
Lutheran Synod Quarterly



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Foreword

This will be the last *Quarterly* of the millennium. We are approaching the dawn of a new millennium and the 2000th anniversary of the dear Savior's birth for our salvation. He is the Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb. 13:8) He took upon Himself our flesh made from dust so that through unity with His divinity He might conquer sin, death, and all our foes in the flesh and raise us to His divine glory – eternal life in heaven. It is indeed a time to celebrate 2000 years of grace. The theme of this *Quarterly* will center on Christology or the doctrine of the person of Christ. This issue begins with the great prophecy concerning the Messiah in Genesis 49:8-12, which points to the great Lion of Judah who would overcome the sharpness of death and give new life to man. The Old Testament is definitely the book of Christ.

All the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ whose human ancestry is of the Jews and who yet is God over all, forever blessed. (Romans 9:5) This is the point of the article by Professor John Moldstad, Jr. entitled *In These Last Days ... Look to the Son*. The article is an exegetical study of Hebrews 1:1-4. Christology pervades this book as it does the entire New Testament. Christ the God-Man is indeed our great High Priest who offers Himself as the one sufficient atoning sacrifice for all people.

In the history of the Early Church the Christological controversies were fundamentally a question concerning soteriology. The fathers maintained that salvation could be accomplished only by a divine Savior. At the same time it was necessary that He be true man. How could the unity of His person and the duality of His natures be properly expressed? This is the question discussed in the essay *The Christology of the Councils*. Here the Christological doctrine of the Seven Ecumenical Councils is reviewed with special emphasis on its salvific significance.

The Christ foretold in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament has established His body, the church, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. (Matthew 16:18) The Lord has graciously guided His church through the past 2000 years and He will continue to do so. This is seen in the establishment of confessional Lutheranism on this continent. The fourth essay in this *Quarterly* entitled *The Development and Early Years of the Synodical Conference* presents, from an ELS perspective, the founding of this conference of confessional Lutherans. This essay is written by Rev. Donald Moldstad of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota.

This *Quarterly* also includes several book reviews and a critique of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.

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Sermon on Genesis 49:8-12

by Gaylin R. Schmeling

Prayer: O Lion of Judah, you who have overcome the sharpness of death and brought new life for man. Come to us through your life-giving Word and Sacraments so that we may be a part of the new creation living for you here and finally living with you there in the new heaven and the new earth. Amen.

Text: Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk. (Genesis 49: 8-12)

The book of Genesis is the book of the beginning. It opens with the record of the creation, the coming of light and life and the glory of paradise. But the book ends with the account of a deathbed, a burial, and a coffin. The reason for this is the tragedy of sin. Sin brought suffering and death. Yet as aged Jacob lay on his deathbed nearing his end he bursts forth with hope for a dying world, the hope of the new creation found in: **Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah.**

I. He alone could overcome the sharpness of death and all our foes. In this text Jacob is relating to each of his sons their

inheritance and future destiny. All is mundane and scarred by sin until he reaches the portion of Judah. To him he says, "*Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp.*" Judah would be the powerhouse of the tribes of Israel. As they traveled through the wilderness, the tribe of Judah led the way. They received the largest portion of land among the tribes in Israel. During the rule of David and Solomon, who were from the tribe of Judah, Israel reached world domination and prestige. This, however, was not Jacob's bright hope as he closed his eyes in death, for this could not overcome the sharpness of death and give hope to a fallen creation.

No, he continues in ecstasy, "*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.*" That the scepter would not depart from Judah means the Jewish people would continue as an independent country until Shiloh would come. When did the scepter depart from Judah? During the reign of Herod the Great, Israel became a client state of Rome. After His death even the outward appearance of independence ceased, for Judah was no longer ruled by Jewish puppet kings but directly by Roman governors. In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish nation came to an end. Who is this Shiloh who came when the scepter was removed from Judah? St. Matthew says, "*Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king.*" (Matt. 2:1) Jesus Christ is that Shiloh that brought hope for a dying Jacob.

Notice that He is called Shiloh. This name means "to whom it belongs." The Scepter of Judah and all ruling power belongs originally only to one, to God. Here Jacob tells us that Shiloh would be not only a descendent of Judah but also the everlasting God, true God from all eternity.

This one is indeed the greater Judah, the great Lion of Judah, concerning whom John in the Revelation says, "*Do not*

weep. *Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.*" (Rev. 5:5) The whole Old Testament church waited in eager expectation for the coming of the Lion, as the ancient rabbis declared, "As for the lion ... this is the Messiah ... who shall spring from the seat of David." (4 Esdras 12:31-32)

This Lion went down to battle for Judah and all of humankind. The battle at the cross was cataclysmic. The scene was veiled in awful and impenetrable darkness. The earth shook and the rocks rent. Deadly and ferocious was the struggle. But the third day the Lion of Judah came forth heavy with booty. He ripped apart the carcass of death. He tore it apart entirely so that it now can no longer contain us. Now death for the believer is not the terrible end of everything but rather a new beginning in the new heaven and the new earth. Then, as Jacob – and every believer – fades from this life he has confident hope because the Lion of Judah has indeed overcome the sharpness of death.

II. Now we will see that Jesus Christ the Lion of Judah can alone give the new creation. As Jacob sees his body dying before his eyes, sees the conflicts in his family life because of sin, and sees how the whole creation has been perverted through the fall of Adam, he desires to see an end to the ravages of sin. This desire is fulfilled in the Lion of Judah, concerning whom it is written: "*Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.*" Messiah is to bring a time when vines are so abundant that you will use them to hitch your mule, wine will flow like water and all will be filled with milk and honey. All this is poetic language to describe the original abundance and peace before the time of the fall, when there was peace and harmony in nature, harmony between man and nature, and -

most important - harmony and a proper relationship between God and men.

All this was lost in Adam's fall. Sin tainted every aspect of the creation. We were all born in sin, and sin is still a part of our lives. Often our hearts are filled with hatred, anger, covetousness, and greed, not loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. Yet in Jesus we have the new creation; in Him all is made new. He restored that peace between God and man of which the angels sang that first holy night. All that first Adam lost in the fall the second Adam restored at Bethlehem. He became poor and lowly, uniting Himself with our flesh made from dust so that He might raise us to His divine glory, eternal life in heaven.

In this work of restoration He was indeed the greater Judah. Remember when Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy grain the second time, they had to bring their youngest brother, Benjamin, with them. As a test to his brothers, Joseph put his silver drinking cup into Benjamin's sack to make it appear that Benjamin had stolen the cup. Joseph did this to see if the brothers would defend Benjamin or if they were still as cruel as when they had sold him into slavery. Joseph said the other brothers could go but Benjamin would be his slave. At this point there is a heart-rending and heart-warming scene. Judah pleads for Benjamin, promising even to become a slave in his little brother's stead. He pleaded to take his brother's place.

In the same way our brother, the greater Judah, not only pleaded for us but also took our place, enduring the slavery of sin for each of us. He endured the bondage of sin and even death so that in Him there would be a new creation. He entered into death to conquer sin and come forth the great Lion of Judah who has indeed overcome and obtained the victory.

This new creation the Lord offers to us as the angels offered it to the shepherds: "Peace on earth, good will toward men." In Baptism, the sacrament of re-creation, we were born anew, destined to live in the new heaven and new earth. In Absolution we have been declared forgiven, as Jesus will say to us on the last

day, "*Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" (Matt. 25:34) In the Lord's Supper we already have a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb. This peace of God through Word and Sacrament is indeed paradise regained right now.

This wonderful renewal of Eden's peace, the new creation which we now have in part, yet tainted by sin, will be ours in all its fullness on the last day. This hope is what gave Jacob confidence even as he saw his own body dying, and this is our confidence, too, in life and in death. The problems of this present life can't even be compared to the glories which will be revealed to us there. (Rom. 8:18) Concerning that time St. John says, "*I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*" (Rev. 21:1-2) Our bodies will come forth from the dust glorified and so we will ever be with the Lord, both body and soul, where all sorrow, pain, and tears will be wiped away and there will be joy beyond compare. The Lion of Judah has overcome the sharpness of death and given new life to men. Amen.

In These Last Days... Look to the Son Hebrews 1:1-4

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

In the middle of our world's concerns with Y2K, the Christian church prepares for the celebration of the 2000th anniversary of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. While externally it appears that many feel computers run the world, the Creator and Preserver of our universe still awaits from every one of his created souls an answer to his crucial inquiry: "*Who do you say I am?*" (Matthew 16:16).

Why Christ? Why did he come? Who is he? How do we view the incarnation? What is his relationship to the Father? To the angels? If he is true God from eternity, how can he be the crucified one? These are far greater concerns for everyone to contemplate than to spend hours and hours speculating how many computer glitches it will take to disrupt the flow of services necessary for our temporal existence. Our eternal existence—an existence absolutely dependent on the soul's relationship to Christ, the world's one Redeemer—is the quintessential concern. We might say it this way: While the world is preoccupied with Y2K, the Christians are asking the world "YnotX?" (Why not Christ?) "Why not see in Christ one's completed salvation from sin and death?" Then the mention of any "doom's day" need never terrify but only solidify how Christ's consolation, and nothing else, gives sustenance to the soul! What an opportunity lies before us to generate interest in Christological studies. We hope that many, with the advent of the new millennium, will be confronted with the life-saving Gospel of him who alone is the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:8).

An examination of the opening verses of Hebrews chap-

ter 1 serves as a comforting reminder that God, through the work of his Son, has provided for our most basic need. And because of this love, we can be sure that our God continues to watch over and preserve us. In his preface to his commentary on the book of Hebrews, F.F. Bruce summarizes well the thrust of the whole epistle: “This is the book which establishes the finality of the gospel by asserting the supremacy of Christ—his supremacy as God’s perfect word to man and man’s perfect representative with God.”¹ Verses 1-4 describe the Christ-centeredness of Holy Scripture and of every phase of soteriology. The immediate focus on Christ as the God-Man sets the stage for why he alone is our Great High Priest—the pervading theme of Hebrews.

For our brief study, we wish to use as our slogan:

In These Last Days...Look to the Son.

See how: (A) The Son was foretold long ago; (B) The Son’s incarnation is the “final word;” (C) The Son’s preeminence is of utmost significance; and (D) The Son’s key question still remains: What do you think of Christ?

A. The Son was foretold long ago.

Hebrews 1:1 Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατέρας ἐν τοῖς προφήταις

NIV: *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,*

From the time of the *protoevangelium* (Genesis 3:15), through the “O.T. evangelist” Isaiah’s ministry, down to “fullness of the time” when God sent his Son (Galatians 4:4,5), there was one main message: Christ crucified for sinners. The Old Testa-

ment was the promise; the New Testament, the fulfillment of that promise. We note here that the historical aorist participle *λαλήσας* encapsulates the full period of the Old Testament from the time of Moses to Malachi, pointing especially (but not exclusively) to what was *written* by the prophets. In times past God dealt with his people through oral, written and visual (e.g., the pedagogical import of Hosea's selection of a wife) communications via the prophets. The adverb *πολυτρόπος* refers both to the different *styles* of the prophets as they wrote concerning the Messianic future and to the way God used *visions and other means* (besides the written) in the former era.²

This prophetic communication always centered in the Messiah, the Christ. Dr. Luther aptly remarks: "God formerly distributed the gift of prophecy among many and through this distribution caused Christ to be foretold in various ways..."³

B. The Son's incarnation is the "final word."

Hebrews 1:2 ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας·

NIV: *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

With the expression ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων we see a *finality* in God's communication with the world, not just a "close to the end" precursor of what is still to come. It was "not a word in part that Christ brought, but the final conclusion."⁴ Again, we have an historical aorist (ἐλάλησεν), which takes us back to the moment of the incarnation. This is the time when God's υἱός, the only-begotten from eternity, was sent forth on the earth as the one born of a virgin (Galatians 4:4,5). Christ's public ministry (begun at age 30, Luke 3:23) is certainly included. Yet, Christ's

“prophetic office” encompasses his entire work from the point in time when the Word was made flesh. Didn’t the apostle John discuss the coming of Christ in such a way as to show his advent **was a full declaration of** (ἐξηγήσατο) the Father to the world (John 1:18)? In other words: “The coming of Jesus Christ fulfilled everything commanded by and promised by God. . . In his grace he [Christ, *God’s own Son*] has fulfilled God’s moral law perfectly in our place. He has offered one sacrifice needed for all time, for all sin. He has turned the promises in Moses to living reality and established God’s truth forever.”⁵

How should we understand the phrase ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων? *When* did God the Father establish this heirship for his Son? Lenski rightly says, “From all eternity and thus at the very creation when the eons of time began God made his Son the heir of all things, not according to his deity which could inherit nothing, but according to his humanity which could and did inherit all things.”⁶ Here, however, the focus zeroes in on the events following Christ’s death and burial: the time of his exaltation, beginning with the descent into hell and including his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven (v. 3) and his mighty and glorious return one day as the Judge. We think of the words from Philippians chapter 2: “*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (9-11).

This same incarnate Son is further described as the one through whom God made the aeons, that is, the universe. (Cf. also John 1:3). No wonder we in these last days should look to the Son! He is our Maker (v. 2c)! He is our Redeemer whose work so satisfied the justice of God against our sin that he was publicly shown to be heir of everything (v. 2b)! He is the final word to us (v. 2a): the Word made flesh! This is how we never fail to have our great and loving God with us. Our blessed

Immanuel (“God with us”) is seen and comprehended spiritually only in Word and Sacrament wherein there is offered to us his forgiveness of sins.

**C. *The Son’s preeminence
is of utmost significance.***

Heb. 1:3,4 ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτῆρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καθαρισμόν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, τοσοῦτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ’ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

NIV: *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*

In the original language we are struck by the two participles appearing in the present tense: ὢν and φέρων. The one called God’s “Son” *is* and *continues to be* and *to carry* all that here is attributed to him. He who is forever incarnate possesses all the attributes of God, for he himself is nothing less than the full deity (Colossians 2:9). So, not only does he shine forth or reflect God’s glory; he *is* the radiance (ἀπαύγασμα) of God’s glory!

Martin Chemnitz draws our attention to the fact that in the ancient church three illustrations especially were used to depict the mystery of the hypostatic (personal) union of the two natures in Christ: 1) the light and the sun; 2) the lighted mass (such as lighted wood or red-hot branding iron); and 3) the soul united with its body.⁷ More than ever, in the area of Christology we must acknowledge that illustrations limp. They assist, but only to a

point. The fact is, as the writer of Hebrews prominently sets forth, Jesus Christ is “the *exact representation* (χαρακτήρ) of his [God’s] being/substance (ὑποστάσεως).” Χαρακτήρ carries the idea of an imprint on a coin corresponding exactly to the details of the die from which it is cast. So, as Bruce observes, “[T]he Son of God ‘bears the very stamp of his nature’ (RSV).”⁸ A similar word, εἰκόν (image, likeness), is used in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and in Colossians 1:15. Louw & Nida give as the meaning of εἰκόν “that which has the same form as something else.” But χαρακτήρ is an even stronger term, although used synonymously with εἰκόν in the passages just cited. The word means: “an exact representation of a particular form or structure.”⁹

The Son is the Creator. He is also the Preserver. He sustains “all things by the word of his power.” Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians: “...in him all things hold together” (τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν).

Just how important the delineation of Christ’s full deity is becomes apparent once the writer of Hebrews mentions (for the first time in the letter) the Son’s great high priestly work. He states: “*After he had provided purification* (καθαρισμὸν) *for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*” Note: The reason a catharsis for sins (obj. gen.) could occur and did occur hinges on who it is who carried out such a feat. This is God’s Son! The blood shed at Calvary was the blood of God’s own Son. As oxymoronic as it sounds to the ears of our natural understanding, when Jesus died, God died! The sweet music to the ear of the sinner in desperate need of salvation is the refrain, “*The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin*” (I John 1:7). His ascension to the right hand of the Father is proof that the catharsis was sufficient in the divine court of law. The Judge for *his* sake declared sinners righteous.

Accolades beyond every angelic degree are due his blessed name! Τοσοῦτω... ὅσω is dative of degree/measure: “...having become **by so much** better than the angels.”¹⁰ Κεκληρονόμηκεν (“has inherited”) reminds us of what was said

in verse 2. The perfect tense of the verb stresses the action as having occurred in the past with the result continuing for the future—in this case, for all eternity. “Son” is the name *more excellent* than that of all the angels. Such a name has been and always will be the inheritance of Jesus. He has this inheritance by virtue of his eternality as God, but also as having earned it by his high priestly vicarious satisfaction.

***D. The Son’s key question still remains:
What do you think of Christ?***

The opening verses of Hebrews in effect confront each reader with the same basic question which was posed to Peter and the Twelve many years ago. Jesus had asked them, “Who do you say I am?” With Peter and with the writer of Hebrews we are moved to exclaim a confession of faith not derived from “flesh and blood” considerations: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16).

Yes, in these “last days” look to the Son in whom God gave his full and final communication to the world. Here is how grace and truth have come! To those very writings of the prophets who long ago foretold his appearing, and to the writings of the apostles and evangelists, Christ now directs you and me. “*Search the Scriptures,*” he says, “*for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*” (John 5:39, KJV).

May we be moved to open and to study our Bibles daily as we celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ! Celebrate in the Son!

Endnotes

- ¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT series) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), intro. p. xii.
- ² J. Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries – Hebrews* (Edinburgh: 1853), p. 32.
- ³ M. Luther, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), vol. 29, p. 109.
- ⁴ Calvin, p. 33.
- ⁵ G. P. Baumler, *John* (People's Bible series) (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), pp. 21, 22
- ⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), p. 34.
- ⁷ M. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, J. A. O. Preus, trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), pp. 88-90.
- ⁸ Bruce, p. 6.
- ⁹ J. Louw & E. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: UBS, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 589, 592.
- ¹⁰ D. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), p. 167.

The Christology of the Councils

by Gaylin R. Schmeling

I. *The History of the Great Church Council*

In the Early Church there was always tension between the schools of Alexandria and Antioch. This was true also in regard to their Christology. The Alexandrian school stressed the unity of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, and the true divinity of His person. The Antiochian school stressed the duality in Christ and the humanity of His person. How could one preserve the unity in Christ and at the same time confess the duality that He is both true God (John 20:28) and true man (I Timothy 2:5) in one person? (Romans 9:5) If the Son was God of the same substance as the Father, as confessed at Nicaea in 325, how do the human and divine relate to each other in the person of Christ? How can one speak of Christ as both fully divine and fully human as the Scripture teaches? This was the burning question in the early church.

Nestorius, an Antiochian, was elected patriarch of Constantinople in 428. When he reached the city he was particularly offended by the title *Theotokos* or Mother of God, which was being used for the Virgin Mary. He so separated the human and divine in Christ that he was not willing to speak either of the child born of Mary as God or of His Mother as the Mother of God. He so separated the natures in Christ that He was virtually two persons. This teaching tore Christ apart and made His redemptive work of no effect since Christ had to be both God and man in one person to be the Savior. Nestorius was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and banished to Syria and later Egypt. The bishops who supported him formed the Nestorian church, the historic Church of Persia which exists to the present, named The Church of the East and of the Assyrians.

The man most responsible for the fall of Nestorius was Cyril of Alexandria (375-444). He became bishop of the city in 412. He was a ruthless defender of the truth, and to be his enemy was not pleasant. When Cyril heard of the Nestorian sermons which forbid that the virgin be called the *Theotokos*, he flew into a rage. How dare they suggest that the infant Jesus was not divine! At the Council of Nicaea Christ's divinity had been determined to be timeless. As far as Cyril was concerned, Nestorius had proved himself a heretic and he spent his time seeing to it that he was condemned. While his main purpose was theological, it also raised the prestige of Alexandria to have the patriarch of Constantinople accused of heresy.

Cyril's doctrine of Christ's person was sound and biblical. As was true of Athanasius before him, his Christological argument was fundamentally about salvation. In order to be the Savior, Christ had to be divine. Therefore he emphasized the divine in Christ. Cyril's great contribution was that he maintained a true personal union in Christ, with a real communication of attributes. Thus there is a divine Savior and not merely a good man in whom God dwelled - only in a greater degree than the prophets. The latter was the direction followed by the Antiochians.

In opposition to Antioch, Cyril of Alexandria stressed the deity of Christ and the unity of His person, because salvation could be given and accomplished by God alone. His purpose was clearly soteriological. Only a divine Savior could win our salvation. He spoke of the "one incarnate nature of God the Logos" to emphasize that Christ was truly God. In statements like this one he equated nature and hypostasis or person, an equation which lead to unclarity. The Antiochian theologians believed that he was confusing and mixing the human and divine in Christ. This was especially true when Eutyches, an aged abbot in Constantinople associated with the Alexandrian school, was rehabilitated by the Robber Synod of 449, even though he confessed that our Lord was of two natures before the union, but after the union only one nature. (Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern*

Christian Thought, p. 23)

The decisions of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, known as the Fourth Ecumenical Council, clarified the imprecise terminology of Cyril. The terms “nature” and “person” should not be used synonymously. The fathers at Chalcedon made use of a statement on the person of Christ known as Leo’s Tome, because it was written by Leo the bishop of Rome, the same Leo who in 452 single-handedly persuaded Attila the Hun not to sack Rome. They declared, “We confess one and the same Jesus Christ, the Son and Lord only-begotten, in two natures without mixture without change (against the one-nature doctrine), without division without separation (against Nestorius).” Thus the extreme views of the Alexandrian school and the Antiochian school were rejected.

Many followers of Cyril felt that Chalcedon had not fully rejected the teachings of the Antiochian school. The Cyrillian formula, “one single incarnate nature of the God-Word” represented for them the only proper Christological terminology. They were willing to say that the one combined nature of Christ came “out of two natures,” but they were not willing to say that Christ always has two natures. The fears of these Monophysites (one nature) increased when, after the council, Theodoret of Cyrus, an Antiochian and friend of Nestorius, dominated the Chalcedonian intellectual scene. Had the true meaning of Chalcedon been clearly enunciated, the Monophysite Schism may not have occurred.

In the century after Chalcedon questions arose concerning the hypostasis of the union in Christ. Was it, or was it not, the hypostasis of the pre-existent Logos? This question was answered using the enhypostasia terminology of Leontius of Byzantium (d. 544), which means “subsisting in something else.” The human nature in Christ does not subsist in itself and according to itself, in its own personality, but subsists in another, namely in the hypostasis of the pre-existent Logos. Because the Logos assumed the human nature into itself, the hypostasis of the personal union in Christ is the hypostasis of the Logos. This definition indicated that Chalcedon was indeed in uniformity with Cyrillian thought, for the

Chalcedonian duality did not suppress the unity of the subject in Christ, which subject was the pre-existing Logos. This should have satisfied the Monophysite camp had it not been that their leading theologians like Severus of Antioch had become entrenched in one-nature terminology. The Chalcedonians could indeed say, "God suffered in the flesh," for one from the Trinity suffered in His assumed human flesh according to the communication of attributes.

Justinian, the greatest emperor of this period, ascended the throne in 527. There is no doubt that Justinian had great political aspirations and that those aspirations affected his theology. He wanted to reunite the religious factions in his empire and extend the empire. In addition to this, Justinian's beautiful wife, Theodora, leaned in the direction of the Greens, the Monophysite party in the capital, while Justinian was a Blue of the Chalcedonian party. There was continual agitation between the two parties in Constantinople. At times riots broke out between the Greens and Blues in the Hippodrome that could remind one of Monday night football. Theodora was continually pushing Justinian to heal the breach with the Monophysites. However, he was also a great theologian. He knew that Chalcedonian Christology was basically Cyrillian, but this fact was being blurred by the writings of Antiochian theologians, which Monophysites understood as representing the real meaning of Chalcedon. To promote the Cyrillian intent of Chalcedon, the Council of Constantinople (553) was called together, where the writings of three prominent Antiochian theologians (the Three Chapters) were rejected. The Three Chapters included all the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and the writings of Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa which attacked Cyril of Alexandria. The Council also proclaimed that the Cyrillian expression "one incarnate nature" must not be understood otherwise than as a synonym of one hypostasis.

In the time of Maximus the Confessor (580-622) controversy arose concerning the energies and wills in Christ. For Maximus, energy and will were virtually synonymous. Energy is the

concrete manifestation of nature. To say that Christ has one will would have been a confusion of the natures. Then Christ would not have been truly human, for energy and will indicate the reality of the human nature. Christ had to be totally and completely human and totally and completely divine to be the Savior. The Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680-681 accepted the doctrine of two wills in Christ, rejecting the Monothelite (one will) view. It should be noted that this wasn't only a condemnation of the Monophysite view in another form, Monothelitism. It was also a rejection of the extreme Antiochian school because Nestorians spoke of a single will in Christ. (Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, Vol. 2, pp. 69ff)

The last major controversy concerning Christology in the Eastern Church was related to the Iconoclastic Crisis in the 8th century. The Eastern emperors were fighting for the very existence of the Christian empire against Islam. In this conflict their sensitivity ever increased to the reproaches of idolatry hurled at Byzantine Christians by the Moslems, who presented themselves as the representatives of a purer religion. As a result, the Eastern emperors forbade the use of images. The Iconoclasts used this theological basis for the rejection of images: if the image represents the humanity of Christ to the exclusion of his divinity, it implies a Nestorian Christology and separates God from man in Christ; if, on the contrary, the iconographer pretends to represent Christ in the individual fullness of His divinity and His humanity, he assumes that the divinity itself can be circumscribed, which is absurd, or else that it lives in a state of confusion with the humanity, a view which nears Monophysitism. (Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 180)

The Orthodox leaders like John of Damascus (675-749) responded to the Iconoclasts on the basis of the incarnation. If the Logos assumed a total and complete human nature, that human nature could surely be represented in picture form. To deny that Christ could be portrayed in an icon was to deny that Christ was true man, a part of history. The iconographers made no pretense

of representing the divinity in Christ, but they did picture the Divine Logos in His assumed flesh. The Iconoclastic view revealed a notion of deification in the humanity of Christ, which suppressed the reality of the human nature and tended toward Monophysitism. The Council of Nicaea in 787 upheld the Orthodox teachings concerning images declaring the reverencing of pictures and images of divine realities legitimate.

II. The Christology of Chalcedon

What was the Christology of Chalcedon? It was a synthesis of Cyrillian (Alexandrian) and Antiochian Christology with Cyrillian thought predominating. Meyendorff writes, "Thus, an attempt has been made to sustain the view that so-called neo-Chalcedonian Christology, proclaimed as official orthodoxy during the reign of Justinian and symbolized by the condemnation of the Three Chapters at the Council of 553, was not a simple concession to Monophysitism but a fundamental option, rooted in basic theological and anthropological presuppositions." (Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 209) This view is not upheld by individuals such as Sellers, who writes, "Moreover, it seems true to say that the Fifth General Council 'erred' when it declared against the Three Chapters." (Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon a Historical and Doctrinal Survey*, p. 328) Sellers believes that here the proper synthesis between Alexandrian and Antiochian thought was upset. After a long history of rivalry between Alexandria and Antioch, the Antiochian school suffered its greatest blow. Its doctrine had been condemned by a council of the church.

I maintain that the basic premise of Meyendorff is correct. By confessing that the hypostasis of Christ was the hypostasis of the pre-existent Logos, the neo-Chalcedonians showed themselves to be in conformity with Cyril before the Council of 553. Cyrillian Christology was not the outcome of a compromise at the Fifth Ecumenical Council; it was the true

intent of Chalcedon.

There is no doubt that Justinian's political ambitions played into the Fifth Ecumenical Council. He wanted reunion with the Monophysites. Yet, far more could have been done if that was the only intent of the council. The council would not have had to criticize the "one incarnate nature" terminology of Cyril. This criticism certainly did not endear the Monophysites who had made one nature in Christ virtually their watchword. The Three Chapters had to be condemned because these writers were blurring the Cyrillian understanding of Chalcedon.

The Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-681 should not be perceived as a counter-balance to the Cyrillian Christology of the Council of 553. This council spoke against the Monothelite view that was close to Monophysitism. It declared there was not one will in Christ, but two. This action did not in any way reject the theology of Cyril. Rather, it was in line with the position of Cyril of Alexandria for it condemned the one-will terminology of his greatest antagonist, Nestorius. This council condemned Monothelitism, but confessed the teaching of Cyril.

Likewise, the Iconoclastic Crisis maintained the Cyrillian synthesis. The Council of Nicaea in 787 did not side with the Monophysite views of the Iconoclasts. It upheld the incarnational theology of Cyril and all the early fathers. Because the Logos assumed a total and complete human nature for our salvation, that human nature could be represented in picture form. If a picture of the assumed nature of the Logos was not possible, then the incarnation was not a reality.

Part of the modern disfavor with the neo-Chalcedonian Cyrillian synthesis results from the branch of Christianity which rejects it. The Reformed tradition centering in Calvin and Zwingli officially accepts Chalcedonian Christology, but in practice it does not uphold it. Calvin held that the finite is not capable of the infinite (*finitum non est capax infiniti*). With this axiom the Reformed have never been able to fathom the true unity of the personal union in Christ emphasized in Cyrillian Christology. This means

that in Reformed theology, by philosophical definition, the human nature of Christ cannot embrace the divine nature. Hence, their Christology tends toward Nestorianism, and they advocate the rehabilitation of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius, and the other representatives of the Antiochene Christology.

In contradistinction to Lutheranism, the Reformed do not maintain in practice the communication of attributes. (1. Genus Idiomaticum, 2. Genus Maiestaticum, 3. Genus Apotelesmaticum [See Addendum I]) Because in their theology the finite is not capable of the infinite, they categorically deny that the divine attributes of the Logos (such as omnipresence) are communicated to the assumed human nature, as is taught in the Genus Maiestaticum. They deny that the blessed bread and wine in the Sacrament are the vivifying flesh and blood of the Son of God. Chemnitz in defense of Lutheranism quotes the fathers of Ephesus (431) as saying: "The flesh of Christ on account of the union with the divine nature, which is life itself, is made life-giving or a life-giver and it thus has the authority or power to give life, and this authority it exercises in the action of the Lord's Supper in the believers." (Chemnitz, *De Duabus*, 474) The Christology of Lutheranism and the Seven Ecumenical Councils borders on Monophysitism for the Reformed and thus they reveal their hidden Nestorianism.

III. Soteriology and Christology

The Christological controversies of the church were not idle philosophical speculation without rhyme and reason. Christology is vital because it has soteriological significance. We confess in the Nicene Creed that He "for us men and our salvation . . . was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man." He was made man for our salvation. This is the purpose of the incarnation and Christology. Athanasius said, "God became man in order that man might become God in him." (*De Incarn.*, 54) Again Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, "What is not

assumed is not healed, and what is united to God is saved.” (Ep. 101, *Ad Cledonium*; NPNF, Vol. VII, p. 440) God became we are, partaking in our flesh made from dust, so that through unity with His divinity He must conquer all our foes and make us partakers in His divine glory, eternal life with Him. Athanasius and the other fathers based this salvific theme on a number of passages from Scripture (II Corinthians 3:18, 8:9; Galatians 3:26,4:7; John 17:23; I Corinthians 12:12-13; Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2; Psalms 82:1-6; Genesis 1:26), but first and foremost on II Peter 1:4, “By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

In the incarnation He took upon Himself our dying flesh, enduring all our woes to raise us to His divine life, as the sons of God with an eternal existence. He partook in our suffering, death, and hell so that we may partake in His glory, life, and heaven, a wonderful exchange (*Der fröhliche Wechsel*). That heavenly treasure, won for all through His incarnation culminating in His great passion, was announced and offered to all by His glorious resurrection in a forensic act of justification. The whole world was declared the innocent sons of God. Through the open tomb God declared the whole world righteous in His Son. This joyful exchange was based on His incarnation, death, and resurrection. God’s Son became flesh so that men might be God’s sons. Christ was made sin in order that man might be forgiven by divine grace. (WA 8:126, 21-32)

This treasure won on the cross and announced to all in the resurrection is brought to the individual personally through the means of grace, Word and Sacraments, and is received by faith in the Savior, which is worked through the same means of grace. (Romans 10:17; Titus 3:5; Matthew 26:28) When faith is worked in the believer’s heart, he stands justified (declared righteous by faith alone) before God, and through the means of grace the Spirit begins to conform us to the divine. “In his 1525 Lenten Postil, Luther writes “Through faith

we become gods and partakers of the divine nature and name.’ For Luther, man’s being like God, his theosis, thus also belongs to sanctification.” (*And Every Tongue Confess*, p. 191) Again he writes, “Through faith we become gods and partake in the divine nature and name as it says in Psalm 82:6, ‘I have indeed said you are gods and all together children of the Most High.’” (St. L. 11:481; Lenker, *Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 73-74)

In Baptism He comes to us personally, causing us to participate in the divine. Christ was born of woman so that we could be reborn as the sons and daughters of God through the water and the Spirit. (John 3:5, Titus 3:5) We were brought into fellowship and communion with the Triune God by being incorporated into the body of Christ. (Matthew 28:19) St. Paul says, “For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27) This passage shows that we are the sons of God through faith worked in Baptism. If we are the sons of God then we are indeed partakers in the divine, prepared to live the divine life in the new heaven and the new earth. All that the first Adam lost in the fall the second Adam restored in Himself and more. He made us partakers in divine life and glory. Baptism is indeed paradise regained.

This divine life brought forth in Baptism and daily renewed through repentance and faith can be nourished and strengthened in this present vale of tears only through the heavenly manna, the life-giving Word and the blessed Sacrament of Christ’s Blood and Body. Through these means of grace we have union and communion with Christ.

The Word who became incarnate and dwelt among men for our salvation is now incarnate in the bread and the wine to give us His divine life. He who once became flesh now gives us his flesh so that we may be as He is. Jesus says, “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides

in Me and I in him ... so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.” (John 5:54-57) While this passage does not speak specifically of Christ’s flesh and blood in the Supper, its promise certainly applies to all places where He is present for us with His blessings and, therefore, it applies to worthy participation in the Holy Sacrament. The Supper gives us Christ’s vivifying flesh so we may have divine life. We who became sons of God in Baptism are continually being nourished by His body and blood. Thus the Sacrament is the viaticum, “the medicine of immortality,” which is the food preparing us for eternal life. Concerning this Luther writes, “So, when we eat Christ’s flesh physically and spiritually, the food is so powerful that it transforms us into itself and out of fleshly, sinful, mortal men makes spiritual, holy, living men. This we are already, though in a hidden manner in faith and hope; the fact is not yet manifest, but we shall experience it on the Last Day.” (LW 37: 101) Again he says: “Similarly, the mouth, the throat, the body, which eats Christ’s body, will also have its benefit in that it will live forever and arise on the Last Day to eternal salvation. This is the secret power and benefit, which flows from the body of Christ in the Supper into our body, for it must be useful, and cannot be present in vain. Therefore it must bestow life and salvation upon our bodies, as is its nature.” (LW 37: 134; also see 37: 132) Chemnitz likewise speaks of this union and communion with the divine:

Therefore, in order that we might be able to lay hold on Christ more intimately and retain Him more firmly, not only did He Himself assume our nature but He also restored it again for us by distributing His body and blood to us in the Supper, so that by this connection with His humanity, which has been assumed from us and is again communicated back to us, He might draw us into communion and union with the deity itself. (Chemnitz, *The Lord’s Supper*, 188)

Because in the Eucharist we receive the body of Christ which has been given for us, and the blood of the New

Testament which has been shed for the remission of sins, who will deny that believers there receive the whole treasury of the benefits of Christ? For they receive that through which sins are remitted, by which death is abolished, by which life is communicated to us, by which Christ unites us to Himself as members, so that He is in us and we are in Him. Hilary says beautifully: "When these things have been taken and drunk, they bring about both that Christ is in us and that we are in Him." Cyril says: "When in the mystical benediction we eat the flesh of Christ in faith, we have from it life in ourselves, being joined to that flesh which has been made life, so that not only does the soul ascend through the Holy Spirit into a blessed life, but also this earthly body is restored by this food to immortality, to be resurrected on the last day." Therefore we receive in the Eucharist the most certain and most excellent pledge of our reconciliation with God, of the forgiveness of sins, of immortality and future glorification ... Beautiful is that statement of Ignatius, which is found in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he calls the Eucharist *pharmakon athanasias, antidoton tou mee apothanein, alla zeen en theo dia Ieesou Christou, katharterion alexikakon*, that is, "a medicine of immortality, an antidote, that we may not die but live in God through Jesus Christ, a cleansing remedy through warding off and driving out evils." (Chemnitz, *Examen 2*, 233-234).

Addendum I

The Summary of the Three Genera

A. The first Genus of Communication of Attributes (*Genus Idiomaticum*)

- 1) The first genus, the Genus Idiomaticum, consists in this: Because the divine and human natures of Christ constitute one Person, the attributes, belonging essentially to only one nature are always ascribed to the whole Person, but the divine attributes according to the divine nature, and the human attributes according to the human nature. (Pieper, II, p. 143; see also FC SD VIII, 36f., Trigl. p. 1027; *De Duabus*, p. 83)
- 2) According to I Corinthians 2:8: "They crucified the Lord of Glory;" Acts 3:15: "And [ye] killed the Prince of Life;" Heb. 13:8: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever;" John 8:58: "Before Abraham was, I am," etc. In all these and similar passages peculiarities of either nature are ascribed to the whole person.

B. The Second Genus of the Communication of Attributes (*Genus Maiestaticum*)

- 1) Concerning the second genus, the Genus Maiestaticum, Lutherans teach that in the hypostatic union, while nothing is

added to or taken away from the divine nature in itself, yet, because of the hypostatic union with the deity, countless supernatural qualities and qualities which are even contrary to the common condition of human nature are given and communicated to Christ's human nature. (M. Chemnitz, *De Duabus*, pp. 6, 83; see also Pieper, II, p. 220; FC SD VIII, 50-52, Trigl. 1031)

- 2) When Scripture states, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," (Col. 2:9) it teaches by these words that the Son of God, with all the abundance of His divine essence and of His divine attributes, without any deduction whatsoever ("all the fullness of the Godhead"), is united with His human nature.
- 3) Whenever divine attributes are given to Christ in time such as in Matthew 28:19: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth," this is proof of the second genus. If this passage refers to the divine nature, Christ is not fully God at the incarnation.

C. The Third Genus of the Communication of Attributes (*Genus Apotelesmaticum*)

- 1) The third genus, the Genus Apotelesmaticum, consists in this: All official acts which Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King has performed and still performs for the salvation of men,

He performs according to both natures, by each doing what is proper to not by itself and apart from the other nature, but in constant communion with the other, in one undivided theanthropic action. (Pieper, II, p. 247; see also FC SD VII, 46, 47, Trigl., p. 1031; *De Duabus*, p. 83)

- 2) Passages such as I John 3:8: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested [4:2: come in the flesh], that He might destroy the works of the devil,” refer to all divine works by which the Son of God became, and still is, the Savior of all men. But all these divine works are executed through the assumed flesh or human nature. The human nature of Christ therefore is the divinely chosen organ, or instrument, for the divine work of redemption in all its parts. (Pieper, II, p. 249; see Mueller, p. 285)
- 3) The passage I John 1:7: “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin,” may be used in connection with all three genera.
 - a) Genus Idiomaticum: The blood is not merely the blood of the human nature, but the blood of the person who is God (His Son).
 - b) Genus Maiestaticum: The human blood has the divine power of cleansing from sin.
 - c) Genus Apotelesmaticum: The blood referring to the human nature and His Son referring to the divine nature are co-

operating in one salvific, theanthropic act,
to cleanse us from all sin. (Pieper, II, pp.
250-251)

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The Development and Early Years of The Synodical Conference, 1872-1918

by Donald Moldstad

In the body of Christian doctrine there are tensions, which are a natural part of the work of the church. Our Lord has lovingly commanded us to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” but we are also directed to “note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them.” We have Christ’s commission to “go and make disciples of all nations,” and yet should “not be yoked together with unbelievers.” We are to “beware of the leaven” of false teaching no matter how small, yet “avoid foolish controversies.... which are unprofitable and useless.” In the same chapter as His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs us to “judge not, lest ye be judged,” but continues that we should “watch out for false prophets,” by judging their doctrine.

When a church body strives to take the commands of Scripture to heart there are times when decisions must be made and actions taken which bring these tensions into play. The bond of peace must always be founded on the unity of pure doctrine. In the history of the Lutheran church the era that shaped the founding of the Synodical Conference and its early years saw many opportunities pertaining to the practices of fellowship and the mission of the church. The decisions made by our forefathers continue to be to our benefit today. The confessor may not always make life easy for himself, but, by God’s grace, he serves future generations. As with all church history our goal in this study is not merely to mark the historical memory of our past, but rather to learn from the decisions made. May the study renew in us a greater appreciation for

the confessions of our church, a new willingness to stay with them, and the courage to restudy the old truths. Having our synodical roots in the old Norwegian Synod, we will attempt to shed greater light on its movements and decisions.

I. "Finding One Another"

The first order of business among many of the immigrant Lutherans was to establish themselves into local congregations and church bodies. This was not always a simple task, under the the conditions of a scattered population, the challenges of a new land and new language, a gross shortage of qualified clergy, and the difficulty of navigating in the religious climate of American Lutheranism. In Norway and Germany the state had always provided the impetus, structure and financial backing for the work of the church. Here in the US churches were on their own. As immigrants arrived, most of the "Old Lutherans" were repulsed by the practices and lax doctrine of the so-called American Lutherans. In attempting to escape the seeds of false teachings planted in the name of the Prussian Union in Germany, the Saxons now entered a garden in America where the seed was already full-grown. The Norwegians, who sought to evade the fingers of pietism and rationalism, were again facing the same foes on new soil. How could they survive and work together while still retaining their confessional Lutheran identity? How would they adapt to a different culture and the new language, which at least their children would someday embrace? Their decisions would have long-lasting implications.

Among the Norwegians there was a strong desire to unite all their emigrants into one church body. This is quite understandable in light of the structure of the state church in their homeland. As natural as this inclination was, it would serve to undo them in the generations to come. Nevertheless, there was along side this desire a sincere intent to establish ties with those of the same confession and practice. Their future depended on it.

For the men of the Norwegian Synod (NS) it was primarily the issue of training future pastors which drove them to investigate the doctrine of other confessionally minded Lutherans. They were not sure they could rely on the homeland to send them an adequate supply of ordained men. Having come from a background which required one year of foreign study under *the Directory of Worship* ordinance at the University of Christiania, the thought of crossing language and cultural borders to find good seminary training was not difficult for them. Early on, the Norwegian Synod demonstrated an eclectic approach to good theological training and was in many ways less parochial than the German synods. J.A. Ottesen and N. Brandt traveled to investigate the seminaries of St. Louis and Buffalo. They returned with the recommendation to use the seminary of the Missouri Synod, a decision which quickly established friendly ties between the two synods. In C.F.W. Walther they saw an American version of professors Gisle Johnson and Carl Caspari.

The desire for true, biblical, confessional fellowship is what finally culminated in the establishment of the Synodical Conference (SC). The doctrinal precision required by the LC-MS, the NS, and the confessionally developing Wisconsin theologians, appeared to many to be rigid, but one cannot label them as separatists. All sincerely expressed an early longing for unity with like-minded Lutherans. In 1856 Walther had invited all Lutherans to unite under the Augsburg Confession, in response to *The Definite Platform* of S.S. Schmucker, which had denied eight articles of the Augsburg Confession. Free conferences were held continually from 1857 through the 1860s with the hope of establishing agreement. These were not to be merely academic exercises, or gripe sessions about the false teachings of others, nor were they simply to bolster one another in their fight for confessionalism, but they had the direct aim of establishing unity. Yet, it was not to be done in haste. Time was needed to continue to investigate each other's doctrine and practice. Such calls to unity helped to propel Charles Porterfield Krauth and other con-

servatives in the General Synod to have hope in creating a thoroughly Lutheran church body.

By 1870 the LC-MS had sent delegates to nearly every Lutheran synod and conference in the land. On the 25th anniversary of the Missouri Synod, Vice President Theo. Brohm stated, "Today we are in fraternal fellowship with five, partly large, bodies."¹ The Wisconsin and Missouri Synods established fellowship by 1868 (official in 1869), which included the placement of professors on each other's campuses. In 1870 the Ohio Synod requested a meeting of other like-minded synods. In 1871 the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods entered fellowship. Walther even proposed the idea of one large synod which would have a joint seminary. A sincere spirit of working together was exhibited early by all the synods involved.

Likewise in the Norwegian Synod, unity on the pure doctrine rose above nationalistic ties. They sought long and hard to join with other Norwegians, such as the Augustana Synod, and the Elling Eielsen Synod, but remained apart for the sake of confessing the truth. The Augustana men embraced pietism. The Eielsen men despised higher education and had a lower view of the holy sacraments and public ministry. Though brothers in the flesh, they were not brothers in the spirit.² The Norwegian Synod demonstrated its love for the truth even by changing its view of the mother church. Having established such strong connections with Missouri it desired LC-MS graduates over those from Christiania. In 1866 Herman Amberg Preus reported to the University of Christiania (Oslo), "As far as I can judge, there is a greater confessional clarity and certainty to be found among our men (who graduate from Concordia, St. Louis), just as their sermons are sounder, more potent, and simpler."³

II. The General Council: Not Quite the Answer

All the future members of the Synodical Conference were supportive of the establishment of the General Council in 1867.

Glowing reports are given to the work of Krauth by Walther, Preus and others. The Wisconsin Synod initially entered the GC. Around this time Wisconsin had broken ties with the German mission societies which had supported it. Having recently wrestled with the decision to avoid unionism, its members realized similar problems were now apparent in the General Council. They removed themselves after one year and began working more closely towards Missouri. Though they had some fears of Missouri's reputation of legalism, the rising leadership of Adolph Hoenecke helped to lead Wisconsin ultimately into the Synodical Conference. This move was seen as encouraging to those in the NS, the Ohio Synod, and the LC-MS. Wisconsin leaving the GC became sort of a "test case" on the proper practice of church fellowship.

Krauth had hoped to win over the "old Lutherans" of the NS and LC-MS. The inaugural meeting of the Council was even held in Indiana, the far west for the east coast Lutherans, with the hope of drawing more attention in the Midwestern churches. While there were questions concerning millennialism and secret societies, the primary issues which kept the SC bodies out of the General Council were fellowship practices and confessional subscription. The GC required only subscription to the unaltered Augsburg Confession. This would have been enough for Walther and the others, but the fact that it was not to be thoroughly enforced made them leery. Things must not only look good on paper, but be carried through in practice. When they would later establish the constitution of the Synodical Conference, it would include required subscription to all the Lutheran symbols, especially the Formula of Concord. This, they hoped, would batten down the hatches in matters of confession. They learned a valuable lesson from the one small error of Krauth. One could easily understand how our forefathers could have jumped at the chance of entering the General Council. Their decision to stay apart not only was wise, but has greatly impacted our present position, for which we owe a debt of gratitude to our Heavenly Father.

To be fair, CP Krauth must also be understood in the light of his times. He had seen a great progression toward confessional Lutheranism among many pastors and churches whom others might have written off. For this reason he was more willing to give others time to “come around” once they had subscribed, even if they were not yet tight in all their practice. The SC men loved his intent but did not feel this approach was completely sound. Their fears, sad to say, were well founded. In 1870 F.A. Schmidt, the new “golden boy” in the NS, applauded the efforts of the GC, but added, “The synods did not really accept the doctrines they claimed to espouse.” He held out hope that the Council would be solid by 1880, the 300th anniversary of the Formula of Concord. One difference between the GC and the SC was in the attitude toward open questions, and what might be called questionable practices. To the men of the Synodical Conference all issues finally came back to support or unravel the doctrine of justification. This point Krauth and the confessional men in the General Council would learn too late. The GC had attempted to unite Lutherans by way of confessional subscription. The coming SC would be united by confessional subscription *and* consistent practice. There was a fundamental difference between the American Lutherans and the “Old Lutherans” in understanding fellowship. As minute as it may appear, one might say it is the difference between Melancthon and Luther. The remaining tinge of Henry Muhlenberg’s influence on matters of fellowship was enough to keep the SC synods away.

At times it is difficult to embrace the negative aspects of making a confession. It seems to challenge Christian love and liberty and comes across as papism. The GC men wanted to have the positive aspects of a confessional subscription, without taking on the negative responsibility when it came to chastising or ousting an erring brother or church for questionable practices. We must admit this is a constant tension, which plays on our hearts as well. Though it must be done in the context of genuine love for souls and the truth, certain decisions in the public ministry in this

regard are challenging. Such decisions may at times agitate even our best members who do not always see the implications of allowing a little leaven into the bread dough.

III. The Early Organization of the Synodical Conference

For the members of the Norwegian Synod the establishment of the SC can be seen as a second phase of its existence. Their first concern had been to care for the needs of their own people settling in the new land. The venture toward formal relations in the SC marks an era of establishing a new American confessional Lutheran identity. The need was great for unity and common practices, since their own members began to move to other communities and slowly assimilate into American life. From 1840-1875 there were nearly sixty different Lutheran synods organized in the U.S. Which churches could be trusted?

From the start, the Missouri Synod wished to have a larger cooperation between the synods. Walther's preference was for almost an "Ultra Synod," which would consist of smaller state synods broken down geographically. Wisconsin fought this idea, despite Missouri's objections. The Norwegian Synod also desired to retain its own identity for the sake of the language barrier and retaining its heritage to some degree. It was clear to all that Missouri was the driving force behind the new conference. The Norwegians may have feared giving up some of their hymns and liturgies too soon. (Many years later in the 1930s, *The Lutheran Hymnal* project may demonstrate some of the Norwegians' concerns.)

The first meeting to organize the Synodical Conference was January 11-13, 1871 in Chicago. Representatives from the Ohio, Missouri, Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods assembled to draft the constitution. Another meeting was held in November of the same year. F.A. Schmidt of the NS presented

a paper called *Denkschrift (Memorial)*, which set forth the reasons for organizing the new conference. He clearly establishes the primary issue to be that of church fellowship. Schmidt points to the problems in the General Council as an example that these matters must be given top concern in the new conference. If further open conferences had been available prior to the forming of the GC, he laments, there would have been better hope for true unity. They must now refuse to let confessional subscription be an empty ploy for mere outward unity.

An initial outline was submitted to each of the synods for their deliberation and suggested amendments, due at the November meeting. The following church bodies were represented: The Ohio Synod, the Missouri Synod, The Wisconsin Synod, the Norwegian Synod, the Illinois Synod and the Minnesota Synod. By resolution, they called for the first convention of the Synodical Conference to be held July 10-16, 1872, at St. Johns in Milwaukee, served by Pastor Bading. The opening day service was marked with great enthusiasm and gratitude to God. Walther preached the sermon, "How Important It Is to Make the Saving of Souls the One Great Object of Our Co-operative Work in the Kingdom of Christ." The first doctrinal paper was presented by Matthias Loy entitled, "Our Duty to the English-Speaking Population of This Country." The second paper was a series of theses by F.A. Schmidt, "On the Doctrine of Justification." Over the next six years a document of eighteen theses on church fellowship, written by Wm. Sihler (LC-MS), was studied by the conference. These three documents say much about the character, mission and conviction of the new conference. The central teaching of the faith, the fellowship to protect it, and the mission to spread it was the flag under which this ship would sail.

Very specific guidelines were agreed upon:

The Synodical Conference is only an advisory body with respect to all things concerning which the synods

constituting it have not given it authoritative power. Only the totality of all synods represented in the SC shall decide what church bodies are to be received into membership of the Synodical Conference. Church bodies cannot be received into membership thereof until all the synods of the SC have given their consent. The SC shall see to it that conferences attended by pastors of the various synods be organized and held, the District Presidents taking the initiative. Without the consent of all the synods of the SC, none of its synods shall be permitted to enter into any church connection with other church bodies. ⁴

(My comment: Note the double emphasis on the unanimity required for admission to the Synodical Conference). To my knowledge, this constitution remained in effect without change until the final collapse of the SC in 1963.

Things were to be done in the open for the verification of everyone. Minutes of each synod were to be examined by a committee so that things might be approved by all. They wanted unity in mind and judgment. The desire to mix more freely with synods of the SC resulted in the amalgamation of various smaller synods into each other. The fraternal bond, which was enjoyed in the early days, drew others to their conference. More talk was given to the idea of combining seminary training, which was finally scuttled when the Election controversy broke. The Conference met every two years with at least four representatives present from each synod. There was an equal number of lay and clergy positions. Wisely, it was decided that the treasurer be a layman.

The entrance of the Wisconsin Synod into the SC is really quite a remarkable thing. At times there has been almost an embarrassment of Wisconsin's weak theological roots. However, consider where they came from and where they finally arrived. Here was a church body which did not have the early leaders such as Walther, Wyneken, Koren or Preus, and whose pastors had largely been trained under a United Church background. They did not have the immediate ties to the confessional men of Europe

as did the NS and LC-MS. Their start had been from German mission societies which themselves were growing unionistic. Yet they now had the same concern which Walther had about other weak Lutheran bodies in the U.S. on matters of "Open Questions," the fear of damaging the central teachings of the faith. Under the direction of Hoenecke and synod President John Bading they were firmly convinced they should be in the SC. Ironically, the Norwegian Synod, however, enjoyed a closer bond with Missouri than did the fellow German Wisconsin Synod.

IV. The "One Great Object of Co-operation"

The theme of Walther's first sermon to the conference was soon put into action. The primary focus of their joint work would be on "matters pertaining to home and foreign mission work, as also to mission work among immigrants; hospitals and orphanages; the publishing of Lutheran literature in general and of Lutheran tracts in particular; the training of pastors and teachers; and the like." A Missionary Board was elected at the earliest convention.

The first field in which the SC would send a laborer would be among the freed slaves of the South, the Civil War having ended less than ten years earlier. Rev. J.F. Doescher (LC-MS) was commissioned in October of 1877. His travels took him to seven southern states preaching to large groups with the intent of establishing a mission station. St. Paul's Colored Lutheran Church of Little Rock, Arkansas was organized in 1878, erecting the first chapel built by the efforts of the SC. Twenty-three people received Christian baptism at the opening service. The accompanying Christian Day School began with forty-six enrolled. This same year the SC resolved to publish a missionary monthly periodical for all its members. Within two years it enjoyed a circulation of over 13,000. A second periodical was soon published for the sake of the new black members of the growing mission fields of the deep South. By 1900 the

SC had eighteen mission stations in the south, serving 1,400 souls. The Norwegian Synod and Missourians had already been doing joint work among the Indians prior to the SC organization.

Other missionary efforts were directed toward the many incoming immigrants. In 1882 alone a total of 250,000 Germans and 105,000 Scandinavians came to these shores, primarily heading for the plains states of the Midwest, where land was available and cheap. The "old Lutherans" had a distinct advantage over the American Lutherans. They had retained a common bond in terms of theology, hymnody, literature, language and customs with the new arrivals. Their numbers grew dramatically as boats poured across from Europe. At this point in its history, the SC was the largest organization of Lutherans in the country. The Norwegian Synod itself would grow to over 900 congregations at its peak. All SC members were excited by and became enthusiastic over the joint work. Things were looking positive in every respect.

V. Dissension In the Ranks.

Knowing the great work which was being accomplished in the fertile fields of the SC, it should not surprise us that the archenemy of Christ and His Church would soon bring trouble. Within ten years of its beginnings the conference synods would find themselves embroiled in a controversy which imperiled its very existence. Though each church body was to be touched by it in some way, none would be as wounded as the Norwegian Synod.

For years F.A. Schmidt had enjoyed prominence in the NS. Having a background tied to Missouri, he had been called by the Norwegian Synod to Luther College in its founding year. By his mid-thirties he already had the respect and admiration of Walther and Preus, and was at ease with all three important languages spoken in the SC: German, Norwegian and English. In many ways, he was the right man in the right place at the right time. Schmidt had been called upon to investigate other church

bodies, and to draw up much of the platform for the Synodical Conference. His connection to both synods only strengthened their fellowship. However, in 1880 Schmidt began to react publicly to a paper which Walther had written three years earlier on the subject of election, charging him with Calvinism. Within months he established a new publication for the sole purpose of informing others. When the NS came to the defense of Walther, Schmidt turned his attack on his own synod and its leaders. Preus, Ottesen and Koren were mainly upset that a fair hearing had not been given before charges were made. ⁶

Within the coming year the NS would seek to study the issue from the Scriptures and the Confessions before it would be resolved in a future convention. But Schmidt elected to bring the matter in through his report as seminary president and force the Synod to take an immediate stand, offering his resignation if they chose to remain with Walther's position.

Missouri was angry. Wisconsin called for patience. The Norwegians were in disarray. Tempers flared around the Synodical Conference. They convened for a special pastors' conference in Chicago in September 1880 with over 500 in attendance – nothing like a war to bring out the troops. The Ohio Synod publicly stood with Schmidt and his charges, finally withdrawing from the SC the following year. Missouri held its ground with Walther, despite a few defections. It instructed its delegates not to be seated at subsequent SC conventions if Schmidt's charges were not dropped. The Wisconsin Synod likewise stood with Walther, losing a handful of churches, pastors and professors through the course of events. Inside the NS Schmidt built a large faction which opposed the leadership and its decision to defend Missouri's position. What had angered many was Schmidt's attack on Walther without the courtesy of debate. This violated the unwritten rules of engagement. He had also chosen to send his charges out into other synods without any concern for the fallout on their own members.

In 1882 the NS sent six men to the SC proceedings, one

being FA Schmidt who had held the position by previous synod vote. When his seating was protested by the others, UV Koren asked him whether he had come as a friend or enemy to the conference. The question having gone unanswered, the other four Norwegians joined in resolving to unseat Schmidt. He and the "Anti-Missourians" would continue to rage against the synod for years to come. That same year the NS withdrew itself from the Synodical Conference with the hope of resolving the strife internally and not allowing it to destroy the larger church body. It was also feared that discussions in German and subsequent translations into Norwegian for many of its clergy and laypeople might be burdensome.⁷ However, removing itself from the SC did not help matters among the Norwegians. Finally in 1887 the Synod voted to show its intolerance for Schmidt's actions. About one third of the synod withdrew and formed the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood.

Though the Norwegian Synod still enjoyed fellowship ties with Wisconsin and Missouri, there was no official move to rejoin the SC. This has always been somewhat puzzling, and yet it demonstrates how deep the wounds were from the entire controversy. Families, communities and close relationships had been devastated in the process. Local congregations had been splintered. Seeking peace with one another was the top concern on the minds and hearts of the synod. It was this deep longing to reconnect, coupled with a general movement away from the strength of the Missouri theologians, which would allow the NS to drift toward a unionistic path by the time of WWI. The synods did remain, however, well aware of each other's work and battles. The synods counseled one another in matters of doctrine. But the solid, old connections were no longer there. By the turn of the century the SC exerted less and less influence on the theological direction for the Norwegians. They were involved in their own mission efforts. Their minds were elsewhere by this time. They spent too much time on trying to reunite with the scattered Norwegian churches. As Christian Anderson would later write,

It was constantly held forth that they had all been united in one church in the home country. They used the same textbooks for instruction in the schools, the same hymnbooks.....it was stressed early and late that they ought to join together. And here I am afraid that the Norwegian Synod was the loser. ⁸

The battle over Predestination had also left other wounds, which would bring a softness to the Norwegian Synod. In the aftermath of such a devastating fight pastors became tired of controversy and neglected to continue studying the issues, and, as some would claim, neglected to continue studying at all. As the opposition appeared more and more friendly in time, the masses were confident that their leaders were competently resolving the issues at a substantive level. In reality, this was not the case. Truly capable leaders, who had remained in office over a long period of time, without intention had enabled the feeling of complacency toward theological study to grow. Koren had been the “go to guy” for many years. He sat on the Synod’s Church Council (Doctrine Committee) for forty-nine years until his death. Without his noticing it, the position itself had become so powerful that his successor could easily use it toward the Merger. Anderson comments:

Because of this experience we had in the formation of the late merger, there was a gentlemen’s agreement among us, when we re-organized the Synod, that the term of office of the President was to be only two years, and that no one was to be re-elected more than once. ⁹

Fraternal relations with the SC were strained as the NS edged toward a compromise with doctrinally weak church bodies. When the Madison Agreement was adopted in 1912, those close ties would become non-existent, except for the Minority,

many of whom increased their contact with the men of Missouri. Sensing the “supply of arms” which the Minority men were receiving from discussions with the SC, the leaders of the NS began to turn a cold shoulder toward efforts of negotiation by Missouri and WELS. President Stub replied to a request for such a meeting, “Our people desire and need peace and rest.”¹⁰

Right up until 1917, as the great debate was raging in the St. Paul Auditorium, the SC provided men to encourage the small remnant to continue testifying to the end. Their committee, consisting of Franz Pieper, W.H.T. Dau, and Theo. Schlueter, having been again denied access to the NS, and even to the larger Minority, met with the handful who would still listen. They left town before the final vote was tallied. Prof. Theo. Graebner later regretted not telling the Minority to leave earlier. Some speculate that under such circumstances other churches and pastors could have been retained for the re-organized little Norwegian Synod.

VI. The Remnant Returns.

Were it not for the safe haven and the nurture provided by the Synodical Conference brethren, the little fledgling group which avoided the Merger of 1917 might not have survived. The initial thought to become a Norwegian District of the Missouri Synod was discouraged by Pieper and others. Re-organizing the old Synod would possibly serve as a familiar island to other Norwegians who might abandon the ship of the Merger. The advice proved fruitful. With the help of its big brothers, especially in Missouri, the “plucked chicken” began to grow feathers again. It was fitting that a sermon was delivered by Rev. H. Steger of the LC-MS at the first meeting in Lime Creek, IA. By the early 1920s the little Synod applied for membership in the Conference, which was quickly approved at the next meeting. Despite having such a tiny pool of pastors and congregations, the Norwegians were again allowed equal representation at the table of the SC.

The history of the Synodical Conference, in both cen-

turies of its existence, is marked with great accomplishments, but also tragic endings. It is still spoken of fondly by those who enjoyed the friendly confines of its fellowship, and the common worship practices. What a gift it was to go from church to church in various states and be confident in hearing the same Law and Gospel espoused from the pulpit. Many again long for the return of this great church organization in a day where confessional Lutheranism appears to be such a minority position. Yet, this is life in the church militant. If any one lesson is to be learned for future relations among Lutherans it is that outward unity is of no real benefit without true fellowship in all matters of doctrine. Our love and sympathy toward conservative, confessional men inside church bodies whose practice is not biblically sound must always be tempered with a love for the truth and a desire to pass it on to succeeding generations. Though we may cheer them on we must also encourage them away from the errors that threaten the faith they profess. God grant us the wisdom and courage properly to discern and apply the tensions in His Word to the benefit of our grandchildren and beyond.

Endnotes

- ¹ J. T. Mueller. *Diamond Jubilee, A Brief History of the Origin, Development, and Work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America*. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1948, pp.5 & 6.
- ² Todd Nichol, *Vivacious Daughter*, lectures by Herman Amberg Preus, The Norwegian American Historical Association, Northfield, MN, 1990, p.82.
- ³ *Ibid*, p.135.
- ⁴ J. T. Mueller, p.19.
- ⁵ *Ibid*, p.19.
- ⁶ T. A. Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill*, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mankato, MN, 1968, p.18.
- ⁷ *Grace for Grace*, Lutheran Synod Book Co., Mankato, MN, 1943, p.61.
- ⁸ Christian Anderson, a paper entitled *Underlying Causes of the Deterioration and Breakdown of the Old Norwegian Synod*, delivered in 1953, published in *The Clergy Bulletin*, September, 1953, Vol. 13.
- ⁹ *Ibid*, p.3.
- ¹⁰ Aaberg, p.57 * See footnote 17 on page 73 regarding Dau's attempts to gain an interview.

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

by Gaylin R. Schmeling

A document more than thirty years in the making was signed Sunday, October 31, 1999 by representatives of Pope John Paul II and the Lutheran World Federation in Augsburg, Germany. It was no accident that the signing took place on the 31st of October, which is the anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. This *Declaration* is intended to begin a healing of the rift that occurred in the Reformation era. At the time of the Reformation, Rome and Lutherans were decidedly divided concerning the central article of the faith, justification by faith alone. This *Declaration* is being publicized as a major step in breaching the divide between the two church bodies.

The question that faces Lutherans, especially confessional Lutherans, is this: Is the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ) really a monumental statement that could be the beginning of a reunion in the Western Church? Is the *Declaration* an adequate confession of the doctrine of justification? As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference we categorically answer in the negative. This *Declaration* has not brought an agreement in either doctrine or practice. Rather it speaks of a “convergence” in doctrine. (JDDJ para. 13) The purpose of the *Declaration* was to reach consensus on certain key issues and to compromise or agree to disagree in other points of doctrine. The *Declaration* specifically asserts that differences are acceptable:

The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this *Declaration* shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this consen-

sus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paragraphs 18 to 39 are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding basic truths. (JDDJ para. 40)

Confessional Lutherans cannot accept this statement because it allows conflicting doctrines to stand side by side – and this even on the central article of the faith.

In accord with the inspired Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions speak of justification as a forensic act. (Apology IV, 305, Tappert, p. 154) On the basis of Christ's redemptive work the Father justified or declared the whole world righteous. This declaration of innocence is brought to the individual through the means of grace and is received by faith alone in the Savior. This faith is worked, strengthened, and preserved through those same means of grace. We are declared righteous by nothing we do or accomplish, but alone because of Christ's work in our stead. Rather than justification being the declaration of free forgiveness while we are yet sinners, Rome teaches that we are *made righteous* through a gradual process of the infusion of divine grace. With this view, faith justifies not simply by receiving Christ's righteousness but by working in the individual a real inherent righteousness, which is, on its own account, acceptable to God.

The Catholic understanding also sees faith as fundamental in justification. For without faith, no justification can take place... The justification of sinners is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous by justifying grace, which makes us children of God. In justification the righteous receive from Christ faith, hope, and love and are thereby taken into communion with him. (JDDJ para. 27)

In the same vein the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "Justification includes the remission of sins, sanc-

tification, and the renewal of the inner man.” (para. 2019) If justification includes the renewal of the inner man, then it is based not only on Christ’s righteousness but also on our good life or inner renewal. As a result, our salvation would then depend at least in part on our good works and, as Paul says, we have then fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:4) Again we would be helping in our own salvation and would be returning to work righteousness.

In this connection it should be noted that the statement does not clearly define “grace.” It merely speaks of the grace of God and never comes to grips with the contradictory definitions of the word. According to Romans 4:4 and 11:6, saving grace is God’s undeserved favor for Christ’s sake. Rome understands grace to mean an infused quality, which elevates man’s natural goodness to a supernatural level that enables him to please God and help in his own salvation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it this way: “The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.” (para. 1999)

Many issues intimately connected to the central article of justification are left unresolved in the *Declaration*. Indulgences, purgatory, the sacrifice of the mass, and the invocation of the saints are all still taught in the Roman Church. This is evident as one pages through the new catechism. How can a scriptural understanding of justification be in any way compatible with such Roman concepts?

It must always be remembered that the *Declaration* does not condemn, change, or limit the decrees of the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent of 1545-1563 remains the official dogma of Rome and it rejects the scriptural doctrine of justification in no uncertain terms:

If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the

action of his own will, let him be anathema . . . If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema. . . If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies, let him be anathema. (Trent, Ses. VI, Canons 9, 11, 12)

In conclusion one would have to agree that this *Declaration* is probably the most monumental event in worldwide Lutheran/Catholic dialogue since the Diet of Regensburg in 1541, which was the last major attempt by Lutherans and Catholics to reach an agreement on justification. But the problem is that the *Declaration* is a compromise much like Regensburg and not a confession founded on the errorless Word of God. Therefore, we as confessional Lutherans will continue to maintain the doctrine of Scripture and the Confessions that a man is justified by faith alone, without the deeds of the law.

Book Review:
We Believe in Jesus Christ:
Essays on Christology

by Michael K. Smith

Curtis A. Jahn, compiling editor, *We Believe in Jesus Christ: Essays on Christology*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999. 312 pp.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$12.99

At each June 1998 district convention of the WELS, various clergymen delivered essays detailing a particular aspect of Christology. These twelve essays address what Pres. Karl Gurgel calls in his foreword the "epicenter of the Gospel" (p. viii). This treatment of our Lord and His work is especially needed, says Gurgel, during increasing millennial madness, fleshly indulgence and spiritual apathy. The message of the Savior, the true Savior, must be proclaimed with all mission zeal.

Unequivocally that mission message sounds forth in these essays. Particular topics of Christology expounded therein range from the communication of attributes to the relationship between Christology and sanctification to Christ's *parousia*. Parish pastors, seminary professors, and church administrators are among the book's authors. The volume's scope is broadened by its diverse origins.

An adequate treatment of each essay is far beyond the scope of the paragraphs that follow. Therefore, allow this reviewer to comment on a few of the essays that particularly piqued his interest.

Eric S. Hartzell penned "A Living, Active, Powerful Christ for the Church of the Next Millennium." Crisp, concise, and concrete, this essay presents the changeless Christ for a fast-changing world. Hartzell splendidly makes applications to the Christian's everyday life, such as when he stresses that to see Jesus as living is to understand the purpose of the Church: "to get people out of the mortuaries of their dead gods" (p. 216). In the section describing Jesus' power, Hartzell constructs creative descriptions replete with biblical imagery. For example, Jesus has "dynamite" power, "tidal wave" power, "atomic bomb" power, and "flash flood" power. Christ has all this power in the face of man's "abysmal lack of any power to do anything good" (p. 223). Especially since this world continues its downward spiral, Jesus will continue to protect and keep His children in His Church.

"Jesus is Coming Again" was written by Ernst H. Wendland. Understandably, he weaves a mission emphasis throughout his inspiring message. Pertaining to one of his areas of expertise, Wendland compares the worldview of African cultures to that of European-American culture. He warns that the Euro-American "man-centered philosophy" is a distinct danger to Christianity that must not be overlooked as the spread of the Gospel continues (p. 232). So that his readers will be prepared to counter the false views of millennialists, Wendland succinctly summarizes the biblical teaching of Christ's second coming, including emphasis on proper biblical interpretation and a mini-commentary on Revelation 20. He closes with heartfelt encouragement to his readers; encouragement to anticipate the Lord's return with joy, while remembering that heaven is populated with people of "every nation, tribe, people, and language" (Rev. 7:9). As a special encouragement to pastors to emphasize missions, Wendland relates an incident from his days of teaching at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary:

I recall an incident when I returned a sermon manuscript to a student with the brief notation, "You missed the mission application." Somewhat crestfallen, he turned to me and said, "But Professor, does *every* sermon have to have a mission emphasis?" My reply? A rather overemphatic "*But of course!*" (p. 246)

Paul M. Janke wrote "Christ in Us: The Place of the Doctrine of Sanctification in Reformed and Lutheran Teaching." Especially in light of the ELCA's recent decision to enter into full communion with three Reformed church bodies, confessional Lutherans must be informed concerning differences that exist between Reformed and Lutheran theology. Regarding sanctification, Janke emphasizes, the Reformed stress "Christ in us" as opposed to "Christ for us" (p. 166). He bolsters his point with citations from Reformed and even LC-MS authors. Throughout these citations it is clear that "Reformed theology is skewed in the direction of making the goal of Christianity the *remaking* of people into more moral individuals" (p. 166; quoted from Robert Koester, *Law and Gospel: Foundation of Lutheran Ministry*). Janke also demonstrates that Reformed preaching carries with it the same over-emphasis on "Christ in us." Such over-emphasis stems from Calvin's belief in the "limited atonement" (that Jesus saved only the elect) and Arminianism's demand of good works along with faith. Janke suggests that Lutherans can retain the biblical emphasis on Christ for us through continued use of the liturgy and by preaching sermons, which follow the pattern of the New Testament epistles.

As a whole, this volume of essays provides a fine addition to one's library. While some of the essays contained similar material (e.g., communication of attributes), and while some were more difficult to read than others, this collection is a good summary of Christology. Parts of the material may be especially useful in the parish as a way of explaining certain intricacies of biblical teaching concerning our Savior.

Book Review:

Romans

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

Armin J. Panning, *Romans*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999. 258 pages.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$10.99

Another book you will want to add to your library is this recent commentary on the Apostle Paul's chief epistle. If you are looking for a handy and reliable guide to the study of Romans, which highlights the proper relationship between objective and subjective justification, this is it. The author, for example, gives this synopsis in his opening remarks on chapter 5: "A number of times Paul has spoken of justification as being for *all* people. That teaching is often referred to as *general justification*. The general or universal aspect of justification, however, is just one side of the picture. The necessary counterpart to this teaching of general justification is a proper understanding also of *subjective justification*, that is, the need for faith in the heart of an individual to receive the blessings that objectively are there for him and for all people by virtue of God's doing. The unbeliever who rejects Christ's righteousness loses the benefit of what is truly there also for him" (p. 79).

There are many topics for careful study in Paul's letter to the Romans. Under chapter 13, for instance, Prof. Panning discusses the proper role of government in society. "God's overriding concern in providing government rule is to bless us with an orderly and peaceful existence. Hence it

is the duty of God's representatives to encourage and commend those who do right. But when the peace is jeopardized by law-breakers, God's representatives need to step in and restore order and punish evildoers. And when they do so, they do it not merely with God's permission but also in accordance with his command. Government is God's servant" (p. 214).

The easy-to-read style of the commentary, together with the bold printed NIV text, makes the book commendable for Bible classes and for family/home devotions.

Book Review: Baptism “My Adoption into God’s Family”

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

Gaylin R. Schmeling, *Baptism “My Adoption into God’s Family”*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999. 168 pages.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$8.99

The subtitle of this book sets the stage for the meaty presentation which runs through the entire 15 chapters: “My Adoption into God’s Family.” The subtitle brings into focus for the reader the supreme practical reason for absorbing a thorough review of the Sacrament of holy baptism. The reason is found in the very first Bible passage encountered in this latest offering from the People’s Bible Teaching Series authored by Pres. Gaylin Schmeling: “*You are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*” (Gal. 3:26, 27).

In a religious climate saturated with the Zwinglian/Calvinistic non-sacramental drivel that “the Holy Spirit needs no vehicle” and ruled by decision theology, *Baptism - My Adoption into God’s Family* is not only a breath of fresh air but also a breath of life, real life! Baptism is a means of grace. It is a means of grace which does not just “remind us of the blessings of the cross, as the Reformed teach, but...actually *give[s]* us the blessings” (p. 25). “In baptism the Father receives us as his children and heirs (Galatians 3:26,27), the Son washes away our sins with

his precious blood (Acts 22:16), and the Holy Spirit gives us new birth, working faith in the Savior in our hearts (Titus 3:5)” (p. 52).

Current and ancient baptismal customs (symbols, use of sponsors, services, etc.) are discussed thoroughly in the book. Those who know the author’s keen interest in church history will not be surprised at the numerous references to the writings of the church fathers and the baptismal practices of the first 500 years following Pentecost. To give one notable example, we refer to Schmeling’s discussion on sponsors in the chapter entitled, “Baptism in the Early and Medieval Church.” Originally the custom of sponsors arose in connection with adult baptisms, where the sponsors served to verify the genuine desire for church membership on the part of the newly confirmed and baptized. Schmeling explains: “A period of instruction called the catechumenate before the baptism of adults was established by the beginning of the third century and could last two years or more. When a person desired to become a Christian and was recommended by a sponsor from within the church, he or she was received into the course of instruction for baptism. The individual’s sponsors would vouch that the person really wanted to become a Christian and was not a spy of the persecuting government trying to destroy the church” (pp. 130, 131).

Two helpful insights serve to characterize *Baptism - My Adoption into God’s Family*. 1) The connection between baptism and absolution is stressed. The author reminds us:

Absolution is a continuation of baptism. Confession and absolution in our worship services take us back to baptism. In confession we throw our sins back into the baptismal font, as it were, in true repentance. Then we hear the forgiving words that are ours through baptism by the power of Christ’s resurrection. These words caused our new spiritual life to go forth strengthened to lead a more Christ-like life (p. 104).

2) The second point is closely related to the first. In expounding the comprehensive statement concerning baptism as

found in Paul's letter to the Romans (6:3-13), Pres. Schmeling repeatedly speaks of baptism not only as our mode of justification but also as our power source for sanctification.

Many people value baptism for their children and realize that baptism was important for them when they were children. Yet they have difficulty seeing any value in baptism for daily life... Baptism is not merely a one-time occurrence in the past without any real meaning for the present. It has real value each day of our lives" (p. 100). Again: "By virtue of baptism, we have resurrection power right now. If that power is dwindling in us or if it is completely gone, we don't have to despair. We can return to baptism in true repentance and faith and be strengthened through the nourishment of the life-giving Word and the Holy Supper (p. 152).

Pastors will find in this volume valuable material and cogent illustrations for fruitful Bible class discussions on the significance of the Sacrament of Baptism. This book, like all of the PBT volumes, eventually will have a prepared Bible class study guide available. But why not get started early? The 800 number is listed above to facilitate your order!

Book Review: Sanctification “Alive in Christ”

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

Lyle W. Lange, *Sanctification “Alive in Christ”*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999. 206 pp.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$8.99

A distinguishing mark of this new book from the People’s Bible Teaching series is the wealth of confessional quotations used by Professor Lange in treating the important subject of the believer’s life of sanctification. A quick glance at the endnotes reveals at least forty references to our Lutheran Confessions, most of which are from the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Articles III-VI. Among the headings in his book, Lange addresses the following: “The Contrast Between Justification and Sanctification” (ch. 3), “The Relationship Between Justification and Sanctification” (ch. 4), “The Means of Bringing about Sanctification: The Gospel in Word and Sacraments” (ch. 6) and “The Necessity of the Sanctified Life” (ch. 7). A very interesting chapter on “Adiaphora” (ch. 11) also will catch the reader’s attention.

Lutherans often suffer the “bum rap” of being accused of neglecting the teaching of sanctification. While attacking the Roman Catholic Church’s insistence on good works contributing merit to man’s salvation, Dr. Luther is alleged to have overreacted. Some would say Luther was so preoccupied about how to acquire the life hereafter that he forgot to stress how to live the life here and now. The charge, of course, is bogus. Even the work of the Reformer in writing his explanation to the commandments in his *Small Catechism* should silence any such accusation. What

Luther did grasp so resolutely by God's grace, however, was the important distinction to be drawn between justification and sanctification while simultaneously upholding their scriptural link (*nexus indivulsus*). Who can forget how Luther spoke of the faith, which knows it has been justified only by the grace of God in the atoning work of Christ? He exclaimed, "Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good! Likewise, faith does not ask if good works are to be done, but before one can ask, faith has already done them and is constantly active" (quoted by Lange on pp. 108 & 109).

Sanctification - Alive in Christ contains a valuable discussion of the errors of Roman Catholicism, Methodism, the Pentecostals and the pietistic emphases so prevalent in American Protestantism. Lange says that "a standard of hyper-holiness... achieved through legalistic observances" has become "the common fare in Protestantism today."

So what warning must be given? "Let the buyer beware! Pietism appeals to the old Adam. It obscures God's grace and his means of grace. It deludes sinners into focusing their lives on the law rather than on Christ. Keep the focus for sanctification where it belongs—on Christ's grace and mercy empowering the sinner. Beware of the idea that following formulas of the law will lead you to a holier life!" (p. 127) "To teach sanctification apart from justification is to attempt to move the body apart from a beating heart" (p. 55). "If a dairy farmer wishes to increase milk production, he doesn't accomplish this by telling the cows to produce more or by feeding the herd worthless straw. It is through proper nourishment that production will be increased" (p. 149).

Are you looking for a book which distinguishes carefully Law and Gospel and evangelically exhorts the Christian to a life filled with fruits of thankfulness? You will find this in *Sanctification - Alive in Christ*. Chapter 9 especially encourages the

Christian to look for opportunities to do good. “We praise and thank God that he has not only redeemed us from sin but also has enabled us to serve him in righteousness... This gives purpose and meaning to our lives in this world as we serve our Savior and our neighbor” (p. 146).

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