November 20, 2016), declared by Pope Francis. He promised that if one observed this Extraordinary Jubilee correctly, that

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[45] One million nine hundred thousand years, according to Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, 58–59. For the ubiquity of indulgences, see Moeller, *Die Reformation und das Mittelalter*, 55, 66.

[46] For example, *TRE*, s.v. "Ablass" (esp. p. 348). But see also R. N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10, who suggests that describing Urban's offer as the first assertion of the pope's power to offer a *plenary* indulgence may just be the result of subsequent interpretation.

[47] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 9–10.

[48] Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, 14–15. Gustav Adolf Benrath identifies Gregory VIII (r. 1187) as the first pope who offered indulgences to those who contributed to a crusade without taking part in one (*TRE*, s.v. "Ablass").

[49] According to *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols., 2nd ed. (Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2003), s.v. "Indulgences," Pope Honorius III (r. 1216–1227) authorized the first plenary indulgence completely detached from the crusades by granting a request from Francis of Assisi on behalf of those who prayed at the chapel that Francis and his followers had restored. This indulgence came to be called the "Portiuncula Indulgence."

person could obtain a plenary indulgence for himself or someone in purgatory, but not for anyone still living besides himself.[50]

Regarding the first Jubilee Year, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes what Boniface VIII required in order to acquire the indulgence:

> On 22 February, 1300, Boniface published the Bull "Antiquorum fida relatio," in which, appealing vaguely [to] the precedent of past ages, he declare[d] that he grant[ed] afresh and renew[ed] certain "great remissions and indulgences for sins" which [were] to be obtained "by visiting the city of Rome and the venerable basilica of the Prince of the Apostles."[51]

In his proclamation, Boniface was not entirely precise in limiting the scope of the proffered indulgence to temporal penalties. So, he further specified: "'Not only full and copious, but the most full, pardon of all their sins,' to those who fulfill[ed] certain conditions."[52] Such conditions, of course, included not only being truly contrite and making a confession to a priest, but also visiting the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul—once a day for fifteen days in a row if you were a visitor to the city, but thirty days in a row if you lived there.[53] Boniface's innovation was a huge success. Large numbers of pilgrims came to Rome that year and visited St. Peter's and other churches in the city in order to obtain full remission of the guilt and penalty of their sins. They spent money, and they honored the pope as head of Christendom.[54]

Although Boniface's intention was to hold such jubilees only once a century, his successors found the practice too attractive to do without for such a long period of time.[55] The next one occurred in 1350, when Clement VI (r. 1342–1352) declared

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[50] Regarding the extraordinary jubilees, see "Extraordinary Jubilee: Last one was declared by John Paul II, the one before that by Pius XI," *Vatican Insider*, March 13, 2015, www.lastampa.it/2015/03/13/vaticaninsider/eng/the-vatican/extraordinary-jubilee-last-one-was-declared-by-john-paul-ii-the-one-before-that-by-pius-xi-7UhETpIXTl8OZioFq5AtJL/pagina.html. For the indulgence obtainable, see "Plenary indulgences aplenty," The Divine Mercy, accessed December 1, 2017, www.thedivinemercy.org/jubilee/thebasics/indulgence.php.

[51] See Herbert Thurston, "Holy Year of Jubilee," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), available online from New Advent, www.newadvent.org/cathen/08531c.htm.

[52] Thurston, "Holy Year of Jubilee."

[53] Thurston, "Holy Year of Jubilee." See also *TRE*, s.v. "Ablass." A Latin text and English translation of the bull are available online: "Jubilee 1300: the first Holy year," Jubilee 2015–2016, Pope Francis, March 29, 2015, www.giubileopapafrancesco.it/en/jubilee-1300-the-first-holy-year.

[54] Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 1:394.

[55] For a brief history and description of the regular Jubilee Years from Boniface VIII to John Paul II, see the article on the Vatican website, "What Is a Holy Year?," accessed December 1, 2017, www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/docs/documents/ju_documents_17-feb-1997_history_en.html.

a Jubilee Year with special indulgences for those who visited Rome, even though he was an Avignon pope. Thus, there was some uncertainty about how often to hold one of these Jubilee Years. One suggestion was every thirty-three years to mark the time of our Lord's earthly life, but Paul II (r. 1464–1471) decided on every twenty-five years, thus giving every generation a regular opportunity for such a special indulgence. Later popes have followed this practice, with some notable exceptions, of course.[56]

Clement VI was also responsible for promulgating the "treasury of merit," a papal-approved teaching about the basis of indulgences. Scholastic theologians—Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas—had all discussed it, but Pope Clement VI made it official in the bull "Unigenitus" (1343), which later became a part of canon law.[57] In this bull, he wrote,

> Upon the altar of the Cross, . . . Christ shed of His blood not merely a drop, though this would have sufficed, by reason of the union with the Word, to redeem the whole human race, but a copious torrent . . . thereby laying up an infinite treasure for mankind. This treasure He neither wrapped up in a napkin nor hid in a field, but entrusted to Blessed Peter, the key-bearer, and his successors, that they might, for just and reasonable causes, distribute it to the faithful in full or in partial remission of the temporal punishment due to sin.[58]

Moreover, to this treasure, the Virgin Mary and the saints also contributed the merits of their good works; thus, the pope had available to him an infinite quantity of merits with which to compensate for the meritorious works owed but not completed by those who obtained indulgences.[59]

Another important expansion of plenary indulgences occurred at the end of the fourteenth century when Boniface IX (r. 1389–1404) made the same indulgences that one could get at Rome for a jubilee or at other specific pilgrimage sites (like Assisi) available in hundreds of other places. Apparently, the pope was willing to grant such privileges in exchange for money.[60] Even Wittenberg became a holy place

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[56] In the nineteenth century, the only Jubilee Year was 1825, the others being cancelled for political reasons. For example, Pius IX decreed one in 1875 but then did not observe the usual ceremonies because Rome was occupied by the troops of the Italian government. See Thurston, "Holy Year of Jubilee" and "What Is a Holy Year?" on the Vatican website.

[57] See *Corpus Juris*, Extravagante, Com., lib. V, tit. ix. c. ii.

[58] Quoted by Kent in "Indulgences."

[59] Kent, "Indulgences." See also Moeller, *Die Reformation und das Mittelalter*, 55–56, who points to Hugh of Saint-Cher (d. 1263) as the first scholastic theologian to consider such a "treasury of merits." For the original Latin of Clement's bull, see Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 31st ed., edited by Clemens Bannwart, Johann Baptist Umberg, and Karl Rahner (Barcelona: Herder, 1960), 233–234.

[60] Moeller, *Die Reformation und das Mittelalter*, 57–58. Moeller says financial need drove Boniface to adopt these measures.

thanks to Boniface IX's actions: anyone who devoutly visited the Castle Church on All Saints' Day and supported its maintenance would receive the same indulgence as he would by visiting St. Francis's church in Assisi. Although Boniface later withdrew the privilege—perhaps in order to sell it again—the people in Wittenberg ignored his cancellation of the indulgence. Then, Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513) made everything completely legal again by confirming the privilege in 1510, and Leo X (r. 1513–1521) expanded the grant by making the indulgence available not just on the holy day itself, but for the week after All Saints' Day as well. Leo also added another kind of indulgence to what was already available at the church—an indulgence for the dead.

This brings up still another point in the growing significance of indulgences: indulgences for those in purgatory.[61] That practice became official papal doctrine only in 1476, though Thomas Aquinas, for example, had promoted it earlier.[62] Pope Sixtus IV (r. 1471–1484) authorized a church in France to offer in exchange for money an indulgence for the dead in purgatory. The pope left it uncertain, however, whether the person who obtained such an indulgence for another had to be contrite and make confession as he would if he had obtained one for himself. In any case, this idea helped generate the enormous demand for indulgences that characterized the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. People could actually do something for their dead relatives simply by buying an indulgence.[63]

As a critic of indulgences in 1517, Luther joined a long line of others—some rather notorious like John Wycliffe and John Hus, but others who were not so well-known and who escaped official condemnation, like Wessel Gansfort.[64] Erasmus was also not a fan of indulgences and referred to them as "the crime of false pardons [*fictis condonationibus*]" in his *Praise of Folly* (1509).[65] Indulgence salesmen had long been attacked in popular literature: Boccaccio's rascal mendicant who promised blessings to the gullible by exhibiting a feather from Gabriel left behind

[61] Moeller, *Die Reformation und das Mittelalter*, 57–58.

[62] Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 276, and *TRE*, s.v. "Ablass."

[63] For Sixtus IV's decree, see Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 269–270. See also *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Indulgence: Roman Catholicism," by Lawrence G. Duggan, published November 25, 2015, www.britannica.com/topic/indulgence. See also Moeller, *Die Reformation und das Mittelalter*, 60.

[64] *TRE*, s.v. "Ablass."

[65] Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly* in John P. Dolan, ed. and trans., *The Essential Erasmus* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1964), 129–130. Erasmus goes on to mock those who think they can use a small coin to compensate for sins like perjury, drunkenness, or murder. For the Latin, see Erasmus, *Moriae Encomium*, par. 40, The Latin Library, accessed December 1, 2017, www.thelatinlibrary.com/erasmus/moriae.shtml.

at the Annunciation (Day 6, Story 10),[66] or Chaucer's pardoner who described himself this way:

> For my exclusive purpose is to win
> And not at all to castigate their sin.
> Once dead what matter how their souls may fare?
> They can go blackberrying, for all I care!
> But let me briefly make my purpose plain;
> I preach for nothing but for greed of gain
> And use the same old text, as bold as brass,
> *Radix malorum est cupiditas*.[67]

Thus, Luther was joining a large company when he, too, went after salesmen like Johann Tetzel, the Dominican monk who long served the church by peddling pardons beginning in 1504.[68] In the Ninety-Five Theses, therefore, Luther devoted several theses to the false claims of the salesmen and to their obvious objective: money. For example, Thesis 66, "The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men." Other examples include Theses 27 and 28, the first denying that when the money is placed into the money chest, a soul gets out of purgatory, and the second insisting instead, "It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased."[69]

Similarly, Luther went after the false claims of Tetzel and his colleagues. In Thesis 79, Luther labeled as blasphemy the boast that "the cross emblazoned with the papal coat of arms and set up by the indulgence preachers is equal in worth to the cross of Christ." And in Thesis 76, he called it madness to say that "papal indulgences [were] so great that they could absolve a man even if he had done the impossible and had violated the mother of God."[70]

However, since the indulgence salesmen presented themselves as representatives of the pope, Luther's theses also considered the attitude and powers of the pope.[71] Luther's operating assumption was that the pope would certainly agree with him if he knew what Tetzel and company were actually saying and doing.

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[66] Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. McWilliam, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Viking Penguin, 1972), 505–514.

[67] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Neville Coghill, (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 243, as quoted by Sabine du Bourbonnais, "A Portrait of The Pardoner from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales," The Three Gold Bees, accessed December 1, 2017, threegoldbees.com/other-articles/chaucer-pardoner.

[68] *OER*, s.v. "Tetzel, Johann (c. 1465–1519)."

[69] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), AE 31:31, 27–28 (WA 1:236, 234).

[70] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), AE 31:32 (WA 1:237).

[71] See Scott H. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy: Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 30–32.

For example, in Thesis 50, Luther wrote, "Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep."[72] In one of his final theses (Thesis 91), Luther insisted that just following the pope would correct the abuses: "If . . . indulgences were preached according to the spirit and intention of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved. Indeed, they would not exist."[73]

Luther also addressed the false claims of the salesmen regarding the pope's power. Such claims, however, were by 1517 an integral part of the theology behind the indulgences, namely, the authority of the pope over the treasury of merits to help souls in purgatory. Luther presented his fundamental position early in the theses, with Thesis 5: "The pope neither desires nor is able to remit any penalties except those imposed by his own authority or that of the canons [i.e., church law]." Those penalties, Luther insisted in Thesis 13, ceased at the time of death: "The dying are freed by death from all penalties, are already dead as far as the canon laws are concerned, and have a right to be released from them."[74] So, whatever powers the pope had, he exercised them on this side of eternity, not the other. Of course, the pope could pray for those in purgatory; but if he actually had power over purgatory, Luther inquired in Thesis 82, "Why does [he] not empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church? The former reasons would be most just; the latter is most trivial."[75]

It was theses like these that caused trouble for Luther. Questioning the powers of the pope alarmed the theologians to whom Archbishop Albert had turned over the theses, and the archbishop wrote to Pope Leo about his concerns.[76] Thus, the controversy began. Indeed, when the pope finally condemned Luther's teaching by means of forty-one statements taken from his writings, two of them were from the Ninety-Five Theses,[77] and thirteen more came from the "explanations" that Luther attached to each of the theses and then published in the summer of 1518.[78]

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[72] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), AE 31:30 (WA 1:235).

[73] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), AE 31:33 (WA 1:238).

[74] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), AE 31:26 (WA 1:233–234).

[75] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), AE 31: 32 (WA 1:237).

[76] Daniel Olivier, *The Trial of Luther* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 14–15; and Hendrix, *Luther*, 60.

[77] Condemnation 4 comes from Thesis 14, and condemnation 17 comes from Theses 56 and 58. Compare Luther, *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (1521), AE 32:31, 62 (WA 7:348–49, 398–99) with Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), AE 31:26, 30 (WA 1:234, 236).

[78] See the footnote attached to each of the forty-one propositions that Luther defended in *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (1521), AE 32:12–98. See also Luther, *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses (1518)*, AE 31:83–252 (WA 1:525–628).

So, one can say that the Indulgence Controversy led directly to Luther's excommunication and indirectly to the formation of the Lutheran Church.

Yet, it is true, as well, that selling the St. Peter's indulgence was also the last big financial campaign mounted by the papacy with plenary indulgences so readily available for purchase. That kind of fundraising campaign finally came to an end.[79] Indulgences, however, did not. The Council of Trent affirmed them in its last session on December 4, 1563. While denouncing financial abuses connected with them, it also anathematized those who called indulgences useless or denied the power of the church to grant them.[80] In spite of Luther's early efforts, Rome doubled down on the theology of indulgences, and so, as we have already seen, they remain an integral part of Catholic piety to this very day.[81]

But the question still remains: Is there any authentically "Lutheran" theology in the Ninety-Five Theses?[82] If there is, it is hard to find. It is true that in Thesis 62, Luther does say, "The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God."[83] But what does he mean by "gospel"? If we go by the *Explanations*, Luther's description of this thesis is right on target. For instance, in commenting on John the Baptist's statement, "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," Luther wrote, "Behold that one who alone fulfils the law for you, whom God has made to be your righteousness, sanctification, wisdom, and redemption, for all those who believe in him."[84] There are other statements like this one in the *Explanations* that sound like justification by faith alone.[85] Furthermore, Luther also mentioned the theology of the cross and the theology of glory in the *Explanations*,[86] but we need to remember that they were published more than nine

[79] Moeller, *Die Reformation und das Mittelalter*, 72.

[80] *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: Original Text with English Translation*, trans. H. J. Schroeder (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1960), 518–519.

[81] For example, see "Plenary indulgences aplenty" on the Divine Mercy website.

[82] Part of the challenge in answering this question arises from one's answer to still another: When did Luther achieve his Reformation breakthrough? If one thinks that Luther came to his "new" understanding of justification before the Ninety-Five Theses, then one will understand the theses as fitting somewhere into Reformation theology. See, for example, the discussion in Berndt Hamm, *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 85–109. However, if one has concluded that Luther's insight into justification by faith alone followed the Ninety-Five Theses, he will explain them as revealing Luther's continued commitment to late medieval thinking and piety. See, for example, Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 1:221–237. While agnostic on the question of when did Luther become a Lutheran, I do not find evidence of the breakthrough in the Ninety-Five Theses.

[83] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), AE 31:31 (WA 1:236).

[84] Luther, *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses (1518)*, AE 31:231 (WA 1:616).

[85] See Luther, *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses (1518)*, AE 31:190, 193, 220 (WA 1:593, 594–95, 610).

[86] Luther, *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses (1518)*, AE 31:225, 227 (WA 1:613, 614).

months after Luther's original letter to Archbishop Albert. A lot had happened in those months, including—who knows?—maybe even the Tower Experience.

If we go just by the theses, it is a lot easier to find salvation by works—works of suffering. Right at the outset, Luther insisted, "Jesus Christ . . . willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance," and then elaborated in Theses 3 and 4: "3. Yet it does not mean solely inner repentance; such inner repentance is worthless unless it produces various outward mortifications of the flesh. 4. The penalty of sin remains as long as the hatred of self, that is, true inner repentance, until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven."[87]

In the last couple of theses, Luther actually described the necessary suffering in the life of a Christian as the basis for hope that he would enter heaven: "94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their head, through penalties, death, and hell; 95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace."[88] Statements like these sound more like a monastic life of discipline and suffering and not so much like Luther's later descriptions of the gospel.

So, we conclude by asking the question raised by our title: Why are the Ninety-Five Theses still important? I suppose if we were participants in the Lutheran/Catholic dialogue, we still might want to ask as Luther does in Thesis 82: Why, if the pope can get people out of purgatory, does he not just empty the place instead of waiting for someone to acquire an indulgence? But that is not really a question Lutherans are asking. No, the significance of the theses for us today is almost entirely historical, not theological. They are the beginning. They show us where Luther was theologically when it all began, but not where he finished. If we want the full story, we will just have to keep marking all the big events from now until at least 2046, the five-hundredth anniversary of Luther's death!

[87] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses (1517)*, AE 31:25–26 (WA 1:233).
[88] Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses (1517)*, AE 31:33 (WA 1:238).

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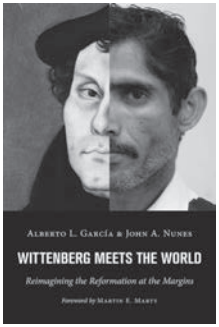

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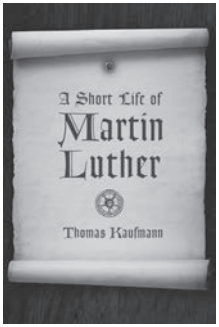

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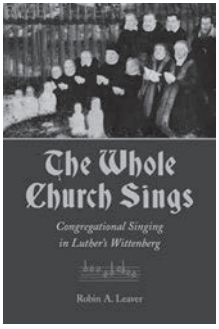

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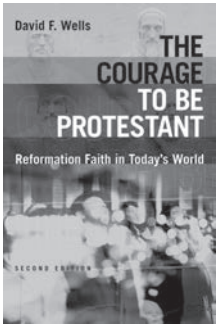

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In Search of Celebrating the Reformation Rightly: Luther's *Lectures on Galatians* (1531/1535) as the Banner of the Reformation

Naomichi Masaki

What is a banner? Do we want to march together as a Lutheran army under the slogan "Luther's Galatians!" and rally our hearts and minds to prepare for a battle? Additionally, why have Luther's *Lectures on Galatians* become the banner of the Reformation? If we want to celebrate the anniversary year of 2017, would it not be more appropriate to focus on the Ninety-Five Theses of 1517 instead of Luther's great Galatian Lectures of 1531, published in 1535?[1] Indeed, why bother celebrating this anniversary at all? Do we, who count as heirs of the Reformation, have to re-study what it was all about? It is wonderful if we recognize that our everyday life is under the blessings of the legacy of the Reformation. Every pastor who has pledged himself to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions at his ordination is given to enjoy such an abundant life. But as soon as we glance outside our circles to see the ways in which other Lutherans in the world commemorate the Reformation, we will begin to sense a duty to consider seriously how best we should celebrate the anniversary year *rightly*, as the second International Conference on Confessional Leadership attempted to do last May in Wittenberg.[2]

[1] Luther lectured on Galatians from October 17, 1516–March 13, 1517, and again in 1531 (forty-one lectures between July 3 and December 12). Twenty-one separate editions appeared during Luther's lifetime, between 1519 and 1546 (Ronald D. Patkus, "Biblical Commentary as Reformation Commodity: The Role of the Paratext in Luther's *Galatians*," *Reformation* 13 [2008]: 52–54). Among them, the publications from 1519, 1523, 1525, 1534, 1535, 1538 are noteworthy (Kenneth Hagen, *Luther's Approach to Scripture as Seen in His "Commentaries" on Galatians 1519–1538* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993], vii). Since Luther's 1531 lectures were printed in volume 5 of the Wittenberg edition of Luther's Latin works (1554), in volume 4 of the Jena edition (1558, reprinted in 1570, 1583, 1611), and in German translation in volume 1 of the Wittenberg edition (1539, 1551, 1556, 1567, 1587, 1602), along with other independent editions of 1543, 1546, and 1563, Robert Kolb asserts that many pastors of the Reformation and post-Reformation era had these lectures in their own libraries (Robert Kolb, "The Influence of Luther's Galatians Commentary of 1535 on Later Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Commentaries on Galatians," *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 84 [1993]: 159).

[2] The papers presented in Wittenberg can be found in *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 2 (September 2015).

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I. The Ecumenical "Commemoration" of the Reformation

Herman Sasse once warned his readers, "Beware of Reformation anniversaries!"[3] Such a warning is appropriate, for the Reformation celebrations of the past were tragedies. The 1617 festival ushered in the Thirty Years' War in May of the following year. In 1817, when the image of the Ninety-Five Theses being posted on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg first appeared and soon went viral,[4] as we might say today, the celebration instituted the Prussian Union, whose church lost the very Lutheran Confessions themselves. Ironically, October 31, which was introduced in 1667 as a particular day of celebration by Johann Georg II of Saxony, finally gained acceptance only after 1817 in connection with this Prussian Union.[5] The jubilee year of 1917 took place in the midst of the First World War, and it was at this high point of nationalist interpretations of Luther that Karl Hall called for more careful historical scholarship, paving the way for the Luther Renaissance.

Indeed, while the network of *Refo500* was organizing international conferences of a more scholarly side, the German Evangelical Church (EKD) had already launched in 2008 a program on a more popular side called "Luther 2017: 500 Years of Reformation." Each year during this "Luther Decade" is devoted to a particular topic, such as "Reformation and Confession" in 2009, "Reformation and Music" in 2012, "Reformation—Art and the Bible" in 2015, and so on. Margot Kässmann, the former council president of the EKD and bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover, who now serves as a special envoy for *Luther 2017*, explains that she is an ambassador not only for Luther but for all twelve historical figures who drove the Reformation anniversary: Copernicus, Zwingli, Calvin, Ignatius Loyola, Thomas More, Katharina von Bora, Luther, Müntzer, Bugenhagen, Melanchthon, Lucas Cranach, and Erasmus! Kässmann says that this celebration is the first anniversary with a clear ecumenical dimension, the first anniversary since the vast majority of Protestant churches accepted women in the ordained ministry

[3] Hermann Sasse, "The Social Doctrine of the Augsburg Confession and Its Significance for the Present," in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters (1927–1939)*, vol. 1, ed. Ronald Feuerhahn, trans. Matthew Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001), 89. Cf. Albert B. Collver, "Theological Observer: A Vision for Lutheranism in Central Europe," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 78 (January/April 2014): 155–165.

[4] Thomas Albert Howard and Mark A. Noll, "The Reformation at Five Hundred," *First Things* 247 (November 2014): 45; Thomas Albert Howard, "Remembering the Reformation, 1817 and 1833: Commemorating the Past as Agent and Mirror of Social Change," in Donald A. Yerxa, *Religion and Innovation: Antagonists or Partners?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 122.

[5] Karl Dienst, "Reformationsfest," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1961), 5:873–874.

and as bishops, the first one since the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973, and the first one that embraces a historical-critical approach to the Bible.[6]

The former president of Wartburg Theological Seminary, Duane H. Larson, suggests that we should avoid the term *celebration* in the year 2017 because that "would be too much about us and could offend our partners." He is firmly convinced that the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) has replaced the Augsburg Confession as the ecumenical proposal to the church catholic.[7] Martin Junge, the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) since 2010, not only echoes such a common voice from that side of Lutheranism but also even advocates for it, saying that "Apostolicity is measured not just in the doctrinal content and truths of faith; it proves itself also in the telling sign of [eucharistic] hospitality."[8]

The ideal of the JDDJ was furthered by another joint document in 2013 between the LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) of the Roman Catholic Church, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*. This piece attempts to "awaken" the Lutherans worldwide to get out of the "dark side" of the Reformation that divided Western Christendom and to move ever closer to the visible unity of the church.[9] Does this mean, then, that the LWF is ready to give up the ordination of women and open Communion, which the Roman Catholics do not allow, in order to achieve such a visible unity?[10] Herman Sasse observed that the modern ecumenical movement strives to ignore and remove confessional differences, and for this

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[6] Margot Kässmann, "*Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda*: Challenges of the Reformation Jubilee 2017," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 40 (December 2013): 413–423.

[7] Duane H. Larson, "Can Lutherans Recapture Youthfulness at Middle Age? Anticipating the 500th Anniversary of Luther's Reformation," *Dialog* 51 (Spring 2012): 3–4.

[8] Martin Junge, "Reformation and Enculturation: Toward the Five Hundredth Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation," *Word & World* 34 (Spring 2014): 118.

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

[10] According to another recent publication, *Declaration on the Way*, which summarizes the consensus that is achieved by Lutherans and Roman Catholics since 1965, issues on women ordination and open Communion are counted among the "remaining differences." That the Roman Catholics do not recognize the apostolic character of Lutheran ministry is taken for granted in this document because of a lack of apostolic succession among Lutherans. But while many Lutheran churches ordain women, the Roman Catholic Church considers itself "not authorized" to do so (The Declaration on the Way Task Force, *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2015], 89–90, 96–97). For the LWF, ordination of women is a social justice issue. Its booklet *Gender Justice Policy* urges churches that still do not ordain women to "prayerfully consider the effect that inaction and refusal on this matter has on those who are precluded from exercising their God-given calling because they are women" (The Lutheran World Federation, *Gender Justice Policy*, ed. Elaine Neuenfeldt [Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2013], 6). The Office of the Holy Ministry is discussed from the baptismal text

sake, it is a continuation of what unionism of the nineteenth century endeavored to achieve.[11] There is plenty of evidence of such unresolved unionism around the world in Lutheranism today.[12]

II. Awareness of Lutheran Characteristics

In 2000, David Scaer insightfully wrote, "Strangely, evangelicals are more aware of what is characteristically Lutheran than Lutherans are themselves, and are able to draw boundaries that restrict Lutheran views from permeating their circles. . . . Lutherans often naively acquiesce to these boundaries and unwittingly surrender their Reformation heritage."[13] What, then, is characteristically Lutheran that Lutherans unwittingly surrender? As a Presbyterian scholar, Carl Trueman might give us an answer in his latest book, *Luther on the Christian Life*. He writes, "For many modern evangelicals, . . . private Bible study is central to their understanding of the Christian life, while sacraments are peripheral. . . . Luther's piety was rooted in the gathering of the church, in the Word preached more than the Word read, and in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper."[14] Trueman continues, after extolling Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Office of the Holy Ministry:

> The popular phrase of "doing church" is thus entirely inappropriate within a Lutheran framework: Christians do not "do" church in any ultimate or definitive way. God "does" church. The minster—preaching, baptizing, and officiating at communion—is merely an instrument by which God achieves what he intends.
>
> This is surely an antidote to the evangelical church's perennial obsession with the big, the spectacular, the extraordinary, and the impressive. The quest for the next big thing that allows the church to ride the cultural wave, or the technical silver bullet that makes outreach and discipleship so much more

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of Galatians 3:27–28, as has typically been done among those who promote ordination of women (*Gender Justice Policy*, 4). The office is detached from the Lord and his dominical mandate here. Another issue is closed Communion. Concerning Communion practice, *Declaration on the Way* states that while Lutherans exercise eucharistic hospitality with open Communion, in the Roman Catholic Church, "Normally only those in full communion with the Catholic Church are invited to receive the sacrament" (*Declaration on the Way*, 112).

[11] Hermann Sasse, "Worldwide Lutheranism on the Way to Hanover," trans. Andrew Smith, in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 1:418–419.

[12] See examples of the Lutheran churches in Asia in Naomichi Masaki, "The Reformation and Asia: Another Battleground of Confession and Liturgy," *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 2 (September 2015): 62–66.

[13] David Scaer, "Is Reformation Theology Making a Comeback?" in Michael S. Horton ed., *A Confessing Theology for Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 156.

[14] Carl R. Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 22–23.

> effective, would be entirely alien to Luther's way of thinking. Preach the Word and administer the sacraments: that is the minister's calling; these are the tools of his trade and the means by which he is to address pastoral problems. That they seem weak and ineffective from a technical perspective is irrelevant: their power and effectiveness come from the agent, God himself.[15]

As Lutherans, we are grateful for the clarity of the gospel in the doctrine of justification by faith. But from time to time, do we not we tend to emphasize the importance of the word of God at the expense of the particular gifts in preaching, Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Lord's Supper, which usually comes with an inadequate view of the ministry? The words of Jesus are indeed central in the life of the church. Yet, Jesus did not institute Baptism or the Lord's Supper as alternative forms of his words. In each of his means of grace, unique gifts are given. In Baptism, his name; in the Lord's Supper, his body and blood. Characteristically Lutheran in the confession of the Lord's Supper are the doctrines of *unio sacramentalis* and *genus maijestaticum* as the Formula of Concord has drawn them from the Scriptures (FC SD VII–VIII). Irene Dingel reminds us that Luther's authority did not originate from his "rediscovery" of the gospel alone, but from his faithful exposition of the *verba Domini*.[16] When there is hesitation to confess this, we are swallowed up by the Augustinian *signum* theory. Conversely, when the *signum* theory is overcome, there is the Reformation. Oswald Bayer has articulated in many of his writings that the reformational discovery in the strictest sense occurred when Luther saw the *signum* (sign) itself as the *res* (the thing).[17] Norman Nagel pushes this further to let us rejoice with every gift that our Lord has his way with us.[18] Since bread and wine are not

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[15] Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life*, 158.

[16] Irene Dingel, "Luther's Authority in the Late Reformation and Protestant Orthodoxy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, eds. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 525–539.

[17] Oswald Bayer, "Luther as an Interpreter of Holy Scripture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 75–77; Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, eds. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 129; Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 52; Oswald Bayer, "What is Evangelical? The Continuing Validity of the Reformation," *Lutheran Quarterly* 25 (Spring 2011): 6; Oswald Bayer, "How I Became a Luther Scholar," *Lutheran Quarterly* 27 (Autumn 2013): 251. In his "Luthers Fragen: Die Einsichten des Reformators müssen von evangelischen Christen immer wieder neu gewonnen werden," *Theologie* 19 (April 2015): 3–4, Bayer warns that we should not turn the Lord's Supper as a whole into a Eucharist. An English translation by Jeffrey G. Silcock appears as "Twenty Questions on the Relevance of Luther for Today" in *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 (Winter 2015): 439–443.

[18] Norman Nagel's articulation of how the gospel became clear to Luther is reflected in a collection of essays by his students in his second festschrift, *Dona Gratis Donata: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel on the Occasion of His Ninetieth Birthday*, eds. Jon D. Vieker, Bart Day, and Albert B. Collver III (Manchester, MO: The Nagel Festschrift Committee, 2015).

mere signs of Jesus' body and blood, the Lord's Supper is not merely another form of the word or an event that happens to take place on Sunday mornings alone; rather, it is the heartbeat of the church. For this reason, Luther risked his life for the delivery of this gift of the Lord. He said that he would gladly walk over a hundred thousand miles to receive it.[19] It is astonishing and joyful that Jesus as God and man loves to serve us in his church by dwelling among us and even by giving his own body and blood for us to eat and to drink for forgiveness and consolation (SD VIII 76–79).

III. The Reformation Piety in the Altarpiece of St. Mary in Wittenberg

That the Lord's Supper was central in the Lutheran piety in the sixteenth century is evidenced by the well-known altarpiece at St. Mary's, the City Church of Wittenberg.[20] This masterpiece by Lucas Cranach the Elder and the Younger is in many ways truly remarkable. Commissioned by the city of Wittenberg, it was installed in April 1547, after Luther's death and at the time the Smalcald League was defeated, the princely defender imprisoned, the city of Wittenberg captured, and the Interims imposed.[21] In view of these historical circumstances, and acknowledging the tragic event of the destruction of the images by Karlstadt a couple decades earlier

[19] Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 65 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993), 30/2:616.11–13 (hereafter WA); Martin Luther, *Admonition Concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Our Lord* (1530), vol. 38, p. 125, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE.

[20] A helpful resource on Cranach's contributions through his various retables is found in Bonnie Noble, *Lucas Cranach the Elder: Art and Devotion of the German Reformation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009). I owe much of my comments on the altarpiece in the City Church of Wittenberg to this work. Also see Thomas H. Schattauer, "From Sacrifice to Supper: Eucharistic Practice in the Lutheran Reformation," in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 205–230; and Carl C. Christensen, *Art and the Reformation in Germany* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, and Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 136–154.

[21] Cranach, who was a close friend of Luther, must have known the words of Luther in his commentary on Psalm 111 (1530): "Whoever is inclined to set up boards on the altar ought to have the Lord's Supper of Christ painted, with these two verses written around it in golden letters: 'The gracious and merciful Lord has instituted a remembrance of his wonderful works.' Then they would stand before our eyes there for our heart to contemplate them, and even our eyes, in reading, would have to praise and thank God. Since the altar is ordained for the administration of the Sacrament, one could not find a better painting for it. Other pictures of God or Christ can be painted somewhere else" (WA 31/1:415.23–31; cf. *Commentary on Psalm 111* [1530], AE 13:375). Luther was planning to write a hymn on the Lord's Supper, only to rediscover that the Holy Spirit had already composed a better and finer hymn in this Psalm 111. The above comment comes from his exposition of verse 4.

in 1522, the installation of this retable at St. Mary's Church was clearly a testimony to and confession of Christ.

Figure 1. Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Reformation Altarpiece*, 1447. Oil on panel. Stadt-und Pfarrkirche St. Marien zu Wittenberg, Germany. Photo by Naomichi Masaki.

The altarpiece consists of four panels. In the left wing, Melanchthon presides at an infant Baptism. As far as I know, he had never preached or baptized. This panel may be simply an honorific inclusion of Luther's closest colleague and a leader of the Reformation. Cranach may have wanted to draw people's attention to *infant* Baptism more than to Melanchthon. In the right wing, Bugenhagen conducts the Office of the Keys as pastor *in loco* at St. Mary's. To Bugenhagen's right is a penitent, humbly receiving Holy Absolution while kneeling. As a return and approach to Baptism, Holy Absolution puts him in close proximity to the Lord's Table. To Bugenhagen's left, on the other hand, is a man who tries to move away in bitterness. Bugenhagen's left hand looks to be pulling the key back, as though it

had been offered and rejected. The only other figure who is fleeing from the Christian community in this altarpiece is Judas.

The central panel depicts the Lord's Supper. The larger size indicates its vitality and weight in the life of the church. Jesus sits at a round table. John is sleeping comfortably in his lap. Judas looks distinguished from the rest by red hair and a bright yellow robe. Other Apostles are talking, making gestures, and eating. Interestingly, Cranach painted the faces of the Apostles to resemble people of St. Mary's congregation. Everyone could identify who they were. Among them is an Apostle in the figure of Luther, turning back and receiving the Lord's blood from a servant. Luther doesn't wear clerical or monastic garments. He is Junker Jörg, or Knight George of the lower nobility—a layman. Jesus and his Apostles sit before a window that opens up to a contemporary German landscape. This panel portrays the Lord's Supper as both heavenly and earthly at the same time. Jesus, the Savior who dwells in heaven as the ascended Lord, is physically there in his church. For our sake, he has arranged a particular place on earth so that we may find him with certainty. If we want our sins forgiven, we run to the Lord's Supper. If we wish to know where the true church is, we find it where the Lord's Supper is going on. A pastor does not receive any attention. In fact, he is not even there in this central panel. That is a Lutheran confession of the pastoral office. When a pastor serves the means of grace as the one in the office, people see Jesus alone. Has Cranach confused Jesus' Last Supper with his Holy Communion in the church? Of course not. At the Lord's Table, we sit with the Twelve, and the Apostles sit with us, even Luther. The Lord has but one church.

Finally, the fourth panel below this triptych is a familiar portrait of Luther as a preacher. The Bible rests open in the pulpit. Luther points to the looming Christ whose eyes seem to be still open and whose mouth is still moving. God made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin. Jesus bore our sin vicariously. Luther points to this Christ the crucified who alone achieved our salvation and preaches as if he were proclaiming, "Behold the Lamb!" or "Hear Him!" or "Be reconciled to God." The congregation listens to the sermon attentively. We see among the assembled Katharina von Bora with an infant in her lap, Luther's deceased daughter Magdalena standing behind Katie, and a bearded man near the back wall, Cranach himself. Christ's hands are open wide to suggest that his atoning sacrifice and the preaching of his crucifixion are the only foundation and source of Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Holy Supper above.

This profound and skillfully depicted Lutheran *externum verbum* piety in Cranach's altarpiece in Wittenberg may be contrasted with the medieval Catholic piety exemplified in Rogier van der Weyden's *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece* a century earlier. His left panel has Baptism, confirmation, and the sacrament of penance.

Ordination, marriage, and extreme unction are in the right-hand panel. At the center is an enormous crucifix with a depiction of the women in the passion narrative in the Gospels. Where do we find the Mass, the seventh sacrament? It is found in a far-back location where a priest stands before the carved retable of the Virgin Mary celebrating the Mass with his back to the congregation. Painted is the crucial moment of the elevation of the host: the moment of transubstantiation. In this altarpiece, preaching does not occupy a space. There is no feast of a community like the round table in Cranach's altarpiece. The Mass is only one among a

Figure 2. Rogier van der Weyden, *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*, c. 1445–1450. Oil on oak panel, 200 x 97 cm. Roayl Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, Belgium. Public domain.

sevenfold sacramental system. Darkness, remoteness of the living Christ, and Christians not engaging with the world illustrate an utter absence of the vitality of the gospel. Ascending and upward Christian piety dominates in this altarpiece in stark contrast to the *externum verbum* piety of the Cranach altarpiece.

During the anniversary years of the Reformation, we get to examine and diagnose how we have been receiving the Lord's gifts. The point of consideration is our receiving rather than our doing. The anniversary is not for us to seek romantically to repeat the unrepeatable. The question is concerning the relevancy of the

Reformation today.[22] Where the faithful confession of Jesus is, there lives on the vitality of the Lord's liturgy. Luther's *Lectures on Galatians* is like the preaching panel in Cranach's altarpiece. It will help us examine whether the doctrine with which the church stands or falls remains whole among us.

III. Luther's *Galatians*: Its Popularity and Criticism

At the heart of Luther's *Lectures on Galatians* is the doctrine of the proper distinction between law and gospel.[23] While Luther's contemporary opponents failed to see this—whether they were the papists, enthusiasts, Anabaptists, Sacramentarians, or antinomians—law/gospel articulation defined Luther's legacy in the thinking of his colleagues, students, and generations after him.[24] The same

[22] In his "Twenty Questions on the Relevance of Luther for Today," Oswald Bayer poses personal questions on the relevance of the Reformation today that are specific to the pastoral office.

[23] Luther emphasized with strong language that the doctrine of the proper distinction between law and gospel is "our theology." It contains, he maintained, "the summary of whole Christian doctrine" and "keeps all genuine theology in its true use." Therefore, "Whoever knows well how to distinguish the Law and the Gospel is a theologian" (Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* [1535], WA 40/1:45.24–27 [AE 26:7]; WA 40/1:209.11–12 [AE 26:117]; WA 40 1:511.31–32 [AE 26:331]; WA 40/1:207.17–18 [AE 26:115]. Cf. WA 40/1:204.11–15 [AE 26:113]; WA 40/1:207.19–28 [AE 26:115]; WA 40/1:208.16–25 [AE 26:116]; WA 40/1:209.16–23 [AE 26:117]; WA 40/1:336.32–337.22 [AE 26:208–209]; WA 40/1:486.17–487.14 [AE 26:313], WA 40/1:519.34–520.24 [AE 26:337]; WA 40/1:617.24–30 [AE 26:406–407]). Later in his life, Luther recalled his theological development: "But when I discovered the distinction—namely, that the Law is one thing and the Gospel is another—then I had the break-through" ("*aber do ich das discrimen fande, quod aliud esset lex, aliud euangelium, da riß ich her durch*") (Luther, "Table Talk recorded by Caspar Heydenreich" [1542–1543], WA TR 5:210.12–16, no. 5518 [AE 54:442]). In his *Lectures on Galatians*, Luther said that the law and the gospel are "two entirely contrary doctrine" (*Ideo lex et Evangelium duae prorsus contrariae doctrinae sunt*) (WA 40/1:336.35–337.14 [AE 26:208]; cf. WA 40/1:520.25–27 [AE 26:337]).

[24] FC SD III 67 recommends the readers to review "the wonderful, magnificent exposition by Dr. Luther of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians." (All quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this article are from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand, et al. [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000].) The source of this statement comes from the Torgau Book of 1576 (Irene Dingel, ed., *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche: Quellen und Materialien* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014], 2:407.29–33). The mention of Luther's *Lectures on Galatians* in SD III reflects Nicholas Selnecker's recommendation at the Lichtenberg Conference a couple of months earlier to adopt it in addition to the three ecumenical creeds, the unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Small and the Large Catechisms as the new *corpus doctrinae* to replace the Wittenberg Catechism, the *Consensus Dresdenis*, and *Corpus Philippicum* (F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. [St. Louis: Concordia, 2005], 575). On the place of Luther's *Lectures on Galatians* in his funeral sermons and oration by Jonas, Coelius, Bugenhagen, and Melanchthon, see my work, "Luther Memoria on the Occasion of his Death" in Irene Dingel, ed., *Memoria-Theologische Synthese-Autoritätenkoflikt: Die Rezeption Luthers und Melanchthons in der Schülergeneration* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 69–87. The influence and reception of Luther's Galatians among the later sixteenth-century Lutheran fathers is articulated by Robert Kolb in his works, "The Influence of Luther's Galatians

pattern is found today also. During the past several decades, those who are sympathetic to the JDDJ, the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), and the New Finnish Interpretation of Luther (NFIL) have expressed their disagreement with Luther's confession of law and gospel in one way or another. Intended or not, some of the common features among the deniers of the proper distinction may be traceable to the theologies of Karl Barth, Albrecht Ritschl, Johannes von Hofmann, and Friedrich Schleiermacher.[25] Faithful Lutherans of our time have been responding to their various charges.

IV. Luther Preaches as He Lectures

In hearing Luther's exposition of the epistle, we immediately recognize Luther's homiletical lecture style rather than a more formal academic style of narrative explanations of the sacred text.[26] This does not mean that his lectures were not scholarly enough or objective enough. Rather, it indicates that Luther was teaching at the university as a pastor in the office. Ronald Rittgers observes that the driving force in Luther's entire career, whether as a professor, theologian, or preacher, was *cura animarum* (care of souls), concrete ways in which Jesus deals with sinners, baptized or not.[27] Such an assertion corresponds to a reflection of Theodor Kliefoth when he wrote that the Reformation was basically a restoration of Confession and Absolution.[28]

For Luther, theology was not about abstract notions, concepts, or ideals, because that would be a show of man's pretention and the devil's illusion. He was not interested in constructing a systematic theology using the law as its basic structure or the love of God as the organizing principle.[29] For Luther, the fact

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Commentary of 1535" and *Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher, and Hero: Images of the Reformer, 1520–1620* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

[25] Concerning the contemporary law and gospel debate with Luther's Galatians, see my work "Luther on Law and Gospel in His *Lectures on Galatians* 1531/1535," in *The Necessary Distinction: A Continuing Conversation on Law & Gospel*, ed. Steven D. Paulson et al. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 135–167.

[26] Cf. Kolb, "The Influence of Luther's Galatians Commentary of 1535," 161.

[27] Ronald K. Rittgers, "How Luther's Engagement in Pastoral Care Shaped His Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 462–470. The Formula of Concord gives a brilliant summary of how Jesus as both God and man wants to deal with the saints in a manner of bestowing on them his own flesh and blood. "He instituted his Holy Supper as a certain assurance and confirmation of this, that also in the nature according to which he has flesh and blood he wants to be with us, to dwell in us, to work in us, and to exert his power for us" (FC SD VIII 79).

[28] Theodor Kliefoth, *Die Beichte und Absolution*, vol. 2 of *Liturgische Abhandlungen* (Schwerin: Stiller, 1856), 125.

[29] In his *Lectures on Galatians*, Luther warns against imposing our ideas on the word of God in reading and hearing the Scriptures (WA 40/2:36.24–37.25 [AE 27:28–30]). Luther's theological point of departure was man's condition before God as a sinner. For example, in the Smalcald

remained that life was under *tentatio*[30]—the daily battle against the devil, the world, and sinful flesh. Man is a sinner *bottomlessly*.[31] If one wishes to treat the word of God by positioning himself above it, then his theology will resemble a scientist who investigates the poison of a snake by googling. Instead, he should realize that the snake is already around his neck. Luther may not have been joking when he said at a dinner table one evening, "Tomorrow I have to lecture on the drunkenness of Noah (Gen 9:20–27), so I should drink enough this evening to be able to talk about that wickedness as one who knows by experience."[32] Luther consistently stayed under the word. He listened to the voice of Jesus without pretention, and he delivered his lectures with passion.

V. Luther's Theological Opponents

Over the course of his *Lectures on Galatians*, Luther repeated a simple statement that the law was given not to justify, but to terrify, accuse, and kill.[33] This was not a mere critique of works righteousness for Luther. It was his observation of an overarching problem in all of his theological opponents, the papacy, the enthusiasts, the Sacramentarians, and the antinomians alike.[34] Luther was also fighting against the

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Articles, before confessing the law and the gospel, Luther deals with sin (SA III I–IV). Less than a year after the completion of his Galatians lectures, Luther said that the subject of theology was never God in himself or our projection of who God should be, but the fact of man as sinning and of Jesus as justifying the sinner (*Nam Theologiae proprium subiectum est homo peccati reus ac perditus et Deus iustificans ac salvator hominis peccatoris*) (Luther, *Psalm 51* [1532], WA 40/2:328.17–18 [AE 12:311]. These lectures took place from June to August of 1532). Cf. Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:406.24–25 (AE 26:259): "*Cum tamen iustificare peccatorem sit solius Christi proprium officium.*"

[30] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:318.12 (AE 26:193); WA 40/1:321.27–33 (AE 26:196).

[31] Here, the expression "bottomless" (*grundlos*) was employed from Luther's Smalcald Articles III II 4. In the *Lectures on Galatians*, Luther observes that man is indifferent to sin, regarding sin as something trivial—a mere nothing. Man does not know the weight and force of sin, thus he supposes some little work or merit of his own will remove it. It is a foreign concept to him that the word *sin* includes the eternal wrath of God and the entire kingdom of Satan (WA 40/1:84.12–24 [AE 26:33]).

[32] Luther, *Table Talk*, as recorded by Anthony Lauterbach and Jerome Weller (1536–1537), WA TR 3:344.19–20 (AE 54:206).

[33] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:44.12–16 (AE 26:6); WA 40/1:48.16–17 (AE 26:9); WA 40/1:73.21–22 (AE 26:26); WA 40/1:403.21–23 (AE 26:256); WA 40/1:479.12–13 (AE 26:308); WA 40/1:480.32–481.25 (AE 26:309–310); WA 40/1:482.12–483.15 (AE 26:310); WA 40/1:486.13–16 (AE 26:313); WA 40/1:511.24–30 (AE 26:331); WA 40/1:529.11–14 (AE 26:345); WA 40/1:554.27–555.19 (AE 26:363); WA 40/2:8.18–20 (AE 27:7–8); WA 40/2:16.20–23 (AE 27:14); etc.

[34] Luther did a similar thing when he dismissed all the heretical doctrine of the Lord's Supper by saying that for them, the sacrament was "something that we do" (*ein ding, das wir thun*) (LC V 7). Whether playing some effective role before God through works/ethics (Rome),

most powerful and attractive opinion that is inherent in man at the same time: the law as the original way of salvation. This is what human hearts say.[35]

Luther's harsh criticism of the merit of congruity and the merit of condignity as speculations and the tricks of Satan should be construed within such a theological diagnosis.[36] The scholastic theology culminated in the tradition of Gabriel Biel carried with it the ongoing attempts to structure theology under the shadow of ancient philosophies.[37] When philosophies of Plato and Aristotle were used to organize Christian theology, the church naturally rejected their notion that there is no Creator. Nevertheless, the basic structure of a movement from lower to higher (Plato) or from a cause to an effect (Aristotle) was retained. God was thought to preserve the perfect eternal order in the world. When scholasticism moved up to its late period, nominalism destroyed the firm relation between faith and reason of the earlier periods by freeing God from acting by necessity. But the basic structure remained the same.[38] The law existed to preserve everything in its place and protect

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mysticism/emotions (Karlstadt), or reason/speculation (the Swiss), Luther discerned that his opponents had one common point of departure: *something in us*.

[35] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:474.21–24 (AE 26:305).

[36] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:220.4–237.24 (AE 26:124–35); WA 40/1:290.33–296.22 (AE 26:172–76); WA 40/1:302.32–305.13 (AE 26:181–83); WA 40/1:453.22–456.16 (AE 26:291–93); WA 40/1:468.17–22 (AE 26:301); WA 40/1:511.12–24 (AE 26:330–31); WA 40/1:571.15–573.20 (AE 26:374–75); WA 40/2: 34.10–20 (AE 27:28). Cf. Ap IV 19, 146, 167, 356.

[37] Cf. Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1983); Heiko A. Oberman, "Luther and the *Via Moderna*: The Philosophical Backdrop of the Reformation Breakthrough," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54 (October 2003): 641–670; Bengt Hägglund, *The Background of Luther's Doctrine of Justification in Late Medieval Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Denis R. Janz, "Late Medieval Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, eds. David Bagchi and David Steinmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5–14; Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1–187; Theodor Dieter, "Luther as Late Medieval Theologian: His Positive and Negative Use of Nominalism and Realism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 31–48.

[38] In Plato, the always-changing (becoming) physical and empirical world was contrasted with the ever unchanging (being) world of the eternal ideas. The former is the shadow or copy of the latter. In turn, the latter exists as a goal and purpose of the former. Since the world of eternal ideas is sufficient in itself, if these two worlds should relate with each other, it was the sensible world that has to move toward the nonsensible by way of imitation. This upward movement of drawing near to the world of ideas takes place because the sensible world yearns for the return to the nonsensible world where it used to belong (*anamnesis*). Plato thought that man lives in both worlds. Man's happiness is achieved when his soul is freed from the physical world of imprisonment as his reason disciplines his fleshly desires. Yet man's happiness is not fully accomplished individualistically. The nation to which he belongs should also follow the same pattern of movement and maintaining a common good order.

Aristotle rejected his master's idea of the world of ideas. He reduced the two independent worlds into one, seeing the ideas only within the *ousia* in the empirical world. For Aristotle, each substance consists in matter and form. And every substance is changing (becoming) in a movement of a matter (*dynamis*) to a form (*energeia*). Because every substance has a movement, there has to

the entire structure in the world from chaos. But disorder was inevitable. So Christ came to the world to fix the muddle by providing a new law. In these late scholastic views, the law was considered inherently good, as it was given to conserve God's eternal order and to protect man from descending to a lower order in his sin. The law was also the ultimate. The goodness of man's life was considered in a realm of moral achievement.

VI. Luther and Conscience

Luther frequently used the word *conscientia* ("conscience") in his *Lectures on Galatians*. In our time, conscience is normally understood as a faculty or judgment that assists in distinguishing right from wrong. While this view resembles a scholastic view of Thomas Aquinas, Luther employed the term quite differently. Conscience meant more than moral principles for Luther. It was a sense of man's standing in relation to God.[39]

According to Michael Baylor, who attempted to understand Luther's view of conscience from the Scriptures, the early church fathers, the *via antiqua* of Thomas, and the *via moderna* of Ockham and Biel, the crucial difference that emerged in Luther as the gospel became clearer to him was found foremost in the

be the beginning point and the ending point. Aristotle called the most elemental and imaginative matter that subsists without a form the prime matter, and the highest substance that exists without a matter he called the unmoved mover. When Aristotle devised the unmoved mover as god, his notion moved closer to Plato. In both, god is immaterial substance. In both, god never moves toward the empirical world. The movement of things in the world is only upward, toward the goal of this unmoved mover or the world of ideas. God is self-sufficient. His activity consists in eternal self-contemplation. In terms of the living thing, Aristotle thought it to be a union of body (matter) and soul (form). Again, there is a hierarchy within the living thing. The plant (the lower soul) is lower than the animal (the higher soul) because the lower soul engages in actions related to nutrition and reproduction alone, while the higher soul also possesses emotions and desires. Man is placed as the highest in the hierarchy, because only man possesses reason, which is related to the self-contemplation of the unmoved mover. For Aristotle, the highest goodness is found in a life that is guided by this reason. Reason controls emotions and desires, and in this way, man spends a morally upright life for the common good of a nation. Cf. Takeo Iwasaki, *Seiyo Tetsugaku Shi*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1975), 10–120; Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta: John Know, 1985), 15–169; James A. Nestingen, "Changing Definitions: The Law in Formula VI," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 69 (2005): 259–70; Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11–71.

[39] For example, Luther speaks of the location of Christian freedom in the conscience. "This is the freedom out of which Christ has set us free, not from some human slavery or tyrants but from the eternal wrath of God. Where? In the conscience. This is where our freedom comes to a halt; it goes no further. For Christ has set us free, not politically or physically but theologically and spiritually, that is, to make our conscience free and joyful, unafraid of the wrath to come. This is the most genuine freedom; it is priceless" (Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* [1535], WA 40/2:3.20–25 [AE 27:4]; cf. WA 40/1:47.26–48.20 [AE 26:8–9]; etc).

object of conscience.[40] To be sure, there were differences within the scholasticism. For example, in the *via antiqua* of Thomas, conscience renders judgment according to general moral knowledge innately present in all men, while in the *via moderna* of Biel, the standard of judgment becomes the revealed law of the Scriptures. But in both traditions, the conscience judges about *individual moral actions* in light of their conformity or lack of conformity to universal moral principles.[41] Luther, however, spoke of the conscience as judging *the person as a whole*, the agent of the actions, not simply the actions themselves.[42] For Luther, a bad conscience is more than one that experiences regret about *past actions*. It goes deeper. The guilty conscience suffers under the impact of a divine judgment that condemns and rejects *that person himself*. Good or bad consciences are not so much emotional conditions that relate to individual actions—like how you feel bad when you violate the law and you feel good when you fulfill it. Rather, they are the conditions that result when a man experiences either the wrath of God over his person that is revealed in the law or the merciful judgment that is conveyed in the gospel.[43]

The late scholastic tradition held that man is, in principle, capable of knowing and keeping the moral principles. Luther did not hold to this. The conscience is not autonomous. It has to be taught by Scripture. In the late scholastics, man's sin was in the area of actual sins. In Luther, it was original sin—you do not merely *have* problems, you *are* the problem! The scholastics viewed the law as precepts that must be fulfilled in order to attain salvation. For Luther, the law uncovers sin and reveals a judgment of God about the person.

"As soon as reason and the law are joined, faith immediately loses its virginity."[44] Insightful words such as these from Luther reveal his profound awareness of the context in which man is given to exist. He agonized over the fact that not one of his opponents comprehended either the law or the gospel.[45] For Luther, the place of daily struggle for the Christian was not found in a cosmic

[40] Michael G. Baylor, *Action and Person: Conscience in Late Scholasticism and the Young Luther* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

[41] Baylor, *Action and Person*, 20–118.

[42] Baylor, *Action and Person*, 157–272.

[43] Cf. SA III II 1–5; III III 1–3.

[44] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:204.17–18 (AE 26:113): "*Quam primum autem Lex et ratio coniunguntur, statim virginitas fidei violate est.*"

[45] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:480.32–483.13 (AE 26:309–10); WA 40/1:485.9–22 (AE 26:312).

arena but in the conscience, the most difficult location.[46] And it is there where the proper distinction between law and gospel is to be made.[47]

VII. Sin and the Proper Office of the Law

Against the rest of the theological world and human traditions, Luther rejected the notion that the law describes what man is supposed to do within the structure of the eternal order. Instead, he viewed the law as what it actually does: it kills.[48] Man in his weakness and sinfulness is capable of reducing the law to a mere command, a rule, a system, a structure—a neat little package that is not threatening. Luther lamented that not only the sophists and monks but also the majority of those who hear the word do not struggle with sin, death, and the devil.[49] The law, indeed, does give requirements. But beyond the commandment, the law exercises power and force.[50] Man can no longer make use of the law to organize his life and to take control of his way of living. The law kills and condemns, and it does so in a number of ways.

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[46] Cf. Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:95.19–96.11 (AE 26:40–41); WA 40/1:539.34–541.35 (AE 26:352–53); WA 40/2.178.16–179.24 (AE 27:139–141).

[47] Luther says, "*Ideo quisque diligenter discat discernere legem ab Evangelio, non tantum verbis, sed etiam ipso affectu et experientia, hoc est in corde et conscientia ista duo bene distinguat. Alioqui quantum ad verba attinet, facilis est illorum distinctio. Sed quando ad experientiam venit, tum invenis Evangelium rarum et e contra legem assiduum esse hospitem in conscientia.*" "Let everyone learn diligently to distinguish the Law from the Gospel, not only in words but in feeling and in experience. That is, in his heart and in his conscience let him distinguish well between these two. As far as the words are concerned the distinction is easy. But when it comes to experience, you will find the Gospel a rare guest but the Law a constant guest in your conscience" (*Lectures on Galatians* [1535], WA 40/1:209.17–22 [AE 26:117]). Luther also says, "*Sic pulchre distinguit Paulus tempus legis et gratiae. Discamus et nos recte distinguere utriusque tempus, non verbis sed affectu, id quod est omnium difficillimum.*" "Thus so beautifully does Paul distinguish between the time of Law and (the time) of grace. Let us learn to distinguish the times of both, not in words but in feeling, which is the most difficult" (WA 40/1:527.21–23 [AE 26:343]; cf. WA 40/1:47.26–29 [AE 26:8–9]).

[48] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:336.32–337.22 (AE 26:208–209); WA 40/1:257.28–32 (AE 26:148–149).

[49] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:84.12–24 (AE 26:33); WA 40/1:618.11–17 (AE 26:407); WA 40/2:90.12–21 (AE 27:71); cf. WA 40/1:236.17–22 (AE 26:134); WA 40/1:484.32–485.22 (AE 26:312).

[50] Luther summarizes his thinking of the law in *Theses concerning Faith and Law* (1535), WA 39/1:50.20–35 (AE 34:116), when he expounds on Romans 3:28: "34. It is firmly established, therefore, that Paul is speaking *not only of moral law*, *but also of its total power* (potenta) *and force* (vi). 35. Man, the rational animal, does not even understand its *force*, much less is he able to judge and teach it. 36. Its *force*, however, and *power* is *to slay* (occidere), or *to show that sin must be punished with eternal death*. 37. When a man really begins to feel this force, with the Spirit reproving him, he soon despairs of God's mercy. 38. But despair of God's mercy is the greatest sin and is unforgivable unless grace cancels it in suitable time. 39. Such then truly are these greatest works which man does according to God's moral law. 40. This is what Paul says, that through the law sin is made sinful beyond measure; through the law sin slays me; and the law brings wrath [Rom. 5:20–21; 4:15]. 41. A man never sins more terribly than in that moment when he begins to feel or understand the law" (emphases added). Cf. FC SD V 10–27.

To demonstrate how many forms the law can take, Luther presented the discussion on two kinds of righteousness at the beginning of his lectures. Christian righteousness is only one. It is the doctrine of faith, grace, and forgiveness. It is *passive*.[51] But outside this Christian righteousness, there are many other forms of righteousness, such as political righteousness, ceremonial righteousness, human traditions established by parents and teachers, moral discipline, and the Decalogue. These kinds of righteousness are all *active*.[52]

The proper office of the law is to make guilty those who are smug and at peace,[53] as the law reveals to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and well-deserved wrath of God.[54] The law accuses and terrifies the conscience. The office of the law is only to kill.[55] Luther saw the organic relation between the proper distinction and the Lord's Supper here. The papacy, the Sacramentarians, and the Anabaptists blasphemed the body and blood of Christ because they failed to understand the proper office and use of the law.[56]

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[51] Luther says that man works nothing and renders nothing to God. Man only receives and suffers someone else to work in him. This passive righteousness comes to man as rain, a free gift of God in Christ.

[52] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:41.15–51.34 (AE 26:4–12). Luther expressed the same thought when he stated later in his lectures, "*Whatever* is not grace is Law, whether it be judicial, ceremonial, or the Decalogue" (WA 40/1:218.7–8 [AE 26:122], emphasis added). In the second set of theses in his second disputation against the antinomians (1538), Luther stated in thesis 18, "*Whatever* shows sin, wrath, and death exercises the office of the Law, be it in the Old or in the New Testament" (WA 39/1:348.25–26, Sonntag ed., *Only the Decalogue Is Eternal*, 80. Emphasis added). FC SD V 12 also states, "*Everything* that proclaims something about our sin and God's wrath is the proclamation of the law, *however and whenever it may take place*" (emphasis added).

[53] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:257.19–22 (AE 26:148). By using the term *proper*, he contrasted another use of the law in the political and civic realm. Luther presents two uses of the law: (1) political/civic, and (2) theological/spiritual. Both confine men in a prison. But the latter is the "true and proper use of the Law" (WA 40/1:519.34–520.24 [AE 26:337]).

[54] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:480.32–481.25 (AE 26:309–310).

[55] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:517.26 (AE 26:335). In the lectures, we encounter Luther's employment of many illustrations on this chief office of the law. His favorite one is that of the hammer of God drawn from Jeremiah 23:29. Man has a huge rock and a solid wall to protect (imprison) himself in the presumption of his own righteousness, immense pride, self-trust, smugness, hate of God, contempt of grace and mercy, and ignorance of the promises of Christ. This huge and horrible monster must be crushed and completely broken. If not, man suffers from two crucial consequences. First, he will never come to know himself as a sinner, not merely civically and morally but also theologically, not only outwardly but also in his conscience, and not only before men but also before God. Second, he will never experience that the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins enters his heart and understanding (WA 40/1:482.12–483.13 [AE 26:310]). Luther repeated the illustration of the law as the hammer in SA III III 2.

[56] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:485.9–22 (AE 26:312).

Luther also predicted that after his time, this proper office of the law would be obscured again and would be completely wiped out.[57] Luther was a true prophet!

VIII. The Proper Office of Christ

When the proper office of the law approaches man, it strips the self-righteous, self-excusing sinner of every credential and covering. It strikes him dumb. It makes him guilty. It humbles him. It leads him to hell.[58] However, this is not the end of the story. The Lord does this to a sinner so that he may be able to make him alive.[59] He strikes in order to heal. He kills in order to make alive. When the user of the law is the Lord God himself, the proper office of the law is not separated from the proper office of the gospel.

According to the Smalcald Articles, such a proper office of the gospel is the preaching of the forgiveness of sins.[60] In the *Lectures on Galatians*, however, instead of the office of the *gospel*, Luther speaks of the office of *Christ*. This office is twofold. First, Luther confesses that the proper office of Christ is "to wrestle with the Law, sin, and death of the whole world, and to wrestle in such a way that He endures them, but, by enduring them, conquers them and abolishes them in Himself, and in this way frees us from the Law and from every evil."[61] Here we observe Luther's understanding of the relationship of Christ with the law. Although Jesus is the Lord of the law, he is confessed as the receiver of the law and not the giver. Christ relates to the law *passively*. He was born under the law. He voluntarily (*sponte*) subjected Himself to it in his ministry. He did this so that the law may rage against him as much as it does against an accursed and condemned sinner, and even more fiercely. The law accused Jesus of blasphemy and sedition. It found him guilty before God of all the sins of the whole world. It frightened him to the point of the bloody sweat in Gethsemane. Finally, it sentenced him to death, even to death on the cross.[62] Luther confesses that in such a passive way, Jesus achieved the forgiveness of sins

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[57] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:484.32–485.9 (AE 26:312).

[58] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:519.11–12 (AE 26:345).

[59] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:517.26–30 (AE 26:335); WA 40/1:529.11–14 (AE 26:345); WA 40/1:534.17 (AE 26:348).

[60] SA III IV: "*Erstlich durchs mündlich wort, darinn gepredigt wird vergebung der sunde inn alle wet, welchs ist das eigentliche Ampt des Evangelii.*" " *. . . primum per verbum vocale, quo iubet praedicari remissionem peccatorum in universe mundo. Et hoc est proprium officium Evangelii.*"

[61] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:569.18–21 (AE 26:373): "*Quare Christi verum et proprium officium est, luctari cum lege, peccato et morte totius mundi, et sic luctari, ut ista sustineat et sustinendo in Semetipso vincat et aboleat et hoc modo nos a lege et omnibus malis liberet.*" By asserting this, Luther explains that teaching the law and performing miracles are his accidental offices. They are not the chief reasons for his coming (WA 40/1:568.25–569.14, 569.21–24 [AE 26:372–373]).

[62] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:564.26–565.17 (AE 26:369–370).

for all people. It was not through force and might, but through weakness and powerlessness. Against his sin, Luther found another sin, that which is in the flesh of Christ.[63] Christ *is* "my law, my sin, and my death," Luther exclaimed.[64] In his own body, Jesus destroyed the wrath of the law.[65]

Second, while Luther spoke of the true office of Christ as bearing our sin, he also continued, saying: "It is the proper office of Christ alone to justify the sinner."[66] Luther frequently spoke of Jesus as "going to the Father." This was not merely to express Jesus' victory, but also to confess his ongoing ministry of delivering the forgiveness of sins in the world.[67] How does Jesus justify the sinner now?[68] Jesus justifies the sinner through preaching.[69] He also preserves the saints by preaching justification.[70] The gospel comes to sinners in more than one way. It is cheering

[63] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:273.17–32 (AE 26:159–160).

[64] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:278.20–29 (AE 26:163).

[65] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:503.19–504.21 (AE 26:325). The true office of Christ is to *bear* our sin, not just some of our sins but all of our sins and sinfulness, not just small sins but sins of any size and magnitude. For Luther, Jesus is not the Savior because he overlooks our sins or ignores them as if they did not exist. Neither did Jesus merely perform what we were unable to do. Man's sins and his sinfulness are as real as Jesus who suffered and shed his blood on the cross. Jesus wrestled with the law, sin, and death, and by doing so, he answered for them all vicariously and as our substitute. "And all the prophets saw this, that Christ was to become the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been anywhere in the world. . . . He is a sinner, who has and bears the sin of Paul, the former blasphemer, persecutor, and assaulter; of Peter, who denied Christ; of David, who was an adulterer and a murderer, and who caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord (Romans 2:24). In short, He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body—not in the sense that He has committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon His own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood" (WA 40/1:433.26–434.12 [AE 26:277–278]). When Luther expounds the office of Jesus in the lectures, he gets so excited that he forgets he is teaching in the university classroom, and he begins to preach. The proper office of Christ is not a description of a thing. It is preaching of Christ crucified. It does not belong to a classroom, but to a liturgical assembly where the Lord's liturgy goes on!

[66] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:406.24–25 (AE 26:259): "*iustificare peccatorem sit solius Christi proprium officium.*"

[67] E.g., Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:361.12–362.14 (AE 26:227–228). Here is summarized all that Luther wished to say about Christian righteousness. Jesus achieved the forgiveness on the cross by passively receiving all the accusations and attacks of the law and its associates, sin, the devil, death, and the world. But he was not done for when he died on the cross. He was raised from the dead and now is seated at the right hand of God. Jesus alone is the one who justifies the sinners now. From our human point of view, Christian righteousness is to receive his justification. Christian righteousness is, once again, completely passive.

[68] Or as Luther poses the question, "Why should we listen to the Gospel? What need is there of the sacrament and of absolution?" "*Quid igitur audiamus Evangelium, quid opus est Sacramento et absolution?*" (WA 40/1:538.13–14 [AE 26:350]).

[69] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:336.32–337.22, 343.33–345.30 (AE 26:208–209, 214–215).

[70] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:534.30–538.35 (AE 26:349–351).

to read how Luther teaches on Baptism,[71] the Lord's Supper, and Holy Absolution in this context.[72]

IX. Justification and the Office of the Holy Ministry

The way of the gospel is not by coercion. The gospel does not demand; it bestows Christ's gifts freely. The gospel *bids* us (*iubet nos*) to hold out our hands and receive what is offered.[73] Jesus gives. We only receive. We don't even *permit* him to work in us and toward us. Faith passively *suffers* (*patimur*) his gracious work in us and for us.[74] In this way, the baptized get to live in the fellowship of the church[75] where Jesus' ongoing ministry of delivering his gifts takes place.[76]

The Office of the Holy Ministry is a confession of such an ongoing ministry of Jesus. Luther acknowledges that when he was a young theologian and doctor, he did not understand that the *rite vocatus* was such a weighty matter.[77] But as his understanding of the doctrine of the proper distinction between law and gospel became clearer, his confession of the Office of the Holy Ministry also matured.[78] Luther follows Paul in the first two chapters of Galatians and testifies that the certainty of the call and ordination gives comfort both to hearers and to pastors. People are comforted because when they hear the voice and see the hands of their pastor, they know for sure that it is Jesus who ministers to them. The pastor is also comforted when he realizes that the reason he preaches and administers the sacraments is because his Lord Jesus called him, put him there, and assured him that the Lord himself is there in the office to carry out the ministry. As in the Book

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[71] For example, when Luther presents Baptism as a new birth and a new creation, he dismisses a *signum* theory (*non signum*) and calls Baptism the garment of Christ (*Lectures on Galatians* [1535], WA 40/1:539.34–541.35 [AE 26:352–353]) and Christ himself (*ipsum Christum*) (WA 40/1:541.32–33 [AE 26:353]). In baptizing the sinner, Jesus is the Justifier (*Iustificator*), Lifegiver (*Vivificator*), and Redeemer (*Redemptor*). To put on Christ in Baptism does not mean to imitate him by the works of the law but to receive "an inestimable gift of the forgiveness, righteousness, peace, comfort, joy in the Holy Spirit, salvation, life, and Christ Himself" (WA 40/1:540.33–541.20 [AE 26:352–353]).

[72] E.g., Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:51.14–17 (AE 26:11).

[73] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:337 (AE 26:208): "*Contra Evangelium non exigit, sed donat gratis et iubet nos porrectis minibus oblate accipere.*" In the gospel delivery context such as this, we prefer "bidding" rather than "command" as a translation of *inbeo* in order to avoid an impression of demand and coercion. The Lord bids us to hear his comforting voice of the gospel. He bids us to come to the Lord's Table to receive his body to eat and his blood to drink.

[74] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:41.17–21 (AE 26:4–5).

[75] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:576.21–25 (AE 26:378).

[76] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:387.21–388.17 (AE 26:245–246).

[77] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:63.19–22 (AE 26:20).

[78] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:54.15–64.12, 66.14–71.28 (AE 26:15–21, 22–26); WA 40/1:183.25–187.15 (AE 26:101–103); WA 40/1:357.14–30 (AE 26:224–225); WA 40/2:148.31–153.29 (AE 27:116–20); WA 40/2:161.30–36 (AE 27:126).

of Concord on the *Predigtamt*, Luther confesses the doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in his *Galatian Lectures* by bringing in such New Testament passages as Matthew 28:19–20, Ephesians 4:11–12, and Titus 1:5.

X. Faith and Imputation: *Blessed Exchange*

In Luther's *Galatians*, justifying faith is not autonomous. It is Christ who justifies, not faith. Faith in Christ indeed plays a vital role in Christian life.[79] Yet, there exists in Luther's exposition something more important than faith in the heart, and that is imputation.[80] Luther does not draw the attention of his hearers to faith in the heart but to Christ who gives such trust that takes hold of him and who uses their imperfect and weak faith, which Luther calls a mere "little spark,"[81] to reckon them as righteous.

As a result, God does not see the sin that remains in man. He covers the remnant of sin, and he forgives it. This emphasis on imputation lies at the base of Luther's favorite phrase on Christian righteousness: the *blessed exchange*.[82] Jesus took upon himself our sin and sinfulness. In turn, he grants us his innocence and victory. Luther does not let the Christians lose Jesus the crucified.[83]

XI. The Christian Life as *simul iustus et peccator*

Just as Paul says that Christ is the end of the law in the Epistle to the Romans (Romans 10:4), so also Luther, in his *Lectures on Galatians*, confesses with Paul that the time of the law ends with Christ's intervention.[84] Christ is the *telos*. He is not only the fulfillment of the law but also its end. The law is not the way of salvation anymore. The law is now replaced by Christ.

According to Luther, a Christian lives in two time periods: the time of the law, when he is under the accusation of the proper office of the law; and the time of grace, when the law's accusing voice is stopped by the forgiveness of sins.[85] The Christian

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[79] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:228.27–229.32 (AE 26:129–130).

[80] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:363.28–368.25 (AE 26:229–232).

[81] Cf. AC XX 23–26.

[82] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:442.31–443.34 (AE 26:283–284): "*Sic* feliciter commutans *nobiscum suscepit nostrum peccatriccem et donavit nobis suam innocentem et victricem personam*" (emphasis added).

[83] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:564.11–14 (AE 26:36): "*immergo conscientiam meam in vulnera, sanguinem, mortem, resurrectionem et victoriam Christi, praeter hunc nihil plane videre et audire volo.*"

[84] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:556.23–27 (AE 26:364): "*non tamen desperes, sed credas in* Christum qui est finis *legis ad iustitiam omni credenti*" (emphasis added).

[85] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:523.31–529.14 (AE 26:340–45); cf. WA 40/1:454.30–33 (AE 26:292); WA 40/2:19.25–26 (AE 27:17).

is to learn to distinguish the two, not in words alone but also in the feelings,[86] because the accusation of the law and the freedom of the gospel are both experienced in the conscience.[87] When the Christian fails to distinguish these two time periods, he has abused the law.[88]

Luther does not regard the time of the law and the time of grace as occurring in a chronological order, as if there were two dispensations, one of the law, and another of the gospel. Luther borrows the Aristotelian language of *forma* and *formalis* to point out that Christian righteousness is not in the saint in a formal sense, but it is outside of him in Christ's imputation.[89] Such a description resembles Luther's statement in his antinomian disputation's fifth set of theses, numbers 46 through 48 (1538). There Luther asserts that the antinomians are convinced that sin is formally (*formaliter*) and philosophically eliminated in Christ because they are completely ignorant of the fact that it is only eliminated in the reckoning and forgiveness of the merciful God. Thesis 48 says, "For *relatively*, not *formally* or substantially is sin eliminated, law abolished, death destroyed."[90] Luther does not deny that salvation is fully accomplished by Christ on Calvary. Yet, when it comes to his justifying office, Christ is the end of the law in a relative sense, that is, dependent on his daily coming to the conscience through the means of grace. The structure of the law remains. But the accusing voice of the law ends in the conscience relationally when the living voice of the gospel arrives to the sinner and frees his conscience with Christ's forgiveness.

All this is another way of recognizing that "the Christian man is righteous and a sinner *at the same time*, holy, profane, an enemy of God and a son of God."[91] As long as a Christian lives, both remain as a fact. He is completely righteous. He is thoroughly a sinner. Luther says, "Thus if I look at Christ, I am completely holy and

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[86] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:527.21–23 (AE 26:343).

[87] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:3.20–4.12 (AE 27:4).

[88] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:528.23–34 (AE 26:344–345). Here Luther describes three ways in which the law is abused. The first is when the self-righteous imagines that he is justified by the law. The second is the sectarians (antinomians) who want to excuse Christians from the law altogether. The third is when the Christian feels the terror of the law and does not understand that these are to last only until Christ.

[89] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:370.28–32 (AE 26:234): "*iustitiam* non esse formaliter *in nobis, ut Aristoteles disputant, sed extra nos in sola gratia et reputatione divina, Et nihil* formae *seu iustitiae in nobis esse praeter illam imbecillem fidem seu primitas fidei, quod coepimus apprehendere Christum, interim tamen vere peccatum in nobis manere*" (emphasis added).

[90] WA 39/1:356.27–32, Sonntag ed., *Only the Decalogue Is Eternal*, 135. Thesis 48 reads, "Relative *enim, non* formaliter *aut substantialiter est peccatum sublatum, lex abolita, mors destructa*" (emphasis added).

[91] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:368.26–27 (AE 26:232): "*Sic homo Christianus* simul *iustus et peccator, Sanctus, prophanus, inimicus et filius Dei est*" (emphasis added).

pure, and I know nothing at all about the Law . . . But if I look at my flesh, I feel greed, sexual desire, anger, pride, the terror of death, sadness, fear, hate, grumbling, and impatience against God."[92] A Christian needs to hear the gospel and receive the Lord's Supper precisely because there is sinfulness remaining in him, and so there is a time of the law when it accuses and terrifies the conscience. Luther talks about the church in the same way. The church is *simul iustus et peccator*.[93]

XII. Faith and Love

It is inconceivable for Luther that the Christian would ever come to the point when he does not need Christ. There is no progressive sanctification in a sense that a Christian is supposed to make a gradual improvement of his life toward moral purity in a synergistic manner.[94] Rather, as he matures as a Christian, he will increasingly discover the fact that he is indeed more deeply sinful than he has ever realized before. The battle between flesh and spirit, between old and new Adams, continues. Luther says, "In fact, the godlier one is, the more he feels this battle."[95] The true saints are not people who are free from experiencing the desires of the flesh.[96] They are not those who perform works that give the appearance of brilliance or grandeur. But they are the ones who are called by the gospel, baptized, and forgiven.[97] "A Christian is not someone who has no sin or feels no sin; he is someone against whom, because of his faith in Christ, sin is not reckoned by God."[98] Moreover, a Christian remains the object of Jesus' pastoral care. Just as the head is more sensitive and responsive in its feeling than the other parts of the body, Luther says, "Christ, our Head, makes

[92] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:537.24–28 (AE 26:350).

[93] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:445.16–18 (AE 26:285); WA 40/2:106.34–107.21 (AE 27:85).

[94] Today, as at the time of the Reformation, many people view Jesus as the taskmaster, so that they are to keep the law, to obey him, and to be good as he is good; yet unlike Luther's days, such popular teaching does not seem to lead them to a terrified conscience. Instead of terrifying, the law seems to have been turned into a comfort. But this is nothing new. Luther was critical in his lectures of those who attribute to the law what properly belongs to Christ. In short, for them, the law becomes Christ (*Lex fit Christus*). And, in turn, Christ is the law (*Christus est Lex*) to them (Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* [1535], WA 40/1:248.22–30 [AE 26:142]).

[95] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:94.14–15 (AE 27:74): "*Imo quo quisque magis pius est, hoc plus sentit illam pugnam.*"

[96] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:96.17–97.16 (AE 27:76).

[97] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:18–28 (AE 27:82).

[98] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:235.15–17 (AE 26:133): "*Definimus ergo hunc esse Christianum, non qui non habet aut non sentit peccatum, sed cui illud a Deo propter fidem in Christum non imputatur.*"

our afflictions His own, so that when we, who are His body, suffer, He is affected as though the evils were His own."[99]

Christ may be seen as an example to imitate. But that happens only at the time of rejoicing when the Christian is out of the reach of *tentatio*.[100] When he is under the law, which is the majority of his life,[101] Christ remains as a gift.[102] Luther sees Christians' good works through the doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator*. He considers good works theologically rather than moralistically.[103] "To do" includes faith at the same time (another *simul*!).[104] Faith takes the doer himself and makes him into a tree, and his deeds become fruit. When the accusing office of the law is ended by Christ,[105] the law is deprived of this right and begins to work as a companion. Here, the law does not work by coercion, but it entices and charms the saints to do the works of vocations.[106] Just like Luther described Christian righteousness as rain from heaven so that while Christ is active we remain completely passive in receiving his gifts, so the Reformer uses the same illustration of rain to speak of a Christian's service to his neighbor in love.[107] There, a Christian is completely active. His attention goes to the neighbor's need and never to his own interest, so long as he does those works as a Christian. Obviously, there is a big difference between Christ as rain and Christians as rain. Christians are under the *simul*, but Christ is not. In doing good works, a Christian relentlessly struggles in his conscience.

When the whole Christian life is depicted as faith toward God and love toward the neighbor, that love is never detached from faith.[108] It is important to note that Luther does not describe the Christian life by employing the third use of the law talk as Calvin and his followers presented it (i.e., the third use as the chief use). Luther

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[99] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:171.32–172.14 (AE 27:134).

[100] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:42.24–26 (AE 27:34).

[101] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:209.20–22 (AE 26:117). "*Sed quando ad experientiam venit, tum invenis Evangelium* rarum *et e contra legem* assiduum *esse hospitem in conscientia*" (emphasis added).

[102] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:42.29–32 (AE 27:34).

[103] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:417.13–15 (AE 26:266).

[104] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:402.13–14 (AE 26:255). "*Ut facere includat simul fidem.*"

[105] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:97.29–34 (AE 27:77). "*Itaque pii non sunt sub lege, scilicet Spiritu,* lex enim non potest accusare *et ferre sententiam mortis contra eos, etiamsi ipsi peccatum sentient et fateantur se peccatores esse,* quia ius ademptum est legi per Christum, *'qui factus est sub legem, ut eos, qui sub lege errant, redimeret.' Ideo hoc, quod vere peccatum est contra legem,* lex pro peccato non audet accusare in piis" (emphasis added).

[106] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:51.21–31 (AE 6:11–12); WA 40/2:76.13–78.23 (AE 27:60–62).

[107] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:43.18–28, 51.21–31 (AE 26:6, 11–12).

[108] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/2:37.26–30 (AE 27:30).

speaks of the *simul*. A Christian spends his life in the world within the forgiveness that he keeps receiving from the Lord.

XIII. Conclusion

At the conclusion of his funeral oration of Luther, Melanchthon urged the pastors to follow Luther's footsteps as bearers of the same office into which Luther had also been put: to be diligent and faithful in the study, confession, preaching, and teaching of law and gospel.[109] We would do well to remember his words in this anniversary year of 2017.[110]

We do not have to boast about celebrating the coming anniversary as the first one after the introduction of women pastors, higher-critical method, NPP, NFIL, the unionism, and false ecumenism, as if the church were progressively getting better and better by discarding doctrine and liturgy. Luther's historical view is exactly the opposite. In his preface to the *Lectures on Galatians*, when its first revised edition was printed in 1538, he maintained that the doctrine of the proper distinction between law and gospel finds its root at the beginning of creation; it was not something new that he had invented. However, as Satan attacked this solid rock in paradise, and a series of persecutions of doctrine followed through Cain and his sons in the world after Noah, in the people of Israel, in the church of the Gentiles (Rome),[111] and in new sects including the antinomians,[112] the devil succeeded in proposing new doctrines and new christs in each generation and even each day.[113]

What we are called to do is to examine our faithfulness in receiving the Lord's gift. We are also given to pray for the *concordia* of doctrine in the church catholic.[114] Luther himself mentioned that he confessed this doctrine with greater certainty (*maiore certitudine*) at the time of the lectures than ever before. His conviction was

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[109] CR 11:734; Johannes Fünck, *Eyn Sermon uber der Leich / des Erwirdigen Herrn Doctor Martin Luthers zu Wittenberg gethon von Phillippo Melanthon* (March 13, 1546), fol. b3; Lewis W. Spitz, ed., *The Protestant Reformation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 76; J. Unwin, trans., *The Life and Acts of Martin Luther by Philip Melanchthon* (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 1990), 45–46.

[110] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:209.17–19 (AE 26:117); WA 40/1:511.31–32 (AE 26:331).

[111] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:486.21–25 (AE 26:313). J. A. O. Preus observed that Chemnitz, who was "probably the greatest student of patristics Lutheranism has ever produced," made no use of the church fathers to support the doctrine of law and gospel ("Chemnitz on Law and Gospel," *Concordia Journal* 15 [October 1984]: 409).

[112] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:33.12–36.27 (AE 27:145–149); WA 40/1:36.28–27.20.

[113] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:321.31–33 (AE 26:196); WA 40/1:563.22–26 (AE 26:369).

[114] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), WA 40/1:627.13–18 (AE 26:413); WA 40/2:46.16–49.19 (AE 27:37–39, 41–42); WA 40/2:136.20–137.10 (AE 27:107–108).

deepened through "study, practice, and experience, as well as through great and frequent temptations." It was his prayer that Christ would keep him and strengthen him in that faith and confession to the end.[115]

Are the *Lectures on Galatians* the banner of the Reformation? I would trust you to make an informed judgment. *Concordia* of doctrine lives together with evangelical liturgy and eager missionary work. May the Lord Jesus ever keep the church in such *concordia* so that sinners like us may never be deprived of him and the comfort he alone bestows.

[115] WA 40/2:135.24–136.8 (AE 27:106–107).

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Pfarramt, Geography, and the Order of the Church: A Formal Opinion from Wittenberg[1]

Translated by Mark D. Nispel

Translator's Introduction

Although there remains general interest in the topic of the ministry among confessional Lutherans of North America, there is a lack of understanding concerning the details of the historical context on which much of the Reformation material on the ministry depends. This is related to the generally low familiarity with the Reformation languages, German and Latin. Together, these shortcomings have contributed to a lack of clarity among English-speaking American Lutherans regarding questions of the ministry and the use of Reformation material in doctrinal controversies on this topic. Without clarity of thought, there can be no progress. The translation of the following letter and of the Weimar edition introduction to it, as well as the inclusion of geographical concepts of church order, will help readers to understand this topic. Additionally, this letter may serve as a pattern and tool for understanding other Reformation materials frequently cited in the discussion of church and ministry among us.

This letter was composed on July 24, 1536, as a formal written theological opinion regarding an ongoing controversy between the parish rector (*Pfarrherr*) and the city council of Zwickau. The letter was signed and sent by Martin Luther (a faculty member of the University of Wittenberg), Johannes Bugenhagen (the parish rector of the church in Wittenberg), and Georg Spalatin (a longtime advisor to the elector and a visitor [examiner] of the University of Wittenberg and the churches of Saxony) to Leonhard Beyer, the parish rector of Zwickau. The opinion has been

[1] Translated from *Luther, Bugenhagen und Spalatin an den Zwickauer Pfarrer Leonhard Beyer*, in *Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1930–1985), 7:476–479 (hereafter WA Br) with reference to text of the St. Louis edition, *Unterricht daß geistlich und weltlich Regiment wohl unterschieden werden sollen &c.*, in *Dr. Martin Luther's Sämmtliche Schriften*, ed. Joh. Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1880–1910), 10:264–267. Thanks are due to Pastor David Jay Webber, Scottsdale, AZ, for his assistance in the preparation of this translation.

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and continues to be of theological interest today within North American Lutheranism primarily on account of one particular sentence it contains, which has often been quoted in isolation to various ends.[2]

In addition to the opinion itself, Otto Clemen, the editor of the volume of the Weimar edition in which this letter appears, has provided a useful historical introduction to it. He also provides part of an interesting and useful absentee minority opinion given by Philip Melanchthon. These, for the most part, are translated below.

A few observations will help to explain the context of this letter. First, it is often under-appreciated that there are geographic assumptions built into the language and concepts used to present the doctrines of church and ministry. In the New Testament, Paul wrote to "the church of God residing in Corinth" (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1).[3] When an average North American reads this phrase, he generally relates this to what he sees and experiences within his own setting. He thinks of a singular assembly defined physically for the most part by one building or, perhaps, by one parking lot. But it is likely that the phrase is equivalent to Paul's other opening greetings, wherein he greets the "saints" or "beloved of God" in a geographic region, which is often a city[4] or something like "the church made up of the Thessalonians" (1 Thess 1:1).

From all indications, in this early period of the young Christian movement, it was common for Christians to gather for worship, prayer, and reading the Scriptures in private homes (e.g., Acts 20:20; Rom 16:5), probably due in part to the great cost of building and maintaining a physical structure for sizable groups. In a larger city, this implies that there were multiple such churches or Christian assemblies within the one city.[5] In the centuries that followed, this multi-assembly situation was certainly the functioning model in the very large cities of Rome and Alexandria; we know at least small bits about multiple groupings of the church in those cities even up to the early third century.[6]

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[2] Specifically, the Wittenberg theologians state that "no peace or unity can remain wherever the assistant preacher, the schoolmaster, and others who serve in the church, etc., know that they are able to be in the office of the church without the knowledge and will of the parish rector." See below, p. 246.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are my translation.

[4] E.g., "all those who are beloved of God in Rome" (Rom 1:7), "all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi" (Phil 1:1), "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who reside in Colossae" (Col 1:2).

[5] Paul greets the "bishops" of Philippi (Phil 1:1). Multiple times while writing to the church or believers in a certain location, he greets a particular church meeting in a particular house, which is not the same as the entire local audience to whom the letter is written, e.g., Rom 16:5; Col 4:15. In Phlm 1:2, Paul greets another house church.

[6] The historical development of the episcopate from the early church of Jerusalem to the Council of Nicaea and beyond has long been a matter of theological and academic discussion. See,

In the earliest period, it is likely that many individual assemblies or small groupings of such assemblies had their own leaders, the "bishops and deacons" (Phil 1:1) of a city. But in the following two centuries, the groups or congregations within a city typically came to be led by a common clergy or at least one overall common leader. Starting early in the second century in some places and almost universally by the third century, the bishop was the head cleric over all the individual assemblies within the city. By the third century, the idea of "church" in such a setting clearly referred to the sum total of the multiple assemblies and the common clergy that served them, all organized under the city's one bishop. This was the church of this or that city or region. Therefore, there was nothing in the phrase "the church of Corinth" that would imply a singular building to an ancient or to anyone of Luther's day.

The second point to be made concerns the titles for the clergy who served the church organized in this manner during Luther's time. A derivative result of the development outlined above is that the word *bishop* had a strong geographic component. The bishop was tied to a place, usually a city. Anything that existed within the region or city that pertained to the Christian religion—whether a holy site, a place of pilgrimage, a Christian school or university, or the erection of a new cathedral—belonged at least in part to the purview of the bishop.

Over time, the geography associated with the word *bishop* enlarged, incorporating more than a single city. The Roman Empire began using the word *diocese* to describe large administrative areas of territory. After the Christian religion attained legal standing and became the official religion of the empire, Christian leaders often took up ecclesiastical responsibilities for areas that tended to correspond to the geographic administrative areas of the empire. As the state weakened over time and became ineffective or even nonexistent, the transition of the term *diocese* to an ecclesiastical use was easy if not obvious. Through this process, the region associated with the oversight of the bishop came to be called the "diocese" or "episcopal see."

In Germany, even before the Reformation began, the church was similarly organized into local regions that individually were called a parish (*Pfarre*, *Pharre*).[7]

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for example, Jerome, referred to by Luther on this topic in SA II IV 9. For a classic yet still valuable scholarly overview, see Philip Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity: A.D. 100–325*, vol. 2 of *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 132–154. For a fairly recent treatment of what is still much the same material, see Francis A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (New York: Newman Press, 2001).

[7] Luther commented that he believed there were about 1,800 parishes in Saxony. See *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School* (1530), vol. 46, pp. 231–234, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986); vols. 56–82,

Just as within the city of the bishop, within the parish, there could be and often were multiple ecclesiastical entities, assemblies, or buildings. In the Wittenberg parish, there was the city church (*Stadtkirche*), the castle church (*Schloßkirche*), the university, and the Augustinian monastery where various preaching, teaching, and worship activities occurred. Preaching and teaching also occurred in the surrounding farming villages, which belonged to the parish.

The head clergyman over such a parish was called the *Pfarrherr* (often *pastor* in Latin). He was the equivalent in Luther's day to the city bishop in the ancient church. He was the ecclesiastical overseer of the church in his city and surrounding area. This included all related institutions insofar as they involved ecclesiastical activities, as well as the city schools and their teachers insofar as they gave religious instruction to the children.[8]

Additionally, in larger parishes, there would be various clergy under the *Pfarrherr* who assisted in the parish work.[9] Wittenberg was typical in this regard in that during Luther's time, the parish typically had three assistant ministers who held the title *Diakon* (deacon).[10]

Alongside these titles and organizational facts of the Wittenberg parish, one should consider the explicit statements of the reformers themselves in terms of how they considered grades of offices in the church. They did not consider these grades or divisions (or those of the ancient church) to be of divine origin, nor did they think it was necessary for them to be the same in all places. Instead, they taught that everyone who has a call to preach and administer the sacraments has the same basic office even if one is made *Pfarrherr* or bishop over the others for the sake of order.[11]

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ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE.

[8] In an analogous way, C. F. W. Walther and the Missouri Synod followed this example as they encouraged the establishment of Lutheran schools in America and were very clear that such schools fell under the oversight of the pastor insofar as the religious instruction was concerned. For one example of an article that applied this idea to the church and school in the Missouri Synod, see C.A.T. Selle, "Das Amt des Pastors als Schulaufseher," *Evang.-Luth. Schulblatt* 4 (1869): 129–154, which was written with assistance from Walther.

[9] Luther mentions offices such as *Küster* (sacristan—one who cares for the church and property), *Prediger* (one focused specifically on preaching and teaching), as well as the *Diakon* (deacon) or *Kaplan* (chaplain). Cf. *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School* (1530), AE 46:220–221.

[10] Hans Volz, *Die Lutherpredigten des Johannes Mathesius: Kritische Untersuchungen zur Geschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Reformation*, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte* 12 (Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger Eger & Sievers, 1930), 174.

[11] For example, "It is our greatest wish to maintain church-polity and the grades in the church even though they have been made by human authority" (Ap XIV [VIII] 1 [24], W. H. T. Dau and F. Bente, eds., *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921], 315). A good explicit treatment of the office of preaching and those helping offices that are created from it can be found in *Lehre und Wehre* 20

The question for the translator is how to handle such terms that are unfamiliar to the English reader. The general terms of our day, "pastor" or "preacher," allow no precision in terms of the grades of office that are part of this context. One can attempt to make use of "head pastor" (for *Pfarrherr*) and "assistant pastor" (for *Kaplan*, *Diakon*, etc.), and I have done so in the past. But "head pastor" does not carry the same geographic sense as *Pfarrherr*. The problem of vocabulary is acute enough that I decided to take the approach of using English terms that have one-to-one correspondence with their German counterparts, even if they are not in common use and must be accompanied by definition and explanation.

So, for *Pfarrherr,* I have decided to make use of the unfortunate term *parish rector*. It is unfortunate in that it is not a contemporary English term for any common church office.[12] Nevertheless, it is not completely without precedent.[13] One must risk a bit of tedium for the sake of clarity.

Kirchendiener is a very general, broad, and abstract term often used to refer to all the offices and workers in the church together. I have used "church worker" or "one who serves in the church" here, as it includes both those traditionally ordained and those who are not.

Diakon is a title for a concrete office. The *Diakon* was an ordained preacher who administered the sacraments and was an assistant to the parish rector. This word does not occur in the Wittenberg letter. However, it does appear in the introduction and in a footnote. I have used "assisting deacon" for this term. In Wittenberg, there were three regular ministers with the title *Diakon.*[14]

The *Kaplan* was also an assistant to the parish rector and generally engaged in teaching and administering the sacraments.[15] It was a common title used in many

(1874): 257–268, 331–339, 363–369. This article has been translated and published: E. W. Kähler, "Does a Congregation Ordinarily Have the Right Temporarily to Commit an Essential Part of the Holy Preaching Office to a Layman?," trans. Mark D. Nispel, *Logia* 6, no. 3 (1997): 37–46.

[12] A "rector" in English is generally associated with an academic institution, not a parish.

[13] See Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Theology and Practice of "the Divine Call"* (St Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2003), 13, where "*Pfarrherr*" is translated "rector."

[14] Georg Rörer, for example, was ordained as *Diakonus* of the Wittenberg parish (Luther, *Formula for Ordination* [1535], vol. 38, p. 403, in *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 65 vols. [Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993], hereafter WA).

[15] As an example, from January 28, 1546, until his death a few weeks later, Luther was in Eisleben to settle a dispute between the ruling members of the Mansfeld dynasty. Count Albrecht had built a new village for the miners outside of Eisleben, which caused a great controversy of the patronage rights of the church in Eisleben (see Gottfried G. Krodel, introduction to Luther, *Letter to Count Albrecht of Mansfeld* [December 6, 1545], AE 50:281–283; Hans Volz and Eike Wolgast, "Zu unserer Nr. 4300 und 4301," WA Br 12:364–365). In a document written on February 16, only two days before Luther's death, Luther and Jonas gave their suggestion for resolution of the problems and suggested how the church in the castle of the landgraves in Mansfeld should relate to the church in the city of Mansfeld and to the church in Eisleben. In the *Schloßkirche,* or castle

different places.[16] In the Wittenberg opinion translated below, the title is included among the other church workers who the city council is not to appoint without the knowledge and approval of the parish rector. I have chosen to use "assistant preacher" here.

Both the *Diakon* and *Kaplan* were recognized by Luther in 1521 as "Christian bishops" along with the parish rector.[17] By the elector's command of 1535, they were to be ordained, after theological examination by the Wittenberg theological faculty, "and thus given the power and authority of their priestly and diaconal office."[18]

A final comment is that the term *Visitation* that occurs here refers to the regular, ongoing inspections of the churches and schools in Saxony in regard to the state of those institutions. This was a system of oversight instituted by the elector over the church in his territory during the 1520s.[19]

I. Introduction provided by the Weimar Edition editor, Otto Clemen[20]

At the beginning of 1536, conflict broke out again in Zwickau between the city council and the parish rector in regard to the calling of those who minister in church and school. The parish rector, Leonard Beyer, claimed the right to choose assistant preachers and assisting deacons on account of the order of visitation, or at least so

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church, there was to be a *Kaplan* who should help the *Schloßprediger* and who should administer the sacrament and make sure that the ceremonies would be held in an orderly manner (Luther and Jonas, *Compromise Concerning the Churches and Schools in Mansfeld and Eisleben* [February 16, 1546], WA Br 12:368). Further, "the *Kaplan* should administer the sacrament, and on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday have a German reading from the sermons of Dr. Luther and receive 100 gulden yearly for support."

[16] In 1533, a student from the university was added to the Wittenberg parish staff and was given the title *Kaplan* alongside the three assistants who had the title *Diakon*. This student helped the assisting ministers care for the outlying villages by teaching and catechizing the children. He was not to administer the sacrament unless it was an emergency. The three with the title *Diakon* were permitted to administer the sacrament, although the villagers in general were to attend the city church to receive the sacrament. See the letter of Elector John Frederick to Luther (May 22, 1545), WA Br 11:104–105.

[17] "For this reason we recognize and assert on behalf of God the Holy Spirit that Christian bishops are honorable, married, mature, good men, learned in the word of truth, many in a single city, who are chosen by the neighboring bishops or by their own people. They might be the very ones whom we now call parish priests, and their chaplains and deacons" (Luther, *Misuse of the Mass* [1521/1522], AE 36:158).

[18] Quoted in Paul Drews, introduction to Luther, *Das Ordinationsformular*, WA 38:407.

[19] See Melanchthon and Luther, *Instructions for the Visitors* of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony (1528), AE 40:263–320; Emil Sehling, ed., *Die Evangelischen Kirchenordnungen Des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1902), 1:242–299.

[20] WA Br 7:476–477. In this translation, I have omitted various references Clemen gave to his external sources. I have also omitted a section in the middle of the introduction that provides more background as to how the controversy played out in Zwickau but does not bring any further insight to the doctrinal and linguistic matters of interest here.

he said. He claimed the right "to present and send them to Wittenberg and to ordain and anoint such people." The council stated to the contrary that "the [right of] election remained with it and not with the parish rector and that he just wanted to retain the old lordship [of the papal clerics] over them." After they had chosen [the candidates], the council wanted to present the chosen to the rector, who then for his part could take care of the corresponding notification of Wittenberg. With a heavy heart, Beyer submitted. He requested that the council "for the sake of peace and unity agree that no one would be forced (into office), and that no one would be presented and assigned without his will and foreknowledge." The council promised to abide by this wish of the pastor. Soon thereafter, controversy broke out again. Beyer began it with gibes made from the pulpit. When the council protested to him about this, he appeared one day in a council meeting to complain about the actions of the council in the calling of "those who serve in the school." Already earlier, the council had overstepped its authority in that it had accepted [into office] the "schoolmaster" (that is, Peter Plateanus, who on May 5, 1535, was assigned as [school] rector of the gymnasium[21]) without his, the parish rector's, foreknowledge and will; and more recently once again, in the selection of a new teacher (that is, Nicolas Rudolf[22]) into the office of Jerome Nopus. "Infringement [by the council] on his office, in which the Holy Spirit has set him, has occurred." On account of this, he felt compelled to call for a decision of the Wittenberg leaders. . . .

From letters by Liborius Magdeburg to Stephan Roth, we know that Beyer himself went and obtained the judgment [*iudicium*] in Wittenberg.[23] He arrived there on July 20. Spalatin was in Wittenberg from July 16 to July 22, and obviously also still on July 24. It is interesting that Melanchthon added an absentee opinion: "And to me, Philip Melanchthon, it appears to be right, just, and useful, that the calling of assisting deacons and of those who teach in the school should be jointly in possession of the council and the pastor of the church."[24]

[21] That is, a secondary school.

[22] See Otto Clemen, introduction to Luther's letter to Anton Rudolf (May 12, 1536), WA Br 7:408.

[23] That is, he went to Wittenberg and helped direct the discussions regarding his complaints. The Zwickau council, when presented with the Wittenberg judgment, complained that they were not given equal opportunity to be heard in Wittenberg.

[24] *Et mihi, Philippo Melanthoni, rectum, iustum et utile videtur, ut vocatio diaconorum et eorum, qui docent in schola, sit communiter penes senatum et pastorem Ecclesiae* (WA Br 7:477).

II. Letter Communicating Wittenberg's Formal Opinion to the City Council of Zwickau[25]

Our gospel and doctrine emphasize most importantly that one should distinguish well between the two kingdoms, the worldly and the spiritual, and not intermingle them, as long as an emergency or lack of people do not compel us to do so. That is, wherever there are people who govern the town hall[26] and the city, and again, where there are people who look after the parish office[27] and the churches, one should not interfere in any part of the office of the other. Rather, let each receive his own (office) commended to his conscience, as St. Peter teaches that we should not be ἀλλοτριεπίσκοποι [1 Pet 4:15].[28] From the beginning, these two offices were segregated by Christ. And experience all too often shows that there can be no peace where the town council or the city want to rule the parish or, vice versa, where the parish rector wants to rule the government or the city, as the example of the papacy showed us all too well.

Accordingly, we beseech and admonish you, Parish Rector and Teacher Leonard, good friend, that in this matter, you in Zwickau should hold fast to the decisions of the visitation articles[29] and of the later electoral recess.[30] For the devil does not take a vacation. Flesh and blood are not good. And the people of this dangerous age are strange and facetious, many of whom seek not what is required for peace and unity but rather what their desire and curiosity demand.

Accordingly, no peace or unity can remain wherever the assistant preacher,[31] the schoolmaster, and others who serve in the church,[32] etc., know that they are able to be in the office of the church without the knowledge and will of the parish rector,[33] realizing that on this basis, they can appeal to the city council and be defiant, since

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[25] WA Br 7:477–478.

[26] *Rathaus.*

[27] *Pfarramt . . . versorgen.*

[28] Luther translated this word as a phrase: *der in ein frembd Ampt greiffet*, "he who reaches into another's office" or "an office not belonging to him" (WA DB 7:310–311).

[29] The Weimar edition editor (Otto Clemen) points out that the Ruling of the Visitors for Zwickau from January 30, 1529, states "that the (city) council from now on should take on preachers with the knowledge and counsel of the pastor" (WA Br 7:478n2, referring to Sehling, ed., *Kirchenordnungen* 1.1:722).

[30] In this context, a recess is a decree of an electoral or imperial diet, or assembly. This electoral recess is discussed by Otto Clemen, introduction to Luther's letter to Joh. Göbel et al. (August 18, 1531), WA Br 6:161. On August 3, 1531, Elector John decreed that neither the city council of Zwickau nor any other calling body (*Kollator*) would be permitted to take on or dismiss a preacher without previously notifying the elector and having this approved.

[31] *Kaplan* (chaplain or assistant preacher). See my introductory comments.

[32] *Kirchendiener.*

[33] *wo der Kaplan, Schulmeister, Kirchendiener wissen, daß sie ohn Wissen und Willen des Pfarrherrs mügen im Kirchenampt sein.*

[in a controversy,] one can always find supporters against parish rectors. Thus, if they[34] should intentionally accept or sanction an assistant preacher, a schoolmaster, or church worker[35] without [the parish rector's] knowledge or consent, you should not concede or grant that precedent. Just as we here in Wittenberg, in accordance with the Visitation, indeed even allow the parish rector to take on or dismiss [such people] without the knowledge and counsel of the secular government. And as far as we know, this is how all the other cities proceed, except where the visitors[36] are entreated for this purpose (where otherwise none can be obtained).

The secular government has enough of its own to do. It should not interfere. It is not to burden itself with unnecessary duties of ruling. It also has a vexing authority. Neither Zwickau nor any other city should be ashamed to follow the example of Wittenberg and other cities, because it is in accordance with the order of the Visitation. To diverge from such common order does not create a good mindset but rather, in the end, causes division and devastation of the churches. We should thank God that our churches have been brought and constituted into a somewhat similar order. And God will give no good fortune to them who break such order and unity on account of their own ambition and conceit without any need to do so. God help and strengthen us all in right faith and unfeigned love. Amen.

Monday after the Day of Saint Mary Magdalene in the year 1536.

Martin Luther, doctor
Johannes Bugenhagen Pomeranus, doctor
Georg Spalatin

[34] I.e., the city council.
[35] *Kirchendiener*.
[36] I.e., not the city council.

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Luther's Use of Apologetics

Adam S. Francisco

The title of this paper may seem strange, for every good Lutheran knows that Luther considered reason deceitful and even dangerous to faith and theology; reason is, after all, "the devil's prostitute."[1] Apologetics employs reason to defend and even demonstrate the objectivity of the faith. Therefore, it can be assumed that Luther would be opposed to any sort of fact-based and rational apologetic.

This is, of course, a caricature of those among us who are skeptical of apologetics. No one has ever published such an argument. Yet spend enough time in the discipline of apologetics, and you will find your confessional friends distancing themselves from you because of your "rationalism," your pietist friends expressing concern for your lack of spirituality, and the liberal acquaintances you keep (assuming they could tolerate having a friend like you in the first place) chuckling at your naive belief that something like objective truth exists in the first place.

The concern and even disdain some have for apologetics may be due, in part, to the apologist him—or her—self. Apologists (like some theologians) can be overbearing, obsessive, and arrogant as they pursue Peter's exhortation to "honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense" but ignore the instruction to do it "with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet 3:15).[2] More common, however, is the objection coming from a culture of anti-intellectualism or a confusion of soteriology with epistemology manifesting itself in a type of fideism. Nevertheless, apologetics remains a biblical and necessary task.[3]

The church has always provided an apologetic witness to the faith. The Gospels were written so that readers could know and be "persuade[d] . . . that Jesus is the

[1] See Martin Luther, *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments* (1525): vol. 40, p. 175, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE.

[2] Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[3] See David Scaer, "Apologetics as Theological Discipline: Reflections on a Necessary and Biblical Task," in *Let Christ Be Christ: Theology, Ethics & World Religions in the Two Kingdoms: Essays in Honor of the Sixty-Fifth Birthday of Charles L. Manske*, ed. Daniel N. Harmelink (Huntington Beach: Tentatio Press, 1999), 299–308.

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Christ, God's Son, who came to save sinners."[4] Paul customarily reasoned with Jews in their synagogues, argued for the truthfulness of the faith before babbling philosophers, and tried to persuade the authorities that Jesus rose from the dead, not in some metahistorical corner but as a matter of historical fact. When and where the gospel sounded like superstitious nonsense, the earliest Christians argued to the contrary. They insisted that it was (and is) not a cleverly devised myth but a confession of what God had done in time and space, as so many eyewitnesses had borne witness. While resistance to Christianity increased geographically and intellectually, apologists from Justin Martyr to Augustine persisted in their defense of and arguments for the truthfulness of the gospel.

Even after the Christianization of Europe in the Middle Ages, the need remained for answers to Jewish objections. An even greater challenge emerged with the geographical extension and belligerence of Islam. In the midst of the Crusades, Christians learned that unlike with the Jews and the Old Testament, they had little to no common ground to reason with Muslims. Thus, after translating and studying the Qur'an and other Islamic source material, they began to fashion polemics and new apologetic strategies for use with the Muslims in Spain and wherever else missionaries accompanying Crusaders might encounter them. It was probably the Muslims in Spain, and not merely some abstract audience of theologians, that Anselm had in my mind when he penned his *Cur Deus Homo* before the turn of the eleventh century.

The high Middle Ages also saw the theoretical side of apologetics taking shape. It began largely with Thomas Aquinas, who, in rejecting Anselm's ontological reasoning, established what remain today to be the primary ways one argues for the existence of God—from effect back to cause.[5] These were hardly brought on by the questions of skeptics, since the existence of God was not really being questioned in that day. Yet, they were still important for thinking about the objective foundation for religious belief.

The apologetic challenges to the faith in Luther's day were virtually the same as the Middle Ages. Despite persistent persecution, Jewish populations continued to prosper. They asserted their own anti-Christian polemics and apologetic arguments, persuading Christians to embrace a form of Judaism for Gentiles called Sabbatarianism. The challenge of Islam also persisted during this time. However, in the sixteenth century, it was a much more pressing matter than it had ever been before, for the Ottoman Turks began pushing deep into the heart of Europe. By 1530, Luther complained that the Turks were at Germany's very doorstep, and

[4] See *The Lutheran Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 1572.
[5] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 2, art. 3.

he feared that many Christians would, for any number of reasons, be enticed to embrace Islam.[6] To these two great apologetic challenges, Luther wrote a variety of responses.

Interestingly, studies specifically addressing his apologetics all but fail to consider them. Avery Dulles's *A History of Apologetics*, for example, argues, "Martin Luther . . . constructed no formal system of apologetics. Not only would this have been foreign to his main purpose—the inner reform of the Church—but it ran counter to his idea of the relations between faith and reason."[7] At best, continues Dulles,

> his system did perhaps make room for a type of apologetic constructed from within faith. The development of such apologetics—which would show the inner power of faith from the standpoint of the believer—would have to wait for authors such as Kierkegaard and Barth, both of whom were strongly influenced by Luther's dynamic and existential concept of reason.[8]

Although he seemed unaware of Dulles's work, Siegbert Becker characterized this as an existentialist and neo-orthodox interpretation of Luther in his monograph *The Foolishness of God*. In a chapter titled "Luther's Apologetics," he summarized the reformer's approach as being that of a Biblicist. "After all is said and done," wrote Becker, "the whole of Luther's apologetics can still be adequately summed up in a sentence which he wrote into the margin of his copy of the works of Peter Lombard, 'Arguments based on reason determine nothing, but because Holy Scripture says that it is true, it is true.'"[9]

There is one other primary interpretation, coming from a long-forgotten German-Lutheran apologist named Otto Zöckler. His dense volume on the history of apologetics treats Luther briefly but gets to the heart of the reformer's theology and epistemology in this description: "The best foundation for all defenses of Christianity is expressed in this sentence: Jesus Christ alone satisfies the need for salvation *and* at the same time man's need for truth."[10] The implications of such a statement have been thoroughly explored and exploited by John Warwick Montgomery. For him, if Luther had an apologetic system, it would start "the search for God . . . at the connecting link between earth and heaven which exists at the point of the

[6] Luther, *Preface to George of Hungary, On the Turks* (1530), AE 59:261.

[7] Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 113.

[8] Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 114.

[9] Siegbert W. Becker, *The Foolishness of God: The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982), 191. The chapter from which this quotation comes was originally published (under the same title, "Luther's Apologetics") in *Concordia Theological Monthly* 29 (October 1958): 742–759.

[10] Otto Zöckler, *Geschichte der Apologie des Christentums* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1907), 309–310.

incarnation . . . absolute truth is available only here. . . . The *point depart* must be Christ."[11] Believe what you want, but the method (or system) Montgomery has developed—which is probably most completely outlined in his *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus*—drives unapologetically and robustly from evidence to the incarnation to establish an objective epistemological basis for the Christian faith.

Luther's theology does not lead to fideism (faith in faith) and may well permit such a comprehensive apologetic. What is interesting in many, if not all, of the discussions of Luther's view of and approach to apologetics is that none of them actually explore his use of apologetics. Instead, they deduce from his theology what his apologetic might have been had he lived in the modern world. Alternatively, they speculate as to what it would not have been. An example of this can be found in an article by H. Wayne House, who asked (and answered) the question "How would Luther react to much of modern apologetics? . . . He would repudiate it . . . [He] would say that" an evidential or rational apologetic "caters to a theology of glory."[12]

Such conclusions are speculative. Luther was never faced with the rank unbelief that modern apologetics addresses today. One thing that is for certain is that after a thorough reading of Luther, one sees a man who is principled, yet often pragmatic, and even creative in his approach to things. There were not many atheists in Luther's Germany, nor were there demythologizing higher critics. But, as has already been mentioned, there were Jews and Muslims. In his work addressing each on a variety of occasions, we see Luther the reformer of the Christian church operating as apologist for the faith.

Before describing these works, though, a brief definition of apologetics and Luther's understanding of the defense of the faith is in order. First, let apologetics be defined as a defense of Christianity over against objections to it, in a context where the objections come from a decidedly non-Christian perspective (and not a different Christian confession). Leander Keyser, a professor of systematic theology and apologetics at Hamma Divinity School in the early twentieth century, helpfully distinguished the former from the latter by describing apologetics as contention with "infidels outside of the Christian Church" and polemics as debate "with heretics within the church."[13] Kurt Marquart described apologetics as distinct from theology proper. The latter is derived from revelation; apologetics is, in a way, prolegomena to theology. He went on to add that such prolegomena to theology are "perfectly valid, indeed necessary." Before the non-Christian, it is necessary "to reason

[11] John Warwick Montgomery, "The Apologetic Thrust of Lutheran Theology," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1970): 27–28. Emphasis original.

[12] H. Wayne House, "The Value of Reason in Luther's View of Apologetics," *Concordia Journal* 7, no. 2 (1981): 66.

[13] Leander Keyser, *A System of Christian Evidence* (Burlington, IA: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1922), 23.

from the common ground of public information and argument."[14] To put it another way, apologetics as generally defined here takes place in a realm where quotations from the New Testament, historical theologians (including Luther or the confessions), or ecclesiastical bylaws do not resolve differences. Luther himself noted in his great commentary on Galatians that when you are in this arena, when you have to "engage in controversy with Jews, Turks, etc.," quoting the Bible is of little use. "You must use all your cleverness and effort and be as profound and subtle a controversialist as possible; for then you are in another area."[15] That is, you must use your reason, you must appeal to facts and be as precise and logical as possible (or at least as the context demands).

Such a task, for Luther, is not merely for apologetic specialists, who can cite chapter and verse of the Book of Mormon or the Qur'an. Nor is it merely for those who have too much free time and can spend countless hours debating in internet chat rooms (if there are such things anymore), commenting on blogs, or participating in high profile debates exposing the irrationality of Richard Dawkins. Neither is it just for seminarians, theologians, or those masquerading as theologians. The apologetic task, for Luther, is for every Christian. Commenting on 1 Peter 3:15 ("In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you"), Luther wrote, "Here we shall have to admit that St. Peter is addressing these words to all Christians, to priests, lay [people], men and women, young and old, and in whatever station they are. Therefore it follows from this that every Christian should account for his faith and be able to give a reason and an answer when necessary."[16]

Luther's earliest apologetic opponents were the Jews. Not much is known about his personal contact with them, but his early work demonstrates that he was well aware of their historical suffering and persecution and thoroughly acquainted with their beliefs. There is evidence that he had some personal contact with a few rabbis and had a heated epistolary exchange with probably the most influential Jew of his day—Josel of Rosheim. As he grew older and his contemporary Jews resisted the gospel he preached, and as he learned of Jewish anti-Christian and sensationalist polemics, he grew ever more impatient (and agitated). This is the anti-Jewish Luther most people know. In his early work, however, he expressed hope that they might be converted. In his lectures on Romans, he wrote that even though they had thrown

[14] Kurt Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: A Theological Analysis of the Missouri Synod Conflict* (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1977), 128.

[15] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), AE 26:29–30.

[16] Luther, *Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter* (1522), AE 30:105.

"Christ out to the Gentiles," he was confident that should they hear a clear exposition of the gospel from the Old Testament, they might "receive him among the Gentiles."[17]

After Luther was thrown out of the Roman church, rumors started circulating that he had been influenced by Jewish ideas. At the Diet of Nuremberg in 1522, he was even accused of rejecting the virgin birth. His response, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (1523), cleared the air of that and other false accusations. It was also written so that a Jew, too, might find his arguments compelling. He wrote,

> If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian. . . . They have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings. . . . I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from holy scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians. . . . When we are inclined to boast of our position we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ.[18]

We know of at least one Jew, a man named Bernhard Gipher, who came to study in Wittenberg, who became a Christian after reading Luther's treatise.[19]

Early in the 1530s, despite what he thought were his best efforts, Luther began to grow weary of the general resistance of Jews to the gospel. He had also learned of their efforts to convert Christians in Moravia, Bohemia, and Poland, and was convinced that the appearance of the Sabbatarians was a result of their activity. Therefore, he wrote *Against the Sabbatarians* in 1538 to demonstrate the error of Jewish theology so that Christians would be able to make a defense of the Christian faith. This led to a response from the Jewish community in the form of a booklet that attacked the divinity of Jesus, the virginity of Mary, and Christian exegesis of the Old Testament, to which Luther responded in his notorious works of 1543—*On the Jews and Their Lies*, *On the Ineffable Name*, and *On the Last Words of Jesus.* These were Luther's last statement against Jewish theology. And while the vitriol is inexcusable, it is entirely typical for the context—from the polemics of both sides. Certainly, it is interesting that in less than three years, right before his death, he would again advocate from the pulpit that Christians should treat the Jews kindly but would still insist that the Jews need to turn from their blasphemy, embrace Christ, and be baptized. Such was the often paradoxical and conflicted mind of Luther on the subject of the Jews.

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[17] Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (1516), AE 25:430.

[18] Luther, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* (1523), AE 45:200–201.

[19] Pekka Huhtinen, "*Luther and World Mission:* A Review," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2001): 25n26.

In any case, his apologetic against Judaism was singularly focused on the person of Jesus and whether he was in fact the promised Messiah. From *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* to his later polemics, he advised that since "the Jews do not accept the evangelists we must confront them with other evidence."[20] He thus worked primarily from the Old Testament, being careful to show that he did not impose a christological reading on the text and demonstrating that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die just as Jesus suffered and died—an event Jews knew from history. He was convinced that, despite the functional Marcionism[21] of much of Christianity, the patriarchs and prophets of old were Christians in faith and fact, though maybe not in name. Thus, he tried to show and illustrate for Christians who had dealings with Jews "a method and some passages from Scripture . . . they should employ in dealing with them."[22]

For his Jewish audience, he sought to show both the "true faith" of the ancient Hebrew people, using prima facie evidence from their own sacred text, and that rabbinic theology was based on tortured grammar and exegesis. You could say he offered a system of Christian evidences for the Jews and for potential missionaries to the Jews. One twentieth-century Luther scholar went so far as to describe Luther as the "father of Protestant Jewish missions."[23] That is a stretch, but there is scholarly consensus that the most fundamental aspect of Luther's writings on the Jews had an "apologetic missionary tendency" to persuade them to return to the faith of their ancient fathers.[24]

However, Luther's apologetic contest with Jews was not just an argument over the meaning of the Hebrew text. This was, in the estimate of many Hebraists and Old Testament scholars, impressive. Interestingly, Luther also used historical evidence to bolster his argument. In the three works from 1543, he used the gospels not as sacred script but as eyewitness testimony alongside ancient Jewish authors such as Josephus and Philo. He did this to demonstrate the weakness of Jewish theology and its claims to antiquity and, more positively, to provide evidence from miracles for the messianic credentials of Jesus. "Whoever is not moved by this miraculous spectacle," he wrote, "deserves to remain blind."[25] Finally, in conclusion to his argument against Judaism and apologia for Christianity, he wrote, "My essays,

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[20] Luther, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew (1523), AE* 45:208.

[21] This term is from Daniel L. Gard, "The Church's Scripture and Functional Marcionism," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74 (July 2010): 209–224, and refers to the fact that many Christians do not preach or teach the Old Testament to any significant degree.

[22] Luther, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew (1523), AE* 45:213.

[23] Armas K. E. Holmio, *Martin Luther: Friend or Foe of the Jews?* (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, 1949), 16.

[24] Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–46* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 366.

[25] Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies (1543), AE* 47:300.

I hope, will furnish a Christian (who in any case has no desire to become a Jew) with enough material not only to defend himself against the blind, venomous Jews, but also to become the foe of the Jews," so that they might understand their belief is false.[26]

Luther's apologetic to Judaism was fairly traditional, learned from the medieval scholastic tradition that began in the thirteenth century with Raymond Martini, Nicholas of Lyra, Salvagus Prochetus, and the Jewish convert Paul of Burgos.[27] His argument with Islam was likewise part of the scholastic tradition, but it included some of his own innovations. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire into Central Europe was the catalyst for his engagement with Islam. From 1521 until the end of Luther's life, the Turks forced their way into Hungary with their sights trained on Germany. The 1529 Siege of Vienna, in particular, frightened everyone, for, as Luther expressed, it placed the Turks and their religion next door to the Holy Roman Empire.[28] Accompanying the annexations of much of Hungary was the Islamization of Eastern Europe. The conversion of the cathedral into a mosque in Buda, many thought, was but a foreshadowing of events to come. Luther was convinced that if the final judgment did not occur soon, the world would become Muslim.

The Ottoman advance and annexation of Eastern and parts of Central Europe brought Christians and Muslims into close contact. Muslim enclaves appeared in Hungary, and many Christians who found themselves subject to the Turks began to assume "Islam without having much of a choice in the matter."[29] There were even reports of violent efforts to proselytize among the inhabitants of southern Hungary. Some willingly embraced Islam. I have "heard and read," wrote Luther, "that many Christians have committed apostasy and willingly and without force believed the faith of the Turks or Muhammad."[30]

The expansion of what Luther called the Muhammadan Empire made it vital for Christians to be able to respond intelligently to Islam, so he began to write about it. His first work was titled *On War Against the Turk* and was published in 1529, on the eve of the Siege of Vienna. His chief purpose in writing it was to explain and encourage war—properly conceived according to the doctrine of just war—against the Turks. He likewise provided a little synopsis of Islamic teaching. Shortly afterward, he penned another little work, *Muster-Sermon Against the Turk*, the second half of which was, as Luther wrote, for "Germans already captive in Turkey

[26] Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies (1543), AE* 47:305–306.

[27] Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, 128.

[28] Luther, *Preface to George of Hungary* (1530), AE 59:261.

[29] Allen Hertz, "Muslims, Christians and Jews in Sixteenth-Century Belgrade," in *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern,* eds. Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, and Béla Király (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 149.

[30] Luther, *Muster-Sermon Against the Turk (1529),* WA 30/2:185.

or those who might still become captive."[31] In this work, he provided basic advice to Christians on how to live as Christians amid Muslims, especially under the restrictions of Sharia law. Over a decade later, after he helped publish a Latin translation of the Qur'an and other Islamic literature so that Christians could learn about Islam from primary texts, he worked on a very loose translation of what was the most influential medieval scholastic apologetic directed against Islam. He titled the resulting work *Refutation of the Koran* and published it for two reasons.[32] First, so that, he explained, "if this booklet should, whether by the press or through the preachers, come before those who are struggling against the Turks or who are already subject to the Turks or who must become their subjects hereafter, they will be able to defend themselves against the faith of Mohammed, even if they were unable to defend themselves against his sword."[33] He hoped it would equip Christians in the task of apologetics so that, as he wrote, they might be "lion hearts" in defense of the gospel.[34] Second, the published text of the *Refutation* stated that a purpose of the book was to bring those led astray by the Qur'an and Islam back to God.[35]

The *Refutation* followed a distinct method for arguing with Islam. As the published text put it, "One must not deal with [Muslims] at first by asserting and defending the high articles of our faith . . . but rather with this approach: take and diligently work with their Qur'an, demonstrating their law to be false and useless."[36] Afterward, one should argue for the veracity of Christianity. More than the first half of the *Refutation* argues against the Qur'an by showing that it cannot be construed as a legitimate revelation from God by a rational person for the following reasons: The Qur'an claims, in a way, to supersede the Torah, Psalms, and Gospels; but neither the Old or New Testament bear witness to the Qur'an. In addition, it does not cohere with any biblical doctrine, it contradicts itself, it has not been confirmed by miraculous signs, it even contradicts common sense reason, there are obvious lies in it, it promotes murder, it is disorderly, it is shameful, and the history of its composition is dubious.[37]

The last few chapters of the *Refutation* are the most interesting, for they attempt to demonstrate Christian doctrine from a few ambiguous passages of the Qur'an.

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[31] Luther, *Muster-Sermon Against the Turk (1529),* WA 30/2:185.

[32] See Luther's preface and afterword to Brother Richard, O. P. [Riccoldo da Monte di Croce], *Refutation of the Koran [ca. 1301]* (1542), AE 60:251–266.

[33] Luther, preface and afterword to Brother Richard, *Refutation of the Koran* (1542), AE 60:261–262.

[34] Luther, letter to the city council of Basel (Oct. 27, 1542), WA Br 10:162.

[35] Brother Richard, *Refutation of the Koran* (1542), WA 53:278.

[36] Brother Richard, *Refutation of the Koran* (1542), WA 53:284.

[37] Cf. Brother Richard, *Refutation of the Koran* (1542), WA 53:378.

The author believed that the Holy Spirit caused Muhammad unwittingly to express Christian doctrine. For example, he pointed out the consistent use of the first person plural with reference to God's speech. From this, he used passages like Qur'an 4:171, where Jesus is referred to as the word of God (*kalimatullah*) born of a virgin through the work of the spirit of God (*ruhallah*) to suggest that the Qur'an can be made to express a convoluted doctrine of the Trinity. The Qur'an also suggests that the Torah, Psalms, and Gospels are legitimate revelations from God.[38] He then added to this that the biblical books should have priority, and he pointed out that, at the very least, Muslims were compelled by their own scripture to read and believe them.[39]

For Luther's time, the *Refutation* was the most sophisticated apologetic against Islam available. The Latin text that Luther translated and adopted persisted and informed the first modern apologetic treatise written by Hugo Grotius about a century later, *On the Truth of the Christian Religion*. The real value of the *Refutation* for understanding Luther's approach to apologetics, though, is that it suggests a much more pragmatic Luther than the Biblicist some have characterized him to be. Additionally, that Luther borrowed and took his cues from a scholastic treatise suggests he was no pre-Kierkegaardian existentialist. Rather, he was a traditional apologist, who received and passed on the basic scholastic approach to apologetics against Jews and Muslims, mixed with a few of his own innovations.

It is undeniable that Luther used and recognized the need for apologetics. He, in fact, believed all Christians should be prepared to give a reason for the hope within them. It would be strange for a man so confident in the objectivity of the faith to dismiss it. This—and not the existentialism or neo-orthodox influences that came later—was the spirit of the reformers. They were not dogmatists (though they held fast to certain dogmas). They kept an open mind, relative to the time. Luther, for example, always kept himself in check by asking the question "Am I alone wise?" Lyndal Roper describes him this way:

> For Luther, doubt always accompanied faith. . . . [I]n one debate, Luther suddenly became unsure that he was right, and he left the room, falling on his bed and praying. . . . He was utterly engaged in the subject under discussion, and shaken to the core by the thought that he might have been mistaken.[40]

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[38] Muslims invented the doctrine of *tahrif* to explain the obvious contradictions, effectively altering, if not contradicting, the Qur'an's claims.

[39] Brother Richard, *Refutation* (1542), WA 53:364–388.

[40] Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (New York: Random House, 2017), 422.

This was characteristic, she contends, of his "extraordinary openness" and "honest willingness to put everything on the line."[41]

Luther and the other reformers were convinced the truth was discoverable, even by the unregenerate. The "second Martin" (Martin Chemnitz) wrote,

> It is absolutely clear that the mind in itself has not been deprived of all understanding, and there remains in even unregenerate men some ability of the mind to perceive and judge those things which are subject to reason and the senses . . . God willed that some of these gifts should remain in the mind, whence man could consider both what God is and what he is like; likewise, in order that there can be instruction to lead us to Christ.[42]

Or, as Luther put it in the catechism, God has given us our reason and our senses and still preserves them (SC II 2). The thesis that scholars like Avery Dulles have advanced—namely, that the reformer was skeptical of apologetics—is simply untenable. So, too, is Becker's thesis that Luther would only go as far as biblical proof-texting, even if it was done in such a way as to show the internal consistency of Christian doctrine.

It should also be added that Luther would not have rejected wholesale the way apologetics developed in the centuries after him. He approved and made use of the scholastic apologetic tradition, and thus he could not conceive of an epistemology being developed apart from certain theistic ontological assumptions, as so many of the thinkers of the enlightenment tried to do. (They failed, by the way. There is no such thing as absolute neutrality, especially in the realm of religion.[43])

Nevertheless, despite his premodern worldview, there is enough material in Luther to suggest he was confident that inductive reasoning from the effects and teleology of the cosmos would lead one to conclude that a deity caused it all. For example, he wrote,

> The more observant among the philosophers drew from this source [the cosmos] what is in truth not an insignificant proof: that all things are done and guided, not planlessly but by divine providence, inasmuch as the movements of the masses on high and of the heaven are so definite and unique. Who would say that they are accidental or purely a matter of nature, when the objects

[41] Roper, *Martin Luther*, 410.

[42] Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici,* trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 233.

[43] Roy A. Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

> fashioned by artisans—such as round or three-cornered or six-cornered columns—are not accidental but the result of a definite plan and skill?[44]

There are numerous other places in Luther where additional forms of the *a posteriori* arguments for God's existence are expressed. To be sure, at best, these arguments only established the existence of a "Supreme Being." "It is [still] interesting to observe," however, wrote N. Arne Bendtz, "how far Luther sometimes can go in recognizing man's knowledge of God unaided by revelation. It is raised above all doubts that man's knowledge leads him to the acceptance of the existence of God."[45]

In Luther's mind, natural knowledge of God served two purposes. On one hand, as Henry Eyster Jacobs wrote over a century ago, it kept "man from becoming like brutes which perish. It constantly reminds him of a higher standard than is attainable under the mere light of Nature . . . and it impels man ever onward in his search for truth and for God." On the other hand, natural knowledge or natural theology "is like writing that needs the intervention of a lens in order to be legible by one whose sight is failing. Some facts indeed are known, but they are misapprehended and viewed in wrong relations; and the most important are entirely wanting."[46]

For Luther, then, lucid and certain knowledge of God comes from his word, particularly in the person of his Word made flesh who dwelt among us. Luther wrote,

> This is why Paul makes such a frequent practice of linking Jesus Christ with God the Father, to teach us what is the true . . . religion. It does not begin at the top, as all other religions do; it begins at the bottom. It bids us climb up by Jacob's ladder . . . Therefore . . . put away all speculations about the Majesty, all thoughts of works, traditions, and philosophy . . . And you must run directly to the manger and the mother's womb, embrace this Infant and Virgin's Child in your arms, and look at Him—born, being nursed, growing up, going about in human society, teaching, dying, rising again, ascending above all the heavens, and having authority over all things.[47]

It seems that if Luther would have developed an apologetic system to demonstrate that Christianity was not a cleverly devised myth, he would have approached it from the incarnation, factually or historically, for this is what sets Christianity

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[44] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis (1535–1545/1544–1554), AE* 1:25.

[45] N. Arne Bendtz, "Faith and Knowledge in Luther's Theology," in *Reformation Studies: Sixteen Essays in Honor of Roland H. Bainton,* ed. Franklin H. Littell (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962), 22–23.

[46] Henry Eyster Jacobs, *A Summary of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1905), 7–8.

[47] Luther, *Lectures on Galatians (1535), AE* 26:30.

apart from all other religions and worldviews. This was not just a dogmatic or doctrinal point he was making. He believed it was also the tremendous epistemological difference that Christianity makes. Apologetics, then, was for Luther an essential part of the life of the mind. It was especially essential for those in ecclesiastical vocations or public ministry. In his preface to the Qur'an, he wrote,

> There can be no thought of leisure, especially for those of us who teach in the church. We must fight everywhere against the armies of the devil. How many different enemies have we seen in our own time?—the defenders of the pope's idols, the Jews, a multitude of Anabaptist monstrosities, the party of Servetus, and others. Let us now prepare ourselves against Mohammed as well. But what will we be able to say concerning things of which we are ignorant? That is why it is beneficial for learned people to read the writings of their enemies—so that they may more accurately refute, strike, and overturn those writings, so that they may be able to correct some of them, or at least to fortify our own people with stronger arguments.[48]

Apologists can certainly be quirky, obsessive, and even myopic at times. That is no reason to scuttle the enterprise, and it is no reason for Lutherans to puff up their chests and act as if they had Luther's approval (as if Luther's approval is needed anyway). For Luther and his heirs really do have a word for the world, even the world of unbelief. It is especially to the latter, like Luther to the Jews and the distant Turks, that the apologist speaks. How does he speak? In a creative and factually persuasive way, so that, as St. Paul put it to King Agrippa, he might persuade those who hear him to be Christians.

[48] Luther, *Preface to Theodor Bibliander's Edition of the Koran* (1543), AE 60:294.

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Antichrist in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions: The Relevance of Reformation Exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 for the Church Today

Charles A. Gieschen

Whenever we interpret a biblical text, we do not come to that text *tabula rasa*—with a blank-slate mind—but we stand on the shoulders of close to two thousand years' worth of interpreters and interpretation. The Holy Spirit was active not only in the recording of God's salvific deeds and words in the Scriptures by prophets and apostles, but also within the church when that word has been interpreted faithfully and proclaimed. In a Lutheran church like ours, in which we subscribe unconditionally to the Lutheran Confessions as reflecting correct exposition of the Scriptures, we are acutely aware that we stand on the shoulders of faithful Christians from the past centuries who have written creeds, confessions, and commentaries. Included in this number are our Reformation forefathers from the sixteenth century. Our subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, however, does not mean that everything about every biblical text has been expressed or that there are not new applications of the meaning of these texts in contemporary contexts. In short, we have much to learn from the past, but we still have exegetical work to do in the twenty-first century.

This study will present the ongoing relevance of Reformation exegesis by examining one prominent example from the Reformation period: the interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12. Even though this text does not contain the title ἀντίχριστος ("Antichrist") found in 1–2 John, it does mention ὁ ἀντικείμενος ("the Adversary") and thus became the central text among Luther and the Lutheran reformers for writing and teaching about Antichrist. Much of that teaching about Antichrist, but not all of it, focused on identifying the papacy as Antichrist. This relationship between 2 Thessalonians 2, the Antichrist, and the papacy since the time of the Reformation is affirmed by John Stephenson, who states, "The *sedes doctrinae* for the confessional dogma that the mystery of Antichrist has found

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realization and fulfillment in the papacy is the second chapter of Second Thessalonians."[1] This study will demonstrate that the Reformation exegesis about Antichrist based on 2 Thessalonians 2 was a bit broader than simply identifying the papacy as Antichrist and will argue for the ongoing value of this exegesis in our current context. Furthermore, it will argue that 2 Thessalonians 2 testifies to a complex Antichrist reality that entails both the broad and ongoing attack of Satan against the church in various people and events in every generation of these latter days ("the *mystery* of lawlessness") as well as an individual satanic figure who will be manifest shortly before the return of Christ and annihilated by Christ upon his return ("the *Man* of Lawlessness").

I. The Influence of Luther on the Use of 2 Thessalonians 2, Especially in the Smalcald Articles (1537)

In his engaging history of teaching about Antichrist, Bernard McGinn argues that there was significant discussion of Antichrist during the late medieval period before the Reformation, with both the papacy and Islam being identified as Antichrist in some of these discussions.[2] A prominent example of this is the writing of John Wycliffe, who began to make use of his papal antichrist rhetoric after Pope Gregory XI condemned some of his views in 1377. He did not go after a particular pope, but the office itself, as seen in his own words:

> From this supposition, depending on the way of life of Christ and the way of life of the pope, it will appear to the knowledgeable faithful that the pope is the evident Antichrist, not just the individual person who sets up more laws that are against Christ's law, but the multitude of popes for the time of the Church's endowment—and of cardinals, bishops, and their other accomplices. Their person of Antichrist is a monstrous composite one.[3]

Although teaching about Antichrist had some prominence before the Reformation as McGinn has demonstrated, Hermann Sasse emphasizes that Antichrist is a teaching no previous or subsequent generation has focused on as much as Luther.

> In Christian history there is no one who has so deeply probed the mystery of the Antichrist as Martin Luther, no one who so shuddered before it. In Roman theology, even in the greatest teachers of the Roman Church, the Antichrist has

[1] John R. Stephenson, *Eschatology*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics 13 (Fort Wayne: Luther Academy, 1993), 79.

[2] Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 143–199.

[3] John Wycliffe, *Opus evangelicum*, Book 3, as quoted in McGinn, *Antichrist*, 182.

> always appeared as a comparatively harmless being. This figure of the distant end time may indeed be painted with the most frightening colors, but one need not be too frightened when one knows that this monster will rule for "not too long" a time, that is, three and a half years. It belongs to the essence of the Roman Church that it puts into a more or less distant future what Holy Scripture says about the events of the end time. For the present, then, [according to the Roman Church] Christians need not be much concerned about it. For Luther the Antichrist was not so innocuous.[4]

Why did teaching about Antichrist play such a large role in Luther's proclamation? McGinn argues that it was not important to Luther's thought in the early years leading up to the Reformation but gained prominence when Luther became more aware of the abuses of the papacy and realized that the papacy as an office was largely responsible for many of the things that he was opposing, such as indulgences.[5] Luther himself says as much when he reflects on the subject, alluding to 2 Thessalonians 2 in the process.

> After the pope, with force and cunning, usurped all power and authority, so that he could not be humiliated either by emperor or king, then it was fitting that by the power of the word the Son of Perdition should be revealed. However, I came upon it quite innocently; for I never would have dreamed this twenty years prior to that day. Rather, if someone else had taught such a thing, I would have damned and burned him. But God is the cause, because he did such things miraculously.[6]

Luther, therefore, went from hardly thinking about the identification of Antichrist in 1517 to writing strongly about it in three treatises published in 1520: *To the Christian Nobility*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *Against the Bull of the Antichrist*. Sasse argues that Luther's focus on Antichrist was part and parcel of his eschatological outlook of living in the end times of the world.

> Is this to be explained by the influence of the apocalypticism of the Late Middle Ages, nourished by a mood born of the feeling that a dying world was going under, as well as by the despair of pious people in regard to the ever-more-decadent church? This certainly was an influence upon Luther and upon the whole century of the Reformation. He, along with most of his contemporaries,

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[4] Hermann Sasse, "Last Things: Church and Antichrist," in *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 115.

[5] McGinn, *Antichrist*, 201–208; see also Scott Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy: Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

[6] Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* 65 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993), 3:438.21–439.2, no. 3593, as translated and quoted in Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy*, 160–161.

> was convinced of living in the eventide of the world. He never supposed that the world would last much longer.[7]

It is apparent that Luther did not attack the papacy because of its moral weakness, but because of its negative impact on the gospel. He states as much in the Smalcald Articles (1537): "The invocation of saints is also one of the abuses of the Antichrist that is in conflict with the first, chief article and that destroys the knowledge of Christ" (SA II II 25).[8] Luther identified the papacy as Antichrist primarily because this office was responsible for the false teaching that did not allow the gospel to be proclaimed. Sasse affirms this assessment when he writes, "For Luther, the pope is the Antichrist because his doctrine is anti-Christian. With his doctrine he casts the Lord Christ from His throne and puts himself there, there in the place which is Christ's alone. Christendom, then, must choose between the Gospel and the doctrine of the pope."[9]

What was Luther's exegetical basis in Scripture for the conclusion that the papacy is the Antichrist? It was not 1–2 John, because there the Antichrist is defined as those who deny that Jesus came in the flesh (2 John 7). It may have been the word ἀντίχριστος ("Antichrist"), which means "opposer of Christ."[10] It does appear that 2 Thessalonians 2 also played a role in Luther's conclusion, especially Paul's statement that the Man of Lawlessness exalts himself above every so-called god. Luther brings this into his argument in the Smalcald Articles.

> This business [i.e., his rule over the church] shows overwhelmingly that he is the true end-times Antichrist, who has raised himself over and set himself against Christ, because the pope will not let Christians be saved without his authority (which amounts to nothing, since it is not ordered or commanded by God). This is precisely what St. Paul calls "setting oneself over God and against God" [cf. 2 Thess 2:4]. Neither the Turks nor the Tartars, despite being great enemies of the Christians, do any such thing. They allow whoever desires it to have faith in Christ, and they receive physical tribute and obedience from the Christians.

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[7] Sasse, "Last Things: Church and Antichrist," 115.

[8] All quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this article are from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

[9] Sasse, "Last Things: Church and Antichrist," 117.

[10] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 91, hereafter BDAG. Given the meaning of the preposition ἀντι ("in the place of"; see BDAG, 87), another possible meaning of ἀντίχριστος is "in the place of Christ."

> The pope, however, will not allow faith, but asserts instead that anyone who is obedient to him will be saved. (SA II IV 10–12)

Shortly after this statement, Luther returns to criticizing the teaching of the papacy as being of the devil because the papacy does not allow the teaching and preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

> Finally, that the pope in contradiction to God promotes his lies about Masses, purgatory, monastic life, one's own works, and worship (which are the essence of the papacy) is nothing but the devil through and through. He damns, slays, and plagues all Christians who do not exalt and honor his abominations above all things. Therefore, as little as we can worship the devil himself as our lord or god, so we cannot allow his apostle, the pope or Antichrist, to govern as our head or lord. His papal government is characterized by lying and murder and the eternal ruin of body and soul, as I have demonstrated in many books. (SA II IV 14)

Near the end of his life, Luther became even blunter about this matter. In *Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil* (1545), he writes,

> Praise God, not one good Christian conscience can believe anything but that the pope is not and cannot be the head of the Christian church and cannot be God's or Christ's vicar. Instead, he is the head of the accursed church of all the worst scoundrels on earth, a vicar of the devil, an enemy of God, an adversary of Christ, a destroyer of Christ's churches; a teacher of lies, blasphemies, and idolatries; an arch church-thief and church robber of the keys and all the goods of both the church and the temporal lords; a murderer of kings and an inciter of all kinds of bloodshed; a brothel-keeper over all brothel-keepers and all vermin, even that which cannot be named; an Antichrist, a man of sin and child of perdition [II Thess. 2:3]; a true werewolf. Whoever does not want to believe this may keep on riding with his god, the pope; I, a qualified teacher and preacher in the church of Christ responsible for telling the truth, have herewith done my share.[11]

Luther is known for this almost singular focus on the papacy as Antichrist. He does, however, also include Islam and other heresies in the realm of Antichrist; but in his view, they are not as strong of a manifestation of Antichrist. That is apparent in this statement from his treatise *Confession concerning Christ's Supper* (1528),

[11] Martin Luther, *Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil* (1545): vol. 41, pp. 357–358 in *Luther's Works, American Edition,* vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957–1986); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), hereafter AE.

which also shows that Luther used Paul's "sits in the temple of God and exalts himself"[12] language from 2 Thessalonians 2:4:

> The papacy is assuredly the true realm of Antichrist, the real anti-Christian tyrant, who sits in the temple of God and rules with human commandments, as Christ in Matthew 24 and Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 declare; although the Turks and all heresies, wherever they may be, are also included in this abomination which according to prophecy will stand in the holy place, but are not to be compared to the papacy.[13]

Luther had a tremendous impact on Reformation discussions of Antichrist. However, his voice was not the only one, as will be seen now in an overview of the other Lutheran Confessions that mention Antichrist.

II. The Interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2 in Other Confessional Writings

Several characteristics of the Antichrist emerge, most of them based directly or indirectly on Daniel 11:36–39 and 2 Thessalonians 2, as one examines references to the Antichrist in the rest of the Lutheran Confessions. It is noteworthy that Paul is drawing directly on Daniel 11:36 when he states that the Man of Lawlessness is "the one who opposes and exalts himself over every so-called god or object of worship" (2 Thess 2:4). The first characteristic that we find is the identification of *the singular Antichrist as a reality within the Christian church*, as already seen above when discussing the Smalcald Articles. This understanding is based on interpreting "the temple of God" mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 as a symbolic reference to the church, rather than the Jerusalem temple or any other earthly center of worship. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531) states,

> Neither do the sacraments lose their efficacy when they are administered by the wicked. Indeed, we may legitimately make use of the sacraments that are administered by evil people. For Paul also predicts [2 Thess. 2:4] that the Antichrist "takes his seat in the temple of God," that is, he will rule and hold office in the church. (Ap VII and VIII 3–4)

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537), authored by Melanchthon shortly after Luther wrote the Smalcald Articles, also makes the point that the Antichrist must be within the Christian church because of Paul's mention that "he takes his seat in the temple of God" (2 Thess 2:4).

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[12] Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are the author's translation.

[13] Luther, *Confession concerning Christ's Supper* (1528), AE 37:367–368.

> It is well known, however, that the Roman pontiffs and their minions defend ungodly doctrines and worship practices. Moreover, the marks of the Antichrist clearly fit the reign of the pope and his minions. For describing the Antichrist to the Thessalonians, Paul calls him an adversary of Christ who "exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God" [2 Thess. 2:4]. He is speaking, therefore, of someone reigning in the church, not of pagan rulers, and calls that one an adversary of Christ because he will invent doctrine that conflicts with the gospel and will arrogate to himself divine authority. (Tr 39)

The second characteristic of Antichrist, which is the primary characteristic of Antichrist as expressed in the Lutheran Confessions, is *the teaching of Antichrist opposes the teaching of Christ.* The Apology centers the kingdom of the Antichrist in the teaching of righteousness by works and includes Islam in the kingdom of Antichrist.

> If our opponents defend these human acts of worship as meriting justification, grace, and the forgiveness of sins, they are simply establishing the kingdom of the Antichrist. For the kingdom of the Antichrist is a new kind of worship of God, devised by human authority in opposition to Christ, just as the kingdom of Mohammed has religious rites and works, through which it seeks to be justified before God. It does not hold that people are freely justified by faith on account of Christ. So also the papacy will be a part of the kingdom of the Antichrist if it defends human rites as justifying. For they deprive Christ of his honor when they teach that we are not freely justified on account of Christ through faith but through such rites, and especially when they teach that such rites are not only useful for justification but even necessary. In the article on the church above they also condemned us because we said that it is not necessary for the true unity of the church that rites instituted by human beings be everywhere alike. Daniel 11[:38] indicates that new religious rites will be the very form and constitution of the kingdom of the Antichrist. For there he says, "He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his ancestors did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts." Here he is describing the invention of new religious rites, for he says that a god such as the Fathers did not know will be worshiped. (Ap XV 18–19)

Teaching contrary to the gospel that Christ taught is also seen as the primary characteristic of Antichrist in the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope. "Therefore, even if the Roman bishop did possess primacy by divine right, obedience is still not owed him when he defends ungodly worship and teaching contrary to the gospel. Indeed, it is necessary to oppose him as the Antichrist" (Tr 57). The most

extensive discussion of this characteristic of Antichrist is found earlier in the Treatise:

> Next, papal teaching contradicts the gospel at numerous points, and the pope arrogates to himself divine authority in three ways. First, he assumes the right to alter Christ's teaching and the worship instituted by God, and he wants his own doctrine and worship regarded as divine. Second, he claims not only the power to loose and bind in this life but also authority over souls after this life. Third, the pope is not willing to be judged by the church or by anyone else and places his authority above the judgment of councils and of the whole church. To refuse to be judged by the church or by anyone is to make himself God [cf. 2 Thess 2:4]. Finally, he defends these dreadful errors and this wickedness with the greatest savagery, killing those who dissent.
>
> This being the situation, all Christians must beware lest they become participants in the ungodly teachings, blasphemies, and unjust cruelty of the pope. Indeed, they ought to abandon and curse the pope and his minions as the realm of the Antichrist, just as Christ commanded: "Beware of false prophets" [Matt. 7:15]. Paul also commanded that ungodly teachers are to be shunned and denounced as accursed, and in 2 Corinthians 6[:14] he says: "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what fellowship is there . . . between light and darkness?"
>
> To dissent from the consensus of so many nations and to be called schismatics is a grave matter. However, divine authority commands all people not to be accomplices and defenders of ungodliness and unjust cruelty. Thus, our consciences are sufficiently absolved. For the errors of papal rule are manifest, and the Scriptures cry out with one voice that those errors are the teaching of demons and of the Antichrist. (Tr 40–42)

The Apology sees the enforced celibacy of clergy as another example of the false teaching of the Antichrist, strangely finding an exegetical basis for this in Daniel 11: "Therefore, this law concerning perpetual celibacy is unique to this new pontifical tyranny, and for good reason. For Daniel [11:37] attributes to the kingdom of the Antichrist this mark, namely, the contempt for women" (Ap XXIII 25). The Apology also argues, based on Daniel 11 but probably grounded in the financial opulence of the papacy supported by indulgences, that the teaching of the gospel and faith is what should adorn worship, not outward adornments of worldly riches.

> The true adornment of the churches is godly, useful, and clear doctrine, the devout use of the sacraments, ardent prayer, and the like. Candles, golden vessels, and similar adornments are appropriate, but they are not the distinctive adornment of the church. Now if the opponents make such things the center

> of worship rather than the proclamation of the gospel, faith, and its struggles, they should be numbered among those whom Daniel describes as worshiping their god with gold and silver [Dan. 11:38]. (Ap XXIV 51)

A third characteristic of Antichrist as taught in the Confessions is that *the Antichrist has both a secular and ecclesiastical rule*. The eschatological king of Daniel 11:36–39 is the basis for this teaching in the Apology.

> Perhaps the opponents demand that the church be defined as the supreme external monarchy of the entire world, in which the Roman pontiff must hold unlimited power. . . . Therefore the pope must necessarily be the lord of the entire world, of all worldly kingdoms, and of all private and public affairs; he must have complete power in both the temporal and spiritual realm; and he must possess both swords, the spiritual and temporal. Indeed, this is not a definition of the church of Christ but of the papal kingdom, according to the definition not only of the canonists but also of Daniel 11[:36–39]. (Ap VII and VIII 23–24)

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope also offers a critique of the papacy's claim to authority over the church on earth by divine right: "First of all, the pope clearly reigns in the church and has established this dominion for himself on the pretext of the authority of the church and the ministry, offering as justification the words, 'I will give you the keys'" [Matt. 16:19] (Tr 40).

It is not that the Lutherans were against administrative structures in the church on earth. It is proper to note here the well-known caveat that Melanchthon attaches to his signature on the Smalcald Articles: "However, concerning the pope I maintain that if he would allow the gospel, we, too, may (for the sake of peace and general unity among those Christians who are now under him and might be in the future) grant to him his superiority over the bishops which he has 'by human right' " (SA Subscriptions). Lutherans disputed the papacy's claim that this office was established by a divine right, as well as the extent to which the so-called "vicar of Christ" assumed the divine role of Christ over the church.

A fourth characteristic taught in the Confessions is that there is *a plurality of Antichrists who are false teachers within the church*. This is exegetically based on the use of the plural noun ἀντίχριστοι ("Antichrists") in 1 John 2:18. Luther's understanding, which is broader than 1–2 John, is that any ungodly teacher who does not teach the gospel is among the Antichrists.

> The ungodly teachers must be avoided because they no longer act in the person of Christ but are Antichrists. Christ says [Matt. 7:15], "Beware of false prophets," and Paul says [Gal. 1:9], "If anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!" (Ap VII and VIII 48)

It is surprising that the Confessions do not engage what Paul means when he writes about "the mystery of lawlessness" already at work (2 Thess 2:7), even though it is a phrase of considerable importance used by Paul in parallel with "the Man of Lawlessness," as will be argued below.

A fifth characteristic taught about the Antichrist is that the *papacy as Antichrist is seen as lasting until the return of Christ*, which is a clear allusion to the testimony in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 that Christ will destroy the Man of Lawlessness upon his triumphal return. This characteristic is expressed clearly in the Apology.

> So Baal worship clings to the realm of the pope, namely, the abuse of the Mass, which they direct in such a way that by it they might merit the remission of guilt and punishment for the unrighteous. It appears that this Baal worship will endure together with the reign of the pope until Christ comes for judgment and by the glory of his coming destroys the kingdom of the Antichrist. (Ap XXIV 98)

It should be noted that the teaching about Antichrist in the Smalcald Articles and Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope is briefly restated in the Formula of Concord (FC SD X 20–23), but nothing new is taught there.

In summation, there are five primary characteristics of Antichrist presented in our Confessions. First, the singular Antichrist is a reality within the church. Second, the teaching of Antichrist opposes the teaching of Christ. Third, the singular Antichrist exercises authority in both secular and ecclesial realms. Fourth, there is a plurality of Antichrists or false teachers in these latter days. Fifth, the papacy as Antichrist is seen as lasting until the return of Christ. What is sometimes overlooked in our discussions of Antichrist in the Confessions is that while the papacy is clearly identified as the prominent part of the kingdom of Antichrist, the reality of Antichrist is not limited to the papacy. Testimony in the Confessions includes Islam and all false teachers with the papacy in its identification of Antichrist. What may also surprise some is that although Daniel 11 and 2 Thessalonians 2 are the most frequently cited texts, very few assertions about Antichrist are made on the basis of 2 Thessalonians 2 beyond that Antichrist sets himself up in "the temple of God" and "exalts himself over every so-called god" (2 Thess 2:4). To express it simply, for Luther and Lutherans, the primary characteristic of Antichrist is teaching that is against Christ, especially something that replaces or sidetracks the gospel.

III. Revisiting the Exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12

What is apparent in this brief overview of testimony from Luther and the Confessions is that, although 2 Thessalonians 2 is one of the two texts most frequently alluded to or explicitly cited, testimony in this text, beyond the fact that

this figure sets himself up in "the temple of God" and "exalts himself over every so-called god," does not appear to play a major role. It is also surprising that Lutherans have done very little detailed exegetical work on 2 Thessalonians 2.[14] This text is especially significant since it probably is among the earliest extant written evidence of apostolic teaching on this subject.

> [1] Now we entreat you, brothers, with regard to the triumphal coming [τῆς παρουσίας] of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to him, [2] in order that you not be quickly shaken from your understanding or be disturbed, neither by a spirit nor a message nor a letter as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. [3] Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy [ἡ ἀποστασία] comes first, and the Man of Lawlessness is revealed [ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας], the Son of Destruction [ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας], [4] the Adversary [ὁ ἀντικείμενος] and the one who exalts himself over every so-called god or object of worship, with the result that he takes his seat in the temple of God, himself proclaiming that he is God. [5] Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? [6] And you know the thing that is now restraining [τὸ κατέχον], in order that he [the Man of Lawlessness] be revealed [εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι] in his time. [7] For the mystery of lawlessness is already effectively at work [τὸ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας], only [it must remain hidden] until he who now is restraining [ὁ κατέχων] is taken out of the way. [8] And then the Lawless One will be revealed [ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος] whom the Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the manifestation of his triumphal coming [τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ]; [9] that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the working of Satan in all power and signs and false wonders, [10] and with all the wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they did not receive the love of the truth in order for them to be saved. [11] And for this reason God sends upon them a deluding influence so that they believe what is false, [12] in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Although this text will not be interpreted in detail here, key aspects of Paul's teaching will be examined.[15] First, Paul testifies to an already established teaching

[14] For example, in all of the twentieth century, the only two extensive exegetical discussions that I could find in English published within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are Henry Hamann, "A Brief Exegesis of 2 Thess. 2:1–12 with Guideline for the Application of the Prophecy Contained Therein," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 24, no. 6 (1953): 418–433; and Ludwig Fuerbringer, "Leading Thoughts on Eschatology in the Epistles to the Thessalonians," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 13, no. 4 (1942): 265–272, 321–329, 401–413, 511–518.

[15] More detailed argumentation and documentation supporting the conclusions presented below on 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 will be presented in my forthcoming volume on 1–2 Thessalonians in the Concordia Commentary series.

that there will be a single eschatological figure whose revelation will cause a great apostasy before the last day arrives. Paul unmistakably draws on imagery and language about the eschatological king depicted in Daniel 11:36–39 who exalts himself over every so-called god (2 Thess 2:4). The fact that Paul's writing here was influenced by the vision in Daniel is further confirmed by Paul's use of ὁ κατέχων, "he who now is restraining " (2 Thess 2:6–7). Such language reflects the role of the angel Michael in Daniel 10–12, including the fact that shortly before the end Michael will "stand aside" (Dan 12:1) or, as Paul puts it, the one who is restraining will be "taken out of the way" (2 Thess 2:7b).[16] Even the title "Man of Lawlessness" probably reflects Daniel 12:10, which states "the lawless ones will do lawlessness, and all the lawless ones will not understand." Paul's description of the apostasy offered in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, 8–9 may also have been influenced by Daniel's time of great tribulation (Dan 12:1–10). In short, Paul does not draw this teaching out of thin air or receive it by special revelation. He draws on Daniel, possibly by way of early Christian eschatological teaching given by Jesus, who frequently identified himself as the Danielic Son of Man.

Second, there is not one exclusive title for this eschatological figure. Paul refers to him by four different titles: ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας ("the Man of Lawlessness") and ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας ("the Son of Destruction," best understood as "the Son Doomed to Destruction") in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, ὁ ἀντικείμενος ("the Adversary") in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, and simply as ὁ ἄνομος ("the Lawless One") in 2 Thessalonians 2:8.[17] As I already noted, the term ἀνομίας ("lawlessness") probably comes from Daniel 12:10, and Paul may use it here—rather than the prominent Aramaic title for Satan's eschatological manifestation in Jewish literature, Belial or Beliar, a title with which Paul was also familiar (cf. 2 Cor 6:15)[18]—because he was in a predominantly Gentile congregation. The four titles in 2 Thessalonians 2, along with ἀντίχριστος ("Antichrist"), ὁ ἀντίχριστος ("the Antichrist"), and ἀντίχριστοι ("Antichrists") in 1–2 John (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7), and ψευδόχριστοι ("Falsechrists") in Matthew 24:24, demonstrate that there was some variety in how the final Falsechrist was identified in the first century. There was not yet a single title to identify him, at least not in Greek.

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[16] See further Colin Nicholl, "Michael, the Restrainer Removed (2 Thess. 2:6–7)," *Journal of Theological Studies* 51 (April 2000): 27–53.

[17] "The Lawless One" is a title used in Psalms of Solomon (17:11), a first-century BC Jewish text that probably draws on Daniel 12:10 to describe Pompey, the general who conquered Israel for Rome in 63 BC.

[18] For example, Beliar is the prominent title used in Qumran literature for the leader of the forces of darkness, especially in the War Scroll (1QM); see further Theodore J. Lewis, "Beliel," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:654–656.

Third, one of the most debated details of this text concerns the meaning of "he takes his seat in the temple of God" (2 Thess 2:4). Many, including Luther, interpret "temple of God" here as a metaphor for the church, because Paul uses this image elsewhere for the church (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21). For Luther and many others, this is the scriptural basis for teaching that the Antichrist is within the church. The primary background for Paul's depiction, however, is Daniel. Daniel's prophecy—fulfilled in Antiochus IV's desecration of the Jerusalem temple—becomes the basis for what the eschatological king will do as described in Daniel 11:36–39, the text that influences Paul's teaching in 2 Thessalonians 2. The Jerusalem temple was still standing when Paul wrote this letter around AD 51. Naturally, that would have been the temple brought to mind among the original listeners when they heard Paul's words about the "temple of God."[19] Jeffrey Weima points out that such an understanding does not mean that the Jerusalem temple, destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, must be rebuilt in order for what Paul writes about to come to pass in the future.

> But while Paul is here referring to the historic temple of Jerusalem, he is more likely using this sanctuary metaphorically by picking up the well-known theme of its desecration as a graphic description of the lawless one's usurpation of God and his divine authority. If so, this means that *the verse says more about the character of the man of lawlessness than the location where he will make his appearance*.[20]

There does not appear to be indisputable scriptural evidence that the Man of Lawlessness will be within the Christian church. The key part of the picture Paul paints is that he will take a position of authority over every deity claiming to be God.

Fourth, Paul teaches that this one will deceive many and cause a significant apostasy within the Christian church. This teaching is certainly similar to the teaching of Jesus about ψευδόχριστοι ("Falsechrists") in his eschatological discourse (Matt 24:3–31, esp. v. 24), but Paul focuses on a singular end-time apostasy caused by the final Falsechrist. He does this because his pastoral purpose is to assure the Thessalonian congregation that the last day has not yet dawned (cf. 2 Thess 2:2).

A fifth feature of Paul's eschatological teaching is that "the Man of Lawlessness" will be destroyed by Christ at his return: "And then the Lawless One will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of his coming" (2 Thess 2:8). Paul draws on Isaiah 11:4 to emphasize

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[19] William C. Weinrich notes that this was the dominant understanding among church fathers; see his "Antichrist in the Early Church," *CTQ* 49, no. 2 (1985): 141.

[20] Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 522 (emphasis original).

that this future and final *false* messiah will be destroyed upon Christ's return. Paul assures the Thessalonian church that the last day will not dawn until the Lawless One has been *both* manifest *and* slain. An example of ridiculous exegesis of this verse by a Lutheran from the perspective of Reformation triumphalism argues that Christ destroying the Man of Lawlessness with the breath of his mouth has already happened in principle in the condemnations of the papacy that occurred during the Reformation.[21] Such a conclusion goes against everything that Paul emphasizes about Jesus' visible triumphal coming on the last day!

A final and often overlooked feature of this pericope is that Paul also speaks of the broader work of Satan being already active but restrained.[22] Paul speaks not only of the *future* "Man of Lawlessness" but also of the *present* "mystery of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians 2:7: τὸ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας ("the mystery of lawlessness already at work"). The use of the same genitive modifier, τῆς ἀνομίας ("of lawlessness"), indicates an organic relationship between "the mystery" and "the Man" presented here. Paul places more emphasis on the final singular eschatological figure ("the Man of Lawlessness") because his overall purpose is to assure the Thessalonian congregation that the last day has not yet arrived (2 Thess 2:2).

IV. Conclusion

Based on these exegetical insights and information from Reformation-era understandings of this text, several conclusions can be drawn about the meaning of 2 Thessalonians 2. First, it would be helpful for many Lutherans to broaden the discussion of this doctrine by speaking of the biblical teaching of "Antichrist," rather than primarily or solely speaking of "the Antichrist." There is a need to teach of the plurality of "Antichrists" and "the mystery of lawlessness" already at work rather than focusing solely on "the Antichrist" or the eschatological "Man of Lawlessness."

Second, in light of an exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2, it would be proper to put more stress on identifying the "mystery of lawlessness" already at work in each generation while always being alert to the final "Man of Lawlessness" who will lead a great apostasy and be destroyed by Jesus Christ at his Parousia. From a purely exegetical basis, the papacy, Islam, and other false teachers, both within the Christian church and outside of it, should be identified as the mystery of lawlessness already at work. Because the Man of Lawlessness is an eschatological figure, one can

[21] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), 443–446.

[22] For further discussion of questions concerning "the Restrainer," see Nicholl, "Michael, the Restrainer Removed (2 Thess. 2:6–7)," 27–53.

be absolutely certain of his identity only when Christ returns. Regarding the identification of the Man of Lawlessness or final Antichrist, Charles Arand properly states that "we must be cautious about making an absolute once-and-for-all-times, never to be altered verdict."[23] Until the last day, like Luther and the reformers, Christians are to be actively identifying the various Antichrists and the mystery of lawlessness in the world around us, including in the church, even while being cautious about identifying the Man of Lawlessness of whom Paul writes. Does this mean that we should continue to identify the papacy with the reality of Antichrist? Absolutely. What John Stephenson has said about the identification of the papacy as Antichrist continues to remain true:

> Confessional Lutherans will not be minded to reconsider the identification made by the Book of Concord of the papacy with the Antichrist until such time as the bishop of Rome and the church body in communion with him unequivocally confess that justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith is the Scripturally-mandated bottom line of the one and only Gospel (Gal 1:8f.).[24]

Third, in light of the Johannine testimony to "many Antichrists" and the Pauline testimony about "the mystery of lawlessness" already at work, we, like our Lutheran forefathers, should be identifying the reality of Antichrist in our own generation and our own backyard. This includes the Roman papacy and Islam, but also other false teachers and churches, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Scientology, and many others. As John Stephenson has also written, "It is conceded that the papacy does not exhaust the mystery of Antichrist, but rather embodies the most intense manifestation of this mystery thus far encountered in the history of the church."[25] He observes that the definition of Antichrist in the epistles of John is the denial of Christ's coming in the flesh. This indicates that Zwingli and the Reformed could also be identified as Antichrist due to their principle that "the finite cannot hold the infinite." Such a position denies the proper understanding of the incarnation as well as the real presence in the Sacrament.[26] Islam clearly denies that Jesus is God in human flesh, and tragedies too numerous to list, such as the December 2016 bombing of St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo that killed dozens, show that some radical adherents of Islam desire to silence the preaching

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[23] Charles P. Arand, "Antichrist?: The Lutheran Confessions on the Papacy," *Concordia Journal* 29, no. 4 (2003): 402.

[24] Stephenson, *Eschatology*, 81.

[25] Stephenson, *Eschatology*, 80.

[26] Stephenson, *Eschatology*, 79. See also Paul R. Raabe, "Necessary Distinctions Regarding the Papacy," *Concordia Journal* 14, no. 1 (1988): 3.

of Christ by any means possible. There is no way to sugarcoat what is happening. It is Antichrist—nothing less than Satan at work against Christ.

Fourth, it is problematic to state that the papacy is the exclusive fulfillment of the testimony in 2 Thessalonians 2, for our Reformation fathers and Lutheran Confessions have a broader interpretation, also including Islam in this discussion. Although we continue to identify the papacy as Antichrist, we have not yet beheld Christ destroying the Man of Lawlessness on the last day, as 2 Thessalonians 2 testifies. Our identification of this figure is always conditioned by the realization that the future may reveal things we do not yet see and know, as Hermann Sasse, among others, affirms.

> There were items in Luther's view of history which were not accepted, specifically that the end of the world would come not later than within the next century. With such presuppositions Luther could not possibly answer the question as to what new forms the Antichrist might assume in subsequent centuries. The church can have no doctrine which answers such a question. The church can and must teach that all the eschatological prophecies of Holy Scripture come to fulfillment. How that may happen lies beyond its knowing. We can never say with certainty how what Scripture says in apocalyptic picture language will be realized. The fulfillment of all prophecies is greater than could be grasped by those who heard them, even by those who heard them in faith. The Lutheran Church teaches nothing in its Confessions as to how God may let the prophecy of the Antichrist come to fulfillment in the hidden future, that is, what form the Antichrist may take in the final terrors of the end time. What our Confessions can teach, and do teach, this and no more, is that in the "last time" which we can see, in the time of the church until the present day, the prophecy of the Antichrist has found fulfillment in the papacy.[27]

Although there are several things to disagree with in Edmund Schlink's discussion of Antichrist, he does offer this helpful conclusion about the broader understanding of Antichrist in the Confessions: "At all events it must be said that the church becomes unfaithful to the Confessions if it views the pope alone as the Antichrist, instead of being ever alert in constant watchfulness for the signs of the Antichrist in each current generation."[28]

Fifth, the example of our Reformation forefathers studying 2 Thessalonians 2 and being alert to the reality of Antichrist in their age is an example for us to follow. Our reading of the Confessions should drive us back to reexamining the biblical

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[27] Sasse, "Last Things: Church and Antichrist," 119.

[28] Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1961), 283.

testimony, especially in 2 Thessalonians 2 and Daniel 11, so that we ground all that we say about Antichrist solely in the testimony of the Scriptures themselves.

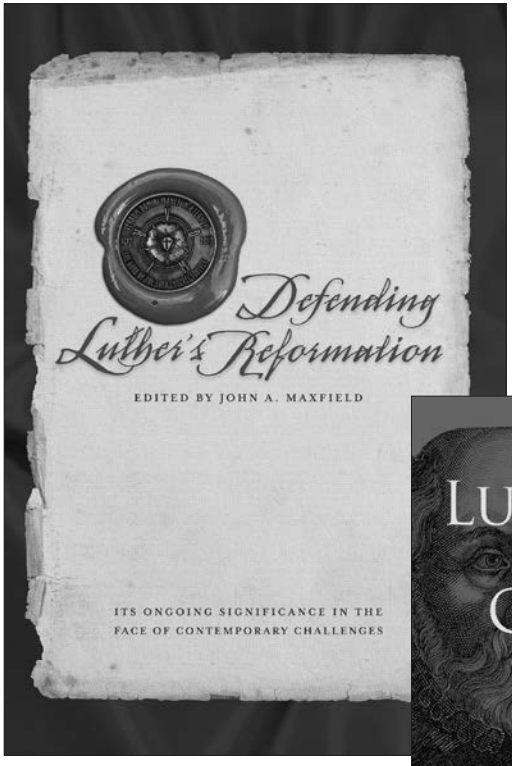
Finally, it is understood but must be expressed that all teaching about Antichrist is in service to teaching about Christ. Warnings about Falsechrists or Antichrists are given so that we never confuse the counterfeit with the genuine. That was true during the Reformation and it continues to be true today. The Scriptures seek to inoculate us against Antichrists and their false teaching not only through these warnings, but also especially by presenting the crucified and risen Jesus. His lordship is known in his self-sacrifice, and his presence in the world is not seen on a throne doing signs and wonders but in congregations at the baptismal font, altar, and pulpit from which his life and forgiveness flow. That is how it will be until he appears in glory on the last day.

The sobering warning about Antichrist from Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315–386) in his *Catechetical Lectures* serves as an appropriate conclusion:

> So be warned, my friend. I have given you the signs of the Antichrist. Do not merely store them in your memory. Pass them on to everyone without stint. If you have a child after the flesh, teach them to him forthwith. And, if you have become a godparent, forewarn your godchild, lest he should take the false Christ for the true. For "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work." (15.18)[29]

[29] William Telfer, ed., *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa,* Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 162.

HOLD FAST TO YOUR CONFESSION.



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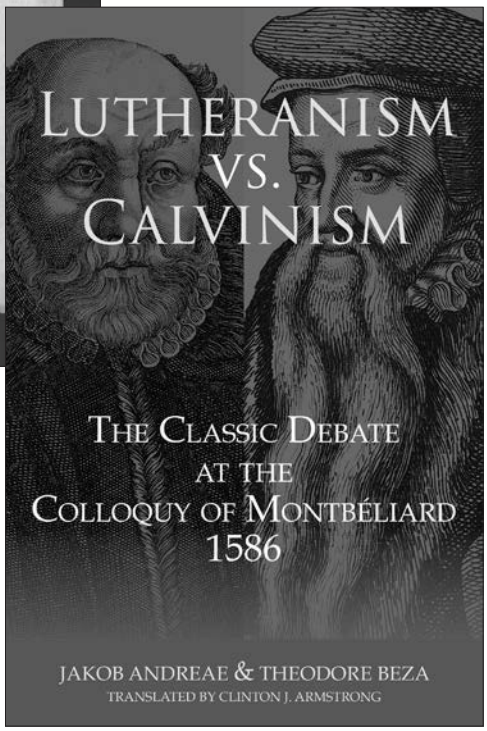

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Will the Real Martin Luther Stand Up?

David P. Scaer

For worldwide Protestantism, 2017 was the equivalent of the Holy Year of Mercy, with pilgrims rushing not through Rome's bronze portals but to the Wittenberg door that once held the Ninety-Five Theses, in order to view the grave of the great reformer. The original door no longer exists, and the door episode itself may be more apocryphal than historical—one episode discussed among others by Hartmut Lehmann in "Demythologizing the Luther Myths 1883–1983."[1] Myth or not, Luther's hammer blows are still heard around the world. Nothing could be more exhilarating than singing "A Mighty Fortress" in the Castle Church where it all began.

Some years ago, a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) pastor was serving as a chaplain in the Castle Church when great things began to happen, or so it seemed. As he was about to conduct the prayers, he heard a choir singing the Luther hymn. These voices of the saints on earth sounded to him like voices of angels, until he learned that the mailing address of these saints was Salt Lake City, Utah. Not everyone who calls himself a saint is one, just as not everyone who claims to be a Lutheran or a Luther devotee really is. German territorial churches count as Lutherans those who do not even regard themselves as Christians. Lutheran hymns are still sung in these non-specific confessional Evangelical German territorial churches and often in German Catholic and Baptist churches as well. In turn, confessional Lutherans make use of the Reformed hymnody. What Luther said about the true and false churches in his *Lectures on Genesis* applies to Lutherans today. Boundaries between the false and the true Lutheran churches are fluid, and we cannot be sure who belongs on which side of the great divide. In the shadow of the true church looms the false church.[2] Sadly, Luther notes that within itself, the true church has the seeds of its own self-destruction.[3] As Esau's children are mixed

[1] Hartmut Lehmann, "Demythologizing the Luther Myths 1883–1983," *Lutheran Quarterly* 30 (Winter 2016): 410–429.

[2] Jonathan D. Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Boston and Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2001), 192.

[3] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1536): vol. 2, p. 12, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing

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with Jacob's children, so, too, can Luther's progeny be found in non-Lutheran communions, and Calvin's progeny in Lutheran communions. In this commemorative year, pilgrims to Wittenberg will not be of one mind. Only the judgment day will separate the chaff from the wheat. In 1983, the quincentennial of Luther's birth, the German Democratic Republic, seeing an opportunity for financial gain, produced sound explanations of the reformer's doctrine of justification. Wheat grows in strange places. Thomas Müntzer remained the reformer of choice, and the Anabaptist-inspired Peasants Revolt was considered what Luther's Reformation should have been. A milder version of this hope is still promulgated by the Reformed in the accusation that Luther was too Catholic, a thought residing in the recesses of the hearts even of some Lutherans.

In an ideal world, all Lutherans, true or false, would make the pilgrimage to Wittenberg. But for those who can't, Luther relics are on display in colleges and seminaries, as well as in museums like the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the Morgan Museum in New York City. These Luther collections are the equivalent to Catholic basilicas for those who cannot make pilgrimage to Rome, or even the Reformation-era Santiago de Compostela. For some, the pilgrimage to Wittenberg will be as much an affirmation of their German or Scandinavian heritage as it is an act of religious devotion.

For travelers and nontravelers alike, the Lutheran thing to do in the year 2017 was to read several books on Luther besides the old standard by Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times* (Concordia Publishing House, 1950), which everyone should read at least once every three years. Highly recommended is *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* by Scott H. Hendrix (Yale University Press, 2015). For nonreaders, Luther movies or documentaries are substitute forms of devotion—something like faithful Catholics saying the rosary. Intriguing is the play *Martin Luther on Trial*, in which the reformer faces a jury consisting of Hitler, Freud, and his own wife.[4] This is nothing new. In 1961, John Osborne used the stage in his play *Luther* to psychoanalyze the reformer, who was portrayed as being uncertain about the value of the Reformation at the end of his life. This was based on Erik H. Erikson's

House, 2009–), hereafter AE. For a discussion of three undefined boundaries of the church, see Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther*, 176–179.

[4] Here is the promotional piece advertised on the website of the Fellowship for the Performing Arts, which produced the play: "A trial for the soul of Martin Luther, and the prosecutor . . . is the Devil. In the new original play *Martin Luther on Trial*, Luther's beloved wife Katarina defends him as witnesses including Adolf Hitler, Sigmund Freud, Rabbi Josel, St. Paul, Martin Luther King Jr. and Pope Francis take the stand. Even as 2017 marks 500 years since Luther ignited the Protestant Revolt against Rome, he continues to spark intense debate. You be the judge in this witty, provocative exploration of one of history's most explosive personalities and the religious and political controversies he unleashed" ("Martin Luther on Trial," Fellowship for Performing Arts, accessed December 5, 2017, https://fpatheatre.com/production/martin-luther-on-trial).

Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History, published in 1958 by W. W. Norton & Company.

A shortcut to Luther studies from one year to the next is provided in the steady supply of Luther articles, book reviews, and commentaries in the *Lutheran Quarterly*. Familiar names associated with the *Quarterly* are Oliver Olson, John T. Pless, Robert Kolb, Lawrence Rast, Mark Mattes, Carter Lindberg, and Steven Paulson, all past speakers at the annual symposium at Concordia Theological Seminary.[5] Matthew Becker is also a familiar name. Any literary journey into Luther's life and work will be only a partial incursion into his mind, which no one scholar has fully mastered. Standard in dogmatic theology is the understanding that God, as he is in himself, is unfathomable; Luther comes in a close second. Here is a case where no one can grasp fully the reformer's thought, even on one subject. In the Autumn 2016 issue of the *Lutheran Quarterly*, Mary Jane Haemig offered a twenty-one page article entitled "Luther on Prayer as Authentic Communication." That ought to settle what Luther thought about prayer, but it does not. Added to the essay is a bibliography of fifteen full-length books, dating only as early as 1976, that discuss what Luther said about prayer. A shortcut to his writings is the book *What Luther Says* (Concordia Publishing House, 2006), in which his sayings are cataloged according to subject. At the end of 2017, the *Lutherjahrbuch*, a detailed bibliography published annually that lists articles and books about Luther published in the previous year, will be greatly expanded. Yet, still he remains beyond our grasp. To speak in biblical terms, of the writing of books about the great reformer there will be no end, at least so thinks the renowned Luther scholar Scott H. Hendrix.[6] Again making use of biblical hyperbole, all the books in the world could not contain the things that have been written about Luther, and Concordia Publishing House continues to unveil translations of what he himself wrote. Had Luther lived before Abraham, the patriarch might have been directed to gaze at the books and articles written by and about the reformer to determine the number of his descendants. This

[5] In 1997, Oliver K. Olson of Minneapolis lectured at the Twentieth Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions. *Lutheran Quarterly*, of which he had recently been made editor, had an ancient but less than a secure tradition reaching into the mid-nineteenth century to *Evangelical Review* in 1849, the *Lutheran Church Review* in 1882, the *Augustana Quarterly* in 1922, and *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* in 1928. In 1949, these were combined to form the *Lutheran Quarterly* that succumbed to journalist mortality around 1977 (Paul Rorem, "*Lutheran Quarterly*, Past and Future," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 43 [January 2016]: 10). By an act of sheer editorial strength, Olson called the *Lutheran Quarterly* back from its grave and staked out a claim for the old tradition. In 1997, the reconstituted *Lutheran Quarterly* had survived infancy, but it was not certain that it would make it through puberty. A provisional transfusion for the *Quarterly* was provided in a successful pitch for subscribers at the 1997 symposium and so the periodical was able to advance into a successful maturity.

[6] Scott H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), x.

is not only a quantitative frustration, but a frustration of content in coming to terms with an agreed upon composite of who Luther really was and what he thought.[7] To rephrase Isaiah 44:15–16, every man has made a graven image of [Luther] and falls down before it and throws into the fire those parts that do not suit him.

If the most theologically influential and admired triumvirate in Christendom would be determined by the number of books written about them, it would be in this order: Jesus, Luther, and Paul.[8] Jesus' first place is beyond challenge, but since the Enlightenment, he is disadvantaged by doubts of what we can know about him, if anything at all.[9] Paul's name is at the head of more New Testament books than anyone else's, but his repertoire has been stripped of Ephesians, Colossians, and the Pastoral Epistles. His popularity survived on both sides of the East-West Schism of 1054 and the Protestant-Catholic split of the Reformation era. James proved the more useful to Rome, but Paul's doctrine of the indwelling of Christ in believers was put to good use. Several years ago, St. Peter's Cathedral in Scranton, Pennsylvania held a commemorative service to mark the two-thousandth birthday of St. Paul. Untold is how the year was determined, but it had to be June—the month in which the commemorative service was held. Blatantly Protestant-styled hymns were sung. And sections of Paul's epistles that had to do with Christ's indwelling in believers were read. Noticeably and understandably missing were Romans 3:20, "For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law," and Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God." It was a Catholic service, and every confession has its favored biblical books and passages. I wondered why Lutherans, with their dependency on Paul for their signature doctrine, failed to commemorate his birth. Lutherans may think they have a hold on the apostle, but they do not.

Complicating the Reformation celebration is the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), an approach to Paul's theology in which E.P. Sanders, N.T. Wright, and James Dunn propose that Luther misunderstood Paul, whose Jewish opponents held

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[7] One such book is Kristian T. Baudler, *Martin Luther's Priesthood of All Believers: In an Age of Modern Myth* (New York: Oxen Press, 2016), in which he argues for a Protestant Luther who had little use for things Catholic. See also Kristian T. Baudler, "Luther's Only Common Priesthood: 1519–1523," *Logia* 25/4 (2016): 45–52. As Baudler's title indicates, he does not take Luther's later writings into account. For this, see Joachim Heubach, *Die Ordination zum Amt der Kirche* (Berlin: Lutherische Verlagshaus, 1956).

[8] Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, ix.

[9] For recent discussion of various views concerning what can be known about Jesus, see *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009). The most radical view is proposed by Robert M. Price in his chapter, "Jesus at the Vanishing Point," 55–83. For an extensive collection of scholarly essays about who Jesus was and whether he existed at all, see *Jesusforschung in vier Jahrhunderten: Texte von den Anfängen historischer Kritik bis zur "dritten Frage" nach dem historischen Jesus*, ed. Werner Zager (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

to salvation by grace. The error of these opponents is thought to be that they imposed Jewish laws on Gentile converts. Should the NPP prove to be correct, the entire Reformation enterprise would collapse and 2017 would be little more than a historical commemoration.[10] Stephen Westerholm takes on the NPP in his essay "Did Luther Get Paul Right on Justification?"[11] For some time, these individuals have held that Paul is responsible for corrupting the teachings of Jesus. Ironically, this has secured Paul's place in history. As one scholar aptly says, "Doubts about Paul's existence are never voiced by critics who hold him responsible for alleged evils perpetrated by the church in Jesus's name, . . . since people who never lived make poor scapegoats."[12] Let us take this one step further. Paul can hardly be blamed for corrupting the teachings of Jesus if we cannot be sure what Jesus taught, or, for some, if he even existed. So let us put things in a row.

Reformation celebration is not only a Lutheran thing. Like brothers born of the same mother but conceived by different fathers, the Reformed cannot ignore it. They present themselves as Luther fans but hold that he did not go far enough in removing the idolatrous practices and symbols of Rome. Calvin's understanding of idolatry results in his assertion that God cannot be depicted, even in the human form—this includes that of Jesus. So also do some Lutherans prefer empty crosses to crucifixes. When it comes to justification, the Reformed are with Luther on the doctrines of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*, but they compromise these doctrines by subordinating them to God's sovereignty and predestination.[13] Secreted away in the hearts of the truly Reformed is that Ulrich Zwingli, not Luther, was the first reformer. Zwingli took umbrage at those who said he was walking in Luther's footsteps, and Luther returned the favor by not allowing Zwingli to be called his disciple.[14] Like Esau and Jacob, the Reformed and the Lutherans were at odds even before the Reformation came to full term. Luther and Melanchthon did not want to meet with Zwingli in October 1529 at the Marburg Colloquy, which Philip of Hesse arranged to solve a dispute between Luther and Zwingli regarding the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Later, Luther took the argument beyond that of the sacrament in holding that the resurrected body of Jesus was present wherever God was and so confirming that Jesus' presence in bread and wine was

[10] James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

[11] Stephen Westerholm, "Did Luther Get Paul Right on Justification?" in Carl E. Braaten, ed., *Preaching and Teaching the Law and Gospel of God (Delhi, NY: ALPB Books, 2013)*, 67–90.

[12] Patrick Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture: The Apostle and His Critics through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 86. Paul's existence has been questioned (see *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture*, 86n3).

[13] Carlos M. N. Eire, *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450–1650* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2016), 295, 311.

[14] Eire, *Reformations*, 219–220

possible. This is a position that the Reformed, beginning with Zwingli, still refuse to acknowledge. Zwingli had a static view of heaven "as a detached place to which Christ was confined" and a belief that Christ's presence in earthly elements was incomprehensible.[15] Whatever issues Calvin had with Zwingli, they shared a common metaphysic that placed a gulf between spirit and matter, invisible and visible, creator and creature. Such a metaphysic then saw any human image of the divine as idolatry. It was this belief that they applied to their understanding of Christ and the sacraments. The Reformed place the Holy Spirit outside the sacraments. Luther placed the Spirit within the sacraments.[16]

Different beliefs about Christ and the sacraments were symptoms of fundamentally opposing worldviews. For Lutherans, "things" are necessary. For the Reformed, they are obstacles. The Reformed join the Luther celebration claiming that Calvin's doctrine of the spiritual presence in the Supper offered a mediating position between Luther and Zwingli, but this is not so. Calvin devoted a lengthy chapter in his *Institutes* against Luther's view that Christ's body and blood should be received by the mouth.[17] He also tried to contact Luther by writing to Melanchthon, who, knowing what Luther thought of Calvin, did not tell him.[18] Alliances between their followers took place after the reformer's death, when one region after another compromised Luther's distinctives. This culminated in the creation of the Evangelical Church in 1830, with one liturgy used by both Lutheran and Reformed churches. For that celebration, crucifixes were placed in the Berlin cathedral. These crucifixes still remain in the reconstructed cathedral. According to the Reformed, these are idols. So, things are not always as cut-and-dried as we would like. Calvin's religion took hold in the Netherlands, Scotland, and England, and from there moved to New England through the Puritans. From New England, it then worked its way westward throughout North America via revivals.[19]

Like children rejected by their father, the Reformed cannot fully rid themselves of a sublimated affection for Luther. They have a fascination with the episode of Luther drinking beer with Melanchthon and Amsdorf, when he said that God's word brought about the Reformation.[20] A similar episode in Calvin's life would be

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[15] Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, 207.

[16] Marc Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ*, tr. Edwin H. Robertson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983), 200–219.

[17] John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 2:555–605.

[18] Eire, *Reformations*, 232–235.

[19] Eire, *Reformations*, 287–288.

[20] Luther, *Eight Sermons at Wittenberg* (1522), AE 51:77. This often-cited reference to Luther drinking beer is taken from a sermon delivered on March 10, 1522, the Monday after Invocavit. Luther also speaks of God working while he slept, an allusion to Mark 4:26–29, a pericope without

difficult to document. Reformed scholars regard Luther as more endearing than Calvin, who is described as just plain cold.[21] Consider the title of the 1971 book *The Humanness of John Calvin*.[22] This book raises the question of whether side-by-side images of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli in German and Austrian churches commemorate a history that never happened. In spite of their admiration for Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, the Reformed cannot fully embrace a reformer who could not fully extricate himself from Catholicism.

Reformation is also a Catholic affair. Just how successful the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was in resolving Lutheran and Catholic differences remains a matter of debate.[23] Typically, Rome takes these kinds of documents less seriously than do their co-signers. What the Catholics call justification resembles what Lutherans call sanctification, but since Lutherans are not in agreement among themselves on justification, any agreement with others is flawed at the outset. The Augsburg Confession and the Catholic Confutation showed basic agreement on what is confessed in the creeds. A joint service commemorating the start of the Reformation anniversary year was held in the cathedral in Lund. The female archbishop of Sweden presided along with Pope Francis, who took note of the gifts that have come through the Reformation. Without specification, one of these gifts could be the Counter-Reformation, and so it can be said that Luther helped the Catholic Church remove the shackles of medieval Christianity. Along with retaking lands lost to Protestants, Catholics began missionary work in the Americas and the East Indies. If we dare speak of a negative cause, the Catholic Church would not be what it is today without Luther.[24] On the return flight from Sweden, Francis said Rome would not ordain women priests—what a relief that was. Another intriguing event was the international symposium on Luther's teachings on the sacraments held in Rome during February 2017, sponsored by the Pontifical Gregorian University.

Luther's place in history is secure but not immune from censure. A confession that he pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall and reassembled the broken shells

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parallel in the synoptic Gospels. "I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing."

[21] Eire, *Reformations*, 287. This was the view classically offered at the 2016 symposium by Carl Trueman in his essay, "Liking and Disliking Luther: A Reformed Perspective," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 81/1–2 (2017): 137–151.

[22] Richard Stauffer, *The Humanness of John Calvin*, tr. George Shriver (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971).

[23] See Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary, *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1999).

[24] Consider that in his encyclopedic *Reformations*, 367–522, Eire devotes more space to the Counter-Reformation than to Luther's.

of medieval Catholicism is unlikely. So, in this commemorative year, we have not expected the pope to pull his garments above his knees and receive the prodigal son into the church's loving arms. That would be asking too much; though it would be a nice gesture for the pope to extend the Year of Mercy by reopening the doors of St. Peter's for just a few moments to receive the great reformer back into St. Peter's fold.

Rather than speaking of *the* Reformation, it might be better to make use of the title of Carlos M. N. Eire's book: *Reformations*.[25] When asking the question "Will the real Martin Luther stand up?," we face multiple Luther resuscitations, and every man can choose the one that best fits his ideology. So, Luther becomes one size made to fit all. Frustration with what constitutes an adequate commemoration of the Reformation is expressed by Hartmut Lehmann in his commentary "The Quincentenary of the Protestant Reformation in Germany."[26] For some Americans, Reformation means Germany, and the Federal Republic pulled out all the stops for the celebration. Six regional conferences were held in what was formerly the German Democratic Republic, with a festive service on May 28, 2017, in Wittenberg. Events were planned in sixty European cities. Protestants and Catholics planned a joint pilgrimage to Jerusalem and special ecumenical services with the aim of healing Reformation-era memories. Lehmann asks why the Reformed churches of the Netherlands and Scotland were not asked to join, but the cloud hanging over the celebration is that the Reformation will be celebrated "in the most secularized, almost de-christianized parts of Germany, the former East."[27] Communism, already deceased for nearly thirty years, still gives birth to stillborn children. Statistics for religious affiliation in Germany are dismal. Twenty-seven percent belong to Protestant churches, twenty-nine percent to the Catholic Church, and thirty-four percent are nonbelievers. Of those who belong to Protestant churches, only five percent are active. In Luther's Wittenberg, less than ten percent belong to any church, let alone Luther's church. Lehmann predicts that the same fate that befell the Orthodox will fall on Germany.[28] To bolster up the Reformation celebration, Lehmann suggests that Baptists and Pentecostals be asked to participate.[29]

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[25] Supporting the argument that Zwingli was the original reformer, Eire says, "Ulrich Zwingli was preaching straight out of the Bible . . . calling into question many of the teachings and practices of the Catholic church" (*Reformations*, 219). Zwingli attributed his conversion to Erasmus sometime between 1514 and 1515 (*Reformations*, 224).

[26] Hartmut Lehmann, "The Quincentenary of the Protestant Reformation in Germany," *Lutheran Quarterly* 30 (Autumn 2016): 327–335.

[27] Lehmann, "The Quincentenary," 333.

[28] Luther, *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany (1524),* AE 45:352–353: "And you Germans need not think that you will have [the gospel] forever, for ingratitude and contempt it will not make it stay."

[29] Lehmann, "The Quincentenary," 332–334.

Rapprochement would have to overcome any hard feelings for Luther's dislike of the Anabaptists.[30] Joint commemorations require a bit of historical amnesia. Eamon Duffy cites Jean Delumeau, a French Catholic historian, who proposes that a solution for a common commemoration is understanding "the emergence of Protestantism and the transformation of Catholicism after Trent as twin aspects of a process of 'Christianization'." By this, he meant that

> both Catholic and Protestant reformers labored to replace the inherited half-pagan folk religion of late medieval Europe with something more authentically Christian, focused on the person of Christ rather than often legendary saints, prioritizing orthodox catechesis and preaching over quasi-magical ritual, and imposing religious and moral discipline on a reluctant populace.[31]

His proposal resembles the theme chosen by the LCMS for its Reformation celebration: "It's Still All about Jesus." Salvation came in Christ in the first century and was clarified in the sixteenth century. Yet, more serious negatives exist in the Reformation celebration.

Duffy notes that "The principle of *sola scriptura* and Protestantism's consequent inability to arrive at workable criteria . . . contributed to the breakdown of Christendom and the emergence of a secular society."[32] A more likely cause for secularization of the West is the philosophical humanism of the Renaissance espoused by Erasmus and passed on through Zwingli and Calvin into the Enlightenment. Benedict XVI noted that the constitution of the European Union made no reference to its Christian past. Some churches offer a morality that is often indistinct from the surrounding culture. Matters are exacerbated by biblical approaches that call into question core Christian beliefs of the creeds. Wittenberg, which bears the noble title *Lutherstadt* and is the destination of Luther pilgrims, is a secularized world in miniature. As part of the Reformation celebration, Lehmann calls for an assessment of

> the negative aspects of Luther's legacy, as for example the unrestrained criticism of adult baptism, the century-long polemic against Roman Catholics, and the unreflected discrimination of Jews, and by doing so clearing the way for a better future for all religions in Europe.[33]

[30] Eire, *Reformations*, 199–214. Modern Baptists cannot be identified with Reformation-era Baptists, but both rejected infant Baptism and rebaptized those baptized as infants.

[31] Eamon Duffy, "The End of Christendom," *First Things* 267 (November 2016): 57, www.firstthings.com/article/2016/11/the-end-of-christendom.

[32] Duffy, "The End of Christendom," *52.*

[33] Lehmann, "The Quincentenary," 335.

He might have added the Turks—Luther's term for Muslims. The ELCA has already apologized for what Luther said about the Jews. But Luther was not such a politically correct kind of man. He offered equal opportunity in his dislike for opponents, whether they were Jews, papists, Germans, Muslims, the pope, Henry VIII, or Duke George. Scholars will continue to come to different and contrary conclusions about who Luther was and what his meaning is for today. With his love for creation, he might even become a patron of the environmental movement some day.[34] Today, Luther is all things to all people; yet in his time, he was not.

Organizational Lutheranism is in a state of centrifugal separation with the International Lutheran Conference (ILC), establishing an identity apart from the staid Lutheran World Federation (LWF). By establishing fellowship with churches that affirm beliefs Luther emphatically rejected, the LWF has undone what Luther's distinctive doctrines on the sacraments and justification sought to accomplish.[35] With the LWF establishing fellowship with Reformed, Methodist, and Anglican communions, Schleiermacher's dream for a united Protestant Christendom is achieved. Lehmann goes even further by wanting to include non-Christians in the Reformation commemoration, thus creating the religious equivalent of the European Union. So, in this year of commemoration, Luther survives as a historical and cultural marker without the annoying edges that his children find embarrassing. Within the context of contemporary biblical studies, Luther's theology is no longer viable. But by ignoring the conclusions of contemporary biblical studies, confessionally minded Lutherans can join Luther scholars who do not share their confessional commitment. So, the sixteenth-century bubble becomes a self-contained canon and no one need be concerned if Luther scholars hold to Jesus' resurrection.

The North American Lutheran Church (NALC) was formed by congregations opposed to the moral direction of the ELCA. A convocation was held recently on the law and the gospel, but chiefly on the law.[36] In his introduction to the published essays from this convocation, Carl Braaten laments "the downhill slide of Lutheranism into antinomianism" at Lutheran seminaries and claims, "Neglect

[34] Lehmann, "The Quincentenary," 335.

[35] Luther wrote *A Short Catechism on the Lord's Supper*, which Eire reports was seen as a " 'savage' blast against all Reformed theologians." Calvin had hoped to use Melanchthon as intermediator with Luther, but knowing Luther's temperament, Melanchthon did not share Calvin's correspondence with him (*Reformations*, 287).

[36] It was held on August 15–16, 2012, in Golden Valley, Minnesota and the essays were published in Carl E. Braaten, ed., *Preaching and Teaching the Law and Gospel of God*.

and misinterpretation of the law-gospel paradigm led to unintended consequences."[37] This is a not-so-slightly veiled reference to ELCA decisions and even to theologians associated with the NALC. Braaten observes, "Too many of us abrogated our confessional teaching on law and gospel, and carried on as though Lutherans who love the 'gospel' must at the same time be enemies of the law."[38] Braaten is not speaking of the law-gospel controversy of the 1960s and 1970s at the St. Louis seminary, whose faculty majority made the gospel—defined as the proclamation of forgiveness—the only theological standard. Insistence on the historical content of the Bible was not necessary as long as the gospel was proclaimed. That approach and the law-gospel paradigm Braaten has in mind agree that the essential element in theology is the gospel, which relieves the sinner from the predicament of sin. Braaten cuts to the heart of the matter in asking whether "Lutherans who love the 'gospel' must at the same time be enemies of the law."[39] So, in this paradigm, the real issue is the role of the law in theology. Uncontested is the role of the law and the gospel in preaching, but David S. Yeago rightly "contest[s] the view that the distinction and opposition of law and gospel constitutes the last horizon of Christian belief, that the opposition of law and gospel to one another is the prime structuring principle."[40] The opposition of the law and gospel in preaching may be indispensable, but as Yeago affirms, it "is *not* the principle in terms of which Christian belief hangs together."[41] Theologians who propose a program in which the gospel eliminates the law are receiving a warm welcome from those who are otherwise recognized as conservatives. In this approach, "The law oppresses *because it is law*, that is, because it is an ordered demand, a requirement, a command. The law oppresses because of the kind of word it is, not because of the situation in which we encounter it. . . . Salvation [then] is [seen as] liberation from form and order and the law's cruel demand for them."[42] A symptom of this law-gospel theology is the oft-repeated claim that the third use of the law as set forth in the Formula of Concord originates with Melanchthon, not Luther, and that it resembles Calvin's definition.[43]

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[37] Braaten, "Law and Gospel: The Hallmark of Classical Lutheranism," in *Preaching and Teaching*, 17.

[38] Braaten, "Law and Gospel," 17.

[39] Braaten, "Law and Gospel," 17.

[40] David S. Yeago, "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology," in *Pro Ecclesia* 2/1 (1993): 38.

[41] Yeago, "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology," 39. Italics original.

[42] Yeago, "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology," 40–41. Italics original.

[43] The organizing committee of the NALC for the symposium on the law and the gospel "invited Dr. Piotr Malysz to address the thorny issue of the third use of the law, giving due consideration to both the freedom of the gospel in Christ and obedience to the commandments of God in the Christian life" (*Braaten,* "Law and Gospel," 15). Malysz notes that "The Formula's blindness to the christological renewal of the Christian is one reason for its turn to the law in search of a rationale for, and structure of, Christian obedience" (Piotr J. Malysz, "Freedom and Obedience

In *Reading the Bible with Luther*, Timothy J. Wengert provides an extensive argument against what he calls "the 'notorious' third use of the law" among Lutherans.[44]

A second symptom of this law-gospel theology is the elevation of the Latin phrase *lex semper accusat* (Ap IV 38) to an absolute theological principle. One cannot fail to note the irony in the fact that in 1531, Melanchthon's position about the law as accusation was made the standard for theology, but then just three years later, he became the villain for offering a Calvin-like definition of the third use of the law. In this law-gospel program, after the law condemns the sinner, it is eliminated from the theological task. The battle cry for the *lex semper accusat* position could be a variation of Cato's *Carthago delenda est*—that is, *lex delenda est*, "the law must be destroyed." In this approach, faith relies on the proclaimed word and not on such concrete "things" outlined in the creeds like the virgin birth and the resurrection. Gospel liberates from hearing the law at all.[45] With good reason, Yeago calls this approach Gnosticism followed by antinomianism, which is, after all, Braaten's concern.

By itself, the law-gospel becomes its own Gnosticism, and a more damaging antichrist than the papacy. In saying "Lutherans who love the 'gospel' must at the same time be enemies of the law,"[46] Braaten could have any number of theologians in mind. But it fits Stephen D. Paulson, who, in *Lutheran Theology* says that for Luther, "Where Christ is preached as crucified for our sins and sakes, the law

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in the Christian Life," in *Preaching and Teaching*, 133). He goes on to attribute to the Formula a position that resembles Calvin's. "The law is brought in because, as it turns out, the gospel is unable to touch one's entire being, part of which must now be admonished and prodded by means of the law" ("Freedom and Obedience," 133). He correctly observes that the Formula does not present the gospel as the law fulfilled by Christ, and this may be a hindrance in having a less than positive view of the law. He favors the view proposed by the late William Lazareth, who, in place of a third use of the law, offers a second use of the gospel called "the second or parenetic use of the Gospel," described as a shadow of the life Christians must follow, but in which they dare not trust ("Freedom and Obedience," 135–136). Paraenesis, a term used by Pauline scholars of advice given in the epistles, avoids, perhaps deliberately so, imposing the law-gospel distinction on biblical imperatives. The end result of this proposal is a confusion of the law and the gospel, a loss of the proper distinction. Although Malysz does not explicitly say that the second use of the gospel is a replacement for the third use of law, this is what it is. Malysz can hardly attribute to the law a third use, since he holds that the law is an overwhelming negative critiqued by the gospel. This is the same view proposed by Forde and Paulson.

[44] Timothy J. Wengert, *Reading the Bible with Luther* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 37–39.

[45] Yeago locates the origin of this thinking in Paul Tillich's Protestant principle that grace appears in finite forms without being identical to any particular form (Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, tr. James Luther Adams [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948], 212; Yeago, "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology," 45).

[46] Braaten, "Law and Gospel," 17.

comes to an end."[47] This view reappears in his article in the Reformation 2016 issue of *Logia*—a publication that presents itself as "A Journal of Lutheran Theology." To advance his argument that the gospel replaces the law, Paulson shifts to the civil realm that will be replaced by the gospel in the new kingdom.[48] This shift also takes place for Paulson in theology. He proposes that the legal scheme offered by second generation Lutherans "forced a series of unsuccessful theories of atonement that brought Christ's 'work' on the cross under the confines of the law."[49] "Unsuccessful theories of the atonement" are not identified but are those discussed by Paulson's mentor Gerhard O Forde: "1) the vicarious satisfaction idea; 2) the victory idea (that Christ won the victory over all man's adversaries) and 3) the idea that Christ was an inspiring example."[50] In determining the value of Christ's death, Paulson does not allow for the idea that compensation or payment is made to the devil, the law, or God. He never tires of repeating his aversion to the idea of payment, especially payment to God.[51] Forde is even more vehement in his dismissal of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, saying that it fosters the false idea that God can be bought off and that we cannot know if Christ has paid enough.[52] As if this was not enough, Forde claims that divinity and suffering are so distinct that the idea of the God-Man offering

up a sacrifice is questionable.[53] While it would be hard to find anyone who now holds that Christ made payment to Satan to redeem lost souls, Paulson, like Forde, has his sights on the vicarious satisfaction by which Christ offers himself as payment to God. This is the view known as the Anselmic or Latin theory of the atonement and is the one that Paul Althaus attributed to Luther.[54] Marc Lienhard also affirms that Luther held to Christ's death as a payment for sin.[55] Paulson wants to distance Luther and himself from what he calls "unsuccessful theories of atonement,"

[47] Steven D. Paulson, *Lutheran Theology,* Doing Theology (New York: T & T Clark International, 2011), 4.

[48] Steven D. Paulson, "The *Simul* and the Two Kingdoms," *Logia* 25/4 (2016): 17–26.

[49] Paulson, *Lutheran Theology*, 88–89.

[50] Gerhard O. Forde, *Where God Meets Man*: *Luther's Down-to-Earth Approach to the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 41.

[51] Paulson, *Lutheran Theology*, 91.

[52] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 11–12.

[53] Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 11–13.

[54] "Luther, like Anselm, views Christ's work in terms of satisfaction. Christ must bring a satisfaction to God for our sins" (Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, tr. Robert C. Schultz [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966], 202).

[55] "The law cannot be oversome unless it is first fulfilled, but just like the wrath of God, it must also be undergone as punishment. This punishment Jesus Christ has suffered for us, in our place" (Marc Lienhard, *Luther, Witness to Jesus Christ*, tr. Edwin H. Robertson [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982], 281).

especially the vicarious satisfaction.[56] However, in speaking of Christ destroying Satan and evil forces, he borrows heavily from the *Christus Victor* theory of Gustaf Aulén.[57] Paulson makes a rarely seen move in associating Albrecht Ritschl's moral theory of atonement with the third use of the law by claiming both views hold that the law is eternal. For Paulson, the law is not eternal and cannot be identified with God. "Obedience to the Father and obedience to the law are two different things. . . . God and the law are not the same; he uses the law as a tool with a definite purpose in mind."[58] Since the law does not belong to who God is—that is, to his nature—Paulson follows his own logic that law is not eternal.[59] This raises the question of whether God is moral. If he is moral, in what sense is this so? If God and law are not the same, does God then prescribe a moral standard for man that has little or no resemblance to his own? To make short of a controverted issue, the phrase *lex semper accusat* is misappropriated to defend a view that eliminates the law from Christian life. All three theologians—Gerhard Forde, Timothy Wengert, and Stephen Paulson—present their positions as Luther's and are received as such by many identifiably confessional Lutherans.[60]

Perhaps in response to misunderstandings over *lex semper accusat*, the Formula of Concord specifies that because of and after the fall, "God's law accuses and condemns human nature and the human person" (FC SD I 6).[61] The law accuses only because, and in so far as, man is a sinner. It did not accuse Adam while he lived in a state of moral perfection, nor does it accuse Christians as they are regenerated in Christ. Those who die in Christ are also free from the accusations of the law. In his explanations of the Ten Commandments in the Small Catechism, Luther does not limit the law as accusation against sin but sees it as a description of Christian life. For example, "You shall not murder" combats the obverse of assisting the neighbor to retain a life given to him by God's act of creating him. The life that man possesses by being made in God's image originated with the Father who possesses life in himself—a life that he shares eternally with the Son and the Spirit. Thus the Fifth Commandment, like all the commandments, originated in God's trinitarian

[56] Paulson, *Lutheran Theology*, 89.

[57] "It is true that Christ pays debt, suffers punishment, and pays ransom to the old lords of this world, but not to let the legal scheme rule" (Paulson, *Lutheran Theology*, 91). This seems to be line with the old classical view that Christ paid a ransom to Satan.

[58] Paulson, *Lutheran Theology*, 174–175.

[59] Paulson, *Lutheran Theology*, 104, 202.

[60] For a succinct and adequate critique of Forde, see Jack D. Kilcrease, "Gerhard Forde's Theology of Atonement and Justification: A Confessional Lutheran Response," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 76/3–4 (2012): 269–273.

[61] All quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this article are from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

existence (Gen 1:26; John 5:26; 6:63). Murder is not simply an offense against a divinely given code of law, but it is also an affront to the God who is life and who gives life. So, for the believer, the positive and original side of the Fifth Commandment is that the believer engages in the divine act of helping his neighbor retain and improve his life.[62] The Apology, from which the oft-cited *lex semper accusat* is taken, also says,

> We do not abolish the law, Paul says [Rom. 3:31], but we establish it, because when we receive the Holy Spirit by faith the fulfillment of the law necessarily follows, through which love, patience, chastity, and other fruits of the Spirit continually grow. (Ap XX 15)

The commandments are not arbitrary prohibitions imposed by a sovereign deity but a description of what God is in himself and how he created his rational creatures. Negatives in the law with threats of punishment for forbidden behaviors, such as in the first and second uses, are adjustments of the law so that man can be retrained from overt evil and realize his condition. Law functions as accusation, but in itself, it remains good. Even the law's threats are acts of divine mercy, without which we would never know our fallen condition and would therefore be forever lost. Only in the condition of sin does law become for God *opus alienum* and for the hearer *lex accusat*. In response to Melanchthon emphasizing repentance over sin and Agricola emphasizing forgiveness, Luther

> presented the Ten Commandments as both prohibitions of sinful behavior and encouragement of the opposite: the correct way to honor God and treat others. The Small Catechism begins not with threat but a call to faith and each commandment begins with "we are to fear and love God" and followed by a prohibition and a positive instruction.[63]

Though it is pedagogically cliché to say Luther's catechism follows a law-gospel outline,[64] the presupposition of the commandments is nothing else but faith. The commandments are not addressed to unbelievers, but to believers. Therefore, their prohibitions are boundaries showing from where believers came and where they dare not return—but of course they do. The other side of the law's prohibitions are the commandments in their primordial form as indicatives of what Adam once was and what Christians are now in Christ. Wengert, Forde, and Paulson see law

[62] For a fuller development of this argument, see my "Sanctification," *Concordia Journal* 41/3 (2015): 236–249.

[63] Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, 196–197.

[64] David Aaron Fiala, "Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A History of English Language Editions and Explanations Prepared by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 86/4 (2016): 24.

intrinsically as enemy and cannot allow for any positive use of the law in Christian life. Hence, no third use of the law. For them, the law is a self-contained, autonomous, negative, evil "thing" that was not overcome by the atonement but conquered in the believer's life by proclaiming the gospel. This law-gospel proposal is a theology of the word in the extreme and shares in the same fundamental principle of the St. Louis faculty majority of the 1970s. In response, law and gospel are not in themselves "things" but have to do with our relationship to the "things" set forth in the creeds: God's trinitarian life; Christ's incarnation, atonement, and resurrection; the church; and eternal life. These are the things of substance that must be believed. Law in its three uses does not have to do with three different things or three different kinds of laws but with how one law functions in three different situations. Gospel is the proclamation of how God has relieved the dilemma in which the sinner finds himself under the condemnation of the law, the *lex semper accusat*. The gospel then puts him in a new relationship with God so that he knows and does the good things that are required by the law and that Christ did. Law and gospel are the lenses through which the "things" in the creeds are presented to man first as a sinner and then as a saint. Without the things of the creed, the gospel is an empty proclamation and promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation and yet is capable of delivering such gifts. Without the things, faith has nothing to rely on.[65]

Formula VI does not say everything that must be said about the third use of the law. Left undeveloped is the christological component that the good works of faith are the works Christ does through believers. So, the Formula slips gears from the third to the second use, law as accusation. It appears, then, that *lex semper accusat* is what the law is all about. Since man is quantitatively more sinner than saint, law as accusation is its chief function. But this is not the law's first, last, original, or essential function as it exists in God. Sin does not define the law's essence, that is, how the law exists in God. Until these distinctions are grasped, the door stays open to the antinomianism that Braaten decries in contemporary Lutheran theology and church

[65] The unintended father of the law-gospel theology is Werner Elert, who properly noted that law and gospel, that is, justification, bound the articles of the Augsburg Confession together. However, they are not the content of theology. Yeago takes note that Elert came up against a blank wall with the first article of the Augsburg Confession, which demanded faith in the triune God quite apart from the law-gospel paradigm. He expresses his frustration in that "the decree of the Nicene Synod concerning the unity of the divine essence and concerning the three Persons is true and must be believed without doubting" (Yeago, "Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Reformation Theology," 43). Elert's own verdict is that "here the ship of the Reformation, which has just recently departed from land, seems to be sailing back into the harbor of the medieval church, which produced laws of faith and demanded obedience to them. Faith itself, the most precious treasure, seems to be betrayed!" (Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism: The Theology and Philosophy of Life of Lutheranism Especially in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, tr. Walter A. Hansen [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962], 200–202).

life. In the face of the moral disorder that follows the denial of the third use of the law, Calvin's view—threats working alongside the gospel prodding Christians to do good works—will be attractive to those who want the immediate results that the law produces.[66] Sadly, in the half-millennium celebration of the Reformation, Lutherans are less likely to agree on his core doctrine of law and gospel. In identifying the real Luther who will stand up, scholars will continue to offer different options. It is left unresolved, much like the question of whether the ghost of Samuel conjured by the witch of Endor was really the prophet or a satanically fabricated apparition. Thus, the search for the real Luther continues, just as the search for historical Jesus continues with some biblical scholars.

[66] For a detailed account of this theology, see Scott R. Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), esp. 167–200.

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The Story of Salvation, the Genesis of a New Creation, and a Bold Proclamation: Luther Lessons for the Present Crisis

Peter J. Scaer

I. Introduction: The Present Crisis

We are living in a time of crisis. At the core of our present difficulty is a radically new understanding of sexuality, marriage, and humanity, with profound implications for our society, as well as our church.[1] Many of our young people have been led astray. Sheep and shepherds are confused and afraid. To those who are still unaware or apathetic, Erick Erickson and Bill Blankschaen have famously warned, "You will be made to care."[2]

Sherif Girgis argues that we are entering into a New Gnosticism. According to the tenets of this budding religion, the body is incidental to our true identity. "We are subjects of desire and consent, who use bodily equipment for spiritual and emotional expression," writes Girgis.[3] We are, as it were, ghosts in the machine. Our true self is the inner person. The body and its members are the tools by which we conduct our business. Accordingly, we are who we say we are, apart from any physical or created reality. Such thinking was crystallized by Justice Kennedy in the 1992 Supreme Court decision Planned Parenthood v. Casey. Writing for the court's plurality opinion, Kennedy grandiloquently opined, "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."[4] Such a pronouncement may sound naive or flighty, but it is hardly benign. David Azerrad describes this movement in terms of unfettered autonomy: "We are all sovereign individuals, radically free to fashion and refashion ourselves into anything we so please at any point in our lives. Man is the

[1] To understand how marriage has been redefined in our present context, see Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, What *Is* Marriage*? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012).

[2] See Erick Erickson and Bill Blankschaen, *You Will Be Made to Care: The War on Faith, Family, and Your Freedom to Believe* (Washington DC: Regnery, 2016).

[3] Sherif Girgis, "Obergefell and the New Gnosticism," *First Things,* June 28, 2016, https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/06/obergefell-and-the-new-gnosticism.

[4] Planned Parenthood v. Casey, 505 U.S. 833 (1992).

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undefined animal. He is *auto nomos*—self legislating."[5] We would add, as well, self-creating, self-justifying, and therefore radically selfish.

Such thinking is corrosive to societal bonds and community life. As Robert George notes, "If we take the Gnostic view, then human beings—living members of the human species—are not necessarily persons. . . . Those in the embryonic, fetal, and early infant stages are *not yet* persons."[6] A human body is not enough to define a human being as truly human. This makes it easier, notes George, "to justify abortion; infanticide; euthanasia for the cognitively impaired; and the production, use, and destruction of human embryos for biomedical research."[7]

This liberty of self-definition is a strike against reality itself and undermines the freedom of others. If one has an unquestionable right to define one's own existence, then the other person must play along or be punished. It becomes impossible to affirm a person without affirming his self-proclaimed identity. "COEXIST" bumper stickers, a plea for tolerance, have become a demand for conformity. Girgis writes, "For the New Gnostic, then, a just society cannot live and let live, when it comes to sex. Sooner or later, the common good—respect for people as self-defining subjects—will require *social approval* of their self-definition and -expression."[8] Bruce Jenner is now Caitlyn. Whether the emperor is wearing no clothes or a dress, we must nod and smile—or else.

This New Gnosticism has more recently taken flight in the creation of gender-neutral and gender-inclusive pronouns. This is not about creating a safe space for the confused; it is an aggressive campaign against those who dare take note of bodily reality. A person is no longer he or she, but may in fact be xe or zir, or even, like Yahweh himself, a plural singularity. While we may be tempted to dismiss all this as nonsense, we should be slow to chuckle. These new pronouns, like much else in our age of political correctness, are trip wires and traps destroying careers, shattering reputations, and stifling speech and thought. Anthony Esolen warns, "Do not dismiss the pronominal wars as nonsense. Do not assume that the warriors are merely daft. Do not mistake the pale horse and its rider for snowflakes or mittens or bunnies or anything else that is soft and inoffensive and trivial. The pale horse and its rider aim to destroy."[9]

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[5] David Azerrad, "Justice Kennedy and the Lonely Promethean Man of Liberalism," *Public Discourse,* July 9, 2015, http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/07/15286.

[6] Robert P. George, "Gnostic Liberalism," *First Things*, December 2016, 34, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/12/gnostic-liberalism, emphasis original.

[7] George, "Gnostic Liberalism," 34.

[8] Girgis, "Obergefell and the New Gnosticism," 2, emphasis original.

[9] Anthony Esolen, "Pronouns, Ordinary People, and the War over Reality," *Public Discourse*, October 13, 2016, http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2016/10/17811.

This New Gnosticism is both individualistic and, according to an internal logic, totalitarian. Push away the Ten Commandments, and you end up with 613 rules in their place. Abandon natural law, and you end up with ten thousand regulations.

The first great wave of trouble came with the passage of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), which mandated that employers cover the cost of contraceptives. Hobby Lobby, noting that many contraceptives are also abortifacient, took the matter to court. Arguing that the mandate infringed on their First Amendment rights, as codified in Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), Hobby Lobby narrowly won its case. This first wave also broke on our Christian organizations, schools, and social agencies. As Mary Eberstadt notes, "The so-called contraceptive mandate forces Christian charities to participate in the disposal of products that Christian doctrine holds to be sinful."[10] Notoriously, the government sued the Little Sisters of the Poor. Similar trouble has come on Christian universities.

The second wave of the attack came as the result of the Supreme Court decision Obergefell v. Hodges, which declared natural marriage laws unconstitutional. In his minority opinion, Justice Samuel Alito warned, "I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools."[11] Indeed, this prophecy has proven true. The list of victims grows longer.[12] Brendan Eich lost his position as CEO of the Mozilla Corporation after donating to a marriage amendment in California. Catholic Charities of Boston had to stop providing adoption services because they would have otherwise been forced to place children for adoption in gay families. Aaron and Melissa Klein lost their bakery after declining to bake a cake celebrating a same-sex wedding. Barronelle Stutzman happily employed and served gay people at her flower shop, but when she declined to use her artistic talents to celebrate a so-called gay wedding, she was taken to court and lost her livelihood. Kentucky clerk Kim Davis was mocked and ridiculed and even spent time behind bars after she refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Closer to home, the Wyoming Commission on Judicial Conduct and Ethics recommended that the court remove Municipal Judge Ruth Neely, a member of an LCMS congregation, after she told a curious reporter that she would not perform same-sex marriages.

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[10] Mary Eberstadt, *It's Dangerous to Believe: Religious Freedom and Its Enemies* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016), xxii.

[11] Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. __ (2015). For a review of the judicial opinions on both sides, see Ryan T. Anderson, *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom* (Washington DC: Regnery, 2015), 59–84.

[12] For a list of casualties, see Anderson, *Truth Overruled*, 85–104.

The third wave, the transgender movement, quickly followed. The logic was inescapable. If man and woman do not matter to marriage, who can claim them as meaningful categories in any other area of our existence? Houston provided hope when a majority of its population voted down a referendum on gender-neutral bathrooms. But since then, victories have been few. Most recently, North Carolina came under attack for a bathroom policy based on the distinctions of male and female. As in the Indiana RFRA debate, big business came down on the side of the secular left. For a chilling picture of what this looks like on a local level, open up the December 2016 issue of *First Things*, where Katherine Kersten's article "Transgender Conformity" tells the story of Nova Classical Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota. A student, claiming to be gender "non-conforming," entered the school. As a result, all K–5 students were required to read *My Princess Boy*. When some parents protested, a firestorm arose, and parents were branded publicly as bigots. Gender-neutral pronouns and bathrooms for "gender neutral" students followed. Yet it was not enough. The child's parents withdrew their "daughter" from the school. "On March 24, 2016, they filed a complaint with St. Paul's Department of Human Rights, claiming the school had denied their 'daughter' the ability to 'undergo a gender transition' in a 'safe and timely way.' "[13] We should in no way imagine that our own Lutheran schools will somehow be spared from this.

After years of holding a privileged place in society, Christian identity now comes with a price tag. The 2016 presidential election may offer hope for a brief reprieve, but there are no guarantees. As Mary Eberstadt notes in the title of her latest book, "It's dangerous to believe."[14]

Though many are ringing the warning bells, still others remain in denial. Surely, the world will come to it senses, and reason will prevail. Yet our Lord reminds us, "You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Matt 10:22).[15] Again, he says, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18–19). Perhaps, what we took to be the peaceful norm was really an exception.

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[13] Katherine Kersten, "Transgender Conformity," *First Things*, December 2016, 27, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/12/transgender-conformity.

[14] Eberstadt, *It's Dangerous to Believe*.

[15] Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

II. Persecution: A Historical Perspective

The preacher reminds us, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl 1:9). Though history may not repeat, it surely rhymes. Communism produced millions of twentieth-century martyrs. Islam continues to take its toll. But what of the rise of secularism in the West? What will that look like? Where can we go to better understand the challenges we face?

Some look to the earliest days of Christianity for comparison. In his book *Sexual Morality in a Christless World,* Matthew Rueger concludes, "Secular society is moving ever closer to Rome in its assessment of Christianity. The message of Christ is despised, and Christians are seen as bigoted and unloving."[16] Indeed, in the first three centuries, Christians suffered harassment, banishment, and economic loss. The need to pay homage to the divine emperors made social, political, and business transactions problematic.[17] While we remember the martyrs, it is good to remember that the greatest temptations came when Christians were called to make minor gestures to the imperial deity. As Larry Hurtado writes, "And yet it seems clear that the aim of Roman authorities was not particularly to execute Christians, but to turn them from what the authorities (and large numbers of the public at large) saw as a perverse and dangerous allegiance. That is, the object was not death but conformity to the demands of imperial authority."[18] It was difficult to be a Christian and hold down a job or to rise up in society. Members of professional guilds were placed in untenable situations. As Hurtado puts it, "If you were the member of a vocational guild, such as bakers or fishermen, what should you do at meetings when the tutelary deity of the guild was honored, e.g., with a libation?"[19] While such a world may seem foreign to us, Christians are already making decisions that have put their careers in jeopardy. Others, by not acting, are placing their souls in jeopardy. In the Martyrdom of Polycarp, the question is posed, "Why, what harm is there in saying 'Lord Caesar,' and offering incense . . . and thereby saving yourself?" (*Mart. Poly.* 8.2).[20] Threatened with an hour of fire, Polycarp recalled the greater fire of eternal judgment. As the Lord had remained faithful to him, so also he would remain faithful to the Lord. Later we are told, "Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian" (*Mart. Poly.* 12.1). That will be the ultimate question for us as well. Are we willing

[16] Matthew Rueger, *Sexual Morality in a Christless World* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 41.

[17] For the difficulties of being a faithful Christian in the Roman Empire, see Bruce W. Winter, *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians' Responses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

[18] Larry Hurtado, *Why on Earth Did Anyone Become a Christian in the First Three Centuries?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2016), 57.

[19] Hurtado, *Why on Earth Did Anyone Become a Christian in the First Three Centuries?*, 15.

[20] Translations taken from *The Apostolic Fathers: With an English Translation by Kirsopp Lake, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).*

to bear the name of Christ, to claim our identity? What will Christian business people do when asked to fly the rainbow flag or participate in a gay-rights march? What will Christian schools do when funding is threatened? Will Christian counselors remain silent? Will Christian doctors perform sex-change surgeries? In an age of identity politics, in which every person has the right of self-definition, we will be hard-pressed simply to say, "No, I am a Christian."

As we consider this in a historical perspective, our present challenge may prove greater, at least in one regard. In the early church, Christians were bringing a new message to a pagan empire that knew nothing of Christ or the church. Felix, Festus, and Agrippa were interested in what Paul had to say (Acts 23–25). When St. Paul brought Christ to Athens, he was introducing an unknown God. However, among the cultural elite of our time, God is known and yet despised, as are those who bear his name.

Indeed, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that this secular worldview has been internalized by our own people. Years of watching Will and Grace and the constant barrage of propaganda have taken their toll. As Mary Eberstadt writes, "A prominent Christian journalist has confided that his biggest fear in life is that his own children will grow up to hate him, because they will believe the terrible things said about the faith in public these days."[21] The greatest danger is not that many Christians will be persecuted, but that those who call themselves Christians will simply abandon the Bridegroom for the sake of expediency. Told that we are haters, they will believe it. "And a person's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matt 10:36).

III. Recovering Reformation Boldness: A Call for Courage

Given the dangers of the present situation, we do well to ask what applicable lessons we might draw from the Reformation and from Luther in particular.

Justification by faith is the great doctrine of the Reformation. But when most people think of Luther, they think of his courage. Few people can tell you what the Ninety-Five Theses were all about, but in their mind's eye, they can see Luther nailing them to the door of the church. Though they might know little of the Augsburg Confession, they can hear Luther say, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise." Historians may correct us on the details, but these two stories capture the spirit of the Reformation in all its boldness. Conscience may be misinformed or ill-informed, but without it, all is lost. Therefore, we still say with Luther, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God . . . because acting against one's conscience

[21] Eberstadt, *It's Dangerous to Believe,* xxi.

is neither safe nor sound."[22] Given the circumstances, Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" sounds fresher than ever: "And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won."[23]

It is also important to note that this is not just about us as Lutherans. We are called to stand with others who face the fire. Given our baptismal identity, it is a matter of corporate solidarity. Christ's face is not now seen, but it becomes apparent to us in the least of our brothers (Matt 25:45). "If one member suffers, all suffer together," Paul says (1 Cor 12:26).

Princeton Professor Robert P. George rallies us to the cause:

> The lynch mob is now giddy with success and drunk on the misery and pain of its victims. It is urged on by a compliant and even gleeful media. . . . And so, who if anyone will courageously stand up to the mob? Who will resist? Who will speak truth to its raw and frightening power? Who will refuse to be bullied into submission or intimidated into silence? . . . If we refuse to surrender, we will certainly be demonized; but everything will depend on whether we refuse to be demoralized. Courage displayed in the cause of truth—and of right—is powerful.[24]

Such cries for courage echo the Reformation spirit as well as the biblical witness. Entering into the dangers of the promised land, Joshua cried out, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the *LORD* your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh 1:9). To the storm-tossed church, straining at the oars and in danger of capsizing, the new Joshua says, "Take heart; ἐγώ εἰμι. Do not be afraid" (Mark 6:50). Courage begins with the knowledge that our Good Shepherd is present (Ps 23:4), secure in the promise that in losing our life, we will find it (Matt 10:39).

Will we be ready if persecution should come our way? Presumption is foolhardy, but courage is a muscle that must be exercised. "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much" (Luke 16:10). Our Lord adds, "For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (Matt 13:12). If we are afraid to speak to our own people, we stand little chance if we are dragged before governors and kings (Matt 10:18). If we are ashamed to speak of such basic matters as bride and groom among the faithful, how will we be faithful to our heavenly Groom when much more is on the line?

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[22] Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil,* trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 39.

[23] *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 262:4.

[24] Robert P. George, "Who Will Stand?" *First Things*, April 5, 2015, https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2015/04/who-will-stand.

Indeed, fidelity in matters great and small became the trademark of Luther's preaching. Not surprisingly, Luther's boldness for the gospel carried over into his teaching on marriage. Consider Luther's essay The Estate of Marriage. He laments, "How I dread preaching on the estate of marriage."[25] Why is the topic of marriage a cause for angst? Luther explains, "I am reluctant to do it because I am afraid if I once get really involved in the subject it will make a lot of work for me and for others."[26]

Indeed, in Luther's day, marriage matters were muddled. Virginity was touted as a great ecclesiastical virtue, while civic brothels were largely condoned and sanctioned. According to Carter Lindberg, "Prostitutes were thought to purify a town by draining off excess male energy as a sewer drained off waste."[27] The end of monastery life made things even trickier. As Paul Strawn notes, "With the emptying of the monasteries in the early 1520's, over ten percent of the population of Germany changed not only their place of residence but also their way of life, most notably when it came to marriage."[28] Confusion reigned at every level. As such, Luther knew that by speaking about marriage, he would be stepping on many toes. He says, "The shameful confusion wrought by the accursed papal law has occasioned so much distress, and the lax authority of both the spiritual and temporal swords has given rise to so many dreadful abuses and false situations, that I would much prefer neither to look into the matter nor to hear of it."[29]

We feel Luther's pain. In a recent article, Brian Saunders asks, "Is the church becoming more comfortable with divorce?"[30] Forty years ago, we could have asked this question in search of an answer. Now, it is purely rhetorical. Homosexuality can be difficult to talk about, as is also the transgender phenomenon. Even gay marriage, though the law of the land for only a couple of years, is treated as if written on golden tablets. We might be tempted to despair.

At an anniversary celebration such as this, it would be easier to speak about Luther at the Diet of Worms than to open up a whole other can of worms.

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[25] Martin Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522): vol. 45, p. 17, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE.

[26] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:17.

[27] Carter Lindberg, "Luther's Struggles with Social-Ethical Issues," in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 169. See also Jacques Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 80–84.

[28] Paul Strawn, "The Theological Conundrum of Marital 'Relations' According to Luther," in *Marriage, Sex, and Gender in the Lutheran Church Today: In Light of the Lutheran Confessions*, ed. John Maxfield (Fort Wayne: Luther Academy, 2015), 64–65.

[29] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:17.

[30] Brian Saunders, "Divorce and Remarriage in the Parish and Parsonage," in *Marriage, Sex, and Gender in the Lutheran Church Today*, 118.

Yet, speak we must, as Luther himself reminds us, saying, "But timidity is no help in emergency; I must proceed. I must try to instruct poor bewildered consciences, and take up the matter boldly."[31] For us, it is a simple matter of fidelity in "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matt 12:39; 16:4). To whom much is given, much is expected (Luke 12:48). The one who is faithful unto death receives the crown of life (Rev 2:10). But if we aspire to be the faithful bride in the holy city of the new Jerusalem, we must proclaim the bridegroom who alone has the power to save. To do that, we must speak of marriage rightly.

IV. Can Luther Be a Theological Guide?

Though Luther's problems were not ours, we do well to consult with those who are not wearing our culturally tinted glasses. Before we can talk to our people about gay, lesbian, and transgender issues, we need to teach them about our creation in God's image, God's intended plan for marriage, and the meaning of our fallen condition. To put it another way, in order to understand what a thing is not, we must learn and teach what a thing is.

It may encourage us to recognize that Luther also had to build from the ground up, beginning with foundational matters. He writes,

> No one has either preached or heard what marriage is. No one has looked upon marriage as a work or estate which God has commanded and placed under worldly authority, and therefore everyone has treated it as a free man does his own property, with which he can do as he wishes, without any qualms of conscience.[32]

So it was, so it is.

V. Our Human Nature: Body and Soul

Indeed, we could do worse than return to a reformer who lectured extensively on the book of Genesis. The New Gnosticism teaches that only the inner person matters. Luther teaches that though our humanity is fallen, God is a good creator, and the physical life has significance. The New Gnosticism teaches that marriage is a human construct, tied to emotional needs, apart from the physical reality of the conjugal union. Luther teaches that marriage is a one-flesh union, oriented toward the begetting of children.

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[31] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:17.
[32] Luther, *The Abomination of the Secret Mass* (1525), AE 36:314.

Luther addresses our human nature in his lectures on Genesis: "Thus Adam had a twofold life: a physical one and an immortal one."[33] A human being, far from being a ghost in the machine, is a body-soul union, what Robert George calls "a dynamic unity: a personal body, a bodily self."[34] Like the beasts, Luther teaches, man has need of food and drink, yet he is also created in the image of God, which Luther notes is "an indication of another and better life."[35] Body and soul, we are created in God's image. In a world that considers the body insignificant, and yet deplores body shaming, Luther's words hit home: "The man is not to despise or scoff at the woman or her body, nor the woman the man. But each should honor the other's image and body as a divine and good creation that is well pleasing to God himself."[36]

Given that the culture is offering another message, indoctrinating our children at an early age, we need to be intentional, as was Luther, in teaching our children the fundamentals. This means telling the Bible stories and offering lessons to young and old. In the catechisms, Luther offers a primer on what it means to be a human being and how to think about marriage. In his explanation of the First Article in the Small Catechism, he writes that God has not only "made me and all creatures," but he has also given me both "body and soul," along with "all my members" (SC II).[37] For Luther, we are a body-soul unity, and our physical life matters.

VI. Marriage and the Created Order

Luther includes marriage among God's many physical gifts, adding, "He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have" (SC II). Again, in his explanation of the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther says that we pray for "a devout husband or wife" and "devout children" (SC III).

At first glance, Luther's catechetical lists may seem disappointing. In his explanation of the First Article, the gifts of wife and children are placed after such pedestrian items as clothing and shoes and before land and animals. In his explanation of the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, the gifts of a devout spouse and devout children are nestled incongruously between land, animals, money, and goods on the one side, and good government and good weather on the other. But that may be

[33] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545), AE 1:57.

[34] George, "Gnostic Liberalism," 34.

[35] Luther, *A Sincere Admonition by Martin Luther to All Christians to Guard Against Insurrection and Rebellion* (1522), AE 45:57.

[36] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:18.

[37] Small Catechism quotations are from *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*,

Luther's very point. Marriage is not only a spiritual blessing, but it is also a created good, a gift, and part of God's physical creation.

Luther addresses the topic of marriage more fully in *The Estate of Marriage* (1522). Luther writes, "Now the ones who recognize the estate of marriage are those who firmly believe that God himself instituted it, brought husband and wife together, and ordained that they should beget children and care for them. For this they have God's word, Genesis 1, and they can be certain that he does not lie."[38] Luther's word is as relevant as ever. Before so-called gay marriage took hold, our own people came to see marriage as a work of man, not God. Couples insist on designer wedding services, write their own vows, and eschew the church for so-called destination weddings. In every way, they show that they think of their marriage as a product of their own desire. The trouble, as we have seen, is that if we can create marriage, we can also dissolve it. This makes marriage unstable, leaving people vulnerable. As we move forward, we may do well to put less emphasis on the marital vows and more on the words of Christ: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt 19:6).

In fact, because it is part of God's good creation, the estate of marriage can be known also through natural law. As such, marriage is not simply a revelation from God but also a recognition of reality. Marriage, with its expectations of permanence, exclusivity, and monogamy, is tied to the reality of the one relationship that alone can produce children and is best equipped to care for them. In his lectures on Genesis, Luther writes, "Moreover, the pagans, too, realized that there was nothing more proper and more advantageous than this close relationship of married people. Hence they declare that according to natural law a wife is necessary and should maintain her inseparable association until death."[39] This basic truth can be explored quite apart from the Scriptures, because it is written into reality itself and is conducive to human flourishing.

VII. Marriage and the Created Order: Oriented toward Children

Marriage is part of the created order. It is also the way that God continues to create. One reason gay marriage so easily became the law of the land is that our society long ago forgot what marriage actually is. Divorce, cohabitation, and the trend toward disconnecting marriage from children have all paved the way.[40] These three are connected. Divorce disregards the needs of the children based on the desire of adults. A couple that cohabitates most typically thinks of a child as an unwelcome

[38] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:38.

[39] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535), AE 1:138.

[40] For a discussion of this, see Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, *Conjugal Union: What Marriage Is and Why It Matters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6.

surprise. The trend of intentionally childless couples adds to the mix. As such, people's conception of marriage has changed from a conjugal union oriented toward children into what Bradford Wilcox calls "primarily a couple-centered vehicle for personal growth, emotional intimacy, and shared consumption that depends for its survival on the happiness of both spouses."[41] To put it another way, if marriage is no longer about children, or even about the other, then it is all about me. This is no accident.

Margaret Sanger's Planned Parenthood revolution fought precisely to separate the sexual union from both marriage and procreation, claiming, "The most serious evil of our times is that of encouraging the bringing into the world of large families. The most immoral practice of the day is breeding too many children."[42] Sanger turned sex from mutual love to a radical and even religious self-fulfillment: "Through sex, mankind may attain the great spiritual illumination which will transform the world, which will light up the only path to paradise."[43] Since sex was oriented to self and not to other, marriage itself became the enemy. Sanger writes, "The marriage bed is the most degenerative influence in the social order."[44] In the 1960s, feminism and the sexual revolution, aided by the pill and abortion, turned Sanger's vision into reality. Irina Dunn famously said, "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." Seizing on the opportunity, Hugh Hefner espoused a philosophy in which boys could play, apart from any responsibility. Not surprisingly, divorce rates have skyrocketed, and marriage has become optional. Not coincidentally, gay marriage has taken hold even as marriage has lost its grip. At today's wedding celebrations, there is plenty of icing, but little cake.

As Heidi Stevens, a columnist for the *Chicago Tribune,* writes,

> As marriage becomes increasingly optional—no longer necessary for childbearing, economic survival or social acceptance—individuals who decide to tie the knot can approach their union as a relationship designed to, above all else, foster a happier, healthier life. And they can tailor and nurture theirs accordingly.[45]

Reinventing marriage, Stevens notes, will lead not simply to polygamy, but also to group marriage and temporary marriage. In this way, gay marriage is more than

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[41] W. Bradford Wilcox and Elizabeth Marquardt, eds. *The State of Our Unions 2010: When Marriage Disappears* (Charlottesville, VA: National Marriage Project, 2010), 38.

[42] Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* (New York: Dossier Press, 1966), 57.

[43] Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (New York: Maxwell Reprint Company, 1969), 237.

[44] Sanger, *Woman and the New Race*, 161.

[45] Heidi Stevens, "Reinventing Marriage for the 21st Century," *Chicago Tribune,* October 7, 2014, http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/sc-fam-1014-rethinking-marriage-21st-century-20141007-story.html.

a redefinition of marriage, it is the unraveling of marriage. When the definition of marriage is no longer tied to the conjugal union that alone produces children, marriage may be anything and ultimately nothing. Such thinking leads to what sociologists commonly call "the end of marriage."[46]

Yet, the basic fact remains: not every marriage need lead to children. But every child is the product of a male-female union. Biologically, there is no way around this. In the First Article of the Creed and the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther puts spouse and children together. He also pairs marriage and children together in his *Exhortation to the Knights of the Teutonic Order*: "For this reason God has done marriage the honor of putting it into the Fourth Commandment, immediately after the honor due himself, where he commands, 'Honor your father and mother.' "[47]

Seeing that it was not good for man to be alone, God created Eve from Adam's rib, thus creating the possibility of community, what Luther calls "the common good."[48] Eve was not simply a partner; together, she and Adam could carry out "the magnificent work of begetting and preserving his kind. Therefore, 'good' in this passage denotes the increase in the human race."[49] Thus, we say marriage is oriented toward children. In an age of declining birthrates, this is worth pondering.

Arguing from natural law, Ryan Anderson makes the same point: "The marital act is comprehensive—it unites the spouses in heart, mind, and body—and is thus oriented toward a comprehensive good—the procreation and education of new persons."[50] This does not mean that every marriage will result in children, but natural law recognizes that every child comes from one union and one union alone. For that reason, marriage between one man and one woman is lifelong, exclusive, and permanent. Since marriage is oriented toward children, we do well to read the Scriptures but also to explore with our people what marriage is and how it contributes to the common good.

Indeed, while the church continues to struggle with the question of birth control, Luther's words are bracing, even shocking: " 'Be fruitful and multiply' is not a command. It is more than a command, it is a divine ordinance which is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore."[51] For Luther, it is the very nature of the male-female union to be productive. As such, marriage is a testimony and means by which

[46] See, for instance, Jane Lewis, *The End of Marriage? Individualism and Intimate Relationships* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2001).

[47] Luther, *An Exhortation to the Knights of the Teutonic Order That They Lay Aside False Chastity and Assume the True Chastity of Wedlock* (1523), AE 45:154.

[48] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545/1544–1554), AE 1:115–116.

[49] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545/1544–1554), AE 1:116.

[50] Anderson, *Truth Overruled*, 21.

[51] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:18.

the story of Genesis continues among us. As Luther notes, "He creates them so they have to multiply."[52]

Perhaps, though, the people of Luther's time were not all that different from us. As Luther long ago said, "Today you find many people who do not want to have children."[53] The same holds true today. In an age of birth control and abortion, we must engender a lively sense of God's continuing work of creation in the blessing of marriage. If we were not so blinded by sin, Luther says, "We would marvel at procreation as the greatest work of God, and as a most outstanding gift we would honor it with the praises it deserves."[54] As an added bonus, our churches would be fuller.

VII. Male and Female He Created Them: A Binary Humanity

While we endeavor to teach natural marriage, the transgender issue has now come to dominate our cultural landscape. At last count, Facebook recognizes fifty-eight genders. The January 2017 special edition of *National Geographic* touts the "Gender Revolution," featuring a nine-year-old transgender child. While we speak of man-woman marriage, the very categories of man and woman are falling into disuse.

Though such thinking would have been as foreign to the Reformation as it was to our grandparents, Luther does have something to say on the issue. Drawing on Genesis, the reformer strongly endorses a binary humanity. "We may be assured," writes Luther, "that God divided mankind into two classes, namely, male and female, or a he and a she."[55] For Luther, the human being consists of both body and soul in unity. "Therefore," Luther adds, "each one of us must have the kind of body God created for us."[56] Does Luther have anything to say to our present-age problems of gender identity and transgenderism? Indeed, he adds, "I cannot make myself a woman, nor can you make yourself a man: we do not have that power. But we are exactly as he created us: I am a man and you are a woman."[57] These complementary differences make possible procreation and aid in the raising of those children. Luther writes, "He created man and woman differently (as is evident) not

[52] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:18.
[53] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535), AE 1:118.
[54] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1535), AE 1:118.
[55] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:17.
[56] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:17.
[57] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:17.

for indecency but to be true to each other, to be fruitful, to beget children, and to nurture and bring them up to the glory of God" (LC I 207).[58]

Bruce, or now officially Caitlyn, Jenner, might demur. Luther's basic insight is that we are not our own creators. The fact that we are male or female is not incidental to our identity, but is inherent in it. This may lead us to think about the body scientifically, in terms of the X and Y chromosomes. It may also lead us to sociological research, which demonstrates that men and women are not only different, but that they also are complementary.[59] We may turn to studies that show there is no such thing as parenting, but only mothering and fathering. This will take some time, but science, the social sciences, natural law, and the breadth of historical experience are on our side. Reading Luther's observation of self-evident truths is a good starting point. Generational wisdom is our friend. Grandpa might just be on to something.

VIII. Marriage as a Societal Matter

Many see marriage as a private matter, a consensual relationship between two individuals, a private contract. "How does my gay marriage affect your relationship?" society asks. "Let the world have gay marriage, and we will keep our biblical one," we respond. Such thinking, as we have noted, is naive. Gay marriage depends not only on our tolerance but also on our approval.

Even apart from that, marriage laws matter. Luther understood that marriage serves a societal function and that a healthy community depends on it. Luther writes, "The estate of marriage, however, redounds to the benefit not alone of the body, property, honor, and soul of an individual, but also to the benefit of whole cities and countries in that they remain exempt from the plagues imposed by God."[60] Such plagues today may include venereal diseases, but also vulnerable and impoverished women, lost children, and aimless men. As President Obama noted, "We know the statistics—that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely

[58] The Large Catechism quotations are from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

[59] W. Bradford Wilcox notes, "Among the many distinctive talents that mothers bring to the parenting enterprise, three stand out: their capacity to breastfeed, their ability to understand infants and children, and their ability to offer nurture and comfort to their children." Fathers "excel when it comes to discipline, play, and challenging their children to embrace life's challenges" ("Reconcilable Differences: What Social Sciences Show about the Complementarity of the Sexes and Parenting," *Touchstone* 18, no. 9 [2005]: 32).

[60] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:44.

to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools, and twenty times more likely to end up in prison."[61]

In his essay *On Marriage Matters*, Luther deals extensively with marriage as a public institution. Luther, for instance, opposed secret betrothals apart from parental consent and public knowledge, not simply on biblical grounds, but also on the grounds that women would be left unprotected with no rights.[62] For Luther, "A secret engagement should yield to a public one."[63] Otherwise, legal and financial problems would follow.

Luther likewise speaks about the case of men who abuse the marital relationship for financial gain and then leave their wives with the responsibility of raising their children alone. After a number of years, such a man returns "and relies on her having to take him back when he comes, and on the city and house being open to him."[64] In such cases, Luther says, "It would be high time and necessary for the authorities to issue a stern decree and take severe measures."[65] For, in abandoning his wife, "Such a villain shows his contempt for matrimony and the laws of the city."[66] These laws are in place precisely to ensure that a husband provides the "duty, food, service, provision, etc., that he owes them."[67] In other words, marriage is not a private matter, because it affects both the spouse and the children and is a drain on the society that is forced to step into the breach. As such, it is a matter of justice and a matter for the law.

Luther's insights should lead us to discuss how marriage functions in society today. Within our own culture, the redefinition and dissolution of marriage has been especially harmful to women and children, leaving them vulnerable. Gay marriage takes the matter a step further and purposefully leaves a child without a father or mother.

Luther understood well that marriage also serves to keep men out of trouble. As Luther notes, men who have sex before marriage end up "plunging into immorality rather than grooving to maturity."[68] For good reason, Luther quotes the proverb "Early to rise and early to wed."[69] Marriage protects the woman and channels a man's strengths toward good ends. Luther writes, "Because from that there come

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[61] Barack Obama, "Obama's Speech on Fatherhood" (speech, Apostolic Church of God, Chicago, IL, June 15, 2008), https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/06/obamas_speech_on_fatherhood.html.

[62] Lindberg, "Luther's Struggle with Social-Ethical Issues," 169.

[63] Luther, *On Marriage Matters* (1530), AE 46:267.

[64] Luther, *On Marriage Matters* (1530), AE 46:312.

[65] Luther, *On Marriage Matters* (1530), AE 46:312.

[66] Luther, *On Marriage Matters* (1530), AE 46:313.

[67] Luther, *On Marriage Matters* (1530), AE 46:313.

[68] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:45.

[69] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:44.

people who retain a sound body, a good conscience, property, and honor and family, all of which are so ruined and dissipated by fornication."[70] Indeed, when we look at our cities, where fatherlessness is a plague and the streets are dangerous, we see the wisdom of Luther's insights.

Finally, we should add, while the government has God-given authority, the family comes first. When Luther speaks of the Fourth Commandment, his explanation is inclusive of civil government, "which, as we have said, belongs in the category of "fatherhood" as a walk of life, and is the most comprehensive of all" (LC I 150). Luther explains, "Through civil rulers, as through our own parents, God gives us food, house and home, protection and security" (LC I 150).

The order of these relationships is instructive. Governmental authority is an extension of fatherly authority, not the other way around. Marriage and family are written into creation itself and therefore have priority. What, then, of government? May a government establish laws that are contrary to nature or that redefine what has already been defined? No, for government acts in the stead of the family. As Luther says in his explanation of the Fourth Commandment, "God has given this walk of life, fatherhood and motherhood, a special position of honor, higher than that of any other walk of life under it" (LC I 105). Again, Luther says, "It is not a walk of life to be placed on the same level with all the others, but it is before and above them all, whether those of emperor, princes, bishops, or any other" (LC I 209). Marriage does not belong only to the church. Luther writes, "It is not a restricted walk of life, but the most universal and noblest, pervading all Christendom and even extending throughout all the world" (LC I 210).

IX. Moving toward a Christological Anthropology

Thus far, we have taken a peek at Luther's teachings on marriage and children and our creation in God's image. In doing so, we shore up the bases. How, then, shall we build and how might the present crisis lead us to go forward?

In a compelling address to the 2016 LCMS convention, Ryan Anderson summed up our theological task in this way, "So for the Early Church, most of the arguments centered on the nature of God. They were about Christology and Trinitarian theology."[71] A thousand years later, the debates turned toward "ecclesiology, soteriology, justification, and sanctification."[72] Today's debates, Anderson observed, center on anthropology. He writes, "The reason so many of our enemies

[70] Luther, *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), AE 45:44.

[71] Ryan Anderson, "Convention Speech: Special Presentation" (speech, 66th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, July 11, 2016), *Upon This Rock*, https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=4283, 7.

[72] Anderson, "Convention Speech," 7.

hate the church right now is because of three anthropological truths articulated in the very first pages of the Bible: that we are made in the image and likeness of God, that we're created male and female, and that male and female are created for each other."[73] It would be hard to gainsay Anderson's assessment. These basic truths are already proving to be the basis for positive ecumenical endeavors. The wonderful magazine *Touchstone* springs to mind. Within the great tradition, faithful Christians have much in common and much at stake. As we stand with fellow Christians, the bonds of friendship will be strengthened and goodwill fostered. What, then, we might ask, does the sixteenth century have to offer? What can we as Lutherans bring to the table, and how might we appropriate the Lutheran tradition for the present crisis?

We do well to form alliances with Catholic and Evangelical friends as we rediscover and appropriate the teachings of the early church fathers and rediscover what it is to be truly human. But this may also be an opportunity to take the matter further. As Lutherans, we recognize that the New Gnosticism is an attack not only on God as creator, but also on Christ who has entered our creation. Just as abortion is an assault on the Christ child, gay marriage is an attack against the bridegroom, and the gender wars take aim at the heavenly Father's Son. The desire to make wrong right is yet another way in which man tries to justify himself before a God he may claim does not even exist. In other words, our fight is not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12).

Therefore, if we are to speak about man in his essence, we will speak about Christ, the man who defines our humanity. If we are to speak about Adam and his relationship to Eve, this will lead us to a discussion of Christ, the second and last Adam, and then to Christ and his relationship to the church.

As we draw from the Reformation tradition, we will focus on Jesus and work to demonstrate that creation is not, in fact, far from salvation, nor is the Second Article far removed from the First. In fact, we might wish, operationally, to put such distinctions to rest. Heresy has a way of sifting and strengthening. In facing the present challenges, we may well come to appreciate more fully that Genesis is not far from Revelation and is, in truth, a revelation in itself. Nor is Genesis far from the gospels, which are, in fact, a new Genesis.

Within Catholic circles, the question of humanity is often treated within a larger framework of Judeo-Christian values or the preservation of the common Western tradition, as can be seen splendidly in the work of Robert George.[74] Questions

[73] Anderson, "Convention Speech," 7.

[74] Robert P. George, *In Defense of Natural Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

of marriage are rightly addressed within the realm of natural law. What is missing from that debate is the christological spark.

Likewise, within our own circles, many have shied away from the controversy, thinking that such topics as male and female, marriage and family, sex and gender, while important, are nevertheless peripheral to the gospel enterprise. We must recognize that our fidelity as a church is that of bride to a bridegroom. What may be lacking is a more holistic understanding of our humanity, a recognition that Genesis is gospel, and the gospel is a new Genesis. When we understand Adam and Eve, we have a picture of Christ and the church, and to undermine the one is to destroy the other. Indeed, marriage is central to the biblical message from beginning to end, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, centered on the Gospels themselves. All belong together, and when one string is pulled, the entire enterprise becomes unraveled.

Indeed, as Luther's children, we marvel that the reformer's turning point came in the reading of Romans 1:16–17. "There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith," marveled Luther.[75] This was Luther's gate to paradise. But as we read these verses, we move to Romans 1:18–32, where we see the paradise that was lost in idolatry and sexual fallenness, and then to Romans 5:12–21, where we meet the new Adam who will carry his bride across paradise's threshold. Even as we read Galatians, Paul's great epistle on justification, we see Christ has not only redeemed us (Gal 3:13), but he has also brought us a new creation (Gal 6:15).

X. Christ, Our Bridegroom

Given our present context, it is worth noting how intricately the stories of creation and redemption come together in Christ, the bridegroom. Marriage marks the beginning of creation and its heavenly destination, the beginning of the biblical story and its end.

In the Old Testament narrative, Adam is the groom, Eve the bride. We are all children of this one relationship, fractured by sin. With the choosing of Abraham, the figure of Adam began to fade into the background, as the universal became hidden in the particular. Hope centered on Abraham's seed, on Israel and the new exodus. Yet, the figures of the bride and groom were not entirely forgotten.

[75] *Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings* (1545), AE 34:337. For a classic retelling of the story, see Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1950), especially 45–51.

The Song of Songs speaks of a more perfect conjugal love, a delightful groom and a delighted bride inhabiting a garden paradise.[76] Isaiah speaks of salvation, saying, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isa 62:5). Even in the sorrow of bridal infidelity (Jer 2), the Lord looks forward to a new covenant that will restore true marital bliss (Jer 31:31–33).

The New Testament depicts the blossoming of this love. Drawing and building on Genesis, Paul writes, " 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:31–32). This passage is familiar, but profound. Paul here claims that marriage itself, as it is written in creation, is a proclamation of Christ's gospel love for his bride, the church. For Paul, Adam was "a type of the one who was to come" (Rom 5:14), even as Christ is "the last Adam . . . a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45). This Adamic imagery reminds us that the gospel is written into creation itself, even as marriage is an icon of the eternal bliss.

This marital imagery finds its consummation in the book of Revelation, where paradise is restored in the marriage feast of the Lamb. The heavenly multitude cries out, " 'Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure'—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb' " (Rev 19:7–9). Apart from our faithful teaching of marriage, this imagery loses all meaning, leaving us with neither foundation nor hope.

XI. The Gospels as New Genesis

The best teacher of marriage is our Lord himself. Drawing on Genesis, he defines marriage by our creation as male and female (Mark 10:6–9). As he teaches on marriage, so also he speaks about protecting and caring for children (Mark 9:42–50; 10:13–16).

But as we confront the New Gnosticism, we must take this one step further. We must show that the God of creation and the God of the gospel are one and the same. This new creation in no way nullifies the old creation but brings it to its climax. As such, creation and redemption are organically related. The First Article bleeds into the Second, even as the Second Article is to the First like branches to the vine.

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[76] For a discussion of the garden paradise, see Christopher Mitchell, *The Song of Songs,* Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 263–273.

As such, the Gospels are not only the stories of our redemption but also witnesses to the new creation.

Luther famously loved the Gospel of John, which he considered "the one fine, true, and chief Gospel, far to be preferred over the other three, and placed high above them."[77] The gospel of John begins by strongly echoing Genesis, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). John's Gospel then takes us to Christ's first sign, performed at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–12). In turning water into wine, Christ not only endorses natural marriage but also introduces himself as the ultimate bridegroom, the one who alone can bring joy and satisfaction as both the planter of the vineyard and the vine himself. John the Baptist says of Christ, "The one who has the bride is the bridegroom," and then calls himself the friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29). In the story of the woman at the well, John draws on Old Testament bridal imagery to demonstrate that Jesus has come to be the Groom, not only for Israel, but also for the Samaritans, and then for the nations.[78] This theme comes to culmination in the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is a return to Eden: "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb" (John 19:41). Here, Jesus becomes like a seed planted in the ground (John 12:24). When Jesus arises from the ground, Mary Magdalene assumes him to be the gardener (John 20:15), and, indeed, as the true Adam, he is God's true Son who brings the bride of the church, now symbolized by Mary Magdalene, back into paradise. This is a fitting end for a gospel that begins, "In the beginning," and as such, it mirrors the theology of Revelation with its return to and renewal of paradise.

But we should not follow Luther in underestimating the synoptic witness. Like the fourth evangelist, Matthew also begins his gospel with a nod toward creation and the words βίβλος γενέσεως, that is, "the book of Genesis."[79] Herein, Matthew announces in grand fashion that his gospel is also a book of creation. Indeed, what follows is a history of God's act of procreation in a genealogy, which tells the story of begetting, that leads to the birth of Jesus, which is also called a "Genesis" (Matt 1:18). For Matthew, Jesus is the bridegroom, and his followers are the sons of the bridal chamber, the wedding guests, who feast in his presence (Matt 9:14–15). Matthew compares the kingdom of the heavens to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son (Matt 22:1–14). Again, in the parable of the ten virgins, the kingdom of the heavens is compared to ten virgins who took their lamps to await the coming

[77] Luther, *Preface to the New Testament (1522), AE 35:362.*

[78] See Peter Scaer, "Jesus and the Woman at the Well: Where Mission Meets Worship," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (2008): 3–18.

[79] See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 4–54, who argue that the entire Gospel is a type of Genesis.

of the bridegroom (Matt 25:1–13). All of this leads to a climax in which our new generation comes through Baptism, and we are invited into a family in which God is our Father.

Luke likewise links Jesus to Genesis through a genealogy that goes back to Adam (Luke 3:38). Perhaps more strongly than any of the Gospels, he ties the resurrection to the eighth day, the consummation of creation.

XII. Stories to Tell

When reading the Gospels, Luther famously loved the words of Jesus more than his works, saying, "If I had to do without one or the other—either the works or preaching of Christ—I would rather do without the works than without the preaching. For the works do not help me, but his words give life as he himself says [John 6:63]."[80] But now, more than ever, we must return to the narrative of our salvation, to the unfolding story of a bride and groom that leads to the ultimate consummation of Christ and his church. Our own people have been led astray not simply by the doctrines of our culture, but also by the stories our culture tells, by the television shows, movies, and books. In such an environment, we do well to heed the words of Jesus as he offers his Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me." If there is anything our culture needs right now, it is remembrance. Our society is like the man in the book of James who looks in the mirror but forgets what he looks like (Jas 1:23–24).

Surely, the roots of our problem can be traced back to no-fault divorce, and even further to the pill, and further still to the fall of sin. But such an observation hardly captures the breathtaking rapidity of our fall.

At stake is our very identity. Our identity as a church, our identity as the bride of Christ, and our identity as men and women created in the image of God. How is it possible that we have so soon forgotten? Perhaps we have not so much forgotten our past as we have neglected to pass on the story of our salvation, the drama of our existence in Christ. Maybe after five hundred years, after two thousand years, the past has something to teach us after all. For, when we tell the story of Luther, or of Adam, or the second Adam, we are telling our own story as well.

[80] Luther, *Preface to the New Testament* (1522), AE 35:362.

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Restoring the Great Litany in the Lutheran Church

Benjamin T.G. Mayes

The Great Litany, often called simply "the Litany," is a responsive form of prayer inherited by the Lutheran Church from the early church and the Middle Ages, that quickly became popular in the Reformation. However, in modern times the Litany has declined in popularity, and in most places has become deformed and estranged from its original function. The Litany, once seen by Luther and the Reformers as a model prayer by which to protect Christian Europe against the invading Muslim Turks and by which all the necessities of life are requested from God,[1] has lost its place as a popular hymn of the people and has been relegated to the status of an obscure liturgical antiquity. In this short essay, our aim is to show how the Litany declined and to suggest ways to bring it vigorously into the life of the church again.

I. History and Deformation of the Great Litany

The Great Litany in the Middle Ages and in the Roman Catholic Church

A litany is "a form of prayer consisting of a series of petitions or biddings which are sung or said by a deacon, a priest, or cantors, and to which the people make fixed responses, e.g. *Kyrie eleison,* 'Grant, Lord,' 'We beseech thee, hear us', &c."[2] From roots in eastern liturgies of the early centuries of the church, the Litany became widespread in the western church of the Middle Ages, both in private devotions and public liturgies, such as the "Greater Litanies" on St. Mark's Day (April 25) and the "Lesser Litanies" on the three days before Ascension Thursday, in Rogate week. These litanies were sung in the context of processions and were prayed for the fertility of the fields and for other benefits. The invocation of a long list of saints was

[1] Ulrich S. Leupold, introduction to Martin Luther, *The German Litany and The Latin Litany Corrected* (1529): vol. 53, pp. 153, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE.

[2] F.L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), s.v. "Litany."

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central to the Great Litany during the Middle Ages.[3] Before the Council of Trent, there were at least eighty different forms of the Litany in use in the Roman Church,[4] but the Council trimmed back these litanies considerably. The great Lutheran liturgical scholar Wilhelm Loehe commented: "There are especially three litanies that have found the widest spread and acceptance in the Roman Church: the Litany of the Sweet Name of Jesus, the Litany of the Mother of God of Loreto, and above all what is called the 'Great Litany.' We Lutherans do not have the first two; whoever is familiar with them can easily understand why."[5] According to Loehe, even before the Reformation there were variations in the text of the Great Litany. "Luther, too, made use of this same freedom."[6]

The Great Litany in the Churches of the Augsburg Confession

The Litany probably fell out of use in Wittenberg during Karlstadt's reforms in 1521–1522. Seven years later, as Turkish armies were threatening Christian Europe, Luther sought to revive it. In *On War Against the Turk*, he wrote:

> After people have thus been taught and exhorted to confess their sin and amend their ways they should then be most diligently exhorted to prayer and shown that such prayer pleases God, that he has commanded it and promised to hear it, and that no one ought to think lightly of his praying or have doubts about it, but with firm faith be sure that it will be heard; all of which has been published by us in many tracts. The man who doubts, or prays for good luck, would do better to let prayer alone because such prayer is merely tempting God and only makes things worse. Therefore I would advise against processions, which are a heathenish and useless practice, for they are more pomp and show than prayer. I say the same thing about celebrating a lot of masses and calling upon the saints. It might, indeed, be of some use to have the people, especially the young people, sing the Litany at mass or vespers or in the church after the sermon, provided that everyone, even at home by himself, constantly raised to

[3] For the history of the Great Litany, or "Litany of Saints," see Michael D. Whelan, "The Litany of Saints: Its Place in the Grammar of Liturgy," *Worship* 65, no. 3 (1991): 216–223, here at 217–219; *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "Litany" and "Litany of the Saints," and the literature cited by Otto Brodde, "Litanei," in *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon: Kirchlich-theologisches Handwörterbuch*, ed. Heinz Brunotte and Otto Weber (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), s.v. For the history of the Litany in the Church of England, see William P. Haugaard, "English Litany from Henry to Elizabeth," *Anglican Theological Review* 51, no. 3 (1969): 177–203.

[4] Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 545.

[5] Wilhelm Loehe, *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*, 2nd ed. (Nördlingen: Druck und Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1853), 1:149.

[6] Loehe, *Agende*, 1:149.

> Christ at least a sigh of the heart for grace to lead a better life and for help against the Turk.[7]

In 1529, Luther revised and published the Litany in German and Latin, excluding the invocation of saints and adding a few petitions.[8]

The German and Latin Litanies became very popular and were seen by Luther, the Reformers, and their heirs as a core component of their life of worship and faith.[9] All over Reformation and post-Reformation Germany, the Litany appears to have been sung once or twice weekly (Friday and in some places also Wednesday).[10] It thus must have been extremely well known, probably well loved, and certainly well ingrained into the minds and hearts of all Lutherans. In his detailed study of early Lutheran worship practice, Joseph Herl notes that the German Litany was the fourth most popular "hymn" in the church orders that he investigated.[11] Several commentaries, sermons, and devotions based on the Litany were written during this period, of which we should not fail to mention Johann Gerhard's *Spiritual Gem of Pious Hearts* (1634).[12] This work includes a "comforting explanation of the customary church litany through devotional sighs taken from Holy Scripture."[13] Gerhard explains that this is useful for when the Litany is sung in church somewhat slowly "as is usual." In these cases, Gerhard's explanation can be read and meditated on in order to understand each petition of the Litany and keep one's heart "in the devotion."[14]

The singing of the Litany was even seen as a confessional ceremony, that is, a ceremony that confessed the distinctives of the Lutheran confession, a ceremony that was abolished where the Lutheran confession was abandoned and restored where the Lutheran confession was reinstituted. In Hessen-Darmstadt, the Litany

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[7] Luther, *On War Against the Turk* (1529), AE 46:172–173.

[8] Translated in AE 53:153–170.

[9] Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 548.

[10] Paul Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands* (Waltrop: Spenner, 1994), 1:224–225.

[11] Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 66.

[12] Johann Gerhard, *Frommer Hertzen Geistliches Kleinod/ Das ist: Vier unterschiedene Tractätlein: Deren Das erste in sich begreifft eine Erklärung des Catechismi . . . Das ander/ geistliche Gespräch Gottes des Herrn und einer gläubigen Seele. Das dritte/ Trostsprüche und Trostgründe … Das vierdte/ die Litaney mit andächtigen HertzensSeufftzern erkläret* (Lüneburg: Stern, 1634). Loehe (*Agende*, 1:151) mentions also Paul Eber's sermons on the Litany; J.G. Olearius, *Eröffnete Himmelspforte* (Leipzig, 1679), p. 872ff.; Phil. Han, *Consiliis oder Neuverbeßertem und vollständigem Kirchenbuch* (Magdeburg & Zerbst, 1692), 3:141; Balthas. Bozögel, *Die Litanei deutsch und lateinisch* (1720).

[13] "die Litaney mit andächtigen HertzensSeufftzern erkläret." Gerhard, *Frommer Hertzen Geistliches Kleinod, title page.*

[14] Gerhard, *Frommer Hertzen Geistliches Kleinod*, "Vorrede."

was to be read, not sung. But in 1623 when Lutheran influences in that territory became stronger, the calls for singing the Litany became stronger as well. After the visitation of 1629, the order was given that it should be sung everywhere "as much as possible."[15] However, as the seventeenth century wore on and the influences of both pietism and rationalism increased, the singing of the Litany waned.[16]

For a long time the Lutheran Church retained the singing of the Litany in Latin. Luther instructed that it was to be sung in Wittenberg by two choir boys in alternation with the choir on Wednesdays in German and on Saturdays in Latin.[17] The congregation was supposed to sing the responses of the German Litany together with the choir. In a sermon on August 15, 1529, Luther admonished the people to come to church on both Wednesday and Saturday and "learn to sing along, because all necessities are included in it, and therefore it is sung among you so that you may help pray with us, just as we pray for you."[18] Perhaps Luther intended for the congregation to sing along with the Latin Litany as well.[19]

The popularity of the Litany among Lutherans was due perhaps in part to the fact that it was seen as a hymn that the congregation could easily sing. In the days when hymnal ownership and liturgical participation among the laity was low, the Litany was simple and repetitious enough to allow a high level of congregational participation. The Litany was perhaps the easiest hymn to learn without printed music or words. The leader's chant served as a signal to the people of when it was their turn to sing. With the choir leading the congregation's part, and with the Litany's frequent repetitions, it would have been simple to put these words of prayer into the mouths and hearts of the people.

Luther wrote to some pastors of Lübeck on January 12, 1530: "Among the most important things you must constantly impress upon yourselves as well as upon the people, however, are the prayers and litanies, both private and public, for purity and fruitfulness of the word, for common peace, [good] government, and for all other matters [about which] you can read in the litany."[20] As Luther wrote to the clergy assembled at Augsburg later that year, the Litany, in his view, is one of "the topics with which it is necessary to deal in the true Christian church and about which we

[15] Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung*, 1:224.
[16] Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung*, 1:224.
[17] Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung*, 1:224.
[18] Martin Luther, *Sermon for Aug. 15, 1529 (12th Sunday after Trinity, on Mark 7:31ff.)*, in *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009), vol. 29, pp. 517, lines 5–13 (hereafter WA).
[19] This is the suggestion of Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung*, 1:224.
[20] Luther, *Letter to Some Pastors of the City of Lübeck* (1530), AE 49:263.

are concerned."[21] The Litany was included in some editions of the Small Catechism,[22] a fact that testifies to its popularity and to its centrality for teaching the Evangelical Lutheran faith. Loehe, followed by Luther Reed, reported that for Martin Luther, after the Lord's Prayer the Litany was the best prayer that could be made.[23]

When Lutherans began revising and printing their Latin liturgical books, the Litany was included. Lucas Lossius' Latin liturgical book, *Psalmodia*, explained the Litany as "a prayer of the Church that is an explanation of the Lord's Prayer, so to speak. For we pray, in turn, that God would preserve His Church, governments, and households; that He would be acknowledged, invoked, and praised in them; that He would hinder the efforts and raging of the devil and his members, who are trying to destroy the Church."[24]

The sixteenth and seventeenth century Lutheran liturgical books specify or assume that the Litany will be recited responsively, with a response by choir and congregation following each petition. "As indicated in the original texts, the Litany was supposed to be sung antiphonally by two choirs. . . . It should be noted that every petition was responded to; the modern practice of repeating a whole group of preces before the response is sung was unknown in Reformation times."[25]

The Modern Deformation of the Litany

In sixteenth-century England, Thomas Cranmer's English revision of the Great Litany made a significant change in the rhythm of the Litany by grouping several petitions together followed by only one response for each group.[26] In the first *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), and from that time to the present in the Anglican Communion, the petitions of the Litany have been grouped with a single response,

[21] Luther, *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg* (1530), AE 34:52–53.

[22] Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 337.

[23] Loehe, *Agende*, 1:150; Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 542.

[24] Lucas Lossius, *Psalmodia, hoc est cantica sacra veteris ecclesiae selecta* (Nürnberg: Gabriel Hayn, 1553), 272.

[25] Leupold, introduction to, *The German Litany and The Latin Litany Corrected* (1529), AE 53:155. The Latin and German Litanies printed by Lucas Lossius present all the petitions having the same response bracketed together with the response to the side of the petitions, not following them: Lossius, *Psalmodia*, 277–279. Clearly, the response was to be sung after each petition. In Johann Keuchenthal's *KirchenGesenge Latinisch vnd Deudsch* (Wittenberg: Lorentz Schwenck, 1573), fol. 529r –537r, the Latin and German Litanies are printed with the two choirs' parts on facing pages. Petitions are not grouped, but where the response is supposed to be repeated, it is printed one or more times to the side of the petitions, not following them.

[26] F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), s.v. "Litany, The (BCP)." See also Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 549–550.

having roughly three petitions for each group. An option for repeating the response after each petition is not given.[27]

Lutheran hymnals in America have not followed the text of the Litany in the *Book of Common Prayer*, but have knowingly or unknowingly adopted the same practice of grouping the petitions.[28] The *Common Service*, incorporated in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's *Lutheran Hymnal* (1941), includes the Litany with the rubric that "The Responses may be repeated after each phrase," that is, after each petition, "or only at the end of each group, as here followeth."[29] The musical setting of the Litany, however, lacks this rubric and though the response is printed with a bracket beside the petitions, similar to sixteenth-century printings, in all likelihood the practice of gathering petitions into groups of about nine dominated American Lutheran liturgical practice.[30] The *Lutheran Book of Worship* allowed these groups of nine to continue, but gave the option of repeating the responses after roughly each three petitions. The text of the Litany was printed with an optional "℟" at the end of each line (of three petitions).[31] In the LCMS's *Lutheran Worship*, the optional "℟" was dropped. Here the ℟ only appears at the end of every three or four lines (nine petitions or more).[32] The latest hymnal of the LCMS, *Lutheran Service Book*, follows the practice of *Lutheran Worship* by omitting even the option of repeating the response at the end of each line, much less after each petition. Following

[27] Henry Baskerville Walton, ed., *The First Book of Common Prayer of Edward VI. and The Ordinal of 1549 Together with The Order of the Communion, 1548* (London: Rivingtons, 1870), "The Litany and Suffrages"; *The Book of Common Prayer, 1549. Commonly Called The First Book of Edward vi. To Which is Added The Ordinal of 1549. And The Order of Holy Communion, 1548* (New York: Church Kalendar Press, 1881), 227–231. The text of the Litany in the Book of Common Prayer tradition is quite different than that of the Common Service, discussed below.

[28] In the old German hymnal of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Litany is a hymn, sung by two choirs, though the music is not provided for this or any other hymn in the hymnal. The petitions are gathered in groups of about six: *Kirchengesangbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgischer Konfession* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), no. 368.

[29] *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 110.

[30] *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 110; *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), p. 110 and hymn 661. Luther Reed assumes that the Common Service's rubric, allowing the response to be repeated after each petition, will not be followed: "The Litany contains sixty-five separate petitions and prayerful phrases and twenty-four responses": *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 550.

[31] The Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis and Philadelphia: Augsburg, 1979), pp. 168–173. The Lord's Prayer and traditional collects at the end of the Litany were omitted as "excessive": Philip H. Pfatteicher and Carlos R. Messerli, *Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979), 300.

[32] The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), pp. 279–287. Lutheran Worship restored the Lord's Prayer and traditional collects, however.

Lutheran Worship, the musical version of the Litany in the *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book* includes the cadence at the end of each line of petitions, even though the congregation is not instructed to respond except at the end of a group. This means that the congregation cannot use the musical cadence at the end of a line as a cue for when to sing.[33]

The American Lutheran deformation of the Litany groups large numbers of petitions together and puts few words in the mouth of the congregation. This has been done, likely, to make a long prayer shorter or to avoid perceived monotony. Musical settings are often not provided, and when they are, the music does not serve as a cue to the people for when to sing. Both the grouping and the lack of music in the pew edition of *Lutheran Service Book* are signs of the state of disuse of the Litany in American Lutheranism.

Unfortunately, these features also contribute to that very state of disuse. This is because: (1) Without frequent repetitions, one must read the text to know when to respond. This limits participation to the literate, excluding some fourteen percent of the US population.[34] (2) Without music serving as a cue for the congregation's response, one must, again, read the text of the Litany to know when to respond. As the Litany was originally written and prayed, on the other hand, one could be an illiterate child or adult and still be able to participate. (3) Without music in the pew book, the accessibility to the sung music is further limited to congregational staff. The sung Litany is now exclusively the turf of professional church workers. It has been removed yet another step from the prominence it enjoyed in the Reformation and Age of Orthodoxy as one of the church's most popular hymns.

II. Restoring the Great Litany in the Devotion and Prayer of the Church

If the Litany truly is one of "the topics with which it is necessary to deal in the true Christian church and about which we are concerned,"[35] then should we not take steps to make it known and loved in our churches? To make it known and loved, three steps are proposed here: (1) Choose a musical setting and teach it by using the

[33] In the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (SELK)'s *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Kirchengesangbuch* (Groß Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung Heinrich Harms, 1999), no. 138, rubrics are given that are much more helpful in this regard. There are two options: (1) The congregation responds after every petition. (2) Or the congregation responds after roughly every three petitions. If the latter option is used, the choir sings all the petitions except the last on one note, so that the cadence at the end of the group of petitions signals to the congregation that it is their turn to sing.

[34] As of 2003, fourteen percent of adults in the USA were functionally illiterate, according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy: http://nces.ed.gov/naal/kf_demographics.asp, accessed on October 1, 2017.

[35] Luther, *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg (1530),* AE 34:52–53.

choir. (2) Increase congregational participation by having the response sung after each petition. (3) Make regular use of the Litany in congregational worship.

Music and Choir

In Luther's day, the Litany was printed with music and was to be sung antiphonally between two choirs. "The first choir was often made up of cantors or choir boys kneeling on the altar steps, the second by the choir whom the congregation could join."[36] Old Lutheran practice was to sing the Litany without organ accompaniment.[37] Several settings are available. In the Lutheran parish one could use *The Lutheran Hymnal* , no. 661, repeating the response after each petition, or *Lutheran Worship*, p. 279, repeating the response at the end of each line of petitions. By using *Lutheran Service Builder*,[38] a parish with *Lutheran Service Book* could provide the text of the Litany with a musical setting to its members, repeating the response at the end of each line of petitions. Finally, the *Brotherhood Prayer Book* offers a public-domain version of the Litany that can be used alone or in the context of a service of prayer and repentance. In this version, the response can be repeated after each petition.[39]

Response after Each Petition

When the Litany is prayed as it was originally conceived and written, with the congregation responding to each petition of the choir, an antiphonal rhythm develops that focuses the minds and hearts of those praying on the text of the prayer, a prayer that so wonderfully asks for all that God has promised to give. The antiphonal rhythm of the Litany is the same as in Psalm 136, where each phrase is answered with the same response. This is no "vain repetition" (Matt 6:7), but a meaningful repetition on the model of scriptural prayer.

It was this kind of repetitious prayer that Luther invited his people to pray twice a week for all their spiritual and bodily needs. The modern grouping of petitions followed by a single response was not the original Lutheran practice.[40] Wilhelm Loehe explained: "A *gathering of the petitions in groups* . . . is found only here and there" in the history of the Lutheran Church.[41] "Certainly no one should request a grouping, except only as a way to make people accustomed to [the Litany] and lead

[36] Ulrich Leupold, in AE 53:155; see also Loehe, *Agende*, 1:153; Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 553.

[37] Loehe, *Agende*, 1:153.

[38] http://cphconnect.org/builder/

[39] Benjamin T.G. Mayes, *The Brotherhood Prayer Book*, 2nd rev. ed. (Fort Wayne: Emmanuel Press, 2007), 570–583.

[40] Ulrich Leupold, in AE 53:155.

[41] Loehe, *Agende*, 1:153.

them to the traditional manner. The power of the prayer—the inner power as well as the external—is in the refrain, in the intonations and answers of each side following beat upon beat."[42] Loehe objected especially to a particular deformation of the Litany that, thankfully, has not appeared in American Lutheranism: the recitation of the Litany by the pastor alone:

> Here and there one finds instructions that the Litany is to be *recited* by the pastor; but this liturgical misconduct was not at all widespread. Who would have abused this ancient prayer so unnaturally if he had any historical and liturgical sense, seeing as its entire essence—not only its majesty and power—rests totally in the 'over-against,' in this simply repeating, plentiful refrain of the congregation? It was *sung* or *prayed* responsively.[43]

Grouping the petitions would be like having the pastor sing five and a half verses of a Psalm by himself, and then having the congregation sing one-half verse; then the pastor singing seven and a half verses alone, and then the congregation again singing one-half verse; and so on. The recitation of Psalms, as well as of the Litany, should be call and response in roughly even rhythm.

Regular Liturgical Use

The old Lutheran service books state that the Litany is to be sung while standing or kneeling. In some places, the prayer bell was rung during the Litany.[44] At Wittenberg in Luther's time it was led by choirboys or cantors kneeling on the altar step.[45] The rubrics for the Litany in the *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*[46] list nearly all of the customary Lutheran uses of the Litany.[47]

> 4. The Litany may replace the prayers in the Daily Office (Matins, Vespers, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer)[48] or the General Prayer in the Divine Service.[49] It may also serve as an entrance rite in the Divine Service, replacing

[42] Loehe, *Agende*, 1:153.

[43] Loehe, *Agende*, 1:153.

[44] Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung*, 1:225.

[45] Ulrich Leupold, in AE 53:155; see also Loehe, *Agende*, 1:153; Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 553.

[46] The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 410.

[47] One use left out by the *LSB: Altar Book* is the use of the Litany as the sequence hymn between the Epistle and Gospel: Herl, *Worship Wars*, 57; Loehe, *Agende*, 1:153.

[48] Herl, *Worship Wars*, 260 n. 26; John T. Pless, "Daily Prayer," in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, ed. Fred L. Precht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 440–470, here at 467; Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 553–554.

[49] In earlier Lutheran liturgical books, the Litany was not to be used at the Communion services, however. Paul H.D. Lang, *Ceremony and Celebration* (Fort Wayne, IN: Emmanuel Press,

the Introit, Kyrie, and Hymn of Praise.[50] 5. The Litany may be used as a separate service, either alone or supplemented by Psalms and Scripture readings.[51] 6. The Litany is particularly appropriate in penitential times, whether seasons (Lent, Advent) or days (Wednesday, Friday,[52] and special days of repentance and prayer).[53]

The Litany can be used at every Advent and Lent midweek service including, as the LSB Altar Book directs, on Ash Wednesday. In addition, the Litany with its repeated responses is well suited to family use, even with small children. Families gifted with musical talent can also sing it regularly as part of their family devotions.

III. Conclusion

Can the Great Litany, the Lutheran Church's heritage from ancient days, again be restored to its original form, and once again become loved and cherished in our congregations and homes? It undoubtedly can. The needs and dangers of our time are no less than when Luther reintroduced the Litany against the threat of Muslim invasion in Europe and against papal suppression of the fledgling Reformation movement. Our need for this ancient prayer is no less than it was in the sixteenth century. Even today, it can cease to be an obscure liturgical antiquity and can become a well-known hymn and one of "the topics with which it is necessary to deal in the true Christian church and about which we are concerned."[54]

2004), 92; Loehe, *Agende*, 1:152, 153; Pless, "Daily Prayer," 467; Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 553–554.

[50] Pless, "Daily Prayer," 467. This use of the Litany, even if based on ancient practice, did not find a place in Lutheran service books before the late twentieth century.

[51] Benjamin T.G. Mayes, *The Brotherhood Prayer Book*, 2nd ed. (Kansas City: Emmanuel Press, 2007), 570–583; Lang, *Ceremony and Celebration*, 121; Pless, "Daily Prayer," 467; Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 553–554. In some Lutheran churches of the sixteenth century, a sermon followed by the Litany often replaced Matins or Vespers: Herbert Goltzen, "Der tägliche Gottesdienst: Die Geschichte des Tagzeitengebets, seine Ordnung und seine Erneuerung in der Gegenwart," in *Leiturgia: Handbuch des Evangelischen Gottesdienstes*, vol. 3 (Kassel: Johannes Stauda-Verlag, 1956), 99–296, here at 205.

[52] Herl, *Worship Wars*, 66. The 1533 Wittenberg church order established Wednesday and Saturday after a sermon as the weekly days for the Litany: Loehe, *Agende*, 1:150–151. But the Saxon church order of 1539 and many others prescribed the Litany for use in preaching services on Wednesday or Friday: Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung*, 1:224; Loehe, *Agende*, 1:152. The Anglican Church, likewise, set these days as Wednesday and Friday: Cross, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "Litany, The (BCP)".

[53] Loehe, *Agende*, 1:152.

[54] Luther, *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg* (1530), AE 34:52–53.

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Research Notes

Demon Possession and Exorcism in Lutheran Orthodoxy

Over the past twenty years, the undersigned has made note of various statements on demonic possession and exorcism from the pastoral writings of Lutheran Orthodoxy. The translations are presented here as a resource for contemporary reflection on the proper diagnosis and pastoral care for suspected cases of bodily possession by demonic powers. Learning from classic Lutheran pastoral theology from before the Enlightenment is of great value for those Christians who believe that what the Scriptures describe (Mark 1:34) could still happen today.[1]

Definition

Johann Ludwig Hartmann (1640–1680):

> In general, satanic possession is nothing other than an action of the devil by which, with God's permission, men are urged to sin and he occupies their bodies in order that they might lose eternal salvation. Thus bodily possession is an action by which the devil, with divine permission, possesses both pious and impious men in such a way that he inhabits their bodies not only according to activity, but also according to essence, and torments them, either for the punishment or for the discipline and testing of men, and for the glory of divine justice, mercy, power, and wisdom.[2]

There are two kinds of demon possession. The first kind of demon possession is spiritual possession. All non-Christians are spiritually possessed by the devil. The devil has taken their souls captive and will take them to hell if they die while not believing in Christ. As Scripture says, we "were by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3).[3] But the devil does not control their bodies, necessarily, though he tries. Non-

[1] Among recent Lutheran books dealing with this topic, see Robert H. Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare: True Accounts from the Lutheran Church of Madagascar* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013); Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Pastoral Care Companion* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 354–362.

[2] Johann Ludwig Hartmann, *Pastorale Evangelicum, seu Instructio Plenior Ministrorum Verbi, Libris Quatuor, Pastoris Personam, Vitam, Spartam, & Fortunam sistens* (Norimbergae: Endter, 1722), 1160–1161.

[3] Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Christians can decide what they want to do; they lead normal lives. The Church's traditional exorcism at Baptism addresses this spiritual possession.[4]

The other kind of demon possession is physical possession. There are symptoms of this. According to Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617–1688), these include: knowledge of foreign languages that one has never learned; supernatural knowledge of secrets, far-off events, and the future; superhuman strength; ability to make accurate animal noises without having the necessary organs for this; vulgar speech; screaming; blasphemy; and convulsions.[5] The Lutheran Orthodox pastoral theologians emphasize that one should not mistake demon possession for a natural disease.[6] Not only can non-Christians be physically possessed, believers can be possessed in this way, too. Being possessed in this way does not, however, mean that a Christian ceases to be a believer and among the number of the saved.[7]

Treatment

> Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627):
>
> What is to be done with the possessed? And can the devil be cast out by using a certain method?
>
> 1. Let experienced physicians be consulted as to whether [there is a medical explanation.]
>
> 2. When a true possession is recognized, let the poor one be committed to the care of a minister of the church who teaches sound doctrine, is of a blameless life, does nothing for the sake of filthy lucre, but does everything from the soul.
>
> 3. Let him diligently inquire what kind of life the possessed one led up to this point and lead him through the law to the recognition of his sins. If he was previously pious, let him console him with the fact that even God sometimes leaves His people in the power of the devil for certain causes, which the histories of Job and Paul testify.
>
> 4. After this admonition or consolation has taken place, let also the works of a natural physician be used, who will cleanse him from malicious humors with the appropriate medicines. For, it has been ascertained that possessed

[4] See, for example, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, ed. David W. Loy, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 159–161.

[5] See Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 344.

[6] See Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 343–347.

[7] See Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 344.

people frequently suffer from a double disease, namely of body—from a melancholy humor—and of soul—for example, insanity, grief, weariness of life, desperation.

5. It is not necessary to bring him into the temple [church] in the sight of the people, as the custom is for many. Let the confession of the Christian faith be once required of him; let him be taught concerning the works of the devil destroyed by Christ; let him be sent back faithfully to this destroyer of Satan, Jesus Christ; let an exhortation be set up to faith in Christ, to prayers, to penitence.

6. Let ardent prayers be poured forth to God, not only by the ministers of the church, but also by the whole church. Let these prayers be conditioned, if the liberation should happen for God's glory and the salvation of the possessed person, for this is an evil of the body.

7. With the prayers, let fasting be joined; see Matt 17:21.

8. And alms by friends of the possessed person [should be given to the poor], Tobit 12:8–9.[8]

In summary, all things happen by prayers and the word.

If the [desired] effect does not immediately follow, remember that not even the adjurations of exorcists are always efficacious. And this benefit of going out [of the devil] is bodily; therefore, in prayers of this kind, the will of God must always be included. Thus He hears them not according to our will but for our help [according to what's best for us]. But the fact that our prayers for the possessed are not heard immediately and as we ask is due, among other things, to the unbelief of the possessed ones, who do not approach with certain faith, asking liberation from God. Therefore Christ said to the parent of a certain

[8] "Prayer is good with fasting and alms and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold: For alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin. Those that exercise alms and righteousness shall be filled with life" (Tobit 12:8–9, KJV). Balduin's meaning is that alms should be given to the poor by the friends of the possessed person, and this almsgiving should be joined with prayer. As a fruit of faith, there are certain divine promises connected with almsgiving. Cf. Ap IV (III) 157: "Alms also are the exercises of faith, which receives the remission of sins and overcomes death, while it exercises itself more and more, and in these exercises receives strength. We grant also this, that alms merit many favors from God [but they cannot overcome death, hell, the devil, sins, and give the conscience peace (for this must occur alone through faith in Christ)], mitigate punishments, and that they merit our defense in the dangers of sins and of death, as we have said a little before concerning the entire repentance" (W.H.T. Dau and F. Bente, eds., *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921], 199). On the use of the apocryphal books in early Lutheranism, see Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed., *The Apocrypha: The Lutheran Edition with Notes* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), xxi–xxiii.

demon-possessed one, "If you can believe the liberation of your son, it will happen."[9]

The following is an anecdote on how Luther handled exorcism. This has not been located in Luther's Works, so it should be regarded as an example of what Lutherans after Luther considered the right way to handle this situation. Whether Luther himself did or said this has not yet been proved.

[Jodocus] Höcker (d. 1566):[10]

Once, during the life of Dr. Martin Luther, a young woman was brought to Wittenberg who was born in the land of Meissen, who was often vexed and tormented by the devil. And a letter was written to blessed Dr. Martin that he should save and rescue this young woman, who was eighteen years old, from the evil spirit. When this virgin was brought to Dr. Martin, he asked her at that time whether she could say her faith [the creed]. She answered, "Yes." Then the blessed Dr. Martin commanded her to say it. As she now began and came to the article [of the creed] and these words, "And I believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord," she could no longer speak, but the evil spirit began to convulse and torment her. Then Dr. Luther spoke, "I know you well, you devil. You would really like it if someone would set up a big ceremony with you and celebrate you greatly. You will find none of that with me." Then he commanded that she be brought to his sermon in the church on the next day and afterwards be brought into the sacristy, and he told the other servants of the church to come into the sacristy too.

The virgin was obedient and came to the sermon of the doctor, but afterwards, when they wanted to bring her into the sacristy, she fell down and struck and convulsed around, so that several students had to carry her into the sacristy and lay her at the feet of blessed Dr. Martin, and they locked the door to the sacristy, and all the servants of the church with several students stayed therein.

Then Dr. Martin began and made this short admonition to the servants of the Church, which should be well observed by all preachers of the divine word who find themselves in the same situation, and they should do nothing different.

1. He began and spoke: "Now and at our time, people should not drive out devils as it was done at the time of the apostles and shortly thereafter, when it was necessary to do miracles and signs for the sake of the gospel, to confirm it

[9] Quoted in Ludovicus Dunte, *Decisiones Mille et Sex Casuum Conscientiae* (Ratzebur auffm Dohm, 1664), 100–101.

[10] The identity of this author is a conjecture. Another possibility is Jonas Hoecker (1581–1617), theologian in Württemberg.

as a new doctrine, which now and at our time is not necessary, since the gospel is not a new doctrine but has been sufficiently confirmed. And if anyone wants to drive them out as was done at that time, he tempts God," he said.

2. "One should also not drive out the devils with conjurations, by commanding, like some in the papacy and even some of our own people do, but one should drive them out with prayers and contempt. For the devil is a proud spirit who cannot stand prayer and despising but desires a ceremony. Therefore, no one should make a ceremony with him but should despise him as much as possible."

3. Dr. Luther spoke further: "One should drive out the devil with and through prayer in such a way that one prescribes for the Lord Christ no rule, no means and manner, no time or place when and how he should drive out the devils, for that would be tempting God. But we persist in prayer so long, knock and rap [at the door] so long, until God hears our prayer, as He Himself says, Matt 7, 'Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you.' But Uzziah, he tempts God by setting and prescribing the time for Him, in which He should help him, Judith 7. Therefore he is rightly rebuked by Judith, Judith 8."

4. Dr. Luther laid his right hand on the head of the virgin, just like one lays hands on those who are being ordained and consecrated to the preaching office. And he commanded the servants of the gospel to do the same, and commanded further that they speak after him: First, the Apostles' Creed. Next, the Our Father. Third, Dr. Luther spoke these words, John 14. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, that will He give to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." After these words, the blessed doctor called on God mightily and prayed that He would rescue and save the poor young woman from the evil spirit that was in her for the sake of Christ and of His holy name, that thereby He would be praised, honored, and glorified. After this prayer and admonition, he stepped away from the girl and shoved her with his foot, and mocked Satan, saying, "You proud devil, you would gladly see me set up a ceremony with you, but you will not experience that. I won't do it. Do what you want, I will not give up."

After this procedure, they took the young woman the next day back to Meissen from Wittenberg. And afterwards they wrote and reported several times to Dr. Luther and others that the evil spirit after this no longer tormented and convulsed the girl as previously.[11]

[11] Cited in Dunte, *Decisiones Mille et Sex Casuum Conscientiae*, 100–103.

One may notice here that this example is quite similar to the exorcism, ceremonies, and words used at Baptism in Luther's Baptismal Booklet: imposition of hands, Our Father, Creed, prayers.[12]

Benjamin T.G. Mayes

[12] Martin Luther, *Order of Baptism, Newly Revised* (1526), vol. 53, pp. 107–109, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986).

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Theological Observer

2017 Commencement Speech

What follows is the commencement address delivered by Dr. Gottfried Martens at Concordia Theological Seminary on May 19, 2017. Dr. Martens was also awarded the Doctor of Divinity degree, honoris causa, on this occasion. —The Editors

Dear future pastors and deaconesses, dear professors and colleagues in the ministry, and to all my sisters and brothers in Christ,

"You are the future of the church!"—Is it this what you expect to hear in a commencement speech? If you expected this, I will have to disappoint you: you are not the future of the church. I am not the future of the church—and I have never been it, and you will never be. If you want to know who the future of the church is, listen to Martin Luther, who never was the future of the church either. Still, he put it very precisely: "For after all, we are not the ones who can preserve the church, nor were our forefathers able to do so. Nor will our successors have this power. No, it was, is, and will be he who says, 'I am with you always, to the close of the age.'"[1]

You are not the future of the church—fortunately not. But as you are going to serve in Christ's church in the future, you are allowed to know that you work in an enterprise with eternal sustainability. You cannot say this about any other enterprise on earth. But it's true that you work in the enterprise with the best prospects that you can imagine at all. Well, I do not directly speak of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, even though I am totally convinced that the confessional Lutheran Church is, humanly speaking, the church of the future. But I speak of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, in whose service you will be called and who cannot be overcome even by the gates of hell. That's a good basis for a lifelong ministry, that's for sure!

But as we are not the future of the church, we have to concede that Christ very often builds his church against all our plans and expectations, and often enough against all our efforts. Christ is not religious background music for our own efforts to build the church as we would like to see her. Often enough, in fact, he slams doors in front of our nose, before he starts to open them again.

It was twenty-five years ago, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, that we realized in our work at St. Mary's Lutheran Church in Berlin-Zehlendorf that more and more Russian German migrants were coming to Germany from the former

[1] Martin Luther *Against the Antinomians* (1539): vol. 47, 91–120, in *Luther's Works, American Edition,* ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1971), 118.

Soviet Union. We visited them in their camps, brought them coffee and cake, even performed a Christian puppet play for them. I think we were pretty good. But nothing happened. Nobody came to church; nobody wanted to be baptized. "Well," I said, "at least we tried. Now we know they do not want to come. Let's look for a different task that we might tackle." But while we were still looking for this new task, suddenly twelve Russian Germans came to us after a church service and told me that they wanted to be baptized. Now, they knew almost no German, and I only knew "yes" and "no," "da" and "njet" in Russian—aside from words like wodka, which were not too helpful for the baptismal class. I tried to teach them Luther's Catechism with my hands and my feet; I still have no idea how much these twelve understood. But finally, I baptized them—and then in the ensuing months and years another four hundred Russian immigrants, with the result that we often heard more Russian than German in our church. We had to give up first, before Christ would start.

Nine years ago, two Iranian Christians came to our church in Zehlendorf. It is always nice to have a few Persians in the church. Then you can show that you are very tolerant and open-minded. There were just these two Iranians for one year, for two years, for three years. Nice, but nothing special; I did not expect anything from these two gentlemen. But then finally a third came, and then a fourth. And then, nearly six years ago, I baptized my first Iranian. Then I baptized the first female Iranian a couple of months later. Matthew Harrison preached on that day in our church. I do not know whether this was the reason, but during the following weeks more and more Iranians came to our church and wanted to be baptized. One year later we had almost a hundred of them in our church—and they were in the strange habit of coming to church every Sunday. It looked like a big success story, don't you think? A couple of weeks later I found a letter in my pastoral office. Members of our congregation had collected signatures telling me that they believed that I did not care about the real congregation anymore, that I only loved the refugees and that the members of the congregation were not willing to accept this any longer. One day later the board of elders approved of this letter as well, telling me that I should send these refugees away so that everything could be as nice as before in the congregation. I told them that if they sent the refugees away, I would go with them. And thus, I had to go.

That was four years ago (2013). My work had come to naught. I had totally failed in what I had done all the years before. People with whom I had worked for more than twenty years did not want me any longer. I had to move into an old church building a few miles away that the church had considered tearing down several times before because it was in such a bad condition. Almost nobody wanted to go to services there anyhow. Many laughed at me and told me that I would be without a job within six months, having only a group of Iranians and Afghans with

me who would certainly disappear after a short while. That's how our refugee work started in Steglitz—as a result of a deep disillusion, of a failure that absolutely brought me to my limits. Yet that's how Christ begins to build his church, showing us that we ourselves are certainly not the future of the church. Remember this when at some point in your ministry you realize that things are totally at odds with what you planned and expected. Christ has his own very special sense of humor.

Meanwhile, we now have more than 1,500 members in our church in Steglitz, 1,300 of them being refugees from Iran and Afghanistan. What did we do? We celebrated the Lutheran mass, at first once a week, then twice a week, then three times a week. We used the advantages that we have as Lutherans, namely, that you not only hear but see something in the worship service: vestments and liturgical gestures. You can feel something, such as when the pastor puts his hands on your head and forgives you your sins and when you receive with your mouth the holy body and blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrament. If as a refugee you do not speak a word of German, you are pretty much lost in a Protestant preaching service. But you know why you travel to church for three hours, as many of our members do, if you receive the Holy Absolution and the medicine of immortality there. It was not us, but Christ himself, who built this congregation by word and sacrament, and not by fancy inventions, not by clown ministries, but simply by the gifts that he himself distributed. What did we do in baptismal classes? We taught what is in Martin Luther's Small Catechism. We taught simply Law and Gospel. The refugees realized that this was *the* real contrast to Islam they were looking for. This was not even as close to Islam as the Reformed stuff that quite a few of them had experienced before as well. Let us never forget these treasures that we have in our Lutheran church. Do not get talked into thinking that these treasures are impediments for missions! Seeing the hundreds of young Afghans and Iranians in our church reverently receiving Holy Communion every week, you understand that we do not need special techniques. We Lutherans have much more to offer than Joel Osteen!

And do not forget what you have learned during your years here at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Sometimes we think that doing missions means forgetting theology. Nothing could be further from the truth than this. I never had to do so much theology in the classes and conversations in my congregation as I am doing now with my Iranian and Afghan refugees. Refugees are not simple-minded or stupid. Our Iranians and Afghans know their Bible and they like to discuss theology. You really have to know the Formula of Concord when you lead the Farsi Bible Class on Saturday and they start asking questions. Again and again you experience that the Book of Concord is not an old book, but it is so topical that it can answer the questions of former Muslims in the twenty-first century as well. And you really have to know your Bible, when, for example, they start to compare Bible

quotes or ask you about some expressions in the letter of Jude. Yes, it is good and necessary for you to continue your theological studies. Always be grateful for the theological basis that was laid in your lives during these years here in Fort Wayne. As a former Fort Wayne student, I know what I am talking about.

We as pastors and deaconesses are not the future of the church. We will not be able to effect faith in one single person. Even less so are we able to decide who should or should not come to our churches, who seems to fit into our congregations and who does not. Christ might have totally different plans for you and your congregation than what certain church growth programs try to tell you. I have always worked in parishes in wealthier parts of the city. But the people who joined our church were always people from the bottom of society. I still remember a rich lady from our congregation in Zehlendorf leaving our church with the words: "Now they are beginning to take in everybody here!" She could not have made a better compliment to us. Our Lutheran church is not a middle-class church, and we do not ensure our future by looking for new members with a decent salary. I acknowledge that we are grateful in Steglitz for American donors with a decent salary. We depend on miracles in our work. But it is so helpful to learn to pray the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer every day anew: just pray for the *daily* bread, for nothing more. Ask God to open your eyes that you begin to realize the wonderful promise that he has given to us in Matthew 25: that we serve the Lord himself by giving food to the least of his brothers who are hungry, by giving drink to the least of his brothers who are thirsty, by welcoming the least of his brothers who encounter us as strangers, as refugees, as migrants in our cities and neighborhoods. Central for our faith is that we encounter Christ himself in his word and sacrament, receiving his gifts for eternal life. But it is a real encouragement for our faith as well to realize that we encounter Christ in brothers and sisters who are treated like the garbage of society, who are defamed and calumniated, whose lives seem to have no value. It is not a sacrifice to work with these people, it is an incredible blessing. I am sure that Christ, our Lord, is willing to open many doors in the work with these kinds of people here in the United States as well. Do not try to lock these doors again, just because life in the congregation could be a bit less cozy afterwards. Gemütlichkeit is certainly a German word—but it is not a Lutheran word. And if you work with Christian refugees who had to leave their countries because of their faith, you can learn how to live in a society that is increasingly becoming anti-Christian in Europe and in the United States as well. Here in Germany our congregation has gotten the reputation of being a refugee church during the last years, not despite our theology, but because of our clear theological stance. Nobody is so deranged to suffer persecution for the values of liberal theology. I encourage you and your congregations to open your eyes

and open hearts to the blessings in places where you would not usually notice them. Never forget: the church is built by Christ, not by our personal preferences.

You are not the future of the church, my dear future deaconesses and pastors. But you are a great blessing and a great gift to the church—that's for sure. Christ does not want to build his church without you, even though he might have to build his church in spite of you from time to time. But he wants to use your mouths, yours hands, your arms and legs, your ears to reach people who so urgently need the gospel and to encourage those whom he has already led into his flock. He does not want to preserve and build his church without your ministry, without your skills and gifts. And he knows how to use you. Maybe it will just be your task to sow the seed, without seeing much fruit. Success is not a mark of the church, let alone that we are saved by success or church growth figures. In any case Christ will let you know in one way or the other that you are not the future of the church. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12:9) That's how Christ builds his church. That's how he builds his church with you as well. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Dr. Gottfried Martens

A Tribute to Donna Preus

The faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary notes with sadness the passing of Donna Preus on Thursday, May 11, 2017. She was the widow of the late Robert D. Preus (1924–1995), who, before serving as president of Concordia Theological Seminary (1974–1992), was a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1957–1974) and served as its chief operating officer during that seminary's critical period in the spring of 1974. Donna Preus is survived by nine children, among whom sons Daniel, Rolf, and Peter are graduates of Concordia Theological Seminary and serve as pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Two daughters, Katie Briel and Solveig Fiene, are married to LCMS pastors who are also graduates of our seminary. She was preceded in death in 2014 by her second son, Klemet Preus, a prolific writer who also was a graduate of our seminary and an LCMS pastor. Several of her grandsons are also graduates of our seminary and serve LCMS congregations. Donna remained at the side of her husband during the synod's critical years of the 1970s and supported him as seminary president in Fort Wayne. She was known for her faith in Christ and devotion to the Lutheran faith that was classically defined by her late husband. She was generous and hospitable to the seminary community during her husband's tenure as president. Her funeral service took place at St. John's Lutheran

Church in Corcoran, Minnesota, on Monday, May 15, 2017, with the Reverend Steven Briel officiating. Burial was in the adjacent church cemetery alongside her husband. Well known and admired throughout the LCMS for her steadfast loyalty to our Lutheran confession, Donna has left behind a lasting legacy that will not soon be forgotten. David P. Scaer represented President Lawrence R. Rast Jr. and Concordia Theological Seminary at her funeral. The words that follow were shared that day with her family and friends. —The Editors

In defining the theology of the Missouri Synod in the last half of the twentieth century, as no one else did, Robert Preus left an indelible imprint on the character of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, as the center of confessional theology. In performing this task from the time he started teaching at the St. Louis seminary in 1957, Donna was by his side to share his successes and sorrows. From time to time, Robert would propose a toast to the Holy Trinity, and so it would not be improper to draw an analogy from that: the doctrine in which the three divine persons are in perpetual conversation with each other. Robert and Donna were in constant conversation with each other, especially in the fourteen-hour drive from Fort Wayne to Gunflint. That conversation was theological, and she was his match. Like the Trinity, one person is no more or less than the others. If I close my eyes, I can still her hear interrupting him and saying, "Now, Robert . . . "

Hannah gave one son Samuel as a prophet, Donna gave four sons and, by adoption, two sons-in-law to preach justification by grace alone through faith in Christ. Hannah's grandsons, the sons of Samuel, did not turn out that well. Donna's did, and so Scripture is fulfilled (Det. 5:9–10). Donna came from ordinary circumstances and went on to live an extraordinary life. Everyone knew who she was, but at the center of the storms, she suffered in the successes and tragedies that befell Robert. It was like the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus in constant alteration, but in all things, she was the paragon of grace. Synodical barriers were never an obstacle to those she entertained. She set the standard for a seminary president's wife. Two months after Robert died, Donna returned to Fort Wayne for the 1996 confessional symposium. As Donna waited in the Appleseed Room in the Coliseum, she was elegantly dressed and greeted with ultimate grace those who had not returned in kind what they received from her and Robert. Here, it was as if the Lord's Prayer was coming to life: that we should forgive those who trespass against us. Symposium banquets are not for the weak of heart. Before it began, she took me aside and said, "Dave, go at it. That's the way Robert would want it."

That's Concordia Theological Seminary—confessional theology sprinkled with real life and humor—and that's the legacy of Robert and Donna. Donna survived Robert by almost twenty-two years. Robert used to say that when he got

to heaven, he wanted to talk with and about God. Now she has joined the conversation. Much of the earthly side of this discussion took place on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Our consolation is that we listened to it and, from time to time, took part in it. There is not too much more to be said.

David P. Scaer

Culture: Friend or Foe?[1]

For a time it had become—and still is—chic to war from the pulpit about the encroachment of culture into church life. Let me give you two cases. In a faculty lecture series a professor from Luther Seminary (St. Paul, MN) recently spoke of the dangers of culture intruding into the church. In the question period following the presentation, I called attention to the quota system based on race and gender used in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) since its founding in 1988 in choosing church officers, and that church's more recent decisions to ordain women and homosexual clergy and to allow for same-sex marriages. This is cultural intrusion in spades. Quota standards in the ELCA reflect percentages in the general population at the time of its founding and not actual membership of the church. Since its founding, there have been shifts in the general population and in that church's membership. Minority status is not a permanent condition. Proposals to enlist minority groups into its membership have yet to succeed. In line with the majority culture, the ELCA health insurance plans pay for abortions. Apart from its congregations conducting Sunday morning worship services, the ELCA is hardly distinguishable from the predominant American culture, but the same thing could be said of the United Church of Christ and other mainline denominations. If American culture is in moral decline—a favorite topic for conservative pundits—so is mainline Protestantism. Catholicism is also a leaking ship. By far the most recognizable critic was the late erstwhile LCMS and ELCA pastor and then Roman Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus. It would be hard to find someone as countercultural as he was.

Now to the second case of assumed cultural sensitivity. One preacher—and he is not alone—could hardly preach a sermon without warning of the intrusion of culture as the enemy of Christian life. In fact the word "culture" popped up in most sermons. He continues to serve the church faithfully, but like other clergymen he

[1] "Culture: Friend or Foe?" was the theme of The 38th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions held on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana from January 21 through January 23, 2015. Following is the introduction to the symposium.

has given himself to playing golf, enjoying the finer restaurants, and obtaining tickets to prominent collegiate sporting events. Keeping up with the Joneses is as much a cultural pursuit as cultural changes in mainline Protestantism.

Like time, culture is more easily described than defined. Each period of time has its own culture and each culture is limited by place and time. No culture lasts forever. If you haven't noticed—and you have—our children live in a different universe than we do. If we attempt to preserve a particular period with its culture, we soon discover that it slips away like sand through our hands. Culture is like time in being in constant flux, and it separates one generation from another and one people from another. Particular times can be identified with its prominent persons. The Age of Aquarius is not the Age of Queen Victoria, and fervent nostalgia will not revive the past. For the LCMS, the Preus era is now gone and it is recalled with mixed emotions. In Pauline terms, culture is the atmosphere in which we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28) and, expanding the Pauline metaphor further, culture is divine-like and in our lives it can replace God. Luther came close to saying this in his explanation of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism. Culture provides the raw materials out of which we create our egos. The church has its own culture but it can thrive in one culture more easily than in another. All cultures are not equal, especially so far as the church is concerned. A culture permeated with feminism provides an environment in which a church is more likely to begin ordaining and continuing to ordain women. With the loss of the distinction between men and women, homosexual clergy and marriage were inevitable. Abortion allows for thinking that all lives might be expendable.

Since the 1960s one cultural shoe in the West has fallen after another. These Herculean changes for those of us who have memories of the 1950s were eggs laid in the Enlightenment, hatched in the French revolution, and have long since taken to wing. God, moral restraints, and all things ecclesiastic have in some circles become cultural relics. Sands carried by cultural winds seep through the church's unsealed door frames, but in some cases churches have opened the gates and sung Hosannas of welcome to the Trojan horses. The rainbow, the symbol of God's promise not to destroy the world with water, is now a sign of welcome to all ideologies. Once inside the fortress, the Greeks tear down the walls and so a culture once calling itself Christian is indistinguishable from the culture that surrounds it.

Nostalgia as the Search for a More (Nearly) Perfect Culture

Nostalgia is the desire for a past time whether or not we have personally experienced it. Fort Wayne's late September Johnny Appleseed Festival sees ever larger crowds as do Civil and Revolutionary War reenactments with participants dressed

in period clothing. Call it "manufactured tradition."[2] Local radio station 101.7 offers classical music and "classical" refers not to eighteenth century baroque but tunes of the 1960s and 1970s. High school class reunions take us back to an earlier culture, but none of us look as good as we once thought we did. Here on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, we sponsor the annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions, suggesting that if we could revive the sixteenth century, life would better. Unstated is that theirs was the better world. *Ad fontes* says it all, but the journey into the past is not without its pitfalls. Biennial symposia on the classics at our seminary bring alive the treasures of ancient Greece and Rome. Not everything was all that rosy. Post-Reformation Lutheranism could not resist the advances of eighteenth century rationalism. Left unmentioned is that Paul had little use for the wisdom of that world (1 Cor 1:20) and its way of life.

Running Away from Culture

Three centuries passed and some took to heart Paul's caution that the world had little to offer, finding solitude in desert caves. Monasteries provided refuge for the more social-minded who, in joining together, created another culture. But like all cultures, it carried within it the seeds of its own deterioration, climaxing with the closing of monasteries in the Reformation lands. Pietists discovered in their Sunday afternoon prayer meetings a religious culture superior to the established church's morning services. Moravians went one step further in establishing the *Herrenhut*, a community immune to the imperfections of surrounding culture. So Lutherans escaping a culture permeated by rationalism departed Saxony for Perry County to repristinate the world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with its confessions and theologians. Within months of laying down the cornerstone of their Zion on the Mississippi, the settlers learned their leader had succumbed to behaviors associated with the world. Facing dissolution on the banks of the Mississippi, they were convinced by C.F.W. Walther that a congregational form of government was the way Luther thought the New Testament defined church organization. What resulted had an uncanny resemblance to what Puritans had put together in New England two centuries earlier, and so German immigrants were on the road to Americanization. Whatever that is, it is at least a culture. Introduction of the English language brought Lutherans closer to the Protestant mainstream and LCMS acculturation was crowned when its congregations found a place in their sanctuaries for the national flag. Any suggestion of removing Old Glory would now be considered sacrilege.

[2] Eric Hobsbawn and Terrance Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambrige, UK: Cambridge Press, 1983).

Culture as the Monkey on the Back

The word "culture" can be twisted in several directions. A person with manners, education, and clipped accent is considered and considers himself cultured, but each person carries around on his back the culture in which he was raised. We may attempt to adopt another culture than the one in which we were brought up, but inevitably the facade crumbles and who and what we are comes to the surface. You can take the boy out of the country, but you cannot take the country out of the boy. A seminary student brought up on the farm feels abandoned in being assigned to an urban congregation—and his wife more so. The reverse is also true. Culture provides our comfort zone in which we live and move and have our being. Marriage counselors ply their profession in getting each spouse to come to terms with the culture of the other. Laity leaving one congregation for another have to come terms with another culture—so does the pastor in accepting a new assignment. Statistics exist showing that the way in which one's congregation worships is more determinative in what its members believe than denominational membership. For those pulling up their roots and moving, each congregation is at first terra incognita. Never-to-be-resolved controversies over hymns and liturgy are as much about culture as it is about theology. Those who left the synod in the 1970s for reasons of conscience had to adapt to the culture of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), but some acted like the Missourians they really were in insisting in having things their own way. This did not fit into the culture of the newly formed synod that was an assimilation of cultures, and the former Missourians were regarded and regarded themselves as aliens. Those who have climbed over the fences in search of greener pastures predestined themselves to spend their lives with one eye on the rearview mirror looking at pastures that looked greener than the ones for which they left. This is especially so of the clergy, who cannot as easily as the laity pull up stakes and replant themselves in fields they left behind. A few prodigals, however, have shifted into reverse and returned to the welcoming arms of the mother synod. Going from one to church to another and back to where they came was as much a matter of culture as theology. Culture makes us what we are and how we think, and we can never escape it. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher created a theology out of culture. Only when we step out of one culture into another do we recognize cultural distinctions. To borrow philosophical and dogmatical terms, only in confronting the antithesis, do we recognize and appreciate the thesis.

Israel as Failed Cultural Experiment

In terms of the New Testament the church is the household of God (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17) and ideally its culture should be distinct from its external

environment. Of course it isn't. Accounts of how God's people succumbed to culture is what the Old Testament is all about. In looking back at the burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife had second thoughts about the world she was leaving behind. Prohibitions against Israel intermarrying outside the tribe assumed that alien cultures were destructive of the faith God gave Abraham. After her eldest son Esau married a Hittite and exacerbated the cultural adulteration by taking a Canaanite as a second wife, Rebecca sent her younger son Jacob to marry one of her brother's daughters to insure cultural consanguinity. Jacob sealed the connection by marrying not one but two of his cousins and then nailed things down by marrying their maids. Unbeknownst to Jacob, the lovely Rachel had taken the household gods with her and, with them, had made an attempt to preserve the familial culture (Gen 31:34).

In spite of sibling rivalries, cultural unity is more easily preserved when it is "all in the family." Family as community shares common customs and discourse. Those on the outside never get the jokes, sort of like first year-seminary students in the fall term. Etymologically the word "culture" has to do with both religion and the cultivation of the earth. Putting two and two together, culture dealing with the things of the world has the power to draw us away from worship of the true God. Mother earth is God's goddess rival. Environmental concerns have religious undertones: the earth is autonomous, and so we are back to the eighteenth century Deism.

In the increasing cultural kaleidoscope in which our pastors work, immunity to cultural changes is no longer possible, no more now than it was in biblical times. (For example, Fort Wayne, whose German Lutheran roots go back almost two centuries, has the largest Burmese population in the United States.) Cultural infection is not only possible but probable at every level of church life. The challenge in preaching is speaking a word of God that is immediately accessible to the hearer to lay bare his situation without absorbing the world, in which he lives, into the message. This is more easily said than done, but it is a task that cannot be avoided. Another option is adjusting the culture to fit the beliefs of the church. This is easier said than done, but has been done at least partially and never permanently. Constantine did it 1,700 years ago as did Luther five hundred years ago. Calvinism and Arminianism have theological premises which are adverse to Lutheranism, but they provided the religious climate in which the LCMS was planted and thrived. One particular culture does not last forever. Primitive cultures on both sides of the Atlantic that sacrificed their prized youth were readjusted. Cultures can be adjusted—yes, corrected. German National Socialism that sent Jews to the gas chambers belongs to history, but that culture was changed. A culture that allows for

abortion and same-sex marriage is also capable of readjustment. Here the church as church, and not just Christian as Christian, has a task.

David P. Scaer

A Living Breathing Instrument and Its CPR

I did my vicarage at Trinity Lutheran in Norman, Oklahoma under the supervision of the great Pastor David Nehrenz. Some thirty years later, Nehrenz remains Trinity's pastor, and has a great story to tell.

You are sure to recall the tragic Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. McVeigh's madness took 168 lives, and injured hundreds more. The bomb's tremors reached a nearby Methodist church, damaging its pipe organ, the oldest in the state. Another great instrument seemed destined for the dumpster. But in stepped the American Organ Institute at the University of Oklahoma, an industrious graduate student named Evan, and the great folks at Trinity Lutheran. The pipe organ, as Pastor Nehrenz notes, is a living, breathing instrument, and now that organ has been brought back to new life, and a new home after having been relocated to Trinity. It is a true organ donation. Think Toy Story. Every organ loves to be played, and to have people who sing hymns along with it.

While an explosion nearly took the life of this instrument, many other pipe organs have been lost to our cultural implosion, and to our church's deflated confidence and loss of identity. It would seem that the king of instruments has been dethroned by poorly played guitars, drum kits, and cheesy keyboards. And with it, our churches have been flooded with songs not good enough musically to compete on the pop charts, not good enough lyrically to be remembered after lunch, not worth singing with our grandchildren, and offering so very little on our deathbed.

Ah, but this organ has been restored, revived. Would that the ideas of the American Organ Institute spread like wildfire, and, with that, a love for true hymns, the great music of the church. No, this is not simply about taste, but the recognition that while we bemoan the things of this world, our very own churches have modeled themselves on that world. Instead of changing the world, we are ever more conforming to it. The less our churches look like churches, the less they *are* like churches. The less they sing the hymns of the church, the less they carry on the memory of the church. Replace the altar with a stage, and the Lord's Supper gets tossed out too. Do this in remembrance of nothing much at all.

What do I want in a church? I want a church that is proud to be church. Not afraid of its shadow, it is a church that embraces its past, which is also its future. Trinity Norman, Evan, and the great folks at OU have done something wonderful.

Three cheers for Pastor Nehrenz. May the same pipe organ that received CPR accompany Christ's life-giving Spirit for many years to come. Through this church, the song goes on.

Peter J. Scaer

Prayerfully Consider

"Maybe I could be a pastor..."
"Maybe I could be a deaconess..."

Prayerfully Consider Visit

This is a three-day event for men and women of all ages to contemplate the vocations of pastor and deaconess. Explore the campus of CTSFW, engage with students and faculty, and experience rich fellowship and worship. Find more information at www.ctsfw.edu/PCV.

Christ Academy and Phoebe Academy College

At this four-day event, undergraduate men and women experience for themselves what seminary life is like. Come sit in on classes, get to know professors and students, and worship with the CTSFW community. More information is available at www.ctsfw.edu/CAC for Christ Academy College or www.ctsfw.edu/PAC for Phoebe Academy College.

Whom Shall I Send?

The Lord Jesus sends pastors to local congregations and into all the world to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. The Gospel is embodied in particular places through tangible means of grace, not just downloaded from online. The need for pastors continues. Who will take your place? Send us your men. Refer promising young and mature men to CTSFW. Call us at 800.481.2155 or email Admission@ctsfw.edu.

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***Lives & Writings of the Great Fathers of the Lutheran Church.* Edited by Timothy Schmeling. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016. 320 pages. Softcover. $25.99.**

This excellent book is a real treat for all lovers of Lutheran orthodoxy. The average Lutheran pastor has had little in the way of resources about this topic prior to this publication. Now he can find everything he might want in a single, handy reference tool. In twenty-one chapters, seventeen authors cover twenty-one Lutheran theologians and pastors from the orthodox period (ca. 1580–1675). Each chapter focuses on a single Lutheran father in three ways: a biographical précis; a select bibliography of his major writings; and a single sample of that author's writing. Each bibliography includes a list of works translated into English, where those are available.

Editor Timothy Schmeling is to be highly commended for his labors in gathering together an all-star cast of scholar-authors, starting with the introduction from the present "dean" of the history of Lutheran orthodoxy, Saint Louis seminary's Dr. Robert Kolb. Other authors are from various orthodox Lutheran synods, including the Evangelical Lutheran Synod—the editor's home base, the Lutheran Church-Canada, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche, as well as one contribution from a professor at the Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo. Many of the scholar-authors are younger men, which bodes well for the future of orthodox Lutheranism in their respective synods.

More than just a reference work, this book could be used as a textbook for college, graduate school, or seminary classes on the subject. For pastors and others familiar with Lutheran theology, it may also serve as edifying devotional material.

Martin R. Noland
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San Mateo, California

***Reformation 500: The Enduring Relevance of the Lutheran Reformation*. Edited by Curtis Jahn. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2017. 262 pages. Hardcover. $37.99.**

Reformation 500 is a collection of essays devoted to demonstrating that the Reformation is not merely a historical phenomenon, but a continuing influence shaping the Lutheran church even in the present day. Produced by the Wisconsin Synod, it is primarily an "in-house" document. Non-Wisconsin Synod readers may be puzzled, for example, by references to Christian Worship and occasionally the Wauwatosa theologians. This does not mean that other readers cannot benefit from it, but rather that its intended audience is somewhat narrow.

The ten articles, mostly popular in tone and focused primarily on Luther, are of uneven quality. Some tend to rely too much on block quotations. That being said, readers may well find *Reformation 500* a welcome refresher on the importance of the Reformation, and some articles, such as Wade Johnston's article on Matthew Flacius, are bound to be helpful for many.

Zelwyn Heide
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Grassy Butte, North Dakota

***Sexual Morality in a Christless World*. By Matthew Rueger. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016. 178 pages. Softcover. $14.99**

Matthew Rueger has provided the Missouri Synod with a solidly Lutheran resource for the parish. With a doctorate in his subject matter, he is thoroughly conversant with the scholarly literature. He brings to the table the practical knowledge of a quarter-century in the parish and first-hand experience with students at a secular university.

Dr. Rueger uses these gifts to digest for us the historical, exegetical, practical, clinical, and theological contours of contemporary challenges to sexual ethics. His engaging and conversational style makes an incredible amount of information accessible. If a Lutheran pastor were to read only one book on the subject, this ought to be the book.

Chapters on the Roman and Jewish context of the Biblical texts prepare the reader for a thoughtful survey of the relevant passages determinative for Christian sexual ethics. All this leads up to a sensitive yet faithful approach toward those who struggle against sexual sins. This pivotal chapter is worth the price of the book. It reveals how the minds of same-sex attracted people are often quite different

from the activists that dominate the spotlight, and it helps those who love them better to care for them with Christ's word.

Concluding chapters survey the clinical research and natural law arguments for marriage. Finally, Rueger brings us back to the gospel to remind *seelsorgers* that this is what every sinner is ultimately crying to hear.

Rueger understands and lives in the dynamics of law and gospel. This, together with his thorough understanding of the subject matter, his Lutheran training, and his pastoral perspective make *Sexual Morality in a Christless World* an outstanding resource. It is the kind of resource that pastors can comfortably pass along to parishioners in full confidence that they will encounter neither legalism nor liberalism, but solid scholarship presented from a pastoral heart.

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Evanston, Wyoming
Pastor, Saint Paul Lutheran Church
Kemmerer, Wyoming

***The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg.* By Robin A. Leaver. Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies, ed., John D. Witvliet. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 162 pages + appendices and index. Softcover. $16.56.**

The impetus for the writing of this book seems to have been a desire to demonstrate that congregational singing in Wittenberg was not an afterthought of the Reformation, notwithstanding the claims of other scholars to the contrary. Those claims are buttressed in the main by dates of publication, especially the date of 1529 attached to a significant Wittenberg hymnal. What Leaver shows in thorough and masterful fashion, accompanied with copious documentation, is that those claims are unsupportable. Significantly, the existence of a Wittenberg *Enchyridion* in 1526, which was itself the product of earlier editions, and of Johann Walter's 1524 *Chorgesangbuch*, shows that vernacular singing was a prominent concern of the Reformers dating from 1523 at the least. "The long-standing assumption—that the first Wittenberg hymnal was choral and primary and that the congregational counterpart [of 1529] was secondary and later—can no longer be maintained" (116).

Leaver's research also reveals, even apart from the virtually irrefutable evidence, the historical likelihood that the phenomenon of congregational singing would have accompanied the Reformation from its onset. His chapter on pre-Reformation folk singing is a fascinating foray into the cultural life of the common folk, whose news was usually transmitted across the land in just this way, via *Volkslieder*. A major

feature of this book is a demonstration of the significant contribution of music toward the success of the Reformation. "Every aspect of life was put into songs, especially the things that were deeply felt, such as one's religious beliefs" (81). Folk songs soon popped up whose subject was Martin Luther himself. The culture was already ripe for the onset and use of Lutheran hymns in worship, and Leaver asserts convincingly that "[t]he Reformation may have begun in 1517, but it can be argued that only after 1523, when the hymns first began to appear, did it really begin to take hold" (7).

The development of the printing press is something that is customarily associated with the success of the Reformation, but what Leaver's research emphasizes is what the printing press specifically produced, in addition to Luther's works, that was profoundly helpful: an increasing number of German songs that circulated not only orally, but on broadsheets or pamphlets. The great popularity of this music even led to the spontaneous interruption of popular songs at the Christmas Eve Mass at the parish church in Wittenberg in 1521. Traditionalists reported this to the Elector as part of an attempt to depict the crowd as unruly, but Leaver suggests, in view of the subject matter of these songs, a greater likelihood that it was more of an expression of religious devotion (44).

Some customary aspects of folk singing were adapted by the Reformers in the crafting of their hymns. Most notably, Luther took advantage of the use of a single and popular melody for more than one song. "He was fully aware of the fundamental role that music would have to play in the introduction of new hymns into Wittenberg worship, since collectively they gave the congregation a much greater role in singing than had been the custom hitherto" (79).

Additionally, many of Luther's hymns were written in bar form, "the mark of a skillful Meistersinger." One may often hear a Luther scholar dispelling the misinformed interpretation of that term as an indication that Lutheran hymns were adaptations of songs that were sung in bars: "bar form," they will rightly point out, and as Leaver also indicates (chapter 2) is a reference to the structure of the song. Curiously, however, this study suggests that the Lutheran hymns may well have been sung in taverns, "printed on single sheets, sung by ballad singers, and pasted on the walls of inns and other public places" (79); for music was critical to the success of the Reformation, in ways that Leaver's most helpful research makes abundantly clear, even more so than one might have thought.

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***1 Samuel.* By Andrew E. Steinmann. Concordia Commentary Series. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016. 636 pages. Hardcover. $54.99.**

Andrew Steinmann has written a commentary of 1 Samuel for the Concordia Commentary Series that is rich in grammatical notes, well informed by his own previous exegetical work and study of biblical chronology, and faithful to the Lutheran confessions. A forty-page introduction provides enough background to orient the reader to critical theories, historical issues, literary features, and theological themes in 1 Samuel, but the commentary's focus is on the text itself. Because of this brevity, there are no separate discussions of 1 Samuel's literary structure or relating the book's contents to the prior biblical history of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. In contrast to the way some authors handle 1 Samuel, Steinmann's approach reads it as more than a narrative about Samuel, Saul, and David, the central human characters. The book's purpose "is to portray a God who deals patiently and mercifully with sinners—Israel as a whole as well as its leaders" (9). He understands David as "a prefiguration of Christ" (25), highlights the role of God's anointed, and explores the priestly, kingly, and prophetic offices in 1 Samuel. Pastors will also find the commentary helpful in answering questions about polygamy, the Urim and Thummim, the evil spirit that came upon Saul, and his interaction with the medium at En-dor.

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***The People beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below*. Edited by Joseph A. Marchal. Early Christianity and its Literature. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015. 338 pages. Softcover. $43.95.**

The working group producing the twelve chapters in *The People beside Paul* has been meeting since 2005, but various "popular uprisings and populist demonstrations" (including Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement) have had a decided influence also (1). White male elitism and scholarship too much given to "anachronistic" creeds, councils, and Christology are held suspect (10), so Marchal and his collaborators fixate upon populist history "from below" and methodological approaches that "cut against the grain"—namely, feminism and queer theory (e.g., 16–17 n. 49, 19, 148, 151, 155–156, 176). It may be wondered why Missouri Synod Lutheran professors should read such literature, let alone pastors. All I can say is that—like it or not—New Testament academic scholarship has moved off in the directions

of marginalized social history recently, so it behooves some of us to become conversant with current trends and inform the church. Besides, not all the offerings are bad. Some, indeed, are at least provocative, and even helpful, for the type of theology Missouri needs to be producing in our day.

Take the chapter by Peter Oakes (University of Manchester), "The Economic Situation of the Philippian Christians" (63–82). According to Oakes, the Philippian congregation was comprised of the descendants of those Greek-speaking, indigenous farmers who were dispossessed of their lands following Mark Anthony and Octavian's victory at Philippi in 42 B.C. It was a particularly "brutal" colonization ("the victors could take whatever they wanted," 66), leading to a congregation in Paul's day of perhaps 20–50 members who really had to scrimp to support Paul's Macedonian ministry (cf. Phil 4:18; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Cor 11:8). Against the traditional assumption that the Philippians were well off financially, Oakes supposes that Paul and the congregations to whom he wrote were poor and anti-establishment, if not anti-Roman (for this bias elsewhere in the volume see 142, 225–226, 252–253, 287). Granted, economic suffering could have been part of the situation at Philippi (see Phil 1:29), but it need not follow that Paul and Christians there were anti-Roman—and all but social revolutionaries. Why, for example, does Paul resort in the letter to the sort of military metaphors (e.g., Phil 1:27–28; 4:3) that can only have made a Philippian congregant proud? And when Paul asserts that he and the Philippians' πολίτευμα ("commonwealth") is in the heavens from which we await as "Savior" (σωτῆρα) the "Lord Jesus Christ (κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, Phil 3:20), he shamelessly panders to Roman imperial sensitivities—sensitivities, in short, that would have been shared by scads of bureaucrats and middlemen of which the Roman world was so full. My guess is that Paul meant to welcome into the Philippian assembly swaggering Romans too who struggled with sins of "selfish ambition and vainglorying" (2:3) and not merely the poor and disenfranchised. Quite a few of the volume's other chapters suffer from this same defect, especially the amazing essay by two Floridian fair-food activists, entitled, "Determining What is Best: the Campaign for Fair Food and the Nascent Assembly in Philippi" (247–283). But Paul in particular, and the NT in general, favors legitimate government and paying one's taxes, not social anarchy (Rom 13:1–7; Phil 4:8–9). The prospect of a radicalized Paul that this volume consistently puts forward does not ring true.

Another remarkable chapter is by Angela Standhartinger (Philipps-Universität, Marburg), "Letter from Prison as Hidden Transcript: What it Tells us about the People at Philippi" (107–140). Paul was "in chains" when he wrote the letter (1:7, 13, 14, 17) but just where he was—Rome, Caesarea, or Ephesus—and the circumstances of his imprisonment are hard to determine. Standhartinger finds "implausible" (109) the image of Paul's imprisonment drawn from Acts, so points

out, e.g., that during the period of his house arrest in Rome recounted in Acts 28 Paul seems to have had nearly "complete freedom of movement" (111 n. 14). However, the picture recoverable from Paul's own letters—including Philippians—is of more vexatious confinement (e.g., 1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 6:4–5; 1 Thess 2:2) and such hardship sets the stage for Standhartinger's "hidden transcript": prisoners in Roman jails were routinely subjected to severe physical abuse, deprivations of many types, and—above all—malicious scrutiny by jailers bent on gathering incriminating evidence not only against the imprisoned but their letter recipients supposed to be coconspirators (119–124). Thus, the language was often "coded"—meaning that efforts were made to communicate with supporting communities with phraseologies that could not have incriminated them (cf. "defense and confirmation of the gospel," 1:7, 16; "my affairs," 1:12; 2:23; "his own interests," 2:4; "interests of others," 2:4, etc) but would have been "nothing but religious nonsense" (130) to outsiders. Standhartinger's piece helps one come to terms with the "loaded" language many suggest Philippians contains.

In my opinion, the essays by Oakes and Standhartinger are best, though much scholarship remains to engage a confessional Lutheran reader. It seems to me that confessional Lutheran exegesis has nothing to fear from such scholarship, though it is impossible here to provide suitable responses to everything given space constraints. Here is a list of the other chapter titles and scholars' names to suggest the scope of the overall project: "Philippian (Pre)Occupations and People Possibilities: an Introduction" (Joseph A. Marchal), "Priestesses and Other Female Cult Leaders at Philippi in the Early Christian Era" (Valerie Abrahamsen), "Collaboration of 'Samothakiasts' and Christians in Philippi" (Eduard Verhoef), "Slaves as Wo/men and Unmen: Reflecting upon Eudodia, Syntyche, and Epaphroditus in Philippi" (Joseph A. Marchal), "Out-Howling the Cynics: Reconceptualizing the Concerns of Paul's Audience from His Polemic in Philippians 3" (Mark D. Nanos), "An Alternative Community and an Oral Encomium: Traces of the People in Philippi" (Robert L. Brawley). The response chapters are written by Richard S. Ascough, Antoinette Clark Wire, and Richard A. Horsley. Given the different approaches, the book cannot help but be uneven at times (I counted typographical errors, split infinitives, and Greek mistakes on pages 104, 117, 135 n. 101, 160, 167, 209, 212, 215, 219, 257, 263, 268 n. 37, 270, 272, 280, 283). The volume also contains Acknowledgments, Abbreviations, Bibliography, Contributors, Author Index, and Subject Index.

John G. Nordling

***The Wittenberg Reformation (1545).* By Philipp Melanchthon. Translated by John R. Stephenson. (With *The Household of God: Observations on "Church" in the New Testament and the City of Ephesus.* By Thomas M. Winger). St. Catherines, Ontario: Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2016. 60 pages. Softcover. $11.95**

In 1545, Charles V requested a report on the Reformation. This is the first English translation of the response written by Philipp Melanchthon, which is essentially both a commentary on the Augsburg Confession and a description of how the Reformation was put into practice. At the end of Luther's life and influence there was still agreement among the Wittenberg divines so that Luther, Bugenhagen, Major, and Melanchthon could sign it.

Attached is an exegetical essay by Thomas M. Winger, presented to the Lutheran Church–Canada's East District Pastors Conference in April 2016 on Church Order.

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***On the Law. Theological Commonplaces: XV–XVI.* By Johann Gerhard. Edited by Benjamin T.G. Mayes and Joshua J. Hayes. Translated by Richard J. Dinda. St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015. 362 pages. Hardcover. $54.99.**

In a contemporary setting in which the very meaning of "law" varies widely, even among theologians, whether as the natural law, the eternal divine law, God's condemning legislation, works of love, or even human edicts, this new publication in English of Gerhard's commonplaces on the law takes a confident place in traditional Lutheranism. For Gerhard, the law, biblically speaking, is simply the statements of what ought to be done and what ought to be avoided, according to the divine will. The law falls into three familiar categories: moral, ceremonial, and civil or "forensic."

This threefold division—at least of the Mosaic law itself—has been criticized in recent years with the counter-position that ancient Israel made no such distinction, but understood the covenantal character of the Mosaic law, such that everything communicated by the Lord via Moses was integral to the covenant. Not merely the decrees, but the whole narrative of the Pentateuch is a constituting document of the old covenant. Along these lines, interesting contemporary research challenges the general assumption that the term "law" (*nomos*/*torah*) in the Bible usually refers to principles or decrees in favor of a definition of law as "covenant narrative" or the

like. These discussions in turn are significant in that they raise the question of the relation of the Mosaic law to the Christian. Does the Mosaic law only accuse? Is obedience to it expected? Or does the law have a broader role as both accusation and typological prophecy? Is it a kind of wisdom literature which assumes meditation, inward delight, and prudential, expansive application to life? For an excellent, recent contribution in this area, see Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013).

For his part, Gerhard engages the law as morally accusing and instructive, but also as typological of Christ and the gospel. The primary purpose of the ceremonial law is to look forward to the coming Christ, and his sections treating the ceremonial law present passages in some detail according to this view. Some sections are quite long and even somewhat repetitive, although in some cases this length is due to numerous biblical quotations. Sometimes it would have been appreciated if Gerhard had not just strung quotations together, but had developed his explanation of these passages in interesting ways with reference to the passages presented for consideration.

Regarding the moral law, Gerhard structures his treatment in line with the Ten Commandments. This treatment of the moral law is especially interesting in the way that he explains the meaning of the commandments far beyond the brief summaries in the Small Catechism. One example is his treatment of the Third Commandment. Not only is assembling for the Divine Service required by this commandment, but avoiding activities which would distract or undermine the use and meditation on the word of God. Rest for servants—employees and workers of all kinds—is required to be offered. Gerhard also elaborated on the benefits of prayer and meditation. In Gerhard's treatment of all the Ten Commandments we see that their broad scope finds concrete exercise in numerous and various practices to be pursued and vices to be avoided. Reflection on Gerhard's guidance, whether the reader agrees or disagrees, will deepen his understanding and practice of love for God and neighbor.

The volume is published in a sturdy hardcover binding that will endure through many years (although the gold-colored foil stamp of my copy has started to wear after several months of moderate use). The book will be of great value to theologians, historians, pastors, and interested lay people.

Gifford A. Grobien

***Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Second Edition. By Richard Bauckham. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, 2017. 680 pages. Hardcover. $50.00.**

"We worship the Christ of faith, not the Jesus of history." "The Gospel accounts, written years after the fact, are not reliable historical sources." "The gospel stories are the result of a kind of Telephone game, in which a story, told and retold, takes on a whole different shape." "The gospels are a third—sometimes fourth—generation recollection of Jesus's actual deeds and words." "People originally thought of Jesus as a good teacher, and only years later did they confess him as Savior, Lord, and God." These are the stories told in our public universities. They are the tales spun at almost every liberal seminary, and throughout our popular culture. This is the kind of stuff that has made Bart Ehrman not only a minor celebrity, but the favorite New Testament scholar of skeptics and Muslims alike. But it is all wrong.

For those interested in how it really happened, try Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, now in a second edition. The stories of Jesus were not fabricated out of whole cloth. How could they be? There were too many people who saw and heard him. While the Twelve formed the foundational witness to Christ, the minor characters also played a role. No fiction writer would ever include the bewildering array of women named Mary. But they were present at the death and at the tomb, and that is why they are mentioned. Simon of Cyrene was an eyewitness, and so was Bartimaeus, once he was no longer blind.

In a fascinating turn, Bauckham examines the names in the Gospel accounts, and he does so over and against the names common to Palestine in the 1930s. He checks the scriptural account and matches it with names found on papyri, including legal and financial documents. Think of our own time. Heather was a popular name in the 1980s, not so much now. Fashions come and go. So also were certain names found in the inscriptions of the time, not to be found in later decades. Certain name were popular in Palestine, but not in the diaspora.

The second edition is not vital to Bauckham's overall argument, which remains essentially unchanged. He does, however answer his critics, including an excellent chapter on the "Eyewitnesses in Mark." Here he revisits the special role of Peter, as well as the minor witnesses, including the women. He also does a splendid job of comparing Mark to other classical works, demonstrating that Mark was not alone in including minor characters as further testimony to the history he records. Bauckham's additional chapter on the Beloved Disciple, whom he identifies as a Jerusalem disciple other than John the Son of Zebedee, is also fascinating, if not

convincing. Perhaps Bauckham could be helped here if he considered an early dating for John. This, however, in no way detracts from the book's value.

If you already own the first edition, the second is not a necessity. If you do not, buy it now. And, if you have a friend or loved one who has taken Bart Ehrman as scripture, buy a copy for him, too.

Peter J. Scaer

***Lutherans in America: A New History*. By Mark Granquist. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. 375 pages. Softcover. $60.00.**

In this volume, Mark Granquist, professor of Church History at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, aims to tell the story of Lutherans in America from the ground up. While he admits he must detail the narrative of "denominational structures, schools, hospitals, social service agencies and the like," he is more eager to "tell the individual and social history of Lutherans in America, their own struggles to live lives of faith and to adapt to a new and different religious culture" (2). It is ironic that Granquist does not succeed in putting forward a comprehensive story of Lutheran individual and congregational experience in America. The book is not primarily focused on interpreting such stories. However, he does do fine job at tracing the larger story of structures and institutions—the story of Lutheranism at a more traditional level. When writing a general history of Lutherans in America, the weight of the institutional storylines inevitably seems to dominate and the social history in Granquist's narrative takes a back seat.

However, this is not a failure. A general history such as this must make sense of the myriad of synods, ministeriums, denominations, mergers, educational institutions, and the like, which defined Lutheran life. This alphabet soup of American Lutheranism can be intimidating to anyone seeking to understand how European Lutherans made their way in the new world. Granquist methodically and patiently rolls out the story and provides a very helpful glossary of abbreviations and acronyms, as well three graphs which function as a family tree of Lutheran synods in this country. The best acronym in the book is the TCFTS-OTCAOOM which was a committee involved in restructuring the LCA in the early 1970s (306). In the middle of the twentieth century, Lutherans became exceedingly fond of burdensome structures and organizations and this lengthy acronym is a prime example of the obscurity and dangers involved in building such bureaucracy. While individual and social history is not the focus of the volume, Granquist is able to weave such stories into his larger narrative. The twelve chapters of his book are each followed by an excursus which gives details on lesser known but illustrative people and events and

movements such as Hispanic Lutheranism and the relationship of American Lutherans to revivalism.

Inevitably, when reading a book such as this, one looks for his own synod or immigrant group. LCMS pastors might be disappointed there is not more here detailing the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's own particular history and role in American Lutheranism. Granquist seems to devote more space than needed to Norwegian and Swedish experiences. Yet, such quibbles are perhaps unavoidable in a book such as this.

Granquist's history tells the whole story of American Lutheranism reasonably well. It is good introduction to the subject and students of American Lutheranism will find many resources and avenues toward deeper study.

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***Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology*. By Marc Cortez. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 264 pages. Softcover. $27.99.**

Lutheran theologian Hans Schwarz once commented that one difficulty in dealing with theological anthropology is that the subject can cover an unwieldy number of themes. In *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective,* Marc Cortez tries to narrow the field by focusing on the subject's christological dimension. What, Cortez asks, does the revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ specifically tell us about what it means to be human?

The author does not intend to present a constructive anthropological proposal. Instead, his purpose is to stimulate questions and insights on the topic by presenting a diverse range of perspectives across history. The following list of the representative figures examined by the book reveals this diversity: Gregory of Nyssa, Julian of Norwich, Martin Luther, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth, John Zizioulas, and James Cone. In presenting the perspective of each, Cortez is more concerned with achieving understanding than he is with evaluation. Still, the effect is not superficial. Many engaging and relevant issues arise in the process.

For instance, in chapter one the book discusses Gregory of Nyssa's anthropology in terms of how human sexuality, between the fall and the coming resurrection, is or is not constitutive of our essence as human. Gregory sees Christ's incarnation as both defining and transformative of human nature. Therefore, since Scripture teaches that there is in Christ no male or female, our created sexual make-up, says Gregory, no longer defines our individual existence after our resurrection.

So why, Cortez asks, did God create his human creatures in a sexually differentiated way to begin with? Gregory's rather unusual answer is that Genesis reveals a two-stage process of creation. God created human beings first in his own image, which means that we are essentially non-gendered like God. Then, in light of the human act of sin which God foreknew, he created us male and female—a condition that better matches our present situation in a fallen world.

Cortez examines and tries to deflate recent theological attempts to use Gregory as a resource for making "gender" a more fluid and socially-constructed concept. This is an interesting discussion. Unfortunately, the book does not examine what would seem, at least in this reader's mind, the Greek philosophical assumptions behind Gregory's rather spiritualized view of human existence. The Patristic theologian's notion that physical sexual differentiation is characteristic of a fallen rather than an originally created human reality sounds more Platonic than biblical. Still, these are exactly the kind of questions Cortez intends to stimulate.

The discussion of Luther's anthropology in Chapter 3 focuses on how the Reformer's understanding of justification informs what it means to act ethically as a human agent in the world. The chapter draws on Luther's own works, along with interpretations of Luther by scholars like Oswald Bayer. Cortez treats Luther's notion of justification as an essentially christological concept. Justification involves the human being's *coram Deo* experience of being justified through the righteousness of Christ. So as this faith in Christ yields works of love, it is Luther's specifically christological anthropology that lies at the foundation of his vocational ethic.

As the book proceeds through its seven chapters, the diverse perspectives invite comparisons. Barth's grounding of anthropology in God's saving election through the one Word of God, Jesus Christ, stands in sharp contrast to James Cone's view of human beings as *co-liberators* who model the work of the *Great Liberator* in an oppressed world. On the one hand, Julian of Norwich's dependence on her mystical visions of the crucified Christ is miles away from Luther's strict reliance on God's word. On the other, the role of suffering as it flows from the cross of Christ into the life of the Christian is a common theme of both anthropologies.

The comparisons and contrasts that arise from these divergent perspectives make for an engaging learning exercise. However, there is a weakness in Cortez' approach. Despites its name, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective* spends very little time discussing the historical contexts of, or connections between, the anthropological visions of the theologians involved. This gives the book a rather episodic feel. Each of the seven theologies seems to stand out apart from any underlying narrative.

The final chapter includes a short but interesting discussion on an issue common to all the perspectives examined. Cortez notices that none of the seven anthropologies have much to say about humanity outside Christ's salvation or the fold of the Church. The few that hint at it, such as that of Karl Barth, tend to project an accompanying doctrine of universal salvation. None seem able to assign a deep value to all created persons while at the same time holding that only those who are transformed through Christ find their human destiny fulfilled in eternity. This issue has ramifications for an increasingly secular and pluralistic world. It is also something, the author points out, that Christian theology needs to tackle. Cortez makes no pretension of knowing how to do that yet. He simply raises one more worthwhile question in a very worthwhile book.

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***The Way of Concord: From Historic Text to Contemporary Witness*. By Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand. St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press. 145 pages. Softcover. $14.95.**

In *The Way of Concord,* Robert Kolb navigates through the political and ecclesial history that lies behind the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. He spares no detail as to the occasions, conflicts, persons involved, etc., of each document contained in what became the Book of Concord. For example, he points out that Melanchthon "used the so-called '*genus iudicale,*' the rhetorical form for effective presentation of ideas in a courtroom," in constructing the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (25). In this respect, the book is highly useful for pastors who desire to know the human circumstances that underpinned the bold confession of faith made at the time of the Reformation. Kolb sheds much light on the historicity of the texts of our Confessions.

With respect to the overall structure of Dr. Kolb's book, the chapters of *The Way of Concord* arose over two decades and were originally written as separate essays later edited into the present volume. This makes it difficult to identify the major thesis of the book, and sometimes interrupts the flow of the book.

On the place of the Confessions in the life of the Church, Dr. Kolb speaks of them as primarily an *example* or *model* for church discourse and confession as opposed to confessions that each generation of Lutherans makes their own by confessing them as "now first uttered by our lips, or now first gone forth from our

hands."[1] According to Kolb, because confessions "are bound in their own times, [they] may not make good reading for the beginning of a person's exploration of the faith. But because they are set in the eternal word of God, they do provide guidance and insight for believers of all subsequent ages" (97). Here is a weakness of the book. Kolb does not sufficiently discuss the ecclesiastical authority of the Confessions for Lutheran churches today. The exegesis of our forefathers in the faith and the dogmatic assertions that follow from their sound exegesis are grounded upon "the pure, clear fountain of Israel," the Holy Scriptures—the very claim of a *quia* subscription. Thus, they do not merely provide guidance and insight for believers of all subsequent ages. Rather, they are the clear and concise eternal confession of the hope that we have drawn from Scripture. "Therefore, it is our intent to give witness before God and all Christendom, among those who are alive today and *those who will come after us*" (SD XII 40, emphasis added).[2]

The historical insights of Dr. Kolb are of value to those who are unfamiliar with the human circumstances that lie behind the Book of Concord. In this regard, *The Way of Concord* is a useful book for the academically-inclined pastor or the interested layman. But readers should look elsewhere to understand the contemporary authority of the Confessions.

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***A Defense of the Lutheran Faith on the Eve of Modern Times*. By H.G. Masius. Edited, translated, and annotated by John Warwick Montgomery. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2016. 223 pages, including 91 pages of facsimile of the second edition in French, 1699. Softcover. $30.99.**

John Warwick Montgomery has provided a service in translating this theological apologetic from the end of the seventeenth century in Paris. The author, H. G. Masius, was a Danish Lutheran theologian who was appointed chaplain to the Danish embassy in Paris in 1682. The original was written in French. He divided the work into two parts: the first, in which he demonstrated on the basis of their own

[1] Charles Porterfield Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 169.

[2] Translation taken from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

hypotheses that the Lutheran religion cannot be condemned by Roman theologians; and the second, in which he put forth the fundamental differences between the Lutheran and the Roman churches. The work was directed solely against the Roman church using Scripture, the assertions of Roman theologians, and reason. He offered short chapters on the Pope, traditions, the invocation of saints, purgatory, the seven sacraments, the sacrifice of the mass, original sin and free will, evangelical counsels, and justification and good works. He returned to these topics in the second part, giving particular attention to the Scriptures and unwritten traditions, the invocation of saints, purgatory, communion in one kind, transubstantiation, the mass, and justification and the fulfillment of the law.

The value of this work is found in the procedure Masius used to interact with the dominant Roman religion in France at a time of anti-Protestant bias. Masius demonstrated an extensive knowledge and interaction with his opponents' writings. The book affords the modern reader the opportunity to evaluate the importance of being prepared to give a defense of Lutheran theology to theologians, popular proponents, and laity of an opposing theological persuasion, as well as to consider the effectiveness of using the opponents' works and human reason along with Scripture in that defense. It should be noted that Masius did not quote the Lutheran Confessions in his defense, though he did know them.

One jarring discord in *The Defense* is in Masius' explanation of the Lutheran teaching of the Lord's Supper. He posed the question, "*But surely Jesus Christ said, speaking of the bread,* 'This *is my body*'?" He responded, "I answer, 'No'" (105). He explained by asserting that τοῦτό in the words of institution does not refer to the bread. Montgomery, in an explanatory footnote, writes that "τοῦτό must reference the total sacramental act of the giving of the bread." But the Lutheran Confessions explicitly reject this circumlocution, stating for example that Jesus "spoke these words about the bread, which He blessed and gave, 'Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you" (FC SD VII 44).[1] The oral eating and the unworthy eating of Christ's body are both bound up with the assertion that the bread of the Lord's Supper is the body of Christ. Masius' discussion serves as a warning that a vigorous rejection of Roman errors not propel Lutheran theologians into Calvinist language or thought.

A Defense of the Lutheran Faith will be useful for training theologians in the defense of Lutheran doctrine and as a primary document in the history of Lutheran theological apologetics. I do not recommend this book for general use, since the

[1] Translation taken from Paul T. McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005).

sound understanding of the Lord's Supper could be damaged by the misleading assertions found in it.

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The Word Does Everything: Key Concepts of Luther on Testament, Scripture, Vocation, Cross, and Worm. Also on Method and on Catholicism: Collection of Essays. **By Kenneth Hagen. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2016. 474 pages. Hardcover. $25.00.**

Kenneth Hagen (1936–2014) was a prolific scholar of Luther's thought who combined vigorous study of Luther's writings and other primary texts in their original languages with clear analysis (frequently very critical of modern scholarship and its assumptions) and a creative as well as idiosyncratic style of writing. As a doctoral student of Heiko Oberman's at Harvard Divinity his scholarship was deeply shaped by Oberman's approach to Luther and the Reformation through the lens of the late Middle Ages and the intellectual heritage going back to the church fathers that shaped this culture. As its long title indicates, the book being reviewed is a collection of Hagen's essays (originally published between 1969 and 2010) on a wide range of topics. These essays focus especially on Luther's practice of exposition (not interpretation!) of Scripture as that Word of God proclaims the Law and Gospel, in his vocation as an Augustinian friar (not monk!), professor of theology, pastor, and reformer. Hagen planned the volume several years before his death and penned its preface in 2010.

One of the purposes of publishing a collection of essays by a notable scholar is to display both the range of interests and the coherence as well as developments in a scholar's life work. The volume succeeds admirably in this goal, bringing together twenty-four of Hagen's essays; many of these are easily accessible online through the ATLA database, but several that appeared originally as book chapters or published conference proceedings (such as the Pieper Lectures and the annual Congress on the Lutheran Confessions sponsored by Luther Academy) are more difficult to find. Some of Hagen's most important and intriguing discoveries such as the importance of Luther's monastic experience (theology as the "sacred page") are nicely laid before the reader in several distinct forms in this collection. One of the idiosyncrasies of Hagen's writing is frequent (sometimes tedious) repetition of key concepts and vocabulary, however, and this is somewhat magnified by the bringing together into one volume of so many essays authored for very different contexts.

Hagen spent most of his career at Marquette University, an institution founded by the Jesuits and still deeply shaped by Jesuit culture. He served his university and

the academy generally very much as a confessional Lutheran who engaged critically the liberal culture of his academic training and professional context. Several of his essays, in particular one commemorating the career and theology of Dr. Robert Preus, another subtitled "What I observed about the Catholic Church while teaching with the Jesuits for 33 years at Marquette University," and a third entitled "The Decline of Christianity in Europe," reveal Hagen's lively and appreciative if also incisive engagement with the religious (and not religious) cultures of his contemporaries.

The essays are arranged topically and it is helpful (even necessary) before reading to identify the original date and context of publication from the bibliographic information provided in the front matter.

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***Ad Fontes Witebergenses: Select Proceedings of Lutheranism and the Classics III: Lutherans Read History*. Edited by James A. Kellerman, E.J. Hutchinson, and Joshua J. Hayes. Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2017. 326 pages. Softcover. $20.00**

A number of years ago, John Nordling, a trained classicist and New Testament exegete, had a dream. Nordling's academic career has been devoted to reinvigorating the study of the classics within Lutheran circles. Long an advocate for the study of both Latin and Greek, Nordling has spoken forcefully and often about the need for our church to get back to its roots, to return to the fountains of knowledge. This dream has come to fruition in a bi-annual conference, held at Concordia Theological Seminary, and entitled "Lutheranism and the Classics." In the October of every even year, Lutheranism and the Classics brings together scholars from the worlds of Lutheran dogmatics, Greco-Roman antiquity, medieval history, and everything in between. Accordingly this conference, though it may seem to some narrowly focused, brings together a wide range of people. All this diverse wisdom is on display in *Ad Fontes Witebergenses*.

Open the book to Cameron MacKenzie's delightful article on "Martin Luther and History." In a world that thinks history is driven by secular ideologies such as Marxism, or perhaps thinks history has no goal or meaning at all, this essay is essential reading. Learn from MacKenzie and Luther that history has a meaning and a goal, driven by God, centered in Christ. Then move to an essay by the great historian Paul Maier, who lays out for us all the ways in which the New Testament story was acknowledge and known by the ancients, including the likes of Josephus

and Pliny. Again, in an age in which the New Testament history is unfairly derided, this is more essential reading.

Many of the essays are quirky, and in the best sense of the word. Joel Elowsky speaks of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, and does so in light of both Luther and the Church Fathers. Paul Strawn has marvelous essay detailing the publication and reception of patristic literature at the time of the Reformation. This is a helpful reminder to us as Lutherans, but is also something we need to tell the world. Lutheranism is not the beginning, nor is it a new thing, but is a continuity of the church catholic. It is a reformation, but not a revolution. The church fathers are our fathers, as Strawn's evidence demonstrate. For those interested in classical education, and there are many, Martin Noland offers an essay on the German contribution and appropriation of the ancient model. Nordling himself chimes in with a fascinating essay on Josephus, whose works may have brought biblical prophecies into the minds of the Roman empires.

There are quite a few other essays well worth your while. By way of disclaimer, the author of this review finds his own banquet speech in the volume. In it you will learn about the great Fort Wayne classicist, Edith Hamilton. All of this is quite the bargain at twenty dollars, and can be purchased through the Concordia Seminary Bookstore.

Peter J. Scaer

Discovering Romans: Content, Interpretation, Reception. **By Anthony C. Thiselton. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. 297 pages. Softcover. $22.00.**

Discovering Romans is the third volume to appear in the Discovering Biblical Texts: Content, Interpretation, Reception series providing "comprehensive, up-to-date and student-friendly introductions to the books of the Bible." The book's twenty five chapters are divided between introduction (chapters 1–6, pp.1–66), and commentary (chapters 7–25, pp. 67–263).

Thiselton offers eight brief reasons for studying Romans (1). Most compelling is the transformative influence Romans has had on Christians over the centuries including such giants as Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Wesley. Next, Thiselton briefly summarizes three essential (2) and nine limited-use reading strategies (3). The three essential strategies employed throughout Thiselton's commentary are historical-critical method(s), rhetorical criticism, and sociological or socio-scientific reading. The nine limited-use strategies are reader-response theory, structuralist exegesis, liberation hermeneutics, existentialist interpretation, pre-critical exegesis, Barthian exegesis, lexical and grammatical exegesis along with text-critical research, social factors such as the shame-honor system and imperial

cult, and some form critical techniques. His brief summaries prove helpful for those unfamiliar with these varied approaches. Thiselton then rehearses the reception history of Romans beginning with Marcion and continuing through Augustine to Martin Luther, and to E.P. Sanders and the 'New Perspective on Paul' (4). Romans 13:1–7 concerning political authority serves as a single example passage, especially germane in light of recent political developments affecting individual religious liberty and church-state relations (e.g. same-sex marriage). Consideration follows (5) of two significant text-critical issues: Romans 5:1 'We have peace' or 'Let us have peace;' and the placement of the doxologies at the end of chapters 14, 15, 16, as well as the overall integrity of Romans. Thiselton concludes these introductory chapters with a brief biography of Paul, noting in particular the ecclesial origin and character of Paul's ministry and Paul's call as both a missionary and a pastor (6).

Thiselton divides Romans into nineteen thematic sections, averaging ten to twelve pages of commentary per section, identifying key exegetical issues and terms. Rather than plowing new ground, Thiselton surveys the landscape of current scholarly discussion as well as historical reception in keeping with the overall purpose of the commentary series. One distinctive mark is the correlation he draws between 1 Corinthians and Romans. According to Thiselton, Paul articulates in Romans his mature reflection upon problems initially addressed in 1 Corinthians.

Written for students, the series strikes a balance between the readability of a popular commentary and the scholarliness of a critical commentary. The reader is able to listen in on current scholarly debate on Romans without being intimidated or overwhelmed. Overall, the book is a good primer on Romans and Pauline theology.

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***The Gospel According to St. Luke.* By James R. Edwards. Pillar New Testament Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. 859 pages. Hardcover. $65.00.**

In this commentary, James R. Edwards (the Bruner-Welch Professor of Theology at Whitworth University, Spokane, Washington) challenges the traditional view that Luke is the Gospel for the Greeks, citing "repeated reliance on Hebraisms in its construction" (10). For Edwards, "the primary purpose of the Third Gospel is to present Jesus as Messiah, and thus Israel's long-awaited savior, into whom Gentiles are also engrafted" (10).

The broader purpose of Luke's Gospel, according to Edwards, is apologetic, "to set forth a convincing narrative of the truth of the Christian Gospel" (14). This is Edwards' conclusion based on the opening words of the Gospel, in which Luke states his purpose explicitly. Edwards opines that Luke is seeking to defend Christ and the Church against the belief that the Jews are the legitimate heir of the promises to Israel.

Edwards is to be commended for writing a commentary on the third Gospel that is as exegetically rigorous as it is edifying. His exegesis is enhanced in many places by his grappling with extra-biblical literature as well as a thorough analysis of the Old Testament echoes and allusions throughout the Gospel. His attention to Old Testament background is seen especially in the infancy narrative, where he observes that "The effect of the infancy narratives is to demonstrate that the births of John and Jesus flow out of Israel's saving history, and that the birth of Jesus marks the fulfillment of it" (31). He then goes on to identify several connections to Old Testament narratives, concluding: "Luke's infancy narrative throbs with the literary and theological pulse of OT expectation." He is careful to observe that "The allusions of the infancy narrative do not simply repeat former stories and outcomes, however, as do the decrees of Mount Olympus. . . . They herald new possibilities" (31).

His eye for Old Testament allusions and echoes leads Edwards to examine the Old Testament background of certain Greek expressions in the Gospel. This can be seen, for example, in his interpretation of Luke 4:14–30, where the townspeople drive Jesus out of the city (4:29). He notes that the Greek expression behind the phrase, ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως is used in the LXX for "ridding a (Jewish) city of defilement, such as plague (Lev 14:40–41, 45), foreign gods (2 Chr 33:15), or a (supposed) evil person (1 Kgs 21:13). The phrase is a ritual anathema and a gauge of the outrage against Jesus. Jesus has become like a Gentile pollutant" (141). Edwards is also quick to point out instances in which something in Luke's second book is foreshadowed in the Gospel. Using the same example above, the phrase in Luke 4:29 is a "foreshadowing of the Christian mission, for in Acts both Stephen (Acts 7:58) and Paul (Acts 14:5–6) will be "thrown outside the city" with murderous intent" (141).

Significant attention is paid to Christological themes throughout the Gospel, making this commentary a useful contribution to the study of early christology. In his interpretation of Luke 5:1–11 (calling of the first disciples), for example, Edwards offers a helpful commentary on the use of the title "Lord" (κύριος). At first, Peter calls Jesus "Master" (ἐπιστάτης), signifying what is "ultimately allegiance" (155). However, after the miraculous catch of fish, Peter calls Jesus "Lord" (κύριος). While κύριος can mean "Sir" as well as "Lord," Edwards argues for translating it Lord, since Luke has prepared readers for a full christological understanding of the

term in verse 8. (155). According to Edwards, "Luke surely intends readers to hear 'Lord' as a divine title, confessing both Peter's sin and his faith" (155–156).

A common feature in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series is the use of *excurses* to delve deeper into an issue of interest without getting "off topic" in the main body of the commentary. One can read an extended discussion of the relation of the infancy narrative to the body of the third Gospel (97–100). Edwards also devotes an entire *excursus* to the topic of "Christ" (271–279) in which he explores the Jewish antecedents for the title. One can also read about Elijah and Elisha typology in the Galilean Ministry (216–219), Jerusalem (408–409), and pairs in the third Gospel (413–414), to give just a sampling. A list of the different *excurses* and their page numbers in the Table of Contents would have been most helpful.

Besides Edwards' tendency to try to make translations more colloquial, there is little to find fault with in this commentary. The amount of content that he fits into one volume is quite remarkable. I have already used it for research and would recommend it for use by parish pastors or professors of the New Testament.

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***Why on Earth Did Anyone Become a Christian in the First Three Centuries?* By Larry W. Hurtado. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2016. 144 pages. Hardcover. $15.00.**

Many have described the rise of Christianity and the factors that made possible its relatively rapid and widespread growth. But Hurtado's work, based on a series of lectures offered at Marquette University, moves from the macro to the micro level, asking a more basic and fundamental question: "Why would anyone ever have wanted to become a Christian in the first place?" On a basic theological level, we might speak about the power of the gospel, and the impact of the Spirit. But Hurtado speaks to the issue on a fundamentally human level. What were the early Christian converts up against, and why did they pursue and confess Christ in the midst of such hostility?

As Hurtado notes, in the first three centuries, there were many reasons for people not to become Christian. There was, of course, persecution. St. Paul speaks of his beatings and imprisonments. We know of the martyrdoms of Stephen and James, Polycarp and Ignatius. But persecution was not confined to the religious leaders, nor was it simply a matter of the official judicial system. Hurtado makes a distinction between social costs and political-judicial costs. He explains, "By social consequences/costs, I mean the tensions that Christian adherents experienced

with their families, acquaintances, co-workers and others" (48). Early Christians were frequently subject to ostracizing from friends and families, with consequences for their livelihood. Hurtado cites Lucian's *The Death of Peregrinus* as a good example of the widespread contempt for Christians. He goes on to talk about Celsus, whose work was characterized by an elite disdain for the intellectually inferior Christians. While Christianity held a certain appeal to the marginalized, its ranks were filled also with those of higher education and higher social status. And they often paid a heavy price.

What must be remembered is that the pagan culture permeated nearly every aspect of life from sports, social clubs, and the arts, to military membership, political groups, and trade associations. Hurtado writes, "Indeed, practically any formal dinner included ritual acknowledgement of deities" (75). Rarely were Christians asked to renounce Christ. More regularly, they were expected to raise a cup and to offer a word of acknowledgement to the god or gods of the day. Failure to do so would often result in a kind of social death, political banishing, and familial discord.

What was it, then, that drove people to become and remain Christian? Hurtado begins with the simplest and most profound of facts. Christians preached a loving God. Hurtado notes, "In high pagan piety to be sure, particular gods could be praised as benign and generous, but it is hard to find references to any deities either loving humans or being loved by them in Roman-era pagan discourse (setting aside the myths of the erotic adventures of various male deities with human females)" (125). Hurtado likewise speaks about eternal life, embodied in the resurrection (128). Indeed, the troubles of this present time pale in comparison to the joys in the life to come.

Admittedly, Hurtado's little book is just a start. To say that Christians were drawn by God's love needs to be fleshed out. In some ways, Hurtado's analysis seems abstract, in that he does not play out the love found in that particular person, Jesus Christ, manifested in a particular event, the crucifixion, which meets the deepest problems of our humanity, sin and isolation. More could be said about how this love was embodied in a eucharistic community, in which true family and friendship could be found. On the other hand, Hurtado's work is a wonderful conversation starter. For years, Christianity has been the default setting for our people. America has long been nominally Christian. Even those who promote abortion and same-sex marriage tout their Christian credentials in doing so. But the situation is changing rapidly. Secularization has won the day, and the persecutions have begun. Early Christians were tempted to offer a toast to the pagan deity. A small nod to the gods paved the way to upward mobility and higher social status. Our own challenges are not too dissimilar. In almost every profession and walk of life, Christians are being challenged for their belief in traditional marriage, and for their opposition to the

LGBT agenda. While Christian business people traditionally have joined churches to help their networking, affiliation with orthodox churches now carries a certain stigma. Christians who uphold the Christian teaching are regularly labeled as haters. Already, Christians are losing their livelihoods, being fined and fired out of business. Sportscasters have been taken off the air, judges off their benches. Day by day, we are learning that Christianity comes with a cost, sometimes financial or social, sometimes judicial. What if you are a teacher, required to teach the LGBT agenda? What if your business sponsors a gay pride parade or rally? How will you respond? Will you keep your mouth shut, or will you speak the truth? Many Christians, especially those who live in Islamic and totalitarian lands, even now face bitter persecution, even death. For us, the persecution will more likely hit our pocketbooks, our social status, and our reputations. What will we do, and how will we navigate such waters? Will we remain faithful, or offer that toast to the gods? Hurtado might not address the present crisis, but his book sets the table for our discussions. For, no doubt, our own children and grandchildren will be asking, "Why on earth would I want to become a Christian?"

Peter J. Scaer

Reviews Published Online at
http://www.ctsfw.edu/resources/concordia-theological-quarterly/book-reviews:

Bartholomew, Craig G., and Heath A. Thomas, eds. *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. 304 Pages. Softcover. $29.99. (Jacob Hercamp)

Betz, Hans Dieter. Studies in Paul's Letter to the Philippians. Wisseschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 343. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015. 205 + xiii pages. Hardcover. €89.00. (John G. Nordling)

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Indices to Volume 81 (2017)

Articles, Research Notes (RN), and Theological Observers (TO)

Book Reviews

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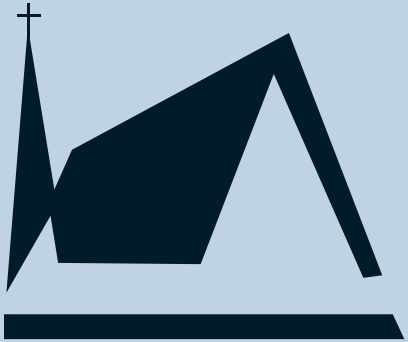

Forming servants in Jesus Christ who
teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.