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Foreword

Grace is God's gracious disposition toward us on the basis of Christ's redemptive work. This is the main theme of the sermon presented by Pres. John A. Moldstad at a Circuit Visitors' Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) last year. Preaching on Acts 15:6–11, Pres. Moldstad reminds the circuit visitors that, as the apostles of our Lord emphasized grace as the backdrop of everything they did, so we will keep grace as the center of all we strive to do as a church body.

From the Scriptures we learn that fellowship is a unit. It is a unit both in respect to the doctrine of Scripture, that is, there must be agreement in all scriptural teaching, and in respect to the various expressions of a shared faith that they are considered an indivisible whole. In his essay *Fellowship Principles and Practices in the Reformation Era*, Prof. Mark Harstad of Bethany Lutheran College points out how the principles of fellowship were applied in that period of history.

The Athanasian Creed teaches that without a proper understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity there is no salvation. While lip service is often paid to this doctrine, in practice many are really modalists, merely teaching that the one God has three names, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This is one of the issues raised in the essay *The Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity: Its Relevance for Spiritual Formation and the Faith-Life* by the Rev. Timothy Schmeling of Trinity Lutheran Church in Sebastian, Florida.

Reinhold Pieper (1850–1920), one of the famous Pieper brothers of the Lutheran Church, was the author of a number of sermon books, a textbook on homiletics, and three volumes on Luther's *Small Catechism*. In his *Brief Summary of Instruction in Homiletics and Pastoral Theology*, he gives a synopsis of Lutheran homiletics. It goes without saying that in a Lutheran sermon the Gospel will always predominate. In addition to this, Pieper shows the importance of proper sermon delivery. He states, "Saving power lies alone in the Word, but a careless, lazy preacher preaches out of the church those he desires to win." This text was translated by Wilbert Werling (1907–1990), a pastor in the ELS.

There have been homiletical studies written concerning the sermons of C.F.W. Walther and other German Lutherans both in Europe and here in the States. Little, however, has been written about the sermons of our Norwegian fathers. The essay, *"Then We Can Gladly Climb on Their Shoulders" – Learning to Preach From Our [Norwegian] Lutheran Fathers*, is intended to fill this gap. The author of this essay is the Rev. Jerome Gernander, who is the pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in

Princeton, Minnesota.

Many questions have arisen concerning the liturgy and worship forms. There are issues in regard to non-traditional formats in worship and contemporary worship. The essay *The Biblical–Confessional Lutheran Doctrine of Worship* encourages Lutherans to continue to follow the historic outline of the western liturgy. The author of this essay is the Rev. Donald Moldstad, who is chaplain at Bethany Lutheran College.

This issue of the *Quarterly* includes a book review of a new translation of Johann Gerhard's *Sacred Meditations*. This translation was produced by the Rev. Wade R. Johnston, who is the pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Saginaw, Michigan. The author of the book review is the Rev. S. Piet Van Kampen, who is the pastor of English Lutheran Church in Cottonwood, Minnesota.

– GRS

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Sermon on Acts 15:6–11

by John A. Moldstad, Jr.

Text: *The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." (Acts 15:6–11; NIV)*

Men of the church had gathered in the large city. They needed to come together to address some issues. As they met, they were heartened by some very good news, as they heard a report from a couple of the pastors indicating new converts to the Christian faith had been brought into the kingdom.

Sound like a Circuit Visitors' conference? Sort of. But not quite. As you know, the men who gathered there at Jerusalem in Acts 15 had to address a serious issue of prejudice and partiality between two groups of people: Jewish background believers and Gentile background believers. Now, we do not have on our Circuit Visitors' agenda the subject of refraining from certain meats sacrificed to idols for the sake of eliminating offense, nor are we here to deal with a Jewish/Gentile debate. But the two meetings – the Jerusalem Council long ago and our own Circuit Visitors' Conference today – are similar, very similar in this major respect: Each was/is **A Meeting Full of Grace.**

Peter previously had some inside knowledge to help with matters at the Jerusalem Council. You recall how God had permitted him at Joppa to have a vision showing how God no longer had commanded people, having come to faith in Christ, to refrain from eating certain meats. Cornelius and his household had come to faith and Peter learned the importance of fraternal association with Gentile converts. Here, Peter addresses the men at the council. He sets the stage for what is to come in all their deliberations that day. Notice the emphasis on grace alone for salvation: "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

As we gather today and tomorrow, may our stage of activity in this room be set with the beautiful backdrop of God's grace. When we say "backdrop," this isn't a stage. God's grace isn't an act. It isn't play-acting. It is very *real* in every way. But this is what is to set the scene for all that we do. That same grace by which we are saved, just as is the case for all of our fellow believers in our synod and all believers in the world, is the setting in which we want to operate with all of our discussions, our prayers, and our counsel for one another. We too want **A Meeting Full of Grace.**

At the end of August a strange thing happened in northern Lake Michigan. A man who was fishing found a dead 2-foot shark in the water. The saltwater fish was identified as a young black-tip shark. Who knows how it got there? It was natural the fish would be unable to survive. It needed the right kind of water, water with the right amount of minerals. Without the saltwater, the fish may have gotten by for a time in fresh water but its span was bound to be short-lived.

That can serve as an interesting picture for all of us. We sinners need the *right* water – the water that gives us life – real life. Apart from the right water, the water given by our Lord Jesus, we would perish. Maybe we would try to swim in this life for a while, thinking things to be fine, but death of an eternal nature would occur. "As a result one trespass was condemnation for all men," states Romans 5. Our Lutheran confessors put it this way: "This damage is so unspeakable that it may not be recognized by a rational process, but only from God's Word" (FC). The waters of this world look pretty inviting, and there are fish of all stripes seeming to get along fine without God's Word and without the sustenance of Christ's cross. But death is imminent – death of such a nature that the horrors of a 9-11 fade in comparison. Who can imagine an eternity in an abyss where there is no quenching of the fires and nowhere to turn for help, for it is truly a God-forsaken location? By nature, at one time we too were facing that dooming prospect.

Do we here today need reminders–wake up calls–as we drift along in the waters of this life? Can we–even clergy who have been called to have our noses in the Word–get caught up in the attractions to the water around us, which is not the living Water of Life? Can our ministry activities lose steam, because we ourselves are consumed by earthly interests, maybe without realizing it? Have our gills been taking in a heavy dose of either the pleasures or the sorrows of this world? Can we easily lose sight of the fact that we are fish of another pond?

Yet, you and I do have salvation! It is a salvation intended for all.

It is a salvation that is also very personal. "Whoever drinks the water I give him," says Jesus, "will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." How can this water give life? Here is the answer: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Talk about the right water for living! This is it: Christ's life carried out perfectly in every thought, word and deed in your place and mine; and Christ's death as the God-man securing payment of the eternal punishment demanded by God's justice. *This* is the one and only formula, found in the living water poured out upon us at the font, which gives regeneration–new life.

Like Jerusalem long ago, we are at **A Meeting Full of Grace.** The grace that saves us, Christ's undeserved love freely given through also his means of grace, is the very same grace that saves Jew or Gentile, the very same grace that saved the apostle and all who gathered at the Jerusalem Council. Today we too join them in saying, "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

A meeting filled with GRACE…. Where is *our* focus? Whenever we gather, let us gather to highlight and reaffirm God's miraculous grace for salvation through faith in Christ. Be also concerned–like the Jerusalem Council–about outreach, no matter to what background or nationality. And one more item: Look for trying to unify around the truth. You remember that the advice given at Jerusalem was tempered with a concern for God's grace. James the elder made this remark that day: "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

It's all about God's grace. Brothers, let us close our devotion this morning by hearing these vital words of the apostle Paul in Romans 5: "Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this GRACE in which we now stand."

God, bless our meeting. May it be a grace-full one. Amen.

Fellowship Principles and Practices in the Reformation Era

by Mark O. Harstad

In preparation for this presentation I have worked primarily with three sources: F. Bente's *Historical Introductions to the Lutheran Book of Concord,* Werner Elert's *Eucharist and Fellowship in the First Four Christian Centuries,* and Hans Werner-Gensichen's *We Condemn: How Luther and the 16th Century Lutherans Condemned False Doctrine.* I rely most heavily on this last work.

This presentation is an attempt to trace in broad outline the progression of ideas connected with the doctrine of the Church and its fellowship, and the practice which flowed from those ideas. The time frame is from Luther's discovery of the Gospel through the compilation of the *Book of Concord*. The focus here is on the flow of concepts and arguments, not on historical events. A historical overview, marking every meeting, document and personality, is far beyond the scope of this presentation. Hans Werner-Gensichen's book provides a quite thorough overview of the material. This presentation is largely a condensation thereof.

We begin with this observation: The shattered unity of the Church was not a result of the Reformation, but rather a condition out of which the Reformation arose. Even the most superficial study of the theological history of the centuries leading up to the Reformation reveals this. Luther was dismayed by the fragmented condition of the visible church, the diverse and contradictory theologies which existed side by side in it. He had to struggle to find a definition of what the church is, and then think through the implications of that definition for discussing the fellowship of the church, and what that meant for one's relations with other people who also professed allegiance to the Christian tradition.

The flow of ideas for Luther began with the discovery of the Gospel, which in turn led to an understanding of what the church is. From there he could proceed to clarify a concept of church fellowship, and then to an actual practice of fellowship. Across the centuries many have operated in the opposite way: First define what fellowship is and make that definition a focal point of theology and practice, and then derive a concept of the Church from that definition. This was Schleiermacher's approach in the 19th century, and it has generally triumphed to the present time. A review of what transpired in the Reformation Era is a helpful antidote to that mentality.

Luther and Rome

The theological method of the church which Luther encountered was shaped by a quest for a synthesis of theology and philosophy, under the control of an authoritarian episcopal structure, normed by the accumulation of prior pronouncements. Truth was defined by the hierarchical church. That truth was enshrined in the church's accumulation of its pronouncements, the tradition of canon law. The hierarchical church determined what belonged to the content of the faith. It was necessary for salvation to submit to its determinations. The Church was conceived of as a visible entity, "as visible as the Republic of Venice," as one Roman Catholic theologian would have it.

The mission of the church was to proclaim its accumulation of pronouncements, compel those who hear to accept them, and punish those who refuse. The essence of fellowship became obedience to the episcopal hierarchy. If you agreed to be obedient you enjoyed the fellowship of Holy Mother Church. If you were willful and disobedient, you were excluded. Elaborate theory and practice developed for dealing with those who departed from this notion of fellowship. A framework of punitive jurisdiction developed which employed secular authority. The perpetuation of the institutional church became the *summum bonum*.

The definitions of key theological terms all served the same purpose. Grace was defined as a quality imparted by the church through its sacramental-sacerdotal system. Faith was equated with obedience to the church. The church consisted of the hierarchy of bishops, and people who lived in obedience to the hierarchy. Doctrinal discipline consisted in identifying deviations from obedience, and following up with the exercise of the punitive authority of the church.

A concept of unity based on a commonly held confession of the Christian Gospel message did not exist, chiefly because there was no clear understanding of what, precisely, the Christian Gospel was. Under the broad umbrella of Holy Mother Church a wide variety of theologies was sheltered. Unity/fellowship was a matter of obedience to the hierarchical structure.

Luther began his work as a teacher of exegesis at the University of Wittenberg. He experienced firsthand the principle that if you want to learn something, get into a position where you have to teach it to others.

While it is possible to speak of a *Turmerlebnis* (Luther himself did so), a moment of epiphany, an "Aha!" experience, the reality is that Luther's discovery of the Gospel was the product of years of patient and

meticulous study and teaching of the Bible. That discovery came into sharp focus with the realization that the righteousness that counts for something in the sight of God, which has the power to deliver the sinner from sin, death and hell, is not a righteousness demanded of us according to the Law, but a righteousness that was acquired for us by the redemptive work of Christ, is given to us in the sacred means of grace, and is appropriated by the individual through faith alone. This discovery was the beginning of the Reformation, the work of defining the Gospel, the Church, and the Church's fellowship.

In the time between October 31, 1517, and the bull *Decet Romanum Pontificem* of January, 1521, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) proceeded against Luther in predictable fashion. His utterances were laid side by side with canon law and the interests of the episcopal hierarchy. The question posed was not, "Are these things scriptural and evangelical?" but rather, "Are these things coming from approved sources within the church?" Where deviance was noted various expressions were applied to Luther's work: "stupid and ridiculous," "falseness," "rashness," "error," "heretical doctrine." Soon followed authorization for Luther's arrest and demands for recantation. Theologians at Cologne and Louvain provided officially approved theological opinion. The Cologne theologians applied the expression "injurious to the community of the faithful" (i.e., the hierarchical church) to Luther's writings.

The official action of the RCC concluded with the ban of Luther and his supporters on January 3, 1521. Then came the summons to Worms to recant. His refusal meant that thereafter he was officially an outlaw with no rights. The only question at issue was whether or not Luther had written things that conflicted with canon law. It was all about preserving the authority, prestige, and financial underpinnings of the institutional church. Its underlying assumptions regarding the nature of truth and authority were certainly not founded on clear Scripture. Furthermore the condemnations were directed against persons, not just teachings.

Out of this experience Luther came to some clear perceptions regarding what was going on in the church of his day. Scripture, obviously, was not regarded as authoritative, clear, efficacious, and sufficient. There was confusion/fuzzification in virtually every important doctrinal category: the problem of the human condition, how salvation was acquired, how it is distributed, how it is appropriated by the individual, the nature of the Christian life, the Christian hope, the role of the Church, etc. There was nothing there that could be regarded as a basis for a spiritual fellowship.

The fact is that human flesh finds it very comfortable to belong

to an authoritative, powerful, and well-financed organization manifesting in perceptible and palpable ways its greatness. The tower of Babel had a powerful unifying effect. So did the medieval RCC.

Luther concluded that the purpose of the office of Bishop of Rome was "to curse and slaughter souls." The ban of the RCC could, in Luther's mind, properly be dismissed as a "Scheissbann." It was not biblically authorized and evangelically carried out. It was simply a matter of tyranny protecting its selfish interests. The claim of the church that the doctrinal discipline they practiced was that of Christ and the apostles was patently false. An office (the papacy) which ignored Scripture and undermined the understanding of Christ and the Gospel must be Antichrist, Luther concluded.

Luther's experience with the theology and practice of church fellowship in the RCC drove him into the Scriptures. The papacy could only fortify itself against the primacy of Scripture by hiding behind a massive wall of purely human authority enshrined in canon law. On Dec. 10, 1520, Luther burned the Bull *Exsurge Domine,* which threatened him with excommunication. Into that same fire he threw a copy of canon law. This was far more important than burning *Exsurge Domine.* It was the foundation of papal tyranny. Luther's response to the church's ban was to issue his own counter-ban. His basis for doing so was simply the fact that he was a baptized child of God supported by the authority of Scripture.

Thus the *Sola Scriptura* principle emerged with clarity. Along with it came the "*regula fidei*" concept, the core issues of the faith employed as a norm or standard for judging doctrine. At the center of the core issues stood the doctrine of justification by the grace of God alone, the grace which expressed itself in the redemptive work of God the Son in human flesh, distributed through the means of grace, and appropriated by faith alone. This faith arises where the realization of human inability to achieve or contribute to salvation is acute. The Church exists where the Gospel creates faith. The fellowship of the faithful consists in the common apprehension of these core truths.

Whatever is contrary to the core teachings was "contrary to the Gospel." It must be recognized and labeled as false teaching. The concept of doctrine as an "inviolable golden ring" came into focus for Luther. The violation of any one part of it constituted the violation of the whole. "Believe everything whole and simple or believe nothing. The Holy Spirit does not permit Himself to be parted or divided, so that He should allow one part to be taught or believed truly and another part falsely" (WA 54, 158).

The 1520s: Zwickau Prophets, Heavenly Prophets, Humanists, and Sacramentarians

Issues began to come at Luther thick and fast through the decade of the 1520s. He sorted them out by returning again and again to the core issues that had emerged for him in his dealings with Rome.

Thomas Muentzer and the Zwickau prophets had no understanding of the purpose of the church. Their methods and purposes had nothing to do with Scripture, Christ, Gospel, grace, faith, and church. Radical social reform was their agenda. Their hope was for this life. No bond of fellowship was to be found there. Carlstadt and the Heavenly Prophets separated the working of the Spirit from the Word. An efficacious Gospel in Word and Sacrament which creates the Church was not to be found there. Therefore there could be no fellowship there.

Erasmus and the Humanists did not understand the fallen condition of humanity. "Do we need a Savior or don't we?" Luther would ask rhetorically. There could be no fellowship in the Gospel with people who did not have a grip on the need for the Gospel. Furthermore, the Humanists could not conform their thinking to the idea of Scripture-based assertions which must be accepted as true doctrine, and their opposites labeled as false doctrine. "What is Scripture good for if we can't make doctrinal assertions on the basis of it?" Luther would ask.

The "spiritual eating" of Zwingli and the Swiss in the Sacrament of the Altar could not be reconciled with clear Scripture. And furthermore, in spite of Zwingli's protestations of agreement in virtually all other points of doctrine, there was the nagging suspicion of underlying problems in other areas, which would emerge into the light of day with the unfolding of further events. The seemingly harsh pronouncement against Zwingli at Marburg, "You have a different spirit," proved to be on target.

By the end of the decade of the 1520s virtually all the issues which would determine lines of fellowship for Lutheranism had been identified and fought through. Lutheranism was set apart from Rome and its ideas about what constitutes authority, the use of religion for radical social reform, the separation of Word and Spirit, humanistic assessments of human nature, and a purely spiritual understanding of the presence of Christ in the Sacrament (and the rejection of sacramental theology in general).

For Luther pure doctrine was knowable from Scripture. Salvation is connected with knowing and confessing it. What is contrary to pure doctrine is false doctrine. It must be rejected. But the point of doing this was

not to bolster the prestige and power of some outward organization. The purpose was to serve the spiritual needs of real human beings. Clarifying pure doctrine and practicing fellowship in keeping with it had practical, spiritual value for real people, not just an organization.

Furthermore, the judging of doctrine is not just a matter for professional theologians. Every baptized Christian equipped with the Word of God judges doctrine, hears and follows the voice of the Good Shepherd, and flees from the hireling. The Church's fellowship is connected with the common grasp of pure doctrine. Morality and purity of life and conduct cannot be the basis for fellowship. Doctrine and life must be sharply distinguished from each other.

The fellowship we are talking about here is Church fellowship. Therefore clarity in understanding of what the Church is is of the essence. Luther sharpened his understanding of the Church both over against Rome and the enthusiasts. The Church is the creation of the Holy Spirit who works through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. It consists in those who have been called by the Gospel and united by faith with the Savior. But in this world this Church is always hidden, out of sight. It does not become visible either in a hierarchy of bishops, or in the ideal, pure community of the sanctified, as taught by the enthusiasts. There is a paradox here. The presence of the church, where its fellowship can be found, can be known, but only by the presence of its marks, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Its bare essence remains hidden in this life.

The only way to find the presence of the church and experience its fellowship is take note of where the marks of the church are, the rightly taught Word and rightly administered sacraments. Where the *fides quae creditur,* the essential objective doctrinal content, is found, there will be people who possess the *fides qua creditur*, faith in the heart of the individual believer which appropriates saving righteousness. They have a fellowship in the Gospel which unites them.

Thus the concepts of Church, pure doctrine, faith in the heart, and the fellowship of the church converge and become inextricable. For theological purposes we can distinguish and discuss them individually, but they can never be separated.

For Luther another important point emerged in the relationship between the Word and the Church. The Word precedes and produces the Church. Rome would have it the other way around, and from that confusion flowed a host of errors. Everything becomes externalized and a matter of perception: church, membership and fellowship therein, and all related matters. Church and church fellowship, both for Rome and the

enthusiasts, belong to what Luther labeled the theology of glory, things that are outward, visible, prestigious, etc. For Luther they remained in the category of the theology of the cross, things hidden away, out of sight, often masked by what is weak and lacking in prestige in the eyes of men.

Luther's understanding of the Church enabled him to acknowledge that there were at all times true Christians within the organization of the Roman Church, because it was possible to hear the Gospel there. But he also asserted that the majority of those in the church of the pope were not Christians, not because of their affiliation with the Roman Church, but because of unbelief in the pure Gospel.

Since salvation, membership in the Church, and the experience of church fellowship are all connected with the concept of pure doctrine, indifference to the distinction between true and false doctrine was inconceivable. False doctrine must be recognized and labeled, not, however, for the purpose of lording it over others, punishing them, or making oneself look good in relation to others ("my practice is purer than yours"). Salvation is connected with confession of the truth. That which is false places salvation in jeopardy.

Since the devil is active wherever Christ builds the church, there will never be a time this side of the resurrection when it will not be necessary to confess saving truth and condemn that which stands in contradiction to it. This is the case for all baptized Christians, but especially for those who preach and teach in the midst of the Church.

Exercising doctrinal discipline is both the responsibility of every baptized Christian, and a part of the essence of the work of those who are called to preach and teach in the Church. Luther derived his authority to teach the truth and condemn the false from both bases: the fact that he was a baptized child of God armed with knowledge of the Word, and the call he possessed to teach the Scriptures.

Luther possessed a realistic view of the effect of condemnations of false teaching. In the history of the church heretics were seldom, if ever, completely overcome. The devil will see to it that Christian unity is always challenged and disrupted.

Luther envisioned no use of secular authority to enforce doctrinal or church discipline. The teaching role of the church should not be connected with the power to impose civil penalties. The faith cannot be upheld by using force. Unity in the faith cannot be required and enforced by the law of the land. Furthermore, distinction must be made between those who err ingenuously on the one hand, and the stubborn, repeatedly admonished heretic on the other hand.

Luther also struggled to deal with what seems, at times, to be a contradiction between the obligation to show love to one's neighbor, and the obligation to label and condemn false teaching. Love can and must put up patiently with all kinds of bad behavior; faith, on the other hand, can tolerate nothing but pure doctrine. It must label that which is false as such. Where matters of doctrine are involved it is not right to appeal to love and tolerance to preserve unity. Love practices tolerance. Faith does not. The law of love does not set boundaries for condemnation of false doctrine.

But false teaching must be distinguished from the false teacher. Neither church discipline (excommunication) nor doctrinal discipline (condemnation of false doctrine) includes imprecation of individuals.

The negative side of church fellowship (condemnation of false doctrine) developed for Luther out of specific dealings with false teachers: Rome, radical social reformers, humanists, enthusiasts, and sacramentarians. The latter two groups especially drove him to see that the working of the Holy Spirit and authority of God must be connected with the external Word.

A summary of Luther's views on condemnation of false doctrine and fellowship, developed through the decade of the 1520s, would highlight the following points:

- Doctrinal and church discipline are not primarily about outward organization and their prescribed procedures for accomplishing ends and purposes that are not spiritual, but have to do with dealing with persons perceived as trouble makers. This is what he had experienced at the hands of RCC officialdom.
- His route to discovery of legitimate doctrinal discipline came from following the *"ad fontes"* motto of the Renaissance and Reformation. He went back to the early Christian church and Scriptures. He sought the true continuity with the holy catholic Church, the ancient creeds, and the Scriptures.
- In these sources fellowship practice and condemnation of false doctrine are connected first and foremost to Christ and the Gospel. This was clear from Scripture and from the history of the early church, but it had been obscured in the Medieval church, which had placed its own hierarchical authority above the authority of the clear and sufficient Word. Ecclesiastical practice rendered the Word powerless. Pope and canon law vitiated the Word. This led Luther first to question, then to reject pope (bishops) and canon law (tradition). What authority was left? "The Word, the Word, the Word!"
- Pure doctrine was the proper preaching of Christ and the Gospel on

the basis of the Word. This establishes the fellowship of the Church. False doctrine is what is contrary to Christ and the Gospel. It breaks the fellowship of the Church.

- The church in its essence remains hidden and out of sight. Its presence is known only in the rightly taught Word and rightly administered Sacraments.
- With the authority that was his as a baptized Christian Luther rejected the unscriptural and antichristian authority of the Roman church.
- The purpose of identifying and rejecting false teaching is for the benefit of the believers. It is not primarily about punishing persons.
- Doctrine holds a fundamental primacy over life and conduct. Therefore, an appeal to the law of love for the purpose of curtailing judgment on false doctrine is inappropriate.

Condemnatory Clauses in the Augsburg Confession

On June 25, 1530, a Lutheran fellowship officially acquired an identity. The Augsburg Confession systematized the thinking of the previous decade among Luther and his associates. It made extensive use of the self-evident principle that thesis must be accompanied by antithesis. The boundaries of a Lutheran fellowship were defined over against Rome, enthusiasts, humanists, and sacramentarians.

The AC defined the fellowship of the pure Word and Sacraments. It could not be done without condemnations. Condemnatory statements occur in Articles I, II, V, IX, X, XII, XVI, XVII, XVIII. The purpose was to demonstrate the continuity of the AC with the ancient church in its struggles over the Trinity, Christology and other issues, and to set Lutheranism apart from contemporary opponents.

At Augsburg it was clear what needed to said about Rome, Anabaptists, and humanists. The big question was, How would the Lutherans define themselves in relation to the Zwinglians? It was no secret that many had hoped for a united front combining the Lutheran and Zwinglian forces. The south Germans hoped to function as mediators and effect union.

But Luther's judgment of Zwingli from the previous year at Marburg prevailed. Article X affirmed the real presence of the body and blood of Christ. And then came words with profound implications for the future: "The contrary doctrine is therefore rejected."

The arguments for peace and the unity of Wittenberg and Zurich had come from prominent theologians and powerful political figures. But

Luther was absolutely clear: No fellowship with men at the expense of fellowship with God. The vicious charges of the Zwinglians against Lutheran "cannibalism" and worship of "the bread God" had made a deep impression on Luther. "I will now break with them [the Zwinglians] according to St. Paul's teaching in Titus 3," Luther had said (WA 26, 262). AC X expressed succinctly what Luther had said before in his Great Confession of 1528. At Augsburg it also represented Melanchthon's conviction, although his Latin translation of the AC changed the condemnatory clause in Article X from "rejected" to "disapproved." It was axiomatic at Augsburg that condemnation applied to doctrine, not persons.

The role of Philip of Hesse at Augsburg is an interesting one. He was young in 1530, just 26 years old. He envisioned a grand union of evangelicals including the Swiss. He had arranged the meeting between Luther and Zwingli at Marburg, his new university. He eventually signed the AC but was obviously disappointed over Art. X and its statement of rejection. His view seemed to be that the understanding of how Christ is present in the sacrament should not be regarded as a divisive issue. The cause of evangelical unity was more important for political reasons than a point of doctrine. There should be toleration for both a metaphorical understanding and a Lutheran view of the real presence, he argued. Philip pleaded with the Wittenberg delegation for a tolerant view of Zwingli. The amazing thing was that Melanchthon, at that point, stood up to him and wrote Art X as he did, with the condemnatory clause.

Philip of Hesse's agenda differed sharply from that of Luther: Unity of all evangelicals was a political necessity in light of the politics of the day. This must be given priority over theology. Emphasis was on the good things that would come of a united front against theological and political opponents. Philip's behavior at Augsburg was revealing. He ordered his court preacher not to talk about the Sacrament. He attended Zwinglian services, and avoided those of the Wittenberg delegation. But in the end he subscribed to the AC. He was very much a conflicted man.

It's easy to condemn the heretics of bygone eras already condemned by the consensus of the Church. It's not so easy to deal with one's contemporaries. The AC did. Luther could lament that it tread far too lightly for his tastes in dealing with Rome, but the basic concerns of the Reformation were dealt with adequately. Lutherans defined their fellowship.

Luther, Melanchthon and the Swiss after Augsburg

In 1531 the South Germans (preeminently Martin Bucer) brought themselves to subscribe to the AC and they joined Philip of Hesse's Smalcaldic League. The Swiss remained aloof from both. Martin Bucer worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between the Swiss and Luther. In 1532 Zwingli was killed in action in the civil war among the Swiss which his reforms had touched off.

The Wittenberg Concord of 1536 established rapprochement between Wittenberg and the South Germans. (But is it true that this fellowship was established by ignoring one question in connection with Sacrament, the *manducatio indignorum*?) This agreement did not bring in the Swiss. Luther continued to communicate with the Swiss down to 1538. But nothing positive came of it.

The big surprise after Augsburg was the change in the views of the author of the AC. As early as 1531 Melanchthon's doubts had emerged. By 1535 he admitted in personal correspondence that his work of defending Luther's doctrine of the Lord's Supper was done as a messenger boy for another (Luther), not out of his own convictions. But he subscribed to both the Wittenberg Concord and the Smalcald Articles. In 1539 in his will he asserted the Wittenberg Concord represented his theology. But in 1540 he altered the AC by dropping the condemnation in Art X. Now it was a public matter, not just a matter of personal doubts expressed privately. In the 1530s Melanchthon also began to use expressions regarding the ability of the unregenerate will and the necessity of good works which would lead to serious problems later on.

Why there was not at least an expression of concern from Luther and others is much discussed. It was John Eck, of all people, who began to call attention to changes in Melanchthon's teaching. This was, of course, done for the purpose of taunting the Lutherans and gloating over their disunity.

Shaky convictions combined with fear of appearing to pass unbrotherly judgment characterized Melanchthon the rest of his days. He called himself a "Peripatetic who lives the golden mean" (CR 3, 383). He never clearly renounced or reaffirmed the condemnatory clause in AC X. Luther, on the other hand, in his short confession concerning the Sacrament of 1544, reaffirmed everything he had said previously about the Sacrament and the sacramentarians.

Publication of Zwingli's "Exposition of the Christian Faith" after his death confirmed all of Luther's suspicions about Zwingli. The

old charges of "cannibalism" and "bread worship" came up again. Luther came to regard his ongoing attempts to deal with Zwingli a waste of time. In his exasperation he finally concluded that no Christian should pray for the sacramentarians and that hopes of fellowship were in vain.

Luther never lost his zeal for the unity of the Word and its truth. "It is certain that he who does not believe one article correctly, or refuses to do so (after he has been admonished and instructed), will surely not accept any article seriously and in true faith."

The Zwinglians remained adamant that differences of opinion on the presence of Christ in the Sacrament are not divisive because they can't be called doctrine. For Luther, on the other hand, how one understands the Sacrament is inseparable from the chief article. "I have in all earnestness condemned and avoided the Enthusiasts and enemies of the sacrament, Carlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Stenkfeld [sic] and their disciples at Zurich and wherever they may be" (WA 54, 146).

But Luther continued to distinguish the misled from the misleaders. Stubbornness in the face of admonition makes one a heretic. On the other hand, his personal disappointment and embitterment were intensified by his dealings with the Zwinglians. He reached a point where communication was no longer possible.

The final Swiss response to Luther made these points:

- Luther's behavior is not Christian, but popish. He demands submission and obedience.
- The Swiss are not stubborn heretics.
- Luther engages in excessive name-calling and scolding in an unchristian manner.
- The manner of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is not a divisive issue. People can hold different views about it.

Luther made no further effort to reply. He had condemned false teaching and avoided the teachers. That was all he could do. To a friend he wrote: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the Sacramentarians, nor stand in the way of the Zwinglians, nor sit in the seat of Zurichers." Melanchthon's reticence, inconsistency, and indecisiveness stand out in contrast to Luther's consistency.

In 1555, in connection with the Peace of Augsburg, the issue of what was the real AC became very important. The treaty recognized two legal religions in the Holy Roman Empire, Roman Catholicism and that expressed in the AC. But which AC and who could claim to be under its banner? If the Unaltered Augsburg Confession was recognized, then

Zwinglians and Calvinists could not legally practice their religion within the Holy Roman Empire. If an altered text was recognized, there would be confusion as to who was really Lutheran. This set the stage for the conflict between Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philippists.

The Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philippists

Some important developments in the decade 1545-1555:

1545: First convening of the Council of Trent.
1546: Death of Luther.
1547: Emperor Charles V's victory over the Smalcaldic League at the Battle of Muehlberg.
1548: The enforced reinstitution of many Roman teachings, ceremonies and practices by the authority of the Augsburg and Leipzig Interim arrangements in Lutheran territories.
1555: The Peace of Augsburg with its *cuius regio eius religio* provision.

1548 to 1555 proved to be a terrible time for Lutherans. Some provisions of the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims were the following:

- Compromise on justification in the direction of a RC understanding.
- The necessity of obedience to pope and bishops.
- Reintroduction of Roman ceremonies in connection with the Mass, baptism, confirmation, etc., also laws regarding fasting.

Melanchthon was one of the authors of the Leipzig Interim. He justified himself by arguing that the various RC reintroductions were all in the category of adiaphora. He also used objectionable language regarding the human will in conversion and the necessity of good works. This elicited strenuous criticism from others, notably Flacius and his associates, which had the effect of causing Melanchthon to realize he had made a big mistake. A growing rift developed among heirs of the Lutheran Reformation and the battle lines emerged between the Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philippists.

The Peace of Augsburg of 1555 with its *cuius regio eius religio* provision brought an end to the authority of the Interim arrangements. Lutherans were once again allowed to practice their religion as they saw fit in Lutheran territories. But what was to be done to patch up relations between those Lutherans who had gone along with the provisions of the Interim agreements, and those who had refused? Matthias Flacius emerged

as a significant voice for authentic Lutheranism. He insisted on explicit condemnations of errors and errorists by name. Others advocated a more restrained approach, a quiet return to the way things had been without pointed, specific condemnations. How the name of Philip Melanchthon was to be treated became a big issue.

In a meeting of Lutherans at Weimar in 1556 the distinct approaches to the reestablishment of Lutheran unity emerged. One side argued for amnesty. Just drop all the issues that had arisen during the period of the Interims. The other side argued that there must be some acknowledgment of error and repudiation thereof. At bare minimum the list included the errors of Zwingli, Osiander and Schwenkfeld, synergism, Majorism, and adiaphorism. But it was generally agreed that public penance by Melanchthon would not be required.

The issue was: When fellowship has been disrupted by serious aberrations in doctrine and practice, what is required for the reestablishment of full fellowship?

The Flacian approach for reconciliation included the following:

- Clear identification and condemnation of the various false teachings, including adiaphorism.
- Requirement of clearly written documents, not just word of mouth consensus.
- Signatures from both sides.

Melanchthon and his people did not trust Flacius, and mistrust of Melanchthon ran deep on the other side. Attempts were made to bring about face-to-face meetings of the two men, but they failed. Insults began to fly. Both sides started to keep score.

Flacius' focus was on the doctrinal issues and the achievement of reconciliation on the basis of written statements. Melanchthon thought that his expressions of regret over what had happened in the past should be sufficient for reconciliation. Specifically regarding adiaphora he asserted:

- There was no concession in the area of doctrine, only in outward practice.
- He had only done what his prince required of him. He had to obey civil authority.
- Some of the ceremonies in question had never been condemned by Lutherans previously.

Shuttle diplomacy was conducted by prominent names, back and forth between Magdeburg and Wittenberg. Melanchthon felt that he was

being pushed to cut his own throat in spite of the careful actions of the intermediaries. But he appeared ready to concede to Flacius on every point except the adiaphora. Thus adiaphorism became the sticking point. It was followed by entrenchment of the two sides.

Melanchthon claimed that he was not fighting for personal vindication, and showed willingness to admit grave errors in judgment. But he claimed he could not condemn things that were not worthy of condemnation (adiaphoristic practices). To do so would be to condemn things that even Luther had practiced.

Flacius responded that there must be a condemnation of Romanizing tendencies manifested by Melanchthon. All impression of capitulation to Rome must be removed. Without this there could be no reconciliation. The person and prestige of Melanchthon could not be taken into consideration. While acknowledging the great contributions of Melanchthon to the cause of the Reformation, he could not back off. True honor is connected to the truth of the Word, not the personalities of men, even very prominent men.

Questions about this period abound. Was Flacius, in fact, deliberately working for a permanent division of the Lutherans? Was he demanding too much of a one-sided surrender from Melanchthon? Was there vainglory and ambition in Flacius? ("I'm the guy who brought the great *Praeceptor Germaniae* to his knees.") So thought the supporters of Melanchthon. It appears that history's judgment on Flacius has been more favorable. "In an emergency one must for the sake of love pull his teacher out of the water, even if that required pulling his beard," he said, apparently without guile. Restoration of union and fellowship had to be based on condemnation of error. The purpose of condemnation was ultimately the creation of a stronger fellowship. But for Melanchthon, the demands were simply too great.

Flacius proved not to be the man who could bring about reconciliation. Can a person be a party in a debate, the one who dictates the terms of the settlement, and an impartial adjudicator all at the same time? The problem was complicated by his alleged peevishness and abrasiveness. But the other side was by no means clear in this area as well.

In 1557 an imperial diet decreed that an attempt at theological reunification in the Holy Roman Empire should be made. But first the Lutherans would have to come together, and then other Protestant elements. A group influenced by Philip of Hesse advocated ignoring the differences as unimportant. This was, of course, not acceptable to the Gnesio-Lutherans.

The formula for union put forward by the Gnesio-Lutherans included

subscription to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and condemnation of sacramentarians and other heretics by name. A counter-proposal from the Philippists included condemnation of Anabaptists, Schwenkfeld, and Osiander by name. Condemnation of Zwinglian teaching and adiaphorism, however, should be done without mention of names. The Flacians walked out. The Swiss were offended. The Roman Catholics gloated over the disunity of the Lutherans and other Protestants.

The Gnesio-Lutheran agenda emphasized these points: The issue is not this or that person. God's Word, the church's need, and conscience are central. It is necessary to repudiate both papacy and sectarians. Preservation of pure doctrine and separation from all schismatics are paramount. Condemnations must be specific, or they are of no value, because anyone can read into general condemnations whatever he wishes.

Melanchthon continued to contend that union could be achieved on the basis of documents of bygone decades: the UAC, the Apology, and the Smalcald Articles. The Gnesio-Lutherans responded: Condemnations of Osiander, sacramentarians from Carlstadt to Calvin, Major, the Interim (adiaphora issues), and the Council of Trent are necessary. The chasm widened. The necessity of condemnations (antitheses) became the focal point.

The Frankfort Recess of 1558 reaffirmed the Melanchthonian agenda. In Ducal Saxony the Weimar Book of Confutations was the response, which consisted of a roster of false teachers to be condemned in the congregations of Saxony.

Philip of Hesse proposed that condemnations be required for reconciliation but only after a public hearing. He pleaded for patience, and for making distinctions among the various errors to be condemned on that basis that some were less serious than others.

Flacius's counterproposal was to condemn right away the teachings of Servetus, the Anabaptists, Sacramentarians, Schwenkfeld, antinomians, and Osiandrians. Then call a meeting to deal with adiaphorism, Majorism, and synergism. For the Gnesio group, adiaphorism was emerging by 1560 as "the Trojan horse of Rome," the issue that must be dealt with clearly and firmly.

Philip of Hesse again chimed in that demands for condemnations should be replaced by fraternal invitations to discuss. Furthermore, the Swiss should be included.

A conference at Naumburg in 1561 proposed re-subscription to the AC with no one-sided condemnations as a basis for unity. This went nowhere. The two sides suspected each other of attempting to rig the

voting in various gatherings.

The Gnesio-Lutherans argued that they were not interested in strife and argumentation. They simply wanted to confess the truth. Furthermore, it is necessary for Christians to pass judgment on false doctrine when they see it. The Melanchthonians accused the Gnesio-Lutherans of wanting to control the whole process by assuming the roles of prosecutor, judge, and jury. Union and fellowship should simply be based on the AC and Scripture.

Some of the princes who favored the Gnesio-Lutherans began to try to rein in the pastors by forbidding scolding from the pulpit, and condemnations by name of people who had never had a fair hearing. It became clear to some lay leaders that there were those among the controversialists who loved controversy a little too much.

Focused discussion was given to the meaning of condemnation. What is the purpose and effect of condemnations? What is the relative weight of condemnation issued by individuals versus that of larger groupings? Does it mean cessation of fellowship? Is it the same as church discipline? Should civil authorities be involved?

It was clear to all that a changed set of circumstances from the era of the Augsburg Confession prevailed. Then the targets of condemnation were relatively few in number. Three decades later there was a whole roster of things to condemn, many of which were within the pale of Lutheranism.

Melanchthon's opposition to condemnations had at least something to do with expediency and church politics. Condemnations would simply inhibit future possibility of coming together with various groups, Roman Catholics, the Swiss, etc.

But ever since the AC condemnations of false teaching had become an identifying characteristic of Lutheranism. This simply could not be ignored or undone, especially not simply in the interest of church politics.

With regard to the weight of condemnation the Gnesio-Lutherans pointed to Luther's assertion that a condemnation issued by one baptized Christian based on Scripture had all necessary weight, because the individual Christian has the obligation to identify and condemn false teaching. Others pointed out that this would lead to an endless, arbitrary hereticizing by individuals. More weight must be given to condemnations issued by ecclesiastical groupings.

Luther's emphasis was always on condemning what conflicted with the pure doctrine of the Gospel, justification by grace for Christ's

sake through faith. Willful and stubborn rejection of the clear Word in relation to these things elicited legitimate condemnation. But how wide is the perimeter in which condemnation should take place? Were the Gnesio-Lutherans trying to expand that perimeter unnecessarily? Were the Melanchthonians trying to shrink that perimeter dangerously?

The Gnesio-Lutherans saw a slippery slope extending across the decades as follows: Philip of Hesse's plan for union at Augsburg which would have included the Swiss, Bucer's attempts to find middle ground, what happened under the Interims, the various meeting of the late 1550s. All of these led to doctrinal indifferentism. They were all things that needed to be opposed vehemently. The expression which brought things into focus was "*Satis est.*" When can one say, "It is enough"?

Melanchthon could complain that Flacius never addressed the whole body of doctrine, but was continually picky about its parts. Flacius could counter that Melanchthon's concern for the whole was vitiated by his lack of concern for specific parts. The Gnesio-Lutherans had the advantage throughout the discussions of consistency and lack of the vacillation that characterized Melanchthon. Pure doctrine, in their thinking, was always doctrine against heretics. It is not simply a static thing in a container. It is something to be wielded by two handles: thesis and antithesis.

The Philippists complained of the lumping together of condemnations without concern for degrees of seriousness. Schwenkfeldians and the Swiss; antitrinitarians and adiaphorists; Roman Semi-Pelagianism and Melanchthonian synergism: Are there no degrees of difference here? For the Gnesio-Lutherans the answer tended to be that error was error. But they distinguished between deceivers and the deceived, leaders and poor people, and conceded that there was indeed a difference between error and heresy.

In spite of the impasse, both sides left the door open for discussion. Both hoped for a general synod of Lutherans, though with somewhat different purposes in view.

Emergence of a third impetus came about in the early 1560s, after the death of Melanchthon. Some princes totally sympathetic to Flacius in content spoke out against his methods. They spoke out against controversy for controversy's sake. New winds of desire for reconciliation began to blow.

Naumburg had represented the high water mark of the compromise mentality: indifference to doctrine and the giving of primacy to church politics. People came to recognize that this was not the route to go.

Another motivation for Lutherans to get their act together was

the growth of the influence of Calvinism. Calvinism by the 1560s was the aggressive and growing form of Protestantism. Would it simply swallow up Lutheranism? There was growing influence of Calvinism in France, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, and elsewhere.

The Controversy About Condemnations and the Formula of Concord

A colloquy at Altenburg in 1568 revealed no change in relations between the Gnesio-Lutherans and Philippists in the two parts of Saxony. But the beginning of a breakthrough came about with the emergence of Jacob Andreae, chancellor of Tuebingen University in Wuerttemberg. He produced five articles on the most controversial points of doctrine. His approach initially was simply to state doctrine briefly, clearly, and positively, and issue a very general condemnation of opposing teaching, but omit personal condemnations. Critique of his work began, by Chemnitz among others. Andreae's critics pointed out that his work was not specific enough on the controverted points. It was too general to be useful in bringing about concord.

It seemed that things were at the same old impasse. The Gnesio-Lutherans wanted specific condemnations. They tended to be suspicious of Andreae. The final test for them of a person's attitude toward truth was to be found in what a person was willing to condemn with specificity. The Philippists gave Andreae's project the cold shoulder. But, his work got people's attention, created interest, and it proved to be the icebreaker. The princes were especially attracted to his work.

Andreae saw that downplaying sharp contrasts would not bring about the desired end. He had at first attempted to stand above the fray in a position of neutrality. He came to see that such a posture didn't work. But he was willing to keep on trying.

In 1573 Andreae produced his Six Sermons. They dealt with the 10 most important issues since 1548, thetically and antithetically. There were no condemnations of teachers by name, but no doubt was left regarding the content of what was being rejected. This applied both to the Philippists and to Flacius's problems on original sin.

The next step was to transform the sermons into a set of articles, the document which became known as the Swabian Concord. The pattern was this: Lay a foundation with Scripture and earlier Lutheran confessions. Then deal with controverted articles by way of theses and antitheses. Include in the condemnations ancient heresies, those dealt with previously in confessional writings, and then the issues especially since 1548, the

beginning of the Interim period.

Thus was initiated the chain of events that led from the Six Sermons to the Swabian Concord, to the Swabian-Saxon Concord plus the Maulbronn Formula, to the Torgau Book, to the Bergen Book, to the Formula of Concord, and finally to the Book of Concord of 1580.

Critique of the steps in the process arrived from all shades and gradations of non-Philippistic Lutherans. Among the more extreme voices were those of Tileman Hesshusius and John Wigand, both of whom had lost previous positions due to the machinations of Philippists. Their critique included the following:

- The Torgau Book is excellent in what it states positively and in what it rejects, but Andreae must apologize for his earlier grave sin when he put out his initial five articles, because they contained no clear antitheses.
- False teachers must be named because this was done in Scripture and in the ancient church.
- Names of false teachers must be included everywhere, not just in connection with some issues.
- Melanchthon must be singled out by name for condemnation. Lack of such specificity proves lack of sincerity in condemning false doctrine.
- Naming names is the Shibboleth of orthodox Lutheranism.

On the other hand, it was clear that specific condemnation of Melanchthon by name would cause several areas to have a deepened sense of alienation from the process.

By the year 1577 there was a new factor on international scene: Queen Elizabeth's agenda and diplomatic efforts to stop the adoption of the Formula. All evangelicals should unite (behind leadership of England) against Roman Catholic forces. The proposed Lutheran "Formula of Religion" would impede such efforts. Therefore, it must be opposed.

(Note developments around Europe: the reign of "Bloody Mary" in England (1553-1558), the War of the 3 Henrys in France, including the horrendous St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572; the struggle of the northern Netherlands for freedom under William of Orange; the various brutal activities of the RC Counter-Reformation, etc.)

The queen's activities opened many eyes to the obvious distortion and subjugation of theological issues to international politics. Not since Philip of Hesse's activities at Augsburg in 1530 had there been such a

crass example.

The queen persisted in dismissing the significance of ideas about the presence of Christ in the Sacrament. "Get rid of condemnations and let people think what they want about how Christ is present." In spite of letters written to her by faithful Lutheran princes, the issue of the condemnations remained incomprehensible to good Queen Bess. She thought the Lutherans were damning her to hell. Fellowship as practiced by the Lutherans was inscrutable to her. She could not see that fellowship practices were not harsh weapons for condemning others and punishing them. Doctrinal discipline and church discipline were still one in her mind. That doctrinal issues could be a matter of conscience was simply beyond her grasp.

The upshot of the efforts of the Queen was that the Lutherans would not be involved in a pan-evangelical alliance. The long-range implications of this would extend into the next century, into the period of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).

A meeting of German Calvinists at Frankfort in 1577 urged the Lutherans not to condemn foreign churches. They claimed to accept the AC as amended in the editions of 1540-42. Some thought was given to drawing up a Calvinistic formula of concord, but it came to nothing.

Andreae prepared an answer to the queen and the Calvinists. He defended the necessity of the condemnations.

- Lutherans had always carefully differentiated between true and false doctrine by means of condemnations.
- Condemnations were of doctrine, not persons.
- The ideas of the queen were rooted in human reason for the purpose of temporal advantage.
- The attacks on condemnation were really for the purpose of spreading Calvinistic ideas.
- Every Christian has the responsibility to judge doctrine.
- Condemnation cannot be withheld until an orderly process like a legal hearing has taken place.
- Sacramentarians had in fact been given many opportunities to defend their teaching, and had often simply resorted to slander against Lutherans (cannibalism, worship of a bread god, etc.).
- An appeal to the law of love against condemnations is out of place. Love which contributes to the weakening of faith is not true Christian love.
- The fact that many Calvinists had given their lives in Christian martyrdom does not change the fact that Lutherans found aspects of

their doctrine unscriptural and worthy of condemnation.

The formulators of the Formula of Concord met in March, 1578, to deal once again with the issue of condemnations. They arrived at complete unanimity:

- There was no way Lutherans could abandon condemnations of specific doctrine at this point.
- They took no delight in condemnations. The fanaticism of the sacramentarians necessitated it.
- Once again they were not condemning persons, churches or whole kingdoms, but false doctrine.
- The names of false teachers would not be included in their document.
- Moderation of condemnations at this point could only be understood as a backing down from their doctrine.
- The proposals from England in the interest of pan-evangelical union would only promote the spread of Calvinism.

They were united in the conviction that condemnations were doctrinally necessary, true to the facts, and relevant to the situation.

In Germany the territories of Anhalt and Hesse remained aloof. William of Hesse and Queen Elizabeth continued to hope for a general convention of evangelicals (an answer to the Council of Trent), but it never happened.

The Elector Louis of Saxony still objected that the mention of synergists in the condemnations was a violation of the principle of not naming false teachers. He also continued to hold that the condemnations in the Article on the Lord's Supper needed to be toned down.

The solution to these last objections became the preface to the Formula of Concord. Once again it was emphasized that the condemnations were of teachings, not teachers. Lutheran condemnation of Calvinism did not mean that Lutherans approved of the atrocities committed against the Huguenots in France in connection with St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572. Pronouncing condemnation of false teaching and practicing the law of Christian love toward others are not mutually exclusive. The hearts of all Lutherans went out toward the Protestant martyrs in France and other places at the same time that they disagreed with their Calvinistic theology.

Eight thousand pastors, teachers, and theologians found the Formula of Concord worthy of their embrace. It stands as a model of clarity in confessing divine truth, and restraint in matters where dealing

with human weakness is involved.

The Controversy over Condemnations at Strasbourg

What happened in the city of Strasbourg is an interesting case to look at regarding reaction to the Formula. The dominant personality in Strasbourg from the 1520s to the 1540s was, of course, Martin Bucer, well known for his mediating theology. After the defeat of the Smalcaldic League, Bucer refused to abide by the Interim. Thomas Cranmer invited Bucer to come to England to help with the work of Reformation there. Henry VIII was dead (1547). The boy king Edward was on the throne under the tutelage of protestants. Bucer lived and worked at Cambridge until his death in 1551. (Had he lived two more years he would have faced death or exile under "Bloody Queen Mary.")

After the departure of Martin Bucer, Strasbourg had come under strong Lutheran influence under the leadership of John Marbach. When the Bergen Book arrived in Strasbourg, the clergy quite quickly approved it, but the city government did not. The issue: What should be the attitude toward people who agree in substance with the FC, but are not ready to cut themselves off from others who are not yet completely convinced of the theology of the FC (triangular fellowship arrangements)? They thought that approval of the condemnations would alienate people from whom they were not ready to be alienated.

A controversy developed in which the chief participants were John Pappus, a young theologian who supported the FC, and John Sturm who opposed it. Pappus produced 68 theses on the issue of Christian love and its relation to the condemnation of false doctrine. This proved to be an enduring contribution.

Previously the discussion had gone on: Opponents of condemnation regarded the appeal to Christian love as a "trump card." It's one or the other: either you practice love or you condemn others as the Lutherans do. There are no other choices. The two are irreconcilable.

Defenders of condemnation argued that there was no incompatibility, and that in matters of doctrine confessing the truth must be given priority over charity. They argued that inappropriate appeals to charity in connection with questions of doctrine were an indication of indifferentism to doctrine, apathy toward the truth, and the placing of humanistic considerations above the things of God.

Pappus wanted to show that there was no tension between practicing Christian love and condemnation of false doctrine, but that a

positive relationship existed between them. Pappus structured his theses around two questions:

1. Is it contrary to Christian charity to fight against teachings which conflict with the Word of God?

2. Is it contrary to Christian charity to condemn churches which stubbornly defend false teaching?

Pointing out and condemning false doctrine does not violate the law of love because the church is commanded to reprove that which is false, argued Pappus. The command to love does not set aside another scriptural mandate. Condemnation is necessary in order for faith to have certainty. Thesis and antithesis work together. The command to love does not undermine being certain in one's faith.

The command to practice love and the command to identify and reprove false doctrine do not negate each other. They are positively interconnected. Love for fellow human beings must never take precedence over love toward God. There is a reason why the first table of the law is the first table. Condemnation of false teaching is finally the highest form of love.

Pappus recognized that zeal for the truth must be genuine, and not simply rooted in a carnal passion to win arguments, put others down, make oneself look good, to play "Gotcha!" or "My practice is purer than yours."

There is no conflict between condemning false teaching and having sympathy for those whose teachings are condemned. There is a perpetual, double obligation here.

To say that only God can condemn does not take seriously clear Scripture which commands Christians in general and ministers in particular to discriminate between truth and falsity (shepherds and hirelings, true prophets and false prophets), to embrace the truth and reject the false.

In the relationship between sheep and wolves, watchdogs play a legitimate and important role. When appropriate, they must growl, bark, chase, hound, and even bite. Condemnation is not just the work of theologians, but of the whole church. Obedience to the first table of the law and the hallowing of the name of God require clear confession of truth and condemnation of error.

Sturm's counter-arguments had to do with church politics. His purpose was to block the approval of the FC in Strasbourg. In the tension between the government and the clergy, the former must win out in the interest of political concerns. Sturm continued in the spirit of Bucer, even though by the 1570s the setting in which Bucer had presented his

ideas was long gone. The cause of pan-Evangelicalism must be upheld. Pappus's defense of the condemnation of false doctrine was offensive. Bucer's *Tetrapolitana* had contained no condemnations. This was the route to go. Sturm frankly admitted that he had never read the FC. (Nor had he partaken of the Lord's Supper in over twenty years.)

Sturm raised the charge of fanaticism. Melanchthon, Bucer, and Calvin represented a level-headed approach to things. The Gnesio-Lutherans were fanatics. His procedure simply avoided substantive theological issues, and banished the idea of condemning doctrine, which he conceded might be theoretically necessary in some few cases, to a setting remote in time and place. He reiterated that only God can condemn. Human judgment concerning the eternal destiny of others was presumptuous.

Pappus replied that Sturm was again attributing to the condemnation of doctrine a meaning which it did not have. Distinguish doctrinal discipline from church discipline, he argued.

Sturm argued the unfairness of the those who condemned false doctrine. They wanted to be both accusers and judges at the same time. They should, rather, strive for impartiality and objectivity. This was the humanist tradition. Pappus replied that in the battle for truth, impartiality and objectivity are not virtues, but constitute treason to the cause.

Sturm wanted to slow down the process. Wait for a general council of evangelicals. Wait for judgment day. Condemnations are legitimate only for proper cause, in good manner, not arbitrarily, not against persons, and not prematurely (i.e., before Judgment Day, apparently).

Pappus replied that condemnation was not about persons, branding people as children of the devil, consigning the French martyrs to hell, etc. It is possible and necessary to condemn false teaching and manifest love and kindness toward the erring at the same time. Consideration for persons is very important, but also has limitations when dealing with the impenitent and stubborn.

The Parable of the Tares among the Wheat frequently came up in these discussions. Sturm charged that condemnation of false doctrine violated the point Jesus was making in the parable. Pappus disagreed.

Other charges of Sturm were these: The Gnesio-Lutherans desired to consign whole churches and all their members to the devil; or to turn those condemned over to civil authorities for punishment; or to justify the bloody persecution of opponents. Pappus's reply: No, No, and No.

The final argument of Sturm was this: In the present dangerous situation of the church (the various measures of the RC Counter-Reformation, with especially St. Bartholomew's Day fresh in mind), it

was a very bad thing to alienate anyone in the evangelical camp by issuing condemnations of doctrines like those having to do with the manner of Christ's presence in the Sacrament, the precise role of human will in conversion, etc.

Pappus replied: It's no more dangerous in Strasbourg in the 1570s than it was at Augsburg in 1530. The church is always in danger. That fact cannot be used to deny the necessity of condemnation of false teaching. Erring faith must be distinguished from erroneous teaching.

Sturm could not really deal with the theology. He didn't understand it or value it. He claimed to be Lutheran under the positive theology of the AC. He did not regard any Reformed ideas to impinge on the essence of the faith or to be divisive of fellowship. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper and the nature of the real presence simply were not important to him.

Sturm's "Lutheranism" was a religion deeply influenced by Erasmus. Erasmian characteristics include:

- suspicion of doctrinal assertions,
- fear of making people upset over points of doctrine,
- emphasis on tranquility,
- tendency to pass over certain points of doctrine in the interest of expediency, and
- precedence of the law of love over doctrinal truth.

It was all about politics for Sturm. But he violated Erasmian principles in the vigor with which he attacked Pappus and other more genuinely Lutheran opponents. In 1581 he was dismissed from his position in Strasbourg and the FC was accepted there.

The enduring contribution of Pappus was this: The thorough discussion of the tension between truth and love in the condemnation of false doctrine. It was not an either/or, but a matter of rightly applying each principle in its proper sphere. But, speaking the truth in love must ultimately take precedence over pragmatic tolerance. Tolerance at the price of indifference toward key doctrinal matters does not ultimately serve the church. It may serve a *theologia gloriae*, but not genuine theology. The FC did not go that route.

The Formula of Concord and the Condemnation of False Doctrine

The Preface to the FC provided the formulators with a last opportunity to clarify the issue of condemnations of false doctrine. Andreae again took a leadership role and worked on several drafts from the end of

1578 through the summer of 1579. Satisfying prominent lay leaders on the issue of condemnations was a big challenge here.

Under the influence of the radical Tileman Hesshusius some questioned the distinction between erring, stiff-necked teachers and those who erred in ingenuousness from simplicity or ignorance. Hesshusius argued that love toward the ingenuously erring was not appropriate. They must be held as accountable as their false teachers are. The result was the inclusion of a statement on the necessity of warning also those who err ingenuously.

By the 50th Anniversary of the AC the completed Book of Concord could be made public. The condemnations were not changed, but the formulators had been forced to think through very carefully the matter of condemnations. The FC upholds both firmness as to theological issues, and moderation and caution in dealing with frail human beings.

The following points show the necessity of condemnations and the drawing of fellowship lines:

- Scripture
- The creeds of the ancient church and the previous confessions of the Reformation era
- The errors which arose out of the Interim period, issues which were just as grave as those dealt with previously
- Confessing positive doctrine for contemporaries and posterity requires antitheses.
- Preservation of the Lutheran church from error requires it.
- Warning pious and innocent people in other churches requires condemnation.
- The stubbornness of the stiff-necked teachers requires it.

But there are limits placed on condemnation:

- Thesis has priority. Antithesis has an ancillary role.
- A distinction must be maintained between needless contentiousness and necessary controversy. The former is to be avoided, the latter engaged in a spirit of humility and obedience to the Word.
- No names of theologians, and no titles of specific condemned books appear in the FC.
- Condemnation is not aimed at those who err ingenuously and do not blaspheme.
- Condemnation is not directed against entire churches. Pious and

innocent people may be found in all churches where the essentials of the faith (Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement) are found.

- Condemnations are not justification for the persecution of anyone.

These points outline a Lutheran theology of doctrinal discipline and fellowship.

How was all this received by those who opposed condemnations and drawing of clear lines? In many cases they took it very personally. They complained of the "egotistical harshness" of the Lutherans. King Frederick of Denmark banned the Book of Concord from his realm. He burned two copies that had been sent to him from Saxony. This had long-range implications in Scandinavia.

Calvinists in the Palatinate in their Neustadt Admonition argued:

- Calvinistic teaching on the Lord's Supper and other issues conforms to Scripture, the ancient creeds, and the Altered AC.
- The condemnations do not rest on decisions rendered by the church (pan-evangelical council); therefore, they are invalid.
- Only things which conflicted with the Decalogue or the Creed could be called heresy in the minds of the Reformed. Erring in areas beyond those boundaries is not worthy of condemnation or severance of fellowship.
- The condemnations of the ancient church were legitimate because they were based on a broad consensus of the church. The condemnations of the Lutherans are not legitimate. They are one party in a dispute, not the whole church. The Lutherans should know that their condemnations would not stand up in a pan-evangelical council.

This amounted to a reiteration of the response of Zwingli and his followers to Luther 50 years earlier.

The Reformed definition of heresy gets clarified at this point. Lutherans and Calvinists agreed that the term heresy should be used only in connection with issues that belonged to the "foundation of religion." But then the question is: What are the dimensions of the "foundation of religion"? The Calvinists defined it as the Decalogue and the articles of the Creed. Teachings that conflict with these things are heresy and therefore divisive. False teachings outside those narrow boundaries may be called errors, but are not heresy and are not divisive. There emerged here a

tendency to quantify the things that can be called heresy and to minimize the dimensions. The crucial issue here was specifically the Lord's Supper and sacramental theology in general. In the Calvinistic view these things do not belong to the inner circle of the foundation of religion.

Lutherans recoiled from the notion that the Sacrament does not belong to the foundation of religion, and were repulsed by the viciousness of reformed attacks on Lutheran "cannibalism." The perpetrators of such attacks were hardly the ingenuously erring.

Lutherans easily refuted the idea that there could be no condemnation of heresy without a council. The Philippists and Calvinists themselves had repeatedly issued condemnations without a council (Schwenkfeld, Anabaptists, etc.). False doctrine must be condemned whenever and wherever it arises. It is not possible to wait for a council. On the issue of the Sacrament councils had been held. And Reformed theologians certainly had not restrained themselves from issuing harsh condemnations of Lutheran sacramental theology.

It was easy for Lutherans to show the self-contradictory nature of the Reformed approach. The Calvinists claimed to desire fellowship with the Lutherans, and yet they harshly condemned them. How did this make sense? Included here were prominent names among the reformed like Theodore Beza.

There is something striking here about the contradictory nature of Reformed theology. Even Karl Barth noted the coexistence in Reformed theology of "a dogmatic attitude that fears no consequences" and a "pious and liberal relativism" The Reformed tendency to value ecclesiastical-political issues and even broader political issues more than doctrine was there from the beginning. And so it remains to this day.

(For Reformed theology there was only one "front" in the theological wars, the one against Rome. They simply could not figure the Lutherans out with their two-front war.)

The big issue for the German Reformed was the provisions of the 1555 Peace of Augsburg. It only recognized the legality of Roman Catholicism and the religion defined by the AC. Therefore, they had to find a place for themselves under the AC, and at the same time justify their distancing of themselves from Lutheran sacramental theology. The way to do this was to use the Variata. The focal point was the condemnation in AC X. It had to be eliminated or softened. They could not in any public document condemn or show strong disagreement with anything in the AC, or they would lose their claim of legality under the Peace of Augsburg of 1555.

These considerations shifted the nature of the debate. It moved away from theology to a disagreement over historical development. They claimed that they were unfairly treated in the developments since 1530. The focal point became the legitimacy of the Variata. The Reformed claimed that they were always protected by the AC because they agreed with the intent of the writer (Melanchthon). Lutherans responded that the AC explicitly excluded them from being under its umbrella. AC X proved this. The UAC had never been repealed or officially set aside in favor of the Variata.

In 1581 a commission of three went to work on an Apology of the FC. Their work was well received by the majority of Lutherans, but once again some questions were raised about the condemnations. A meeting came about in 1583 (at Quedlinburg) to deal with the questions raised. Some still objected that condemnations without the explicit mentioning of names were not adequate, and that it was not right to make a distinction between misled hearers and false teachers. The erring are the erring, period. And so, there was renewed discord even after the Book of Concord had been adopted. Was the FC "treading too lightly"? The response of the apologists was, "Heretic and heresy belong together and are conjoined, but not heresy and a sheep that has been led astray."

The final report of the meeting included the following:

- Names of theologians who had taught false doctrine.
- The stipulation that discussion of the names should not be carried on in the schools or pulpits.
- Only in the case of extreme need to keep wolves out of the sheepfold should names be brought up in schools or pulpits.

Thus the spirit of restraint in the Book of Concord was preserved, but with some concession to hard-liners. The latter referred to condemnations which did not include condemnations of persons as "shadow boxing," while more restrained voices complained of "pedantic and contentious disturbers of the peace." These latter ones asserted: Don't needlessly offend people, and at the same time do not detract from the glory of God. Hard-liners responded: God's glory is, in fact, diminished when we show concern for not offending people.

The upshot of it all was that a distinctive Lutheran fellowship was established. A grand union of evangelicals did not come about.

The parting of ways began in the momentous decade of the 1520s.

It was established formally at Augsburg in 1530. It persisted. The difference between the religious communities became the primacy of doctrine and faith, versus the primacy of political concerns.

The Book of Concord took a stand against the laxity and indifferentism toward doctrine manifested among the Philippists, the Swiss, and the politiques in England and France and elsewhere. And it did so without giving in to the excessive harshness which characterized some.

The preservation of the whole of theology, salvation won by the person and work of Christ, distributed in the divinely instituted means of grace, received by faith alone, and enjoyed in full in the resurrection to eternal life was more important than the Reformed agenda of evangelical union. This was really the embracing of the theology of the cross, and rejection of the theology of glory. The evangelical union concept had many attractions, but its benefits would come at the price of doctrinal integrity.

FC did not just repeat the condemnations and the drawing of fellowship lines. It clarified both. It preserved firmness where necessary, and recognized the limits on the meaning of condemnation of doctrine and withholding of fellowship. In so doing it preserved Luther's thinking. This was not a matter of compromise or finding middle positions. It was a matter of judiciously applying scriptural principles which might appear to come into conflict with one another.

The Formula of Concord stands as a model of clarity and restraint.

Soli Deo Gloria

Spectrum of opinion as to what is required for public confession of doctrine and basis for fellowship.

• Positive statement of doctrine.	• Positive statement of doctrine. • General rejection of opposing teachings.	• Positive statement of doctrine. • Clear rejection of specific antithetical teachings. • Distinction between stubborn false teachers and the ingenuously erring.	• Positive statement of doctrine. • Clear rejection of specific antithetical teachings. • Explicit naming of false teachers who taught the rejected doctrine. • No distinction between stubborn false teachers and the ingenuously erring.	• Positive statement of doctrine. • Clear rejection of specific antithetical teachings. • Explicit naming of false teachers who taught the rejected doctrine. • No distinction between stubborn false teachers and the ingenuously erring. • Require explicit recantation from anyone who once used expressions deemed to be false doctrine.

The Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity: Its Relevance for Spiritual Formation and the Faith-Life

By Timothy R. Schmeling

The modern Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, wrote, "Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere monotheists. We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged."[1] While in the eyes of many Confessional Lutherans Karl Rahner and his modern cohorts have only seemed to confound the problem of articulating the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity in his quest for relevance, Rahner has rightly diagnosed a rather significant problem facing contemporary Christianity. The problem is that many Christians have very little knowledge about the Holy Trinity to begin with, and what is worse is that they go about their faith-lives as if there were no Trinity or at least as if the Trinity were not really relevant to their faith. The real question is: Can there be anything more relevant, essential, and moving for our spiritual formation and faith-life than the most holy and blessed Trinity?

How has this problem been addressed in recent times?[2] The father of modern theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher, believed the problem was really the Early Church's formulation of the Holy Trinity itself. In *The Christian Faith*, he states that the doctrine was fraught by pagan concepts and is unsettled because it did not receive a fresh treatment by the Protestant Church. His solution was to relegate the Holy Trinity to a dogmatic appendix and advocate a version of Sabellianism, because the Early Church's doctrine of the Holy Trinity was not an "immediate utterance concerning the Christian self-consciousness."[3] The Swiss Reformed theologian, Karl Barth, conversely, saw the Holy Trinity as what makes the Christian God Christian and as informing all the *loci* of his system. But his emphasis on the unity of the Trinity at the expense of the threeness also opened him up to charges of latent Sabellianism. Barth substituted the term *Seinsweise*, i.e., *way of being* or *mode of being*, for the classical term *person* in the Holy Trinity to combat tritheism and an individualistic interpretation of *person* as *personalities*.[4] Echoing Adolf

von Harnack's thesis that the Early Church's formulation of the Trinity was the embodiment of Hellenization, Wilhelm Pauck dismissed Barth's attempt to rearticulate the Trinity.

> As if it were really a matter of life and death, that as members of the church of the Twentieth Century-we should accept the dogma of the Trinity! Professional theologians may think that it is absolutely necessary for us to be concerned with theological thought-forms of the past, but—God be thanked!—the common Christian layman is no professional theologian, and he may be a better Christian for that reason….What (the preacher) needs to know is who God is and how man can be put in right relation with him into the abundant, full, rich, meaningful life.[5]

The modern Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, pursued Barth's thought and attempted to rearticulate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as well. He shared Barth's concern about modern misunderstandings of the term *person* in the Holy Trinity. He further believed that keeping the ontological Trinity distinct from the economic Trinity only destroyed interest in the Trinity at the expense of protecting the unity and mystery of God. Believing the salvation history to be the proper starting point for the doctrine of the Trinity, Rahner proposes the idea that the economic Trinity is the ontological Trinity and the ontological Trinity is the economic Trinity.[6] Jürgen Moltmann believes that both Barth and Rahner have failed because their theology still results in Modalism and a God distinct from the suffering world. His work abandons the distinction between the ontological Trinity and economic Trinity as well. What is more, he introduces a political critique to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.[7]

> Monotheism was and is the religion of patriarchy, just as pantheism is probably the religion of earlier matriarchy. It is only the doctrine of the Trinity, with the bold statements we have quoted which makes a first approach towards overcoming sexist language in the concept of God. It leads to a fellowship of men and women without privilege and subjection, for in fellowship with the first-born brother, there is no longer male or female, but all are one in Christ, and joints heirs according to the promise.[8]

Contemporary feminist theologians have also tried to rearticulate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. They come to understand the Bible to be misogynous and patriarchal. In response, they have also tried to feminize God Himself through their books and gender inclusive worship.[9] Drawing on the feminine *sophia*, (i.e., Greek for *wisdom*), a term attributed to Christ (Proverbs 8; Matthew 11:18–19), the RE-imagining Conference held in Minneapolis on November 4–7, 1993, for example, offered up prayers addressed to Sophia. One of the prayers at the conference read as follows:

> Our maker Sophia, we are women in your image: With the hot blood of our wombs we give form to new life. With the courage of our conviction we pour out our life blood for justice. Sophia, creator God, let your milk and honey flow, shower us with your love. Our sweet Sophia, we are women in your image: With nectar between our thighs we invite a lover, we birth a child; with our warm body fluids we remind the world of its pleasures and sensations. Our guide, Sophia, we are women in your image: With our moist mouths we kiss away a tear, we smile encouragement, we prophesy a full humanity to all peoples.[10]

While the progressive Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants have rightly diagnosed that the Trinity has become almost irrelevant for many contemporary Christians, their solutions to this problem have generally only compounded the problem by means of their departure from the Bible's conception of the Holy Trinity. If one were to think that Evangelicalism or even Lutheranism has remained above the fray or somehow immune from this trend, one would be mistaken. The doctrinal ambiguity and worship practices of the Evangelicals have tended to promote a *Jesus Religion*, where God the Father and God the Spirit are neglected at best or are deemed different *modes* of the same God at worst. In point of fact, a movement has arisen called *Oneness Pentecostalism* that asserts that the godhead consists of one person, who manifests himself in three separate ways.[11] Classical Lutheran theology, the Creeds, and the historic liturgy have helped to safeguard the Holy Trinity in Lutheranism, but recent academic theology, preaching, catechesis, and contemporary spirituality, etc. have been lacking. The prominent ELCA theologian, Robert W. Jensen, set forth his understanding of the Holy Trinity with the subsequent words,

"There is one event, God, of three identities."[12] In the LCMS, Dr. Waldo Werning was charged with Modalism because of the Trinitarian theology of his *Health and Healing for the LCMS*.

The goal of this study is to reassert both the necessity of reaffirming the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity and its relevance for our spiritual formation and faith-lives. Since those surveyed above have failed to articulate the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity in their quest for relevance, this essay will review the classical Lutheran presentation of this doctrine. The hope is that this review will help Confessional Lutherans better articulate and convey the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity to their contemporaries. In fact, one of the great confessions of western Christendom known as the *Quicunque vult*, or the *Athanasian Creed*, clearly affirms the centrality of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity for the Christian's spiritual formation and faith-life.[13] A thorough study of the sacred Scriptures, the divine liturgy (ordinary, propers, and the church year), and the Church Fathers will not only further demonstrate this to be so, but it will also show that the Holy Trinity, *den höchsten Artikel unsers Glaubens*, lies at the very heart of a proper understanding of justification, *dem höchsten fürnehmsten Artikel der ganzen christlichen Lehre*.[14] A proper understanding of justification presupposes a proper understanding of Christ. The Christ that is not confessed by means of the Holy Spirit and who does not provide access to God the Father is not the Christ of the Bible (1 Corinthians 12:3; John 14:6). Likewise, a Christocentric theology that is not firmly grounded in the Holy Trinity is not the Christocentric theology of the sacred Scriptures that testify of Christ (John 5:39). God the Father, the Unbegotten One, brought about creation through His Word and His Spirit. God the Son, the Begotten One, was sacrificed upon the high altar of the cross by the Father as the one all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. This sacrifice, in turn, was borne by the Spirit to the Father, who accepted it as making full redemption for all. God the Holy Spirit, the Spirated One, carries out the will of the Father by sanctifying us, i.e., making us holy in Christ, by the means of grace dispensed through Christ's church. To be sure, the Holy Trinity is truly a mystery beyond all comprehension. Yet, the essentials are revealed in the sacred Scriptures, clear enough for any child to believe and confess. The Holy Trinity is not some academic paradox intended to amuse the theologians, nor some riddle invented to vex the simple; rather it is an inexhaustible mystery and the very essence of Christianity itself. God reveals to mankind through this dogma a beatific glimpse of Himself for our salvation, without which one cannot be saved. The Holy and Blessed Trinity will become an

inexhaustible labor of love, which will yield a harvest of spiritual fruit to all who dare ponder in faith its rupturing splendor. Let us begin this task with the words of Augustine of Hippo.

> And I would make this pious and safe agreement, in the presence of our Lord God, with all who read my writings, as well, in all other cases, as above all, in the case of those which inquire into the unity of the Trinity, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; because in no other subject is error more dangerous, or inquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more profitable.[15]

Definition of Terms

Before dealing with any subject, terminology must be addressed. It should also be noted that these terms should not be treated lightly. In the ancient church, there was much debate concerning whether the church should even use secular and philosophical terms. Although the orthodox theologians wanted to use Scripture exclusively to define the Trinity, the necessity of using secular terms was required because of the errors of the heretics. Martin Chemnitz explains:

> Therefore because the heretics spoke with the language of the church and yet meant something different and "through similar words," as Gregory of Nazianzus says, "spread their poison secretly among the inexperienced," who suspected nothing evil when they heard them using the same words which the church used, churchmen tried to find terms in Scripture by which they might draw the hidden heretics out from their ambushes, so that they would not be able to deceive the unsuspecting by their double-talk....What did the church do about this? It had to defend against the heretics the faith regarding the articles of the Trinity, the faith which the Holy Spirit had revealed in the Scriptures, which the apostles had handed down, and martyrs had corroborated. But the church could not do this with the words of Scripture, because of the insolence of the heretics, who with their guile played games with all the Scriptural terms, so that these words could not be retained or used in debate; and meanwhile they were

> taking captive the mind of the simple with their lives. Therefore terms had to be sought by which the doctrine itself, handed down in Scripture concerning the article, could be expressed in a proper way, so that the heretics could not play games with some sneaky interpretation.[16]

In other words, many of the terms used in teaching the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as they are historically and dogmatically understood, are not found in the sacred Scriptures. Nevertheless, the concepts conveyed by these words are found in the sacred Scriptures and are therefore scriptural. Furthermore, one must maintain with Martin Chemnitz that these terms are not clearer than the sacred Scriptures since Scripture is perspicuous. On the other hand, these terms are valuable because they are terms that all recognize as having one correct definition that all can agree upon. In short, these terms serve the church as sort of helpful theological shorthand, because they can convey a whole biblical concept in a single word or two.

The first term in need of explanation is *Trinity* (τριάς, *trinitas*). It means that God is three persons in one divine being or essence. The Greek term τριάς is not found, as it is now understood, in the sacred Scriptures (unless one perhaps appeals to the rather dubious reading of 1 John 5:7: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" [ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦ ντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατὴρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἕν εἰσιν]), but is a concept conveyed in it. The Christian origin of the Greek term τριάς is the writings of Theophilus of Antioch, whereas the Latin term *trinitas* originates in the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian.[17] When Martin Luther writes that *Dreifaltigkeit* is not an adequate term for the Trinity, he appeals to thought of Augustine of Hippo noting the etymology of *Dreifaltigkeit* is *threeness* or *threefold*. Thus, it would seem that Martin Luther preferred the term *Dreieinigkeit*, although he uses both terms in his works.[18] Even though Luther could be critical of the term *Dreifaltigkeit* and *trinitas,* this does not mean that he believed their use to be heretical. In reality, Luther is recognizing that finite human language as well as man's sinful limited intellect itself is incapable of comprehensively reflecting and understanding the doctrine of the Trinity better.[19]

> The word (οὐσία), used of God, signifies an essence common to the three persons of the Godhead, one in number and undivided, which does not exist partially in

> the three persons, so that a part of it is in the Father, a part in the Son, and a part in the Holy Ghost; but because of the infinity and immateriality, is entire in the Father, entire in the Son, and entire in the Holy Ghost.[20]

The Greek term οὐσία is used in the Bible in Luke 15:12-13, Tobit 14:13, as well as 3 Maccabees 3:28, although not in the sense it is used in the doctrine of the Trinity.[21] For instance, Luke writes, "The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate (οὐσίας).' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth (οὐσίαν) in wild living" (Luke 15:12-13). The language of three ὑποστάσεις in one οὐσία, which the Cappadocian Fathers, i.e., Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, used to describe the orthodox understanding of the Holy Trinity, is already evident in Origen.[22] Synonyms of οὐσία are found in Romans 1:20 (θειότης), Galatians 4:8 (φύσει), Colossians 2:9 (θεότητος), and 2 Peter 1:4 (φύσεως). Since it is very important to distinguish the use of the term *essence* with respect to the Trinity from its use when applied to man, Martin Chemnitz provides a further word of explanation.

> Therefore the church understands by the term essence not a universal term, as philosophers name human essence, but a divine nature truly existing, which is communicable and common to three persons, and is entirely in each. But what this is with respect to the definition of the matter, I say is not known, unless we say that the attributes given in the definition of God are the very essence of God. The essence with respect to divine persons (α) is not a species, because the persons of the Trinity do not share essence in the manner that individuals share a common nature, which diffuses itself in no way beyond that of which it is part, as it were; as, man is a species of animal, and Peter is an individual of the human species. (β) It is not predicated of many individuals differing in numerical essence, as three men are said to differ in number. (γ) It is not predicated in the plural form of individuals, for the three persons are not three gods or three divine essences, as Peter, Paul, etc. (δ) Neither does it belong to either more or less than three persons; while human essence is not restricted to

> a determinate number of persons. Of a man I cannot say that all humanity is in him, but of a person of the Godhead I can correctly affirm that all the fullness of the Godhead is in Him. The reason rests upon the infinity of the divine essence. In three human individuals the essence is not one, not in number, but one only in species; but in the three persons of the Godhead, there is an essence one in number and absolutely undivided. Human persons are distinguished by substance, time, will, accidents of mind and body, etc. Thus, the substance of Peter is different from Paul;…but in the Trinity persons are not thus distinguished, for the Son is ὁμοούσιος, ὁμοιώνοις, συναίδιος with the Father….Of human persons it cannot be said that the one is in the other; but of Himself and His Father, Christ says (John 14:10): "I am in the Father," etc. Of human persons it cannot be said that because of their common nature, where the one person is, there also is the other; because they are locally distinct; but of Himself and the Father, Christ declares (John 8:29): "The Father hath not left me alone." Of human persons it cannot be said that, because of their common nature, he who honors the one honors the other, nay rather one can be honored while the other is treated with contempt; but of Himself and the Father, Christ says (John 5:23): "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that hat sent Him."[23]

The third term *person* (ὑπόστασις, πρόσωπον, *persona*) means, "an individual, intelligent, incommunicable substance, which is not sustained, either upon another or from another."[24] The Greek terms ὑπόστασις and πρόσωπον came to be used as synonyms of the Latin term *persona*, although they were not originally understood this way. The author of Hebrews writes, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being (ὑπόστασις), sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3)." This being said, ὑπόστασις also means a *situation, condition,* or *a frame of mind* in 2 Corinthians 9:4, 11:17, and Hebrews 3:14.[25] In the early church, ὑπόστασις was initially understood as a synonym for οὐσία. The Cappadocian Fathers introduced a new understanding of ὑπόστασις to convey properly the three persons of the Holy Trinity and solidify the use of ὁμοούσιος in the Nicene Creed among orthodox Christians. The Latin Fathers generally recognized the

orthodoxy of the Cappadocian formulation, but also realized the difficulty of establishing Latin equivalents. Tertullian introduced the Latin term *persona* to refute the Sabellian heresy. *Persona*, like the Greek πρόσωπον, originally referred to the mask of an actor. *Persona* came to denote an individual character of a play by Tertullian's day or an objective individual legally capable of having property or *substantia*.[26] Naturally, the Greek terminology could be misunderstood as undermining the one essence of the Trinity or as Arianism. The Latin terminology could be misunderstood as undermining the three persons of the Trinity. Now that the term *person* is defined, it is important to realize the term is used differently in the Trinity than it is used in creatures. Martin Chemnitz explains.

> Thus, in the church, the term ὑπόστασις, or person, is used in a different sense from the usage of common speech. Among men we know what a person is, among angels we understand what it is. Peter, Paul, and John are three persons to whom one human nature is common. But they differ very much, (1) in substance, because one entirely is distinct from another (*totus a toto*), (2) in time, (3) in will, (4) in power, (5) in work….But in the Trinity, persons are not thus distinguished, as an angel from an angel, and a man from a man (nor do they differ in time, will, power, work; but, in the persons of the Trinity, there is co-eternity, one will, one power, one working). Likewise, in creatures, it does not follow that where one person is, there, because of their common nature, the others also are. And this distinction must necessarily be observed; for the mystery at which even the angels are astonished, would not be so great, if one essence were three persons, in the manner that Michael, Gabriel, Raphael are three persons, to whom one angelic nature is common and equally belongs…. The persons of the divinity do not differ essentially as in creatures, where each one has his own peculiarity, nor is there only a distinction of reason therein as Sabellius wished; but they are really distinguished, nevertheless, in a manner incomprehensible and unknown to us.[27]

In short, the terms *person*, *nature*, and *essence* may be used of God and creatures. However, these terms are not used unequivocally or equivocally when used for God and man. Rather Lutheranism holds with Thomas

Aquinas that they ought to be understood analogically.[28]

The fourth term is *consubstantial* (ὁμοούσιος, *consubstantialis*). The Nicene Creed employed the Greek term ὁμοούσιος to explain that the Son is of the same substance or being as the Father. Athanasius of Alexandria provides the following explanation of ὁμοούσιος.

> That the Son is not only like to the Father, but that, as his image, he is the same as the Father; that he is of the Father; and that the resemblance of the Son to the Father, and his immutability, are different from ours: for in us they are something acquired, and arise from our fulfilling the divine commands. Moreover, they wished to indicate by this that his generation is different from that of human nature; that the Son is not only like to the Father, but inseparable from the substance of the Father, that he and the Father are one and the same, as the Son himself said: The Logos is always in the Father, and, the Father always in the Logos, as the sun and its splendor are inseparable.[29]

This term was used to counter Arius, who claimed there was a time when the second person of the Trinity was not. This Greek term had precarious origins in the condemned theology of the Gnostics, the Manicheans, and Paul of Samosata as Arius pointed out. It was suggested at Nicea by Hosius of Cordova to convey the relationship between the Father and the Son. The Semi-Arian mediating party proposed ὁμοιούσιος, i.e., literally *a similar* οὐσία, rather than the Nicene *same* οὐσία as their solution. Nevertheless, the Semi-Arian one iota did make a difference and ὁμοούσιος eventually won universal acceptance.[30]

The fifth term is *will* (θέλημα, *voluntas*). The Greek term θέλημα as used in the Monothelite Controversy can be found in the sacred Scriptures. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ distinguishes His human will from His divine will, the later of which He shares with the Father and the former of which He always conforms to and willingly submits to the divine will. "Father, if you are willing (βούλει), take this cup from me; yet not my will (θέλημα), but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). The importance of this will in the discussion of Trinity and Christology was articulated by Maximus the Confessor during the Monothelite Controversy and reaffirmed in Lutheran Christology by Martin Chemnitz. Maximus the Confessor argued that the Trinity has one will, since will corresponds to nature. The person of

Christ has two wills, since He has two natures, one human and the other divine.[31] Christ shares the divine will with the Father and the Holy Spirit. If will corresponded to the persons, then there would be three gods. Since the Holy Trinity is one God and essence, the Trinity has one will. The Sixth Ecumenical Council confessed this with the following words, "'Two natural wills and two natural activities are shown in our one Lord Christ' (δύο θελήματα φυσικὰ ἤγουν θελήσεις καὶ φυσικὰς ἐνέργειας, ἐπί τοῦ ἑνὸς δεικνύσθαι χριστοῦ)."[32]

The sixth term is *and the Son* (*filioque*). The Latin term *filioque* refers to the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father *and the Son*. There is no Greek equivalent term for the *filioque* in the sacred Scriptures, but the concept is grounded therein. The language of *from the Father through the Son* can be found in Tertullian, but the term *filioque* first seems to rise in such individuals as Hilary of Poitiers. The idea takes its classical form in the thought of Augustine of Hippo.[33] In opposition to Priscillianism, King Reccared articulated the orthodoxy of the *filioque* at the Third Council of Toledo in 589 along with the heterodoxy of its denial. This position was affirmed in the anathemas of the council, but the term *filioque* does not appear to have been interpolated into the Nicene Creed at this juncture. While the papacy generally remained reluctant to support the *filioque,* the term found a great champion in Charlemagne, who naturally also saw the political advantages of promoting a term he could use to argue for the heterodoxy of the Christian East. The term was generally appended to the Nicene Creed throughout Europe, with the notable exception of Rome, by the ninth or tenth century. This being said the Nicene Creed was not generally confessed in the mass throughout Europe until the tenth century and was still not in regular use in Rome to the surprise of the Emperor when he visited in 1014.[34]

The final term relevant to discussions of the Holy Trinity is *interpenetration* (περιχώρησις, *circumincessio*). The Greek term περιχώρησις was first used by John of Damascus.[35] It expresses the fact that each person has the one divine essence and that therefore the three persons are in one another and reciprocally interpenetrate and interpermeate each other.[36] This term is also employed in Lutheran thought in Christology, the Lord's Supper, and the mystical union.

The Nature of God and the Trinity

Systematically speaking, the subject of God has been customarily divided into two parts. The first part deals with the nature of God. The

second part deals with the Holy Trinity. The focus of this study is really not the former, but the latter. In order to discuss the Trinity, a brief summary of the nature of God as it pertains to the discussion of the Trinity shall be presented.

Theology is divided into two parts. There is natural theology and revealed theology. Natural theology is knowledge of God known by means of reason, independent of divine revelation. Although this knowledge was perfect before the fall, it has been corrupted by the fall. As a result, man knows that there is a God, there was a creation, there is something like sin, etc. This theology is what St. Paul is addressing in the first chapters of Romans. By means of this knowledge, men like Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and the majority of the ancient pagans recognized that there was a god.[37] This knowledge is approved by God as indicated by Romans 1-2, but it cannot show man the depths of his sin, reveal the Holy Trinity, nor proclaim the Gospel to him. Revealed theology is synonymous with sacred Scripture. This is a perfect knowledge that shows one the depths of his depravity, the true triune God, as well as the way of salvation.

Can God be defined? Some of the ancient pagans and philosophers attempted to make definitions of God, but most of them acknowledged the folly of doing so.[38] How can a God, who transcends all things, really be defined by His creation? So can God be defined? It may be better to ask if God can be comprehensively defined. The answer to this question is categorically "no."[39] However, God can be certainly described by what He reveals about Himself in Holy Scripture. This is evident in the maxim of Franz Pieper, "*Deus non definiri, sed ex verbo suo revelato describi potest.*"[40] In other words, the sacred Scriptures do not provide a comprehensive definition of God, because He is far beyond the intellect of man. This being said, what the sacred Scriptures teach about the Holy Trinity is absolutely and completely true, because God cannot lie. With this in mind, John of Damascus provides a definition of God.

> We, therefore, both know and confess that God is without beginning, without end, eternal and everlasting, uncreated, unchangeable, invariable, simple, uncompound, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribed, infinite, incognizable, indefinable, incomprehensible, good, just, maker of all things created, almighty, all-ruling, all-surveying, of all overseer, sovereign, judge; and that God is One, that is to say, one essence; and that He is known, and has His being in three subsistences, in Father,

> I say, and Son and Holy Spirit; and that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in all respects, except in that of not being begotten, that of being begotten, and that of procession; and that the Only-begotten Son and Word of God and God, in His bowels of mercy, for our salvation, by the good pleasure of God and the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, being conceived without seed, was born uncorruptedly of the Holy Virgin and Mother of God, Mary, by the Holy Spirit, and became of her perfect Man; and that the Same is at once perfect God and perfect Man, of two natures, Godhead and Manhood, and in two natures possessing intelligence, will and energy, and freedom, and, in a word, perfect according to the measure and proportion proper to each, at once to the divinity, I say, and to the humanity, yet to one composite person; and that He suffered hunger and thirst and weariness, and was crucified, and for three days submitted to the experience of death and burial, and ascended to heaven, from which also He came to us, and shall come again. And the Holy Scripture is witness to this and the whole choir of the Saints. But neither do we know, nor can we tell, what the essence of God is, or how it is in all, or how the Only-begotten Son and God, having emptied Himself, became Man of virgin blood, made by another law contrary to nature, or how He walked with dry feet upon the waters. It is not within our capacity, therefore, to say anything about God or even to think of Him, beyond the things which have been divinely revealed to us, whether by word or by manifestation, by the divine oracles at once of the Old Testament and of the New.[41]

One God in Three Persons

Based upon the sacred Scriptures the church has defined the Holy Trinity as three persons in divine being or essence (τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις καὶ μία οὐσία, *tres esse personas in una essentia*). In so doing, one must always maintain the unity of the Godhead as well as the distinction between the three persons. Some passages that support the one essence or being are the following: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4); "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30); and "Therefore concerning

the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one" (1 Corinthians 8:4). Some passages that speak to the three persons are the following: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26); "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalm 33:6); "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20); "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14); and "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father'" (Galatians 4:6). In addition, the prophet Isaiah's vision of the Thrice-Holy (Isaiah 6) and the prophet Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7) should not be overlooked. Theophanies such as those taking place at the Oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18), the Baptism of our Lord (Matthew 3), the Transfiguration of our Lord (Matthew 17), etc., should be noted as well.

When speaking about the unity of the Trinity, one must take caution not to speak improperly. Martin Chemnitz clarifies:

> Speaking to the unity of God one may say that there is one undifferentiated nature, one and the same substance, one single and undivided deity, one undifferentiated essence, and three coeternal and coequal persons. One may say that there are three persons of one substance and inseparable equality are one God. There is one deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; one equal glory, one coeternal majesty. In the Trinity nothing is first or last, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are coeternal and coequal with each other. Regarding the unity it would be incorrect to say that in essence He is singular. It would also be incorrect to say that there are three eternals or three uncreateds, three immeasureables, three almighties, three Gods, or three Lords. Likewise one dare never say that the essence is divided into the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit or that in the deity there is first and last, greater and lesser. Furthermore, one cannot say that in the deity there is inequality or any similar mode of speaking that

> imports a confusion of the persons or a separation of the essence.[42]

When speaking about the person of the Trinity, one must take caution not to speak improperly. Martin Chemnitz clarifies again:

> One may say that among the persons there is distinction, differing, or separation. It is correct to say the Father is different in person, or personally; the Father has begotten another, namely, the Son; not, however another God but another person. One may say that God is Triune, not in essence, which is one and simple, but in persons. It is incorrect to say that among the persons there is diversity, division, or separation. Likewise one cannot say that God is threefold, the Father is another (of a different kind), the Father did beget another (of a different kind), or God begets God.[43]

The Ontological Trinity

The Ontological or Immanent Trinity is customarily defined with the Augustinian axiom: *opera Trinitatis ad intra divisa sunt,* i.e., "the internal works of the Trinity are divided." In his *Last Words of David*, Martin Luther explains, "If I do not ascribe to each Person within the Godhead, or outside and beyond creation, a special distinction not appropriate to the other two, then I have mingled the Persons into one Person. And that is…wrong. One must distinguish the Persons within the Godhead."[44] The Ontological Trinity refers to God-as-He-is-unto-Himself, i.e., God's works outside of creation and within Himself. These works are not common to each person, but are peculiar to only one person.[45] The basic idea goes back the Cappadocian Fathers, namely, what really distinguishes the persons from another is their relation to each other or their relations of origin. With this in mind, the ontological characteristic of the Father is that He is eternally *unbegotten* or the *begetter* (ἀγεννήτως) (Psalm 2:7, John 1:14, John 3:16, Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5). The characteristic of the Son is that He is eternally *begotten* (γεννήτως) (Psalm 2:7, John 3:16, Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5). Some have denied the Ontological Trinity by arguing that one of the *loci classici* for it, Psalm 2:7, is not referring to the external generation of the Son by the Father, but rather the Father's setting of Christ into His kingship in time or worse the setting of a mere human king. The latter would be excluded by the New Testament's attribution of

Psalm 2:7 to Christ (Cf. Acts 13:13). The problem with the former is that the verb יָלַד normally describes origin, not entry into office or adoption. Nevertheless, some have tried to refute this by arguing Psalm 2:7 should rather be understood as entry into an office or Christ's resurrection in light of 2 Samuel 7:14 or Acts 13:33. Yet, 2 Samuel does not use the term יָלַד. Furthermore, Georg Stöckhardt rightly argues,

> However, in Acts 13, beginning with verse 16, we find a sermon of Paul preached at Antioch of Pisidia. There he reminds the Jews of the benefits God bestowed upon them in the Old Testament covenant. He shows them that God who raised up David, and had given him the promise of the Son, had now sent the Son as the promised Messiah. The people of Jerusalem had crucified Him and condemned Him to death, but God raised Him from the dead. Paul then proceeds, verse, 32 f. "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again (anastoosas Ieesous)." He means to say, that God sent Jesus in fulfillment of His promises. Then he quotes, Psalm 2. Thereby the Apostle merely wants to show the nature of this Jesus, whom God once promised and now sent. This promised Savior is no other than God's Son, of whom the second Psalm speaks. It is not Paul's purpose here to prove that God raised Christ from the dead, for in verse 34 he proceeds: "And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead," and then points to David's testimony in Psalm 16. By this Paul proves His resurrection from the dead. It is very clear then from the former reference that Paul merely wants to show of what nature Christ is. If Psalm 2 already had the purpose of proving Christ's resurrection, then he would not have proceeded in verse 34: "And as concerning that He raised Him from the dead," etc., that is recorded in Psalm 16….The modernistic interpretation of Psalm 2:7 as "the begetting or birth into kingship" reveals very unclear thinking. When do you ever speak that way about a man who has been set into office and been made King? Psalm 2 does not say this either. When in the preceding verse, verse 6, Christ is called a King, it does not say in

> the following verse that it treats of this King. Moreover, what is strikingly evident is that the two terms Son and begotten, are correlative, one explaining the other. When we use the term "begotten," we think of a child, a son or daughter as having been begotten, but never of a king as having been begotten into kingship. The plain fact is that with clear words the eternal generation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is taught here (Psalm 2:7). The Psalmist introduces this eternal Son as the Speaker, saying: "I will tell what is decreed: The Lord hath said unto Me," etc. Here the eternal Son reveals what the "Lord," God the Father has said unto Him. He calls it a decree, an ordinance, a statute, a dogma. Christ, God's Son, born of the Father from eternity – that is the eternal dogma of the true religion. From the beginning the earthly great and wise have opposed and contradicted this dogma. To be man, a son of David, and yet to be born from eternity is absurd to human reason. Within the very pale of the visible church this dogma has been assailed by the theologians. Think of the Arian controversy! Later this dogma became the target of rationalism. Over against this teaching of Scripture it was taught that Christ is a mere man, but a model teacher. All the native critics ridicule this dogma: "Christ, God's Son, born from the essence of the Father."[46]

In this connection, it should be also noted that יום can be used to express *eternity*, as evident in Isaiah 43:13 and Psalm 90:4. Even if Psalm 2:7 does not refer to the eternal generation of the Father from the Son, this dogma is firmly grounded in John 1:14 and John 3:16.[47]

The characteristic of the Holy Spirit is that He eternally *proceeds* (ἐκπορεύτως) from the Father and the Son (John 15:26). Some exegetics have also tried to deny the Ontological Trinity by arguing that John 15:26 does not refer to the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. However, R. C. H. Lenski rightly argues,

> Some commentators claim that the second relative clause, "who proceeds from the Father," denotes the procession of the Spirit from the Father *in time*, i.e., his coming for his mission at Pentecost, and has nothing to do with the Spirit's inner-Trinitarian relation to the Father, his proceeding from

> the Father in eternity. This claim overlooks the climax in the three statements regarding the Spirit: Jesus will send him — he is the Spirit of truth — he proceeds from the Father. These three, piled the one on the other, reveal the greatness, the absolute competence of the Paraclete who is to stand at the side of the disciples in their battle with a hating world. This claim ignores the separation of the two relative clauses by means of an apposition, "the Spirit of the truth." If the two relative clauses refer to Pentecost, why this separation? Again, why the second clause when Jesus already in the first says what the second would repeat with a tautology, namely, the Spirit sent from the Father comes from the Father? Finally, why the change in tense: "I will send — he proceeds"? It is assuming a great deal to claim that the present tense "receives its modification" from the preceding future tense, in plain language, that "he proceeds" means, "he will proceed." Moreover, Jesus himself shuts out such a modification by placing the appositive between the relative clauses. "Whom I shall send" refers to Pentecost; "who proceeds from the Father" does *not.*[48]

The ontological Trinity has been further categorized as follows in Lutheran theology. Note also that these designations do not define the substance of God, since each person is not begotten, nor are these spoken of God according to accident, because God is immutable: The *personal acts* (*actus personales*) are two, namely, *generation* (*generatio*) and *spiration* (*spiratio*). The *personal relations* (*relatio personalis*) are as follows: The Father relates to the Son by His *active generation* (*generatio activa*) and to the Spirit by His *active spiration* (*spiratio activa*). The Son relates to the Father by His *passive generation* (*generatio passiva*) and to the Spirit by His *active spiration* (*spiratio activa*). The Spirit relates to the both the Father and the Son by His *passive spiration* (*spiratio passiva*) from both. The generation of the Son and the spiration of the Spirit are certainly different. However, how they are different, man is not able to define. The *personal properties* (*proprietates personales*) are as follows: the Father is *paternitas*, the Son is *filiatio*, and the Spirit *processio*. The five *personal concepts* (*notiones personales*) are as follows: The Father is *innascibilitas et improcessibilitas*. The Son is *nascibilitas sive generatio passive talis*. The Holy Spirit is *processio sive spiratio passiva*. These

terms and designations maintain the distinctions of the persons and prevent confusion of the persons.[49]

In sum, the classical Augustinian distinction between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity are vital to a proper biblical understanding of the Trinity. First of all, there is exegetical warrant for an ontological Trinity, which in truth, is ontologically triune and distinct from the economic Trinity. Second, this distinction combats Sabellianism by affirming that God is not an ontological monad or something/s else, who merely reveals Himself in three modes or worse a deity with a multiple-personality disorder.[50] Third, this distinction reaffirms that God's economic acts of creation, redemption, and sanctification were a sheer acts of grace, not some necessity on God's part or a necessary part of achieving self-actualization for Himself. Fourth, the distinction provides further support for the mystery of God or the concept of the hidden God. Similarly, it maintains the fact that the ontological Trinity is not some theoretical or philosophical abstraction as well as the fact that everything which man knows about God-as-He-is-unto-Himself can only be revealed to him by divine revelation, i.e., the sacred Scriptures.

The Economic Trinity

The economic Trinity is customarily defined by the Augustinian axiom: *opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt,* that is, "the external works of the Trinity are undivided."[51] In his *Last Words of David*, Martin Luther writes,

> If I ascribe to each Person a distinct external work in creation and exclude the other two Persons from this, then I have divided the one God-head and have fashioned three gods or creators. And that is wrong….One must not separate the Persons with regard to the works and ascribe to each its distinct external work; but one must…ascribe externally each work to all three with out distinction.[52]

The economic Trinity refers to God-as-He-is-unto-us, i.e., each person of the Godhead works in harmony with each other in all that God accomplishes in creation. How are all three persons undivided in their external works? With an illustration attributed to Bonaventure, Luther explains how this can be so.

> If, for example, three young women would take a dress and put it on one of their number and this one would also take part in clothing herself with this dress, then one could say that all three were dressing her; and yet only one is being attired in the dress and not the other two. Similarly we must understand here that all three Persons, as one God, created the one humanity, clothed the Son in this, and united it with His person, so that only the Son became man, and not the Father or the Holy Spirit. In the same way we should think also of the dove which the Person of the Holy Spirit adopted and of the voice which the Person of the Father adopted; also the fiery tongues on the Day of Pentecost, in which the Person of the Holy Spirit was revealed; also the wind and whatever else is preached in Christendom or in Holy Scripture about the operation of the Holy Spirit.[53]

The works of the economic Trinity are according to Martin Chemnitz considered in a twofold manner:

> Therefore the external works, as our great Martin Luther sets forth, should be considered in a twofold sense. First, in the *absolute sense*, and thus without distinction, they are and are described as the works of the three person in common. Second, in a *relative sense*, when they are considered as to the origin in which the persons act, [we must consider] what the properties of each person are and what each person does in an immediate sense.[54]

In the absolute sense, the sacred Scriptures demonstrate that all three persons are active in creation (Genesis 1:1-3, Psalm 33:6, 104:30, Job 33:4, John 1:1-3), redemption (Matthew 1:18, John 3:16, Galatians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19), and sanctification (John 14:16-26, Acts 2:33, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:30). In the relative sense, the sacred Scriptures assign creation and preservation to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Bible also confirms this relative understanding of the economic Trinity in Romans 11:36 where it distinguishes the persons in the economic Trinity by the prepositions ἐξ (Father), διά (Son), and εἰς (Holy Spirit) (Ephesians 2:18). In short, the *opera ad extra* are common to the three persons, but in such a way that the

distinctions and properties of the persons are not confounded.

The Deity of the Persons

In church history, the deity of the God the Father was never questioned. It was firmly established in many passages such as John 6:45-46, John 8:54, John 20:17, Romans 1:7, and 2 Corinthians 1:3. In one the best examples, St. Paul writes, "Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Corinthians 8:6). Conversely, the deity of God the Son and God the Spirit have been at issue and are still questioned. The first two ecumenical councils were called to examine both the deity of God the Son and God the Spirit. The deity of Christ is confirmed by the following: Divine names are attributed to Him: John 1:1-3 (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος), John 20:28 (Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου), Philippians 2:11, and 1 John 5:20 (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος). Divine attributes are ascribed to Him: Colossians 1:17 (eternal), Matthew 28:20 (omnipresent), John 2:25 (omniscient), and Matthew 28:18 (omnipotent). Divine works are accomplished by Him: John 1:3 (creation), Colossians 1:17 (preservation), and John 5:21, 28-29 (resurrection of the dead). Divine worship is attributed to Him: Philippians 2:10, John 5:23, and John 14:1. As the deity of the Son was disputed, the deity of the Spirit naturally also came under scrutiny. Passages that prove the deity of the Spirit are the following: Divine names are attributed to Him: Acts 5:2–4 (οὐκ ἐψεύσω ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ) and 2 Corinthians 3:17 (ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν). Divine attributes are ascribed to Him: Psalm 139:7 (omnipresence) and 1 Corinthians 2:10 (omniscience). The divine works are accomplished by Him: Job 33:4 (creation) and Acts 20:28 (the leading of the church and establishing of its clergy).

The Filioque

Even though the *filioque* was not a contentious subject among the Western Confessions, it was a subject of great and often heated debate between Western and Eastern Christendom. As Lutherans began to articulate their catholicity over against Roman Catholicism, they increasingly defended their case by arguing their doctrine and practice where generally in harmony with Greek Orthodoxy, where they were not in harmony with Roman Catholicism.[55] In the midst of the sixteenth

century, it happened that opportunities arose whereby Lutherans could put their thesis to the test. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Joasaph II, sent Deacon Demetrios Mysos to live six months with Philipp Melanchthon so as to learn more about Lutheranism. In response, Melanchthon sent a cordial letter to the Patriarch and seems to have made a Greek translation of the *Augsburg Confession* with Mysos' assistance. (This translation does not seem to be based on the 1531 *editio princes*). It appears that Mysos was supposed to bring a translation of the *Augsburg Confession* to the Patriarch, but he did not return to Constantinople.[56] Fourteen years later, the Tübingen theological faculty led by Jacob Andreä renewed contact with the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II and initiated a dialogue that took place between 1574–1582. At the very same time the *Book of Concord* was being codified, the Lutheran faculty of Tübingen, led by one the chief authors of the *Book of Concord*, was working to establish cordial relations between Greek Orthodoxy and Lutheranism. In 1583 the *Scripta Theologorum Wirtembergensium, et Patriarchae Constantinopolitani D. Hieremiae* was published, which contained all the proceeds of this extensive dialogue. The debate centered on the *Augsburg Confession*, apparently using Melanchthon's Greek edition. There was much agreement and disagreement. One of the major points of disagreement was the *filioque*.[57]

While this dialogue ended all formal discussions between Lutheranism and Greek Orthodoxy in the 16-17th centuries, Lutherans still did not stop asserting a special kinship with Greek Orthodoxy nor refrain from addressing the gaps. Naturally then, Lutherans kept trying to show the orthodoxy of the *filioque*.[58] The issue at stake was not whether the Spirit was sent through the Son in the economy or in time, but did the Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son ontologically or eternally as one principal.[59] Lutherans such as Johann Quenstedt did not think one could simply cite a passage to prove the *filioque*, but believed it was a valid and legitimate inference from Scripture.[60] With this in mind, according to Bruce Marshall the Lutheran arguments for the *filioque* can be boiled down to three major sorts.[61] The first kind of argument is inferred from passages that speak of the Holy Spirit as *the Spirit of Christ* such as Romans 8:9, Galatians 4:7, Philippians 1:19, and 1 Peter 1:11. The argument is, "Since scripture speaks of the Spirit's relationship to the Son in the same way as it does his relationship to the Father, with genitives insinuating belonging, the Spirit must originate by procession from the Son."[62] The argument, it should be noted, assumes Thomas Aquinas' premise that for the persons of the Holy Trinity to be ontologically distinguished a *relations oppositae* is also necessary. The second kind of argument is inferred from passages

that speak of Christ as Sender of the Holy Spirit such as John 15:26, John 16:7, and John 20:22. The argument is,

> In order for one person to send another, the sender must have some power or right of sending with respect to the person who gets sent….The procession of the capacity must therefore be based on some characteristic which distinguishes those who have it from those who do not, but without any inequality.[63]

The third kind of argument is inferred from what the Spirit receives from the Son such as John 16:13-15, which the Lutherans thought was the clearest passage on the *filioque* as well as a clear passage the affirmed the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son. The basic argument is,

> If the Spirit "takes" from the Son (John 16:14-15) and "hears" from the Son (John 16:13: "He will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears"), in order to declare to the church what he has taken and heard, this ultimately has to mean, Luther argues, that he receive the divine essence itself from the Son, and so proceeds from the Son.[64]

Objections could be made to all these arguments, but the Lutherans fathers were indeed ready to meet these objections. This being said, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide all their rebuttals.

Tritheism and Monarchianism

Tritheism is the antithesis of Monarchianism. It is the overstress of the distinction of the persons to the detriment of the unity of God. The net result is that three persons in one God become three gods. Tritheism has no historical school as such. However, the accusation of tritheism arises again and again in church history as something that scripturally speaking should be avoided. For example, Roscellinus, one the teachers of Peter Abelard, was accused of tritheism at the Council at Soissons in 1092. The accusation was based on the fact that he was a true Nominalist and not what would later become known as Conceptualism. If Nominalism denied the real existence of universals, how could there be such thing as one divine essence or substance? How could Christ, moreover, assume such a thing as a human nature, take the place of all people by means of such as

things as a human nature, or make an atonement that really had value for all mankind if universals did not exist?

There are two different kinds of Monarchianism: Modalistic Monarchianism and Dynamic Monarchianism. Modalistic Monarchianism is the more important of the two and is attributed to Noëtus of Smyrna. He came to Rome after being expelled from the Smyrnaean Church for teaching that Christ was the Father and that Father became incarnate in addition to dying on the cross. This teaching that the Father suffered and died is known in church history as patripassianism. A more refined version of Modalism was taught by Sabellius. Hence, Modalistic Monarchianism is often referred to as Sabellianism. Sabellius taught that the Godhead is ontologically one, but manifests Himself economically in three roles or modes, namely, creator, redeemer, and sanctifier.[65] In religious art, the picture of three faces or masks united as one or blended together has been associated with this error.

Dynamic Monarchianism or Adoptionist Monarchianism originated with Theodotus, a tanner from Byzantium. Theodotus taught that Christ was only a man on whom the divine δύναμις descended upon at His baptism. Like Modalistic Monachianism, this view maintained a strict monotheism or monarchy of God. Unlike Modalistic Monachianism, it accomplished it via subordinationism, i.e., the teaching that the Son and Spirit were merely a δύναμις that emanated from a unipersonal God. In Syria, Paul of Samosata taught a similar version of Dynamic Monarchianism.[66]

Trinity in the Old Testament

The church has often admitted the Holy Trinity is not as evident in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament.[67] 16th- and 17th-century Lutheranism generally affirmed that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is taught by the Old Testament.[68] Furthermore, the Lutheran Fathers have generally also taught that the Holy Trinity had to be believed by the Old Testament believers in order to be saved.[69] Even in modern times, J. P. Meyer of the Wisconsin Synod wrote, "While we readily grant that the Old Testament references are 'more obscure,' relatively dim by comparison with the brightness of the New Testament passages, yet we cannot concede that the Jews did not know or believe in a triune God."[70]

The Lutheran conception of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament was typically supported as follows: Passages that speak to the plurality in God in the Old Testament are Genesis 1:26, 3:22, Exodus 16:7, Numbers 14:21, Psalm 45:8, 110:1, Jeremiah 23:5-6, 33:15-16, and Micah 5:1. In

this connection, it was usually suggested that *Elohim* implies a plurality in a unity. Passages that support the Trinity in the Old Testament are Genesis 1:1-2, Genesis 18-19, Numbers 6:24-26, 2 Samuel 23:2, Psalm 33:6, Isaiah 6:3, 42:1, 61:1, and 63:9-10. Perhaps one might be surprised to see Genesis 18-19 on this list. Even though modern Lutheranism generally understands Abraham's three visitors at the Oaks of Mamre as Christ and two angels, Augustine and Luther argued the three visitors should be understood as a theophany of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament.[71] The strongest argument for this interpretation is Genesis 19:18-19. Lot said to the two, "No, my lords, please! Your servant (עַבְדְּךָ) has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die" (Genesis 19:18-19). Note that he addresses the two at the same time as *one* by referring to himself as "your servant," i.e., by means of adding a second person *singular* suffix to the noun "servant." There are two main objections to this exegesis. The first is that the two are referred to as מַלְאָךְ, which means *angel.* However, the term literally means *messenger* and is often understood as Christ when encountered as מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה. The second objection is that the Father never depicts Himself in the Old Testament. But this is tantamount to letting a dogmatic presupposition run roughshod over one's exegesis. If this presupposition is true, then who is the Ancient of Days depicted opposite the Son of Man in Daniel 7? If this dogmatic presupposition were true, then Western religious iconography has committed a grave error in depicting God the Father as the grey-bearded Ancient of Days (e.g., Albrecht Durer's famous *Adoration of the Trinity*).[72]

The Holy Trinity and Worship

The economic Trinity also has liturgical implications. If the works of the persons of the Holy Trinity are undivided in the economy, then they are also undivided in the Divine Liturgy. In the sacramental portions of the liturgy, grace comes *from* (ἐξ) the Father, *through* (διά) the Son, and *in* (εἰς) the Holy Spirit by the means of grace (Romans 11:36). In the sacrificial portions of Divine Liturgy, the faithful offer their prayers, praises, and themselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) *in* (ἐν) the Holy Spirit, *through* (διά) the Son, and *to* (πρός) the Father (Ephesians 2:18). The Lutherans as confessional adherents of the Western liturgy, including its system of propers, historically maintained this biblical direction of prayer.[73] For example, the historic collect for Easter reads,

> Almighty God, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You have overcome death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech You, that, as You put in our minds good desires, so by Your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.[74]

This being said, Martin Luther and the dogmaticians also point out that sometimes the church has not always fully maintained the biblical direction of prayer emphasis because of passages like John 14:9. Martin Chemnitz explains.

> The church in its worship sometimes makes specific mention of the three persons, sometimes of two, and sometimes of one; and yet always it directs its prayers to the one true divine essence and at the same time to all the persons. For with respect to us the three persons are at the same time and each individually the one, true, undivided God, so that when the dove descended, one can correctly say that this is the one true God and beyond Him there is no other God, as it says in John 14:9, "He who sees Me, sees My Father also." And again in v. 10, "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." On this basis we can understand how the church directs its prayers sometimes to the Father, sometimes to the Son, and sometimes to the Holy Spirit. For it believes and confesses in its prayers not only that the three persons are the one true God, but that each person is not just a part of that one divine essence but rather is the entire divine essence, that is, the one true God, than whom there is no other God. For he who invokes one person above or beyond the others, as if that person were separate or individual, errs from the true God, as it is said in John 5:23, and John 8:54–55b. This is the point which has been made by our revered father and preceptor Dr. Martin Luther, *De Ult. Verb. Davidis*, Vol. 8, Jena ed. [Amer. Ed. 15.302–03]. The persons are distinguished not only by internal differences, such as that one begets, another is begotten, the third proceeds, but also by external differences which have been noted

> particularly by reason of revelation and beneficial actions toward the church, as is evident in the definition of each person. For in the external works (*opera ad extra*) the three persons are together and work together, and yet with a certain order and with the properties of each person preserved, as Augustine says in *Contra Felicianum*, 10 [MPL 42.1164]. Note 1 Cor. 15:57. The fathers often used the statement of Paul in Rom. 11:36, "For of Him and through Him and in Him are all things; to whom be glory and honor." For because the apostle is speaking of external works, he mentions the one eternal essence, "To Him be honor," not "to them." And yet, just as there is one essence without confusion of the persons, so this essence performs the external works in common for the three persons without confusion, but hints at the difference of the persons—"of Him, in Him, and through Him."[75]

Martin Chemnitz is by no means suggesting that Lutherans have at times sanctioned a confusion of the persons of the Trinity. Rather, he is acknowledging that the Bible does not rigidly maintain its teaching on the direction of prayer at all times, provided that the persons are not confused. Chemnitz goes on to say, "Yet always it (church) directs its prayers to the one true divine essence and at the same time to all the persons…. For he who invokes one person above or beyond the others, as if that person were separate or individual, errs from the true God, as it is said in John 5:23, and John 8:54–55b."

Can one pray so-called "Jesus prayers" or prayers that do not formally make use of the biblical direction of prayer? The answer to this question as Martin Chemnitz indicates is "yes" provided the persons of the Trinity are not confused. Is it wise to neglect consistently the biblical direction of prayer especially at a time when Modalism seems to be running rampant in the church? The answer is likewise "no." For this reason, the biblical direction of prayer should be reemphasized in Christendom today.

Fundamental Doctrine

Lutheranism asserts that the Holy Trinity is a fundamental doctrine that must be believed in order to be saved. Johann Gerhard clarifies this point by stating that not only a denial, but even the ignorance of the Trinity

is damning. This being said, he recognizes there are different levels of knowledge about the Trinity among the faithful that still are saving. While Gerhard affirms that our knowledge of the Trinity is not perfect and full in this life, he firmly maintains that the believer worships one God in three persons and three persons in one God without confusing the persons or dividing the divine substance to be saved.[76]

Is the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity relevant? By all means! The Apostle Paul writes, "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). Our Lord Himself states, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). May we then as Confessional Lutherans redouble our efforts not only to study what Martin Luther calls *den höchsten Artikel unsers Glaubens*, i.e., the Holy Trinity, but also to convey the relevance of this most beautiful of doctrine in our preaching, teaching, and faith-lives.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum.

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Endnotes

[1] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity,* trans. J. Jonceel (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 10–11.
[2] A good overview of the recent literature on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity that has informed this brief survey of recent literature is: John T. Pless, *Tracking the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Fort Wayne: 27th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions, 2004).
[3] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 738ff.
[4] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1/1, trans. G. T. Thomson and G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956–1975), 301, 412ff.
[5] Wilhelm Pauck, *Karl Barth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1931), 189-190.
[6] Rahner, *The Trinity,* 21–22.
[7] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 144–148, 160.
[8] Ibid., 165.
[9] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads Publishing House, 1992).
[10] Cited in Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 686.
[11] David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, Series in Pentecostal Theology, no. 1 (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame Press, 1986), Chapter 6.
[12] Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).
[13] *Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche.* 11th ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992; Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 23–25. All subsequent references to various confessions contained in the Book of Concord will be cited in the standard manner and using the abbreviations found on xi–xii of Kolb/Wengert.
[14] Martin Luther calls the Holy Trinity "the highest article of our Christian faith" in *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften*, vol. 13, ed. John. Georg Walch, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1880–1910), 664 (hereafter Luther, W², 664); The Ap and FC refer to justification as "the highest and most principal article of all Christian doctrine." Cf. Ap, 4; FC, SD, 3, 6.
[15] Philip Schaff, ed., *A Selected Library of the Christian Church: Nicene*

and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3, First Series (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995), 19. Hereafter cited as Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 1:2 (NPNF[1], 3:19).

[16] Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici,* vol. 1, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 70–71.

[17] Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995), 101. Hereafter cited as Theopilus, *Theophilus to Autolycus*, 2:15 (ANF, 2:101); Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 2 (ANF, 3:598); Cyprian, *Lord's Prayer*, 34 (ANF, 5:456); Alexander Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin To 600 A.D.,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 430.

[18] Luther, W², 13:2691–2692; Martin Luther, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther,* vol. 7, ed. John Nicholas Lenker (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 304–305; Luther, W², 23:371–372.

[19] Luther, W², 11: 1146ff; Luther, *The Complete*, 2.1:406ff; Luther, W², 13:2109; Luther, *The Complete*, 6:206; Luther, W²; 12:628; Luther, *The Complete,* 4.2:7–8.

[20] Cited in Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs, 3rd ed., (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1899), 142–143.

[21] William Arndt and F. Wilbert Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 596.

[22] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 2:6 (ANF, 9:328ff); Origen, *Commentary on John*, 10:21 (ANF, 9:402).

[23] Cited in Schmid, *The Doctrinal*, 141–142.

[24] Schmid, *The Doctrinal*, 144.

[25] Arndt, *A Greek*, 847.

[26] Muller, Richard A., *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 223, 307–308; Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 2 (ANF, 3:598); Souter, *Glossary*, 299.

[27] Cited in Schmid, *The Doctrinal*, 146.

[28] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1947), 63–64; Johann Andreas Quenstedt, *Theologia didactico-polemica, sive systema theologicum*, par. 1 (Wittenberg: Litteris Matthaei Henckelii, 1685), 293; Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 431.

[29] Athanasius, *De Decret. Syn. Nic*, 19 (NPNF², 14:4).
[30] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition A History of the Development of Doctrine,* vol. 1*, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 202, 209.
[31] Maximus the Confessor, *The Disputation with Pyrrhus of our Father among the Saints Maximus the Confessor* (n.p.: n.d.), 5–6; Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 233–240.
[32] Cited in Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures*, 236; Cf. also the council's *Definition of Faith* in NPNF², 14:345–346.
[33] Hilary, *On the Trinity*, 2:9 (NPNF², 9:60); Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 4:20 (NPNF¹, 3:83ff.).
[34] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (Burnt Mill: Longman, 1972), 358ff; Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development,* vol. 1, trans. Francis A. Brunner (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1950), 460–470.
[35] John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, 4:18 (NPNF², 9:91).
[36] Pieper, *Christian*, 1:415.
[37] Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series, no. 71 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 1161–1162.
[38] Plato, *The Collected*, 929.
[39] From the Latin root, *definire*, meaning to bound or to end.
[40] Pieper, *Christian*, 1:438.
[41] John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, 1:2 (NPNF², 9:1–2).
[42] Chemnitz, *Loci*, 1:77.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 15, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955–1986), 302. Hereafter cited as Luther, LW, 15:302.
[45] Chemnitz, *Loci*, 1:74.
[46] George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Selected Psalms* (Lake Mills: Graphic Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), 22–24.
[47] R. C. H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publications, 1998), 77ff.
[48] Ibid., 1069.
[49] Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces: Exegesis, or A more Copious explanation of Certain Articles of the Christian Religion (1625) On the Nature of God and the On the Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity*, trans. Richard J. Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007),

324. Note that this is translation of Gerhard's 1625 Exegesis, which was intended as a supplement to his original *Loci Theologici*; David Hollatz, *Examen theologicum acromaticum*, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971), 406–408; Christian Löber, *Evangelisch-Lutherische Dogmatik* (St. Louis: Verlag von Fr. Dette, 1872), 201, 204, 205.

[50] Chemnitz, *Loci*, 1:74.

[51] Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 2:5 (NPNF[1], 3:41).

[52] Luther, LW, 15:302.

[53] Ibid., 305–306.

[54] Chemnitz, *Loci*, 1:76.

[55] Luther appealed to the Greek Church in his debates with Eck. The Greek Church is cited six times in Ap, two times in SA, and once in FC. The Greek Fathers and Ecumenical Councils are cited throughout the *Book of Concord*.

[56] George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession,* The Archbishop Iakonos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Studies, no. 7 (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982), 8–10, 17–19.

[57] Ibid., 12–17.

[58] The Electoral Saxon *Consensus Repetitus* appears to be willing to assert that the Church of the Augsburg Confession and Greek Orthodox are Christian against the Syncretists, but that Roman Catholicism and Calvinism were not. Cf. *Consilia Theologica Witebergensia,* par. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Wusts, 1664), 968–969. In 1663, Johann Dannhauer published a 320-page tome on the *filioque* titled *Stylus vindex aeternae Spiritus S. a Patre Filioque processionis, internae immanentis, avita religione hactenus creditae ac necessario credendae, nudius tertius in dubium vocatae et negatae.*

[59] According to Augustine, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son because both act as co-principle for the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Father, moreover, is understood as the *principium non de principio* (origin not from origin) or underived source and the Son is the *principium de principio* (origin from origin) or derived source. Cf. Augustine, *Conl. Max*, 2.17.4; Augustine, *On the Trinity,* 15:17 (NPNF[1], 3:216); Augustine, *On the Trinity,* 15:27 (NPNF[1], 3:225ff).

[60] Quenstedt, *Theologia*, 1:402.

[61] These arguments are summarized by Bruce D. Marshall in his "The Defense of the *Filioque* in Classical Lutheran Theology: An Ecumenical Ap-

preciation," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 44: 154–173.
[62] Ibid., 158, 160–1.
[63] Ibid., 164.
[64] Ibid., 170.
[65] Williston Walker, et. al., *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 84–86.
[66] Walker, *A History,* 84–86; Pieper, *Christian*, 1:383.
[67] Luther, *The Complete*, 7:300, 305.
[68] Luther, LW, 15:276–279; Gerhard, *On the Nature*, 271; Quenstedt, *Theologia*, 1:354–356; Hollatz, *Examen*, 1:503; Löber, *Dogmatik*, 186–187.
[69] Gerhard, *On the Nature*, 271; Abraham Calov, *Systema Locorum Theologicorum,* vol. 3 (Wittenberg: Hartmann and Wilckius, 1655–1677), 150–151; Quenstedt, *Theologia*, 1:354–356; Hollatz, *Examen*, 1:503; Löber, *Dogmatik*, 186–187; Cf. also Luther, LW, 2:228; Luther, *The Complete*, 300–301, 305.
[70] Lyle Lange, ed., *Our Great Heritage,* vol. 1 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991), 533.
[71] Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 2:11–12 (NPNF[1], 3:47–48); Luther, LW, 3:177, 190–195, 219, 245.
[72] John of Damascus, *On Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack Divine Images,* trans. David Anderson (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).
[73] CA, 24; In addition, Philipp Melanchthon agrees that prayers ought to be directed to the Father for the sake of Christ in his 1543 *Loci Communes.* Cf. Chemnitz, *Loci*, 1:49.
[74] *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (St. Louis: MorningStar Music Publishers, Inc., 1996), 155.
[75] Chemnitz, *Loci*, 1:75–76.
[76] *Athansian Creed*; Gerhard, *On the Nature*, 267ff; Calov, *Systema,* 3:149–150. Cf. also Luther, *The Complete*, 7:300ff.

A Brief Summary of Instruction in Homiletics and Pastoral Theology

by Reinhold Pieper[1]
Translated by Wilbert H. Werling[2]

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). So the apostle writes to the Corinthians, and gives the criterion according to which every pastor judges himself, and by which he should be judged by others, namely, faithfulness in his office. No more, but also no less is required. No vast scholarship, no sparkling eloquence, no other special gifts are demanded. He must, of course, have such a degree of knowledge as is needed to carry out the demands of his office. He should, for instance, have such a command of the language in which he preaches that he does not make crude blunders. This would divert the attention of the hearers from the proclamation of the truth, so that the Word fails to strike heart and conscience.[3]

If one has this kind of knowledge then he does not need any special learning, not even knowledge of the ancient languages, for a practical and blessed pastorate. If these were the indispensable requisites, how many pastors would then be really qualified? A wide range of learning is to be highly prized, particularly when it is faithfully used to attain the aim and purpose of one's office. If, however, those who have, or seem to have, this knowledge, look down upon those who were not able to acquire it, then their studies have a withering influence upon them, and confirmed the saying:

Hebrew roots, we understand,
Thrive the best on arid sand.

A pastor may possess a most extensive and scholarly knowledge, and yet be a rather beggarly preacher, and have only a moderate, or even no blessing on his work. This will be the case if he does not have the qualification of faithfulness, which Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 ("our sufficiency is of God") designates as indispensable.

"What could this faithfulness be?" asks Luther, and answers: "What advantage is it, or of what use is it, if a bishop were so great that he had charge of all dioceses, as the pope presumes? Of what avail is it if he were so holy that his shadow could raise the dead? Of what good is it if he

were as wise as were all the apostles and prophets? This is of no concern here. But to be faithful, to give the Word of God to the people, to preach the Gospel and share the mysteries of God, that, that is the great concern. That benefits everyone; everyone is profited. Therefore before all things faithfulness is to be sought and required in stewards."[4] …

Foremost in the question of faithfulness is the careful and conscientious preparation of every sermon. In one of his lectures, Dr. Walther once remarked, "A pastor who does not use every free hour for the preparation of his sermon, is unfaithful in his office." And so it is. To be sure, all power to rescue sinners lies indeed in the Word (Romans 1:16-17). No scholarship, no eloquence, and the like, of the preacher can make it more powerful than it is, but the mysteries of the Gospel are so deep and unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8 – "the unsearchable riches of Christ"), and all powers of even the most capable preacher so insignificant, that he must exhort himself to the utmost to unlock and proclaim the divine mysteries to the welfare of his hearers.

I repeat: The saving power lies alone in the Word, but a careless, lazy preacher preaches out of the church those he desires to win. His sermon should be the net with which he catches the fish; instead it is a scarecrow that drives them away. It would be more beneficial if he would remain silent. Since often careful preparation is missing he preaches away from, rather than out of, the text. Instead of presenting and applying the divine truth contained in the text, he relates all kinds of little stories. Is that not offering strange fire before the Lord (Leviticus 10:1-2)?

Faithfulness in office, furthermore, demands that the Word, Law and Gospel, be correctly proclaimed. I shall not speak here of the fact that both must be proclaimed unadulterated, the former in all its severity, the latter in its entire fullness. Rather, I state how, and to what purpose, both should be done by the preacher. Preach the Law in all its severity. Let lightning and thunder descend as from Mt. Sinai; reveal to your hearers the burning wrath of the holy God; let the flames of the fiery, bottomless pit rise up before them. Preach it, however, in fervent love to them in order to preserve them from it. Preach the Law in hatred towards sin, but in pitying love to sinners bought with the blood of the Son of God. Did you ever consider the words of the apostle Paul to his misled Galatians, "My little children, I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (4:19)? Do you feel some of the love and fears which Paul experienced for his Galatians? Do not be surprised if you sense but little love on the part of your hearers if love in your heart has grown cold toward them. Then do not blame them but blame yourself!

Would that we pastors would take to heart the Word of the apostle, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us" (2 Corinthians 5:20). We know it; we preach it: Christ for us – Christ in our stead. This truth cannot be proclaimed loud and clear enough, especially now, since it is rejected by so many theologians and ministers who empty the Gospel of its real content. Whoever does not proclaim this divine, saving truth is no ambassador for Christ but an emissary of the devil, a ravening wolf among the sheep of Christ. Woe unto him (Galatians 1:9: "if anyone preaches any other Gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed")!

Let us not forget that we are ambassadors for Christ, and are such only then when we constantly keep His example before us as we proclaim the good tidings. Let us ask ourselves, how would Christ preach if He were standing in the pulpit in our place? Did He ever preach in a mechanical fashion? Was he ever satisfied simply in delivering the sermon? Was He ever unconcerned whether or not His sermon produced fruit? Did He not always and everywhere seek the one thing – to rescue the lost (Matthew 8:11: "many come from the east and the west")? Were not all His words arrows, directed to the heart – cords of love with which He sought to draw sinners to Himself (Matthew 11:18)? Did not His heart throb constantly in saving love towards them? Why were His sermons so powerful, so much different from those of the Pharisees? Not only because of different content, but also because they were presented in a different way—whether He was unmasking the Pharisees and scribes, or whether the publicans and sinners were drawing nigh.

Are we earnestly striving to imitate Him? Do we preach, being fervent in spirit (Acts 18:25 – Apollos)? In the preparation of every sermon, do we have the one great, sublime goal vividly before our eyes—are we mindful of the entire responsibility of our task—that nothing less is at stake than the rescuing of lost souls, than their life and salvation? Do we realize that every time this involves calling sinners to repentance, shattering the breastplate of self-righteousness with the hammer of the Law, bringing the proud to bow before the cross of Christ, and rescuing immortal souls with our message?

Do we implore the Lord that He grant us His Holy Spirit, that He place His blessing upon our sermon "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel" (Ephesians 6:19)? Are we constrained by love to Christ, and by souls committed to our charge (2 Corinthians 5:14)? Should we not be wholeheartedly concerned to meet the challenge as ambassadors for

Christ, since we are called by Christ, sent by Him, through whom God makes His appeal, imploring in Christ's stead, "Be reconciled to God"? If this would come to pass then there would not be so many sleepy preachers standing in the pulpit, and not so many slumbering hearers sitting in the churches. Then in many expiring congregations a new life, a new stirring and striving would emerge. For, as the shepherd, so his flock (*Qualis rex, talis grex*).[5]

The required faithfulness of a steward over God's mysteries consists in a solemn earnestness and resolve not only against every false doctrine (2 John 10 "receive him not"; Galatians 1:8-9 "any other doctrine – accursed"), but also in uncovering and flaying sin, in striving against every kind of worldliness invading the church. Whoever does not demonstrate this earnestness and grows weary in this strife does not discharge the duties of his office faithfully. The apostle writes, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3). These are the times in which we live. Many find the wholesome, true doctrine intolerable, since it rebukes sin in those who continue therein. They demand pastors who are liberal, who make concessions, who do not rebuke so-called "Christians" when they mingle with the children of the world in theatres and similar places, grow intimate with, and ape the fashionable world. They want to have pastors held in high esteem by the semi-believing and unbelieving world—not old-fashioned preachers, but such as bring them prestige.

Often entertainment and amusement, not edification, are sought in congregations and churches. All kinds of societies are formed, entertainments and concerts are arranged to satisfy the desire for diversion. All kinds of diversion are offered to attract people. In this way it is hoped to fend off worldliness, but instead, doors and windows are opened wide through which it streams into the church. But what benefit is it if, having well entertained and amused themselves the trumpet then sounds, calling them before the judgment-seat of Him who suffered His hands and His feet to be pierced, not for their entertainment, but for the redemption of poor, penitent sinners! Bazaars and sales are arranged, intended for the upkeep and benefit of the church. In this way churches are downgraded to second-hand shops, similar to the temple at Jerusalem, when the moneychangers and sellers of doves carried on a profitable business under the guise of godliness. Is not this an attempt to court the favor and funds of the world?

For what purpose are congregations established and maintained,

churches built, and the Word proclaimed? Not in order to make room for entertainment, but to rescue sinners, to preserve souls bought with the blood of Christ from the flames of perdition. And what is the means through which this is accomplished? Not by lectures concerning everything imaginable; not in entertainment and theatre-like performances, but in the proclamation of the divine Word—and of the divine Word only. Will there really be many standing on the right hand on that great Day who are "kept" with the church through such means, who are thus kept from backsliding to the world? Are they not the ones to whom Revelation 3:15–16 applies ("I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth")? Pastors who do not oppose such a state of affairs with resolution may well consider if they are not the ones of whom Isaiah writes, "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (56:10). To gather large congregations, to build magnificent churches can often be possible without much trouble, especially if one is not particular about the means used. It is quite another thing to build the kingdom of God. This takes place solely through the Word, and only insofar as individual sinners are brought to faith. Whoever does not recognize this as the sole task of his office, and does not keep it before his mind's eye, preaches for this world and not for eternity. He has forgotten the truth that Christ's kingdom is a spiritual, eternal kingdom, and has forgotten the Word of the Lord: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

Our preaching should be timely.[6] That does not mean that one should "be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14), preaching the matter and the manner that is pleasing to the hearers, but rather preaching to their needs. Whoever preaches the former permits the hearers to put words into his mouth; whoever proclaims the latter preaches what comes from God. The sermon that is at all times timely reads thus: "Repent and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15)!

We find this faithfulness only in a pastor who is a "man of God." Certainly, a pastor should be an ordinary person, without pride and conceit in his congregation. He should be all things to all men, that he might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9:22). Lordly pride has ever been a snare by which the infernal fisher has caught many "divines," as church history informs us.[7] The pastor, however, should be a "man of God," and as such should follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, and fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:11-12).

If he is not a man of God, but a man of the world—if in spite

of all his unctious talk the man of the world peeks out from under his ministerial robe,[8] then it is a special wonder of God's grace if a single sinner comes to a proper understanding through him. According to the exhortation of the apostle (1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7 "a pattern of good works"), the pastor should be an example to all, in everything, in every way, so that the gainsayer can speak no evil about him. If he cannot be an example he is despised even by the world. Someone once was asked, "Do you attend services at the church near your home?" "No." "Why not?" "Well, the pastor who serves there plays cards." "But you yourself like to play cards." "That is true, but the pastor in whom I am to have confidence must be better than I am." (Romans 14:15-16: "If your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love.") Such a one is a "religious" worldling, or a worldly "divine" in the pulpit speaking of spiritual, heavenly things! …

The harvest is great, but the laborers few. Let us pray the Lord of the harvest that He send laborers into His harvest. May He make faithful laborers of those He sends, so that they deliver His message properly, and seek nothing else than the rescue of sinners and the glory of His name![9]

Endnotes

[1] Editor's Note: Reinhold Pieper (March 2, 1850–April 3, 1920) was born at Carwitz, Pomerania, the son of the town mayor, August Pieper, and Bertha nee Lohff. After Reinhold and his older brother Julius came to America, his widowed mother and four younger brothers immigrated to this country and settled in Watertown, Wisconsin. His mother worked at Northwestern College and the boys attended the school. After completing his studies at Watertown, he entered Concordia Seminary at St. Louis, Missouri, graduating in 1876. His first call as pastor was at Wrightstown, Wisconsin, 1876–78, and later he served in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, 1878–91. Both congregations were members of the Wisconsin Synod. In 1891, he was called as professor of theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, and was president of the institution until 1914. He was called to his eternal home in heaven in 1920.

Reinhold's brother Franz Pieper (1852–1931) was the great dogmatician of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, professor at St. Louis from 1878–1931, and president of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod 1899–1911. His brother August Pieper (1857–1946) taught at the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod and is known for his Isaiah commentary. His brother Karl was editor of a newspaper and died at Menomonie, Wisconsin. His brother Anton was a pastor in the Wisconsin Synod serving most of his years in Newton, Wisconsin. His brother Julius was a miller. His sister Minnie (Wilhelmine), the oldest in the family, and his sister Bertha remained in Germany. His mother died in 1893.

Reinhold Pieper was the author of five volumes of sermons, a textbook on homiletics and three volumes of lectures on Luther's *Small Catechism*. Of special interest in his sermon books is his use of Old Testament texts. He probably made more use of Old Testament texts than any other writer in the Synodical Conference of his period. In these sermons he made a considerable use of biblical typology. An example of this is *Simson auf seiner Brautfahrt nach Thimnath ein Vorbild auf Christum* recorded in *Predigten über freie Texte*, Vol. II (Milwaukee: Germania Publishing Company, 1902), 231–241. For a summary of this sermon, see Gaylin Schmeling, "Sermon on Judges 14:1–9," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly,* Vol. 38:3 (September 1998): 186–192.

[2] Editor's Note: Wilbert H. Werling (January 26, 1907–January 16, 1990) attended Concordia Seminary at St. Louis, Missouri, graduating in 1930. During his time at the seminary, dogmatics was taught by Franz Pieper in German using only the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testa-

ment as textbooks, as Dr. Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics* was not yet written. Upon graduation Werling served as a missionary in China until he was forced to return to the United States due to tuberculosis in 1936. After serving a number of congregations in the Missouri Synod, he became a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1966. He served both St. Martin's Lutheran Church of Shawano, Wisconsin, and St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Clintonville from 1966–1973. In retirement, he served several congregations in Wisconsin and California. The Chico Lutheran Mission in Chico, California, was founded by him, where he served until his death in 1990. He is the grandfather of Jerome and Erik Gernander, who are pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod today, and of Amy (Gernander) Chandia, who was a volunteer lay assistant in the ELS Chile mission for several years.

[3] This may also be caused in other ways, e.g., by a monotonous, singsong delivery, through partial reading, and plagiary of the manuscript, etc. When once a plain, elderly, Christian lady heard a humdrum preacher, she said, "God be thanked that he is not our pastor; he sounds like an old street organ." Did she receive a blessing from the sermon? And as for a plagiarized use of a manuscript – such dishonesty in the pulpit takes away all devotion! When he was a young pastor, superintendent-general Buechsel served a country congregation in Pomerania, and was accustomed to partial reading of his manuscript. This could be observed especially by those seated in the choir loft. One Sunday, as he was again reading his sermon he heard a servant saying to his neighbor aside of him, "He's reading again." Later, said Buechsel, "I owe this servant many thanks."

[4] Erlangen Ausgabe 7:94; W^2 XII, 63.

[5] Literally, as the king (leader), so the flock (crowd).

[6] *Zeitgemäß*

[7] What complaints Gregory of Nazianzus raised against the worldly inclinations, the ambition, and pride of the bishops at the second general council of Constantinople in A.D. 381! And what about the councils at Ephesus in 431 and 449, and at Chalcedon in 451!

[8] C*horrock*

[9] This translation is from the foreword to *Occasional and Festival Sermons (Kasual und Festpredigten)* by Reinhold Pieper (Milwaukee: Germania Publishing Company, 1908), III-IX.

"Then We Can Gladly Climb on Their Shoulders" – Learning to Preach From Our [Norwegian] Lutheran Fathers

by Jerome T. Gernander

The stated assignment for this paper was: "What Guidelines and Instructions Do We Have Regarding Form and Style of Preaching From Our Lutheran Fathers?" Among our "Lutheran fathers" are Martin Luther, Johannes Bugenhagen, Martin Chemnitz, Jakob Andreae, Philip Nicolai, Johann Gerhard, Paul Gerhardt, Erdmann Neumeister, Thomas Kingo, Hans Brorson, Henry M. Muhlenberg, Wilhelm Loehe, C.F.W. Walther, Charles Porterfield Krauth, John Bading, George Stoeckhardt, and more, including many preachers unknown and unnoticed by us but highly honored in their day. Also there are those before Luther's time who preached the "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5) and are true fathers to us: St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Alexandria, the Venerable Bede, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, to name a few.

This would provide a huge field to plow. In this paper I have made a narrower choice. Ironically, in our Evangelical Lutheran Synod our closest "fathers" are the ones we do not know very well: particularly the three great leaders of the Norwegian Synod (Ulrik Vilhelm Koren, Jakob Aal Ottesen and Herman Amberg Preus) and those who came after them. Especially it is true that we hardly know them as preachers, if at all.

In this paper we will come to know them a little as preachers. "Form and style" are not simply technical aspects of a sermon, divorced from substance. I take "form and style" to mean the ways a preacher communicates the truths of God's Word. They are the vehicle. Now, if my car arrives at your house, I do too. So "form and style" cannot get away from "substance," that which rides along inside. There will be plenty of that in this paper: the substance of the preaching. This is where we learn from them.

One of the reasons we do not know these preachers well is the language problem. Most of the sermons are in Norwegian. Few sermons are preserved in English.

There are a few sermons by Herman Amberg Preus, translated into English by Rev. Herbert Larson. Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux has translated

all 64 of Koren's sermons in his *Collected Writings [Samlede Skrifter],* to be published soon. I am indebted and grateful to Pastors DeGarmeaux and Larson for permission to cite these sermons. Koren's sermons will form the major share of material for this paper. In our synod's archives, I obtained English sermons by Rev. Martinus K. Bleken and Rev. George O. Lillegard, choosing common texts to those represented in the Koren collection. Lillegard came a generation after Koren; Bleken fell in-between and served a congregation Koren had founded. Also there are the recently published sermons of Norman A. Madson (1886-1962). From these subsequent preachers, we can make some points in comparison.

One note about the title of this paper, "Then We Can Gladly Climb On Their Shoulders": These are Koren's words in an "Address to the Students of a Theological Seminary." Speaking of "spiritual fathers," he said, "We have to learn from them what they have learned from God's Word. If we have learned with their help to see those same things in God's Word, then we can gladly climb on their shoulders if we wish."[1] Koren is speaking of what they learned in God's Word. But we can apply it more broadly, so that we climb on the shoulders of Koren and others to learn from their work as faithful preachers. This is entirely fitting; Koren especially spoke of the importance not only of seeing what is in God's Word, but seeing with a shepherd's heart how the Word of God needs to reach each hearer in his specific need. This is a strength of the preachers who followed that generation too. So may we "climb on their shoulders!"

In advance I ask the reader's pardon for the length of some of the citations. This is simply unavoidable in dealing with sermons like these. Sometimes to illustrate the point being made, Father Koren does not cooperate with the "quick hit" internet age which will not wait for a slowly developing thought. (I am glad that he does not.)

Learning to Preach from Our Norwegian Lutheran Fathers

Learning to preach does not take place in a seminary classroom. It only can take place as a pastor spends his time among the flesh-and-blood people he is called to shepherd, who in turn "do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against … the rulers of the darkness of this age, … spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). The pastor wrestles against these forces too, especially in the sermon and in the writing of the sermon, which takes place not only in his study but in all his pastoral work.

So learning to preach from Koren and the others is not something

we find in a lecture series. Instead, the intense Election Controversy of the 1880s – in which the synod lost many members – provided insight into what was needed from the pulpit. At this time Koren delivered an address titled "The Requirements Which the Present Condition Of Our Church Body Demand of Our Clergy." In it he provides some principles for pastoral preaching. Not surprisingly, his own sermons model these principles.

For each of these points, we will hear commentary and elaboration from Koren from this essay ("The Requirements …") and from the address to the seminary students, and we will see these principles carried out in actual sermons.

1. Continue to Ground the People in the Basic Doctrines of Scripture.

In the essay to the clergy, Koren encourages them to study Chapter 11 of C.F.W. Walther's *Pastorale*, "The Requirements of Public Preaching." Specifically he highlights several exhortations by Walther under the requirement to proclaim the whole counsel of God: (a) the "shortcoming when a preacher does indeed diligently preach that one should believe but does not thereby show how one can attain such faith," and (b) the "shortcoming when a preacher does indeed preach again and again about repentance and faith but does not preach about the necessity of good works and sanctification, or gives no thorough instruction about good works."[2]

These concerns were close to Koren's heart. They fall under the Third Article of the creed, the Holy Spirit's work. This was under attack in the Election Controversy.

But these issues are not merely of historical interest to us. These are the hardest subjects about which to preach and about which to balance Law and Gospel preaching correctly. How do you preach about obtaining and keeping faith, without lapsing into the "decision theology" of the Baptists and others who are weak on original sin and make saving faith a human work and not "the gift of God, not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9)? How do you preach about good works and sanctification, so that the Gospel will predominate and the sermon will not end with Law preaching? The temptation is to avoid preaching much about these things. Koren considered that devastating to the church.

He himself did not shy away from preaching sanctification in the narrow sense. For example, in his Septuagesima sermon on the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), already in the first part of the sermon

("the work in the vineyard") he talks about good works:

> What we do in faith and love because we know that God wants it, that is work in the vineyard. So when we strive to do the work of our calling – even if it is lowly in the eyes of the world – as well and as faithfully as we can, as before God, that is work He wants to have. When we strive to change our own heart, to grow in knowledge, in humility, in faith, in thanks, and in sanctification, to cast off our errors, that is work God wants to have. Remember that not only the tree that bears bad fruit, but also the tree that doesn't bear good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire.[3]

Another example of this is in his sermon for the Third Sunday After Easter, preaching about Christians' behavior in the world (1 Peter 2:11-20). Besides giving instruction about the good works themselves, he explains good works' correct role:

> We are also duty bound to do good works. The importance of this, unfortunately, is often tragically forgotten. For although good works do not help for salvation, they reveal our faith. We therefore have a double requirement to emphasize them, both because God commands us, and in order to stop the mouths of those who despise the Gospel.

This was not to be omitted. The systematic presentation of doctrine among the Scandinavian churches emphasized "the order of salvation." This is the *ordo salutis* developed by the 17th-century Lutheran dogmatician Nicholas Hunnius. He included in "the order of salvation" the call, repentance, justification, conversion, renewal, regeneration, and union with Christ.[4] The "order of salvation," as it was taught among Norwegian Lutherans, refers to all the stages in a sinner's salvation, from election by grace in eternity, through the Christian's being called by the Gospel, converted, preserved in faith through the means of grace, to his being taken to heaven in the hour of death ("glorification") -- as Romans 8:30 says: "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Koren himself, as the Norwegian Synod's chief spokesman in the Election Controversy, used this phrase to distinguish the true doctrine from the false, in his 1884 summary of the controversy, "An Accounting" (*En Redegjoerelse*): "The election of grace … is determined by the order

of salvation fixed by God, which points us to Christ."[5] To leave out part of this "order of salvation" – including how faith is obtained and kept, and also good works, sanctification in the narrow sense – put salvation in jeopardy.

Koren preaches about this in the sermon on Matthew 22:1-14, the parable of the guest without a wedding garment for the 20th Sunday after Trinity. The Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration XI:14) specifically cites this text in connection with election and what later came to be called "the order of salvation." So it is a natural text for preaching "the order of salvation," and that is what Koren does. His sermon is divided into: (1) the glorious wedding, (2) who attends it, (3) how they get there, and (4) their mark. This is the order of salvation. This part of the sermon is very didactic:

> But are some people so foolish that they really won't come? Yes, it is true that they would not come in God's time and in God's way. … How then does a sinner enter into this glory? It happens here in the time of grace, by heeding the invitation. That is to say, through conversion, in that the mind is changed and the person in repentance and faith receives salvation in Christ. But one might object that man cannot do this on his own. And that is true. But God wants to do it with all who do not stubbornly prevent Him. What is it then to heed the invitation? … To come to God is to submit ourselves to His Word and promise, and to acknowledge it as the truth and to believe it and entrust ourselves to it.

Koren does not only treat this in a didactic way. The end of the sermon brings all of "the order of salvation" together in a pastoral way, as he speaks of faith and love:

> But how can we know that we come to Him? The indication is the wedding garment. But what is that? Is it faith? Is it love, or new life? If we separate these things, then we deceive ourselves. Faith without new life is no wedding garment, and neither is new life without faith. Faith alone justifies us and adorns us for the heavenly wedding. And the new life shows that faith is in our hearts, and thus that we have the wedding garment with which alone we can stand before God.

The points Koren makes in his essay to the clergy during the Election Controversy show his concern also for the young and future

generations. There is a danger, Koren writes, that the doctrines taught thoroughly in the past would be "of benefit only to the older members of our congregation, while thousands who have grown up in later years are for the most part very little grounded in those basic principles."[6]

Therefore, among Koren's sermons in his *Collected Writings* are some that are primarily didactic, for instance on not mixing Law and Gospel (Trinity 18). There are references to Christian vocation (Trinity 2), the means of grace, baptism of infants, the Christian's cross, universal grace (not only on Good Friday but also on the 2nd Sunday after Easter, "Good Shepherd Sunday"), etc. In accordance with his own advice to heed what Walther had said in his *Pastorale*, he preaches quite a bit on conversion, how faith is obtained and kept, and good works and sanctification.

Koren is always teaching but he hardly ever does so in a lecturing way. It is as if he is just reviewing what they previously have been taught, and making applications which they perhaps had not considered. H.A. Preus, by contrast, routinely quotes the catechism and uses long Luther quotes, which Koren hardly ever does. Perhaps this has more to do with their audience: Preus was preaching among better educated people in Wisconsin, while Koren was preaching on the prairie to very simple people.

Of the later preachers, there is quite a bit of didactic preaching. M.K. Bleken – who served the Saude, Iowa, congregation beginning about the time of Koren's death – used a very simple preaching style that is quite didactic. In a sermon on the Child Jesus for Epiphany 1, each sub-section of the sermon begins with a carefully worded summary statement such as, "The Child Jesus served God according to the law though He was not bound by it." Lillegard's sermons from the 1920s also are very didactic.

There is evidence that both these men heeded Koren's counsel to train people in the basic Christian knowledge as taught in the catechism. An Epiphany 2 sermon by Bleken is the second in a series on the Lord's Supper. In 1940-41, Lillegard preached a series of 37 sermons on the catechism, having preached on historic gospels and epistles the previous 12 years. Shortly after the conclusion of this series, the Pearl Harbor attack took place. What a well-(and recently-) catechized congregation absorbed this shock!

Before leaving this subject of preaching the full counsel of God, it is important to note that while Koren hardly ever brings current events into his sermons, there are several examples of his warning the congregation against "revivalism," at the time a clear and present danger. He begins his Lent 2 sermon (on Matthew 15:21-28) this way:

> We have all heard talk about "revivals," special meetings for awakening and enlivening in God. We know that through these contrivances most often the external form becomes the main thing, and experience confirms that only rarely are the changes that are called forth in this way – boisterous sorrow and boisterous joy – complete and lasting.

In Koren's Trinity 25 sermon on the signs of the end (Matthew 24:15-28), he says:

> When by the gracious leading of God a person for a long time spiritually asleep finally is awakened by God's Word, is alarmed about the danger to his soul and looks around for help, then it often happens that he becomes an easy prey for false christs and false prophets … easily making a mistake with regard to the cause of his long spiritual sleep. … "Something else is needed," he thinks, because this is what he hears said by one person after the other whom he regards as spiritual people. And what "other thing" is then put in its place? Preferably it is something new that looks very fine to his inexperienced spiritual vision: new forms and exercises at the services, new ways of preaching, or new doctrines which he thinks really move him and look more spiritual than the old Gospel.[7]

What do we learn from all of this? That it is important to continue to catechize people from the pulpit. The sermon need not be a lecture; as Koren's example shows, it should not be one. But we should be evaluating our sermons from year to year to see that we cover all the basic teachings of Scripture. Then, within this framework, we should address spiritual dangers of the times.

2. Direct the Sermon to Actual Conditions in the Congregation.

There was a danger that the preachers would obsess over the controversy of the day, the doctrine of election, preaching about that to the exclusion of other basic Christian doctrine (see principle No. 1). This is always a danger. It applies to doctrinal controversies we have had within our own synod. It applies to situations within the congregation, when a pastor is tempted to take into the pulpit his frustrations with various church members, and aim his arrows at several hearers instead of preaching to all.

Koren addressed this concern in his essay to the clergy during

the Election Controversy (previously cited). Under the "temptations and dangers which follow in the wake of the doctrinal strife which we have been compelled to carry on," Koren includes as the fourth of five dangers: "There is the danger that we become so filled with zealous thoughts for the truths which are attacked that we finally think of little else and our sermons and discussions become more and more one-sided and senseless."[8]

Many of the sermons in Koren's *Collected Works* are from the time of the Election Controversy and shortly afterward, but you cannot tell from his sermons that it is going on. There is, however, a lot of preaching on "the order of salvation" – which was basic knowledge needed to remain well grounded in the true biblical doctrine of election. There also is a lot of preaching on the right doctrine of conversion and on certainty of salvation, doctrines that also were related to election.

Similarly, M.K. Bleken does not show a hint of the controversy in his preaching. When he was called to Saude, Iowa (then called the Little Turkey River parish), in 1909, already the tensions over a potential future merger among the Norwegian synods were a great cloud over this congregation. He was pastor there all the way through the merger and the beginnings of our synod in 1918, until his death in 1922. Yet his confirmation day sermons in 1917 and 1918 do not mention a word about synodical events.

George Lillegard was one of the 13 pastors who refused to join the big merger of the Norwegian synods in 1917. In a 1920 sermon for the last Sunday in the Easter season, on a text about persecution (John 15:26-16:4), he does not mention the recent synodical events by name, but certainly his hearers knew of whom he was speaking:

> Even in our Lutheran Church there were any number of pastors who were threatened in a similar manner [threatened with losing their churches] if they did not join the big Union and who in all too many cases yielded to the temptation because of their fears.[9]

It appears that there is a change here. What Koren and Bleken would not do, Lillegard feels freedom to do, at least a little bit. Perhaps we should examine whether it is too easy for us to interject a congregational or synodical issue into a sermon. This takes restraint and pastoral wisdom. If we would do so, perhaps it is because (presumptuously) we consider our present crisis more crucial and difficult than those Koren and his fellows faced. We should learn from Koren's way: to be sure that if the hearers continued to be well grounded in the truth by the sermons, they would not

be attracted toward or sucked in by the deceiving ways of false teachers, doctrines, or practices.

But beyond that limited concern, in his essay to the clergy Koren observes that the Gospel must be preached to the hearers in their specific situation, not generically.

> I have heard the complaint that from the pulpit nothing else is to be heard but the same thing over and over again Sunday after Sunday, causing only boredom and drowsiness in the listeners. When I asked what it was which was so constantly reiterated, the answer was: "We are all sinners and we are saved by faith in Christ." It is certainly true that we ought not take offense at being chided for constantly repeating the chief truths and for failing to bring in something new. Yet our hearers need to be impressed with the fact that, even though repeated constantly, the old truths become ever new to us; then it will not fail that many a one will hear them as if he were hearing them for the very first time. Above all will this be the case if the minister – with proper concern for the congregation's present conditions and needs – brings a sermon which is really the fruit of his meditation upon the particular truths which it is God's will that he proclaims.[10]

Koren's sermons show that he did this himself. Not only was he constantly preaching to conversion (see the next section), but he preached to his hearers' living situation. His sermons are filled with common, everyday details, like in this Epiphany 2 sermon:

> When your work is successful, and you can sit happily at the table with your family, -- when day after day goes along in peace, when you see your hope realized in your children, and happy festivities with your loved ones are granted to you, -- shouldn't you acknowledge God's goodness and have Him with you? … Go back in your memory, both to the smaller and bigger sorrows. Difficult situations have tried the older ones among us. How often there was an immediate need! Perhaps there was a lack of food, clothing, money, or the like, but God sent a helping hand. …

3. The Sermon's Goal is to Bring Hearers to Conversion and Repentance. Remember: There Are Congregation Members Walking in Sinful Security!

This is a major theme with Koren, and absolutely impossible to miss in his own sermons. This is not a common assumption today. It seems foreign to us. While we do not deny the truth of Jesus' parable of the tares and the wheat, affirming that "the tares" (unbelievers) "grow up together with the wheat" (actual believing Christians; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-38), do we believe that there are bodies in the pews to whom this applies? Koren did. We assume faith. Koren did not assume faith as a preacher, in his preaching of the Law and exhorting to repent and to believe.

"I fear that all too often there is lacking not only the call to awakening but also the guidance which will show the unconverted" – who are sitting in the pew – "how they can come to the Savior, that is, how 'they shall conduct themselves' – the guidance which is at the same time the means by which God works the change, the attitude which He wants to produce." Notice: This is not only Law but also Gospel. In the same breath Koren says this "repentance preaching" is not "outward screaming and shouting … [or] the kind of repentance preaching which with a sighing and whining says 'repent, repent,' but perhaps brings forth a superficial emotion without true repentance."[11]

It is obvious that Koren is not guilty of pietism (which requires "feeling" or experiencing something in order for it to be true), or a revival-type dependence on working up emotional responses. He is concerned about actually possessing faith, whether the Christians under the pastor's care have fallen from faith, and whether the preacher is using the Law and the Gospel in such a way that the Holy Spirit will awaken and restore them. He advises, "Our congregations, without a doubt, have in their membership a large number of secure and sleeping Christians, people who are Christians by habit. How will it benefit them to be most strongly warned against synergism? People who in false security live in unrighteousness need entirely different sections of God's Word than do those who must be admonished because of self-righteousness."[12]

One of the best examples of this principle is found in Koren's sermon for Trinity 21. This long excerpt is the end of the sermon. So Koren preaches this *after* the basic gospel preaching in the sermon, as exhortation for the new life:

> Has His purpose been attained? Your answers will probably vary. Also in our circle here, there are certainly many different kinds of sentiments and different spiritual conditions. Oh, also here, there are those who must say: I have an entirely different objective than that of the salvation of my soul. I do not inquire about peace with God. I am satisfied to let Jesus stand outside

> and knock. I don't hear it. I have cast my lot with the world. I follow the world. That's where I seek my blessing. Dear friend, are you among those whose mind the god of this world has thus blinded? Oh, I beg you to consider what the fortune which the world has given you means, and what will be left for you when the world has forsaken you, and you appear before Him whose Word you have despised. Consider the choice you have made before it is too late! But if you, dear friend, can truthfully say, "I really want to belong to Jesus and be counted among His disciples; I really want to be saved, but oh, I am so unfit and full of foolishness and sin," consider then who it is who has given you this willingness and desire and longing for salvation and for the Savior. Who it is who has searched for you while you went your own way perhaps many a year? Who it is who has not forgotten you, but has wrought this change in you that you now ask first for that which you formerly asked for last? Is it not exactly Jesus who has called you to Himself by His Word? And you delay and doubt and do not know exactly what you are to believe, or what to hope for! O then listen today again to His loving voice, and let yourself be raised up from this your weakness! Remember what He has promised you: that you shall be there where He is. … And be ashamed of your unbelief! He has indeed promised you all things, and that for His own sake, not yours; because He is good, not because you are good; because He loves you, not because you deserve His love. The promise is not built on you or on anything that is yours. He loves you. The Word belongs to Him and He speaks it. Oh, then lift up your heart and let your tongue be loosed and bring to Him your praise and adoration and thanksgiving! … Follow Him, hold to Him and do not let Him go. Rely upon His Word. Then you are among those of whom He has said that no man shall pluck them out of His hand, and you shall behold Him in eternal joy! To this end help us, Lord Jesus. Amen.[13]

Now, it is obvious that this is a very striking example of preaching to the assembled congregation as if they have no faith. What is even more striking is this: Koren preached this sermon at a *pastoral conference (!)* in Red Wing, Minnesota, in 1874. His audience consists of pastors. It is to pastors he says: "Also here, there are those who must say: I have an entirely different objective than the salvation of my soul," and: "You delay and doubt, and do not know exactly what to believe," and: "Let yourself be raised up from this your weakness." *He acts as if all the pastors are struggling for faith!* We could discuss many aspects of this. But for our

discussion, the point is: Koren doesn't just assume the presence of faith in *anyone*, not even ministers of the Word.

But Koren preaches this strongly with his own congregation too, particularly in a sermon for Trinity 10 on Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-48). There is very stark, direct, hard-hitting Law preaching here, especially near the end. But notice that it is geared toward producing repentance. Notice that it is not given without the Gospel. The preacher's goal here is repentance: contrition *and* faith.

> Now, my dear friends, let us take a serious look at ourselves! What are we like as a Christian congregation? … O brothers and sisters, take care! Are those public sins avoided the way they should be, or are they perhaps met with a smile as something one basically shouldn't take so seriously? Do you warn those who commit such sins, or do you let them meet their destruction without trying to stop them? Do you make your homes and hearts God's temples, and do you keep yourselves, and your parents and your children as well, diligent in God's Word? Above all, don't the sorrows and joys of the world consume your mind and thoughts, so that you ask only a little about the salvation of your soul? If only it were not so, that there was a time when God's Word was dearer in our church than it is now. God is reminding you by things you often hear about, sudden death and the like. How would you be ready to meet it? What must you expect then: you, in whom rules such a rebellious mind as the Lord describes from the time of Noah? None of you, when you sow weeds, will expect to reap the best wheat. Let us therefore consider what serves for our peace. Cleanse the temple, the temple of your heart! There the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit should live with their fullness of love and grace. In this way your heart receives peace, the peace of God which surpasses all understanding [and] shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus [Phil. 4:7].

Koren did explain his approach, not in a lecture to seminary students but in his sermons themselves, honestly and transparently explaining his thinking, as in his introduction in the sermon for Trinity 7 (Mark 8:1-9, Jesus' feeding of the 4,000):

> On our own we don't look deeper than the surface. Only by the light of God's Word do we see into the real essence of things. That's why we are inclined to cling to outward things, and are apt to be disturbed and **prevented from believing.** As long as

> the thought of giving an account and being judged do not seem real, we are easily comforted by the fact that there is peace and no danger. As long as God's requirement in the Law is not understood, that it demands our whole being, the whole person, then it is easy to comfort ourselves with external Christianity. As long as there is plenty to eat and drink, then it is easy to comfort ourselves that we have enough, that there is no need, and to forget Him who alone can sustain us. God wants to help us against all this blindness, and the help is in His Word. It shows us that our salvation is only in Christ. That's why it is my task to lead you to Him. This miraculous work of Jesus' is also directed to this task. By this miracle He reveals Himself as true God. **So let us then use this text to examine our faith, to learn to see what we are lacking, and to learn to flee to Him for help.** (emphasis added)

4. Aim For "Direct Hits" With the Law.

Koren does not say it this explicitly in his address to the clergy. But in his sermons, he makes what I call "direct hits" in his preaching of the Law. Not only does he address people in specific ways, but the second person pronoun "you" is prominent.

This is another characteristic which almost sounds strange and foreign to our ears. We shy away from this; preachers are taught to say "we" and "us." If the preacher says "you" in the preaching of the Law, the logic goes, he will be giving the impression that the congregation members are sinners and he is not. But Koren is simply speaking the way the Bible does. The prophet Nathan said to unrepentant David, "<u>You</u> are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7) There is a place for "reasoning together" (Isaiah 1:18); Koren does plenty of that. But the use of "you" more directly serves the goal of repentance.

A great example of this is Koren's sermon for Sexagesima Sunday, the familiar parable of the sower (Luke 8:4-15). First, hear the "direct hits" that identify the hearer with the wayside where the seed first fell:

> You perhaps have gone to church here for many years, dear listener. What was your purpose in doing so? Have you perhaps had no definite purpose? Did you come with a distracted mind, without a desire to have God's Word enter your heart? You sang along with the hymns, did your thoughts perhaps fly here and there meanwhile? During the sermon you were perhaps attentive, and afterward unable to say what was talked about.

> … You didn't appropriate the blessing to yourself. What benefit do you have from all this at all? … What do you have left of your attending church? Nothing, except perhaps that your heart was more hardened, more used to hearing God's Word without fruit.

In the next section the "direct hits" mark the hearer as the stony ground:

> You got used to God's Word. Little by little you became more indifferent, colder, you neglected prayer, and began to be happier in other things. Although you continued to hear the Word, nevertheless you became more like those by the wayside. And then temptation came. Perhaps it was simply bad company and the derision of the world. … Or other people's ungodliness tempted you to regard everything as hypocrisy. Or the objections of your own reason led you astray. That was enough; your Christianity was over. It no longer brought you any concern, any joy – any fruit. Why? There was no thoroughness and sincerity in your repentance. Perhaps it was honest enough, but not thorough. You had not seen how dangerous it was for you ….

Koren continues with "direct hits" which mark the hearer as thorny soil:

> Perhaps you didn't fall away through temptation in the ways mentioned, and yet you are not like the good ground. Maybe you received God's Word very seriously and didn't wean yourself from it again, and yet you no longer belong to Jesus, although you did at one time. Maybe in your heart you have even let the thorns grow. … Where the cares of the world are allowed to remain in a heart, there they soon become more important than sorrow before God. Where the joys of the world, the enticements of wealth, are allowed to remain, these soon become more important than the gift of the Gospel.

Would we speak this directly and brazenly about what "you" the hearer have done? We should remember why Koren is doing this: for repentance. He doesn't want the Law to miss the mark.

In his introduction for the Trinity 14 sermon on Jesus and the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19), he explains this. In this sermon he states things in very personal ways. In the sermon's introduction, Koren explains the

reason for this approach:

> If I now would picture the misery of leprosy with all its horrors and paint the glory of healing and in a striking manner show the points of similarity between leprosy and sin itself, and if I could arouse serious resentment against the ingratitude of the nine lepers, could we thereby conclude that something worthwhile has been wrought in our souls? We could very well sit here as unconcerned listeners, or, if the presentation were really vivid, we could sit here as casual onlookers in spirit and still remain as we are. But then we would be using the Word in vain. What the apostle Paul says about God's dealings with Israel applies also here, that these things are written for our example, that we should permit the familiar Word to be a mirror in which we can see ourselves so that we can seek and find grace to help us in time of need.[14]

Koren does not only use "you" in order to achieve these "direct hits." It is not wrong to say "we" and "us"; there are good reasons for doing so, and Koren does so quite often. The issue is not so much which pronoun is used. The issue is whether the Law actually hits each individual hearer. In his sermon for the last Sunday in Easter (John 15:26-16:4), under the theme "The Christian's Confession," Koren hits everyone:

> How does confession sound forth … in the homes, from parents in front of their children, in business dealings? How does it sound forth in comparison with congregation members, against sin and error, where comfort and encouragement are needed, and where help is needed? … What does someone do who neglects God's Word and despises it? What does someone do who is in the service of some sin or other, in drunkenness, or disunity, in greed, or pride, who loves money more than Christ…? Or someone who thinks he must act just like the world and do what they do?

The point is that this kind of preaching hits everyone. Sometimes it is by saying "you." Often, as in this example, it is by addressing not only specific sinful acts but by addressing Christians in their many vocations and relationships with others, in their thoughts and attitudes, at one time or another. Notice the various ways in which Koren makes it impossible to say, "Not me, I've never done that or been that."

Koren may have been led in his preaching to speak this directly

due to his scorn for covering-up and hypocrisy of any kind which allows one to evade being caught and cornered by the truth. Koren said he had been heavily influenced by the philosopher Kierkegaard to see through sham and pretense.[15] In his address to the seminary students he said, "You shall be sent out to rip off the masks from the world's lies."[16]

In his preaching of the Law so directly with the repeated use of "you," Koren is "ripping off the mask," as he put it. He is trying to make sure that nobody goes home without hearing the voice of God condemning him for his sins. Not only that, but he wants to be sure that nobody escapes the Law. Remember that the aim is repentance.

5. Aim For "Direct Hits" With the Gospel.

It is extremely important that the "direct hits" not be limited to the Law. Then the Law would be preached for its own sake, and not to serve the Gospel and prepare the way for Christ. The "direct hits" must be just as strong and even stronger with the Gospel. This is in accordance with Walther's teaching that "without the Law the Gospel is not understood; without the Gospel the Law benefits us nothing."[17] If the "direct hits" with the Law are on the mark, the "direct hits" with the Gospel will be more effective.

Koren's "direct hits" with the Gospel, as with the Law, involve the repeated use of "you." How much more effective it is to say "God loves <u>you</u>" than "God loves <u>us</u>," is self-evident. This ensures that the preacher does not preach about the Gospel, but preaches the Gospel directly. It ensures that through the preacher, Christ is speaking.

These "direct hits" with the Gospel also serve to confirm that when the preacher speaks this way in preaching the Law, he is not singling out the hearers, in contrast to himself. The Law and the Gospel are given in the same way, to the same hearers. The "you" whom the Law condemns is the same "you" whom the Gospel then comforts.

Consider these examples (emphasis added):

From an Advent 3 sermon (Matthew 11:2-10):

> Yet, do not fear! Here is the message from God, whose righteous wrath **you** fear. It is true that **you** have served Him poorly. But He has pity on **you** and holds **you** dear. He has made a way for **you** to be saved. **Your** long list of debts is blotted out with the blood of Christ. God wants **you** to be saved. That's why Jesus entered into **your** situation. He suffered the harshest pains of

> body and soul for **you.** The punishment was on Him, so that **you** should have peace.

From a Christmas Day sermon:

> There were the lowly, poor shepherds -- perhaps there are also such lowly men and women among us. Do **you** need the Savior? He has come. God tells **you** that. Are there some here who have come to church today with worry and heavy thoughts? Do **you** want to be happy, to have peace with God? Do **you** need salvation? **Your** salvation has come! Is there someone here who knows that he has forsaken his baptismal covenant and is troubled by this? Do **you** need salvation? The Savior is here! Is there someone who feels cold and indifferent and is worried about it, who sees that he needs to be woken up? Yes, who can enumerate everything that is in every single heart? But whoever **you** are, and however great a sinner **you** are, God sends the message to **you** – **<u>your</u>** Savior has come.

From a Good Friday sermon:

> Do **your** sins trouble you? If **you** have come to see that they are even more numerous and even bigger than **you** thought – Jesus wants **you** to believe that He has paid for them all. … It is for people like **you** that Christ made atonement.

There are many more examples than these. Again, the issue is not whether the word "you" is used but whether the Gospel "hits" everyone, reaches everyone who is troubled by his sin through the Law. Koren does this especially well in that Christmas excerpt where he addresses the one who is worried, the one who has strayed, and the one who feels indifferent. These situations are so common. Even if a person is not experiencing it at that moment, he would have to admit that he had been there at one point. A good example of doing this without saying "you" is in his sermon on the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-16) for the Second Sunday After Easter:

> It was for you who are hearing this, that He died. There are many who have never seriously troubled themselves about Him and His work. He wants to be **their** Shepherd. There are irresponsible souls who don't think about anything except the fleeting foolishness of the world; He also calls them. There are many who never meant anything with their Christianity, many

> who are content with themselves, many who are defiant in sin, -- even all of these are in His heart. For all of them He has done and still does His work as Shepherd. For all of them His voice sounds forth: "Come to Me – why do you want to die!" There are those who are little regarded in the world, who are poor, in poverty, overlooked by others, who have neither ability nor great gifts; perhaps there are one or two like this here today. But He, the Good Shepherd, doesn't overlook them. He loves them all, takes care of them like a Shepherd, and pursues them with His love and concern. There are also miserable souls who see themselves as unworthy, who are lowly and needy in their own eyes. He comforts them. "Why are you so troubled? I am your Shepherd!" There are the weak. He comes to them with His power. There are the ignorant. He speaks simply with them, so they also should know His disposition. And He knows His own, those who belong to Him, who believe in Him. He knows them not just in general, but He knows if they are strong or weak, sick or well. He sees their temptations and dangers and hears their cry. Everything is known to Him. He seeks, leads, feeds, watches, remembers, and carries the simple, as necessary, through comfort and chastisement.

This is how Christ Himself preaches through the preacher. That is what it means truly to preach the Gospel.

6. Use Not Only "Second Article" But Also "Third Article" Gospel.

It is said of Koren that "the keynote in all his preaching is: 'All by grace' [*Alt av naade*]."[18] It is interesting to note which aspect of the Gospel predominates in Koren's preaching. Many people think of the Gospel mainly as "Second Article Gospel." Certainly that is pure gospel: objective justification, the redeeming work of Christ. It is the unshakable foundation of our salvation. Koren does not cheat the hearer of this aspect of the Gospel. He preaches it in many of his sermons, as we see just from the sermons for Advent 3, Christmas, and Good Friday quoted in the previous section of this paper.

In his 1890 essay, "What the Norwegian Synod Has Wanted and Still Wants," Koren connected this doctrine of justification to the pulpits of the synod: "From Scripture we have learned to see, as the Lutheran Church has always confessed, that this truth is the chief point in all true Christian preaching. … In the Norwegian Synod, the doctrine of the Universality of God's grace has always been strongly insisted upon."[19]

But what you find in much of Koren's preaching is "Third Article Gospel." The preachers who followed Koren also did not neglect this. "Third Article Gospel" is harder to preach. This is about the work of the Holy Spirit, to work faith and preserve Christians in the faith until the hour of death, including His producing of the fruits of faith, leading Christians to live a godly life. The scriptural teachings of the Third Article also are the Gospel: that a person is saved by grace also in how one possesses faith.

This is tricky, to preach "Third Article Gospel" (Pentecost, if you will) in such a way that it has every bit as much certainty for the Christian as Christ's cross (Good Friday). From God's perspective, it is absolutely certain and sure that the Holy Spirit and His Word are accomplishing that for which they are sent. But from man's perspective, it is an article of faith. It is believed, not seen.

Koren spends more time on "Third Article Gospel," I believe, partly because of what he had lived through: the Election Controversy which had done so much harm in the Norwegian Synod during his years as a pastor was a battle of the Third Article. The issue really was about the role of faith in God's election, or choosing, of a Christian by grace. The issue was whether God called or elected a person "in view of faith" – as if faith *caused* a person's election. That is the unbiblical teaching, a teaching of salvation by works. Rather, the true teaching of Scripture is that faith is the *result* of God's action in calling us by grace in eternity to be His own. Also, a person does not have faith because of his own innate goodness; faith comes from God the Holy Spirit alone.

It is no surprise that Koren is constantly grounding his people in the subject of faith and everything connected with it. But this is not just a question of Norwegian Synod history. Third Article challenges are not history. We have our own. People still struggle to be certain of their salvation. People still want to have faith in their faith, and therefore when they see weakness of faith in themselves, they have a hard time dealing with it. When people see how they do the evil that they do not want to do, they are tempted to doubt if they have a living faith. Then there are friends and family who attend churches that teach very different things about the means of grace.

So we learn from Koren that it is important to emphasize the Third Article issues, but not only that: to preach the <u>Gospel</u> according to the Third Article.

He does this in individual lines in his sermons:

"He doesn't just want him to be able to believe. But God will also

work and help him believe." (From a sermon for Advent 3 on Matthew 11:2-10)

"Don't we come on our own? That is exactly what we don't do." (From a sermon for Trinity 5 on Luke 5:1-11)

"With these and many similar words the Scripture will help us to a true faith in God's faithfulness." (From a sermon for Trinity 7 on Mark 8:1-9)

"He did this already in Baptism, and now if He has brought you back to your baptismal covenant through His powerful Word, so that you in childlike faith believe God's Word and promise, then He has also made you 'fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.' " (From a sermon for Trinity 24 on Colossians 1:9-14)

Now see how Koren does this in longer sections. At the end of a Pentecost sermon, he directs the certainty for having faith to the work of the Holy Spirit alone:

> Alas, many an anxious soul will say, "I do not have that mark [of the Spirit's work], since I live in anxiety and have many doubts and many fearful thoughts." Are you concerned about your sins and the weakness of your heart? Is it your salvation you are anxious about? Where do you seek it? You say, "In Christ." Have you forgotten that Jesus said, "He who seeks shall find?" The Holy Spirit reminds you of these words again today. Who has taught you to seek Jesus? Did you teach yourself to do it? Did the spirit of the world do it? No! It was He who taught you to confess that you neither dare nor are able to be without Jesus. You confess Him as your peace. Then do not let yourself be tempted to unbelief. As you have learned of the Holy Spirit in the past, so continue to do it. Cast all your care upon Him who alone is able to bear it. The mark that we are children of God is not this, that we feel sweet peace in our hearts; but this, that we, even though with pain, seek peace in Him in whom alone it is to be found. … May we never forget that Jesus has said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 7:21b). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to plant this in us.[20]

And in a Trinity 16 sermon on the raising of the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17), there is this discussion about how faith is kept in the midst of struggles:

> True help and comfort you find only with Him who comes to you and says: *"Do not weep!"* If He can dry tears where

> everything is gone and no help is possible, humanly speaking, then He can also help you in all your sorrows. However lowly you are, He will not send you away. However unworthy you are – you cannot be worse than lost. But that's the kind of people He is looking for, the kind of people He came to help and save. Do you think He doesn't know your need? He sees it. Learn to know what Saint Paul calls the length and breadth and depth and height, namely Christ's love [Eph. 3:18]. Speak to Him about what is in your heart. Whatever it is that is pressing on you, speak to Him about it so that you can say: "I have told it to the Lord. Now I must hope in Him that He will do it. I must wait for His time with patience. He could create such joy in that widow's heart with a word; it doesn't cost Him any more to help me." If you can say this in your heart, then you have comfort. For then you believe in Jesus.

There is a constant emphasis here on what faith is, how it is obtained, how it is kept, who gets full credit for it yet how Christians should want it so much to ask for it and strive for it. Koren drills Scripture's promises about faith into the hearers' ears. As we saw in the first of the principles for preaching that Koren stressed, the fruits of faith are an important subject too: who produces them and what Christians should be doing.

The lesson? We are not to neglect any of these things in our preaching. More than that, we are to emphasize them, because the battle for the Third Article is not over.

Did the preachers who followed Koren emphasize this too? Yes.

M.K. Bleken, who certainly knew Koren although he was a younger pastor when Koren was old, shows in a confirmation sermon this reliance on Third Article promises: "We shall continue learning, that is, we shall continue to read and study the truth, not indeed as something we can never find, but as something we shall surely find and in which we shall be enlightened more and more."[21] Hear the repeated "shall."

George Lillegard, in a sermon on Matthew 7:15-23 (the gospel for Trinity 8) first delivered on the mission field in Kuling, China (probably at the annual missionaries' conference) said, "This Spirit does not come to men in some mysterious, mystical manner which we cannot trace. Neither is His presence made known to us by our emotions, or any feeling of exaltation and special holiness or zeal. The Comforter comes rather into the hearts of men by the one vehicle of the Word of God."[22]

Rev. Norman A. Madson in his parish sermons is doing this all the time. In his Advent 1 sermon on Matthew 21:1-9, what does he preach about

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem? In the introduction he says: "We want to know how to receive Him, we want to know what is pleasing and welcome in His sight, so that our worship of Him here may be crowned with the eternal adoration of the saints before the throne. How is this accomplished?" In his sermon on Jesus' baptism for Quinquagesima Sunday, all of the emphasis is on how we use baptism (1. Do you value it as a means of regeneration? 2. Do you value it as a constant means of grace? 3. Do you value it as a weapon against sin?).[23]

Other Miscellaneous Characteristics of This Lutheran Preaching

Preaching With a Spirit of Understanding: One thing Koren in particular models for us as preachers is a spirit of understanding for the parishioners. It is the idea that the pastor is on their side. He does not talk down to them. Consider these examples:

"Now if anyone after this examination will say: You demand a lot, true Christians are few, and who among them is as he ought to be? Then I would answer: No, dear friend! I require nothing of you except honesty, as John [the Baptist] did. For I know that you are a lost sinner, but I also know, God be praised, who can help you." (From a sermon for Advent 4 on John 1:19-28)

"The time we live in is a difficult time for the church. … And I find reason for worry for the congregation." (From a sermon for Lent 1 on Matthew 4:1-11)

"There you are with your sorrows and concerns, with your questions and melancholy thoughts. Yet you are not alone. He is surely near you … He knows precisely how things are going with us both in our hearts and in our homes. He knows our circumstances. He knows what earthly possessions we have, how we use them, and what it is good for us to have. He is at every sickbed and knows all our pains."[24] (From a sermon for Lent 4 on John 6:1-15)

We find this same spirit also in H.A. Preus' Christmas Day sermon: "My friend, however great your anxiety still is, and however good reason you also have to be afraid, yes, however great and numerous even your sins are – as blood red as the color of scarlet – yet listen, the Lord is saying to you, 'Fear not!'"[25]

Use of Hymns: Koren uses hymns throughout his sermons; in just the few Preus sermons in English, he uses even more hymn verses than Koren does. I think we can call this feature an ELS tradition. Koren's hymns are mostly the Norwegian hymns, such as "I Pray Thee, Dear Lord

Jesus" (*ELH* 178), "There Many Shall Come From the East and the West" (*ELH* 200), "I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name" (*ELH* 525), "In This Our Happy Christmastide" (*ELH* 150), "I Walk in Danger All the Way" (*ELH* 252), etc. He certainly also uses Luther hymn verses and some other well-known hymns such as "Day of Wrath, O Day of Mourning." The point is: He uses hymn verses people know!

The first sentence of the sermon: Often the very first words of Koren's sermon are a very directly worded statement that gets right into the message.

Here are a few examples of Koren's "opening lines":

"Advent should be a preparation for the Christmas festival." (Advent 4)

"Often in God's Word we get a special summons to **listen."** (Sexagesima)

"The picture presented in our text is an emergency situation." (Trinity 7)

Concluding Thoughts

The things about "form and style" that we learn from our Norwegian Lutheran fathers have very little to do with technical details. What is most important is the question: In what form are the divine truths brought to the people? In this, U.V. Koren especially can teach us today, as he taught the generations of preachers who immediately followed him. What stands out is that the sermon was a matter of life and death.

Koren teaches us to consider the reality that some of the people gathered to hear the Word are sleeping in sinful security. They are unhurt by the Law, and therefore they are unhelped by the Gospel; they do not belong to the Savior in that condition. The preacher does not know which ones they are, but it is his task to be used by the Holy Spirit to wake them up. Whether that means saying "you" in the sermon, or finding ways to make "direct hits" with both the Law and the Gospel, whatever the preacher needs to do so that nobody can say "this doesn't apply to me," and so that everyone is led in his heart to say, "This is for me, nothing else matters," – that is the preacher's task, and Koren's benefit to us as a preacher. The battle for the Third Article is alive and well in the church today. May we learn to be sons of these fathers!

O Holy Ghost, to Thee, our light,
We cry by day, by night:
Come, grant us of the light and pow'r
Our fathers had of yore;

When Thy dear Church did stand
A tree, deep-rooted, grand;
Full-crowned with blossoms white as snow,
With purple fruits aglow!
(Hans A. Brorson, *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #215 v. 3)

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The Biblical - Confessional Lutheran Doctrine of Worship

by Donald L. Moldstad

The summer of 2006, I was asked to put together a Sunday morning service for the thirty-year reunion of my Lutheran high school class. Knowing that many of us were now in different churches, I made copies of the page five Common Order from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, which all of us had used in our youth. The service went well. Everyone seemed to remember what "Thee" and "Thou" meant. Following worship a number of friends approached me and made comments like this: "Thanks for using that old order. That was fun. My church doesn't really use a liturgy anymore, and this was so refreshing!" How interesting that something which some of them may have considered to be so in need of replacement at one time, had now become "refreshing" and "fun."

Corporate worship is a very personal part of the spiritual lives of all of us. For some their only contact with Christ each week is through the public service. The rites which we use Sunday after Sunday can become so deeply imbedded in our memories and hearts. Senator John McCain recited the Episcopalian liturgy from memory to his fellow prisoners while held captive in Vietnam. Stories are told of elderly Lutherans who were forbidden to worship under the Soviet system who retained a knowledge of their faith primarily through the liturgy.

As shepherds under Christ, pastors make important decisions regarding how the flock of Christ in their care should be fed. For the most part, we are the gatekeepers of what goes on in worship. Knowing this, "it is good, right, and salutary" that we deeply consider what directives our Lord gives us in His Word, and through the history and confession of our church regarding this highly important aspect of the public ministry.

Searching the Scriptures, one soon discovers doctrinal themes and principles which run throughout and are common to worship life for all ages:

1) Recognition of the devastating consequences of the Fall on mankind.
2) The gracious act of God through His Christ to redeem fallen man, justifying us.
3) The need for faith in the heart to possess the benefits of Christ.
4) The delivery system which God alone establishes to bring

these benefits to fallen man.
5) The believer's response to God's gracious salvation.

Worship in the Old Testament

"Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). These words present us with the first corporate worship in Scripture. No command is mentioned for such an assembly, but God's children, moved by repentance and faith, naturally seek out each other and establish such worship. Throughout Scripture there is an "expectedness" to this spiritual activity. The desire for corporate worship is a given in God's elect. Love for the brethren is one of the signs the Holy Spirit gives for us to know we have passed from death unto life. All of the scriptural metaphors for the Church—stones in a building, a flock of sheep, parts of a human body—contain this element of togetherness in the faith, around which corporate worship is established. Choosing not to assemble for Word and Sacrament is a warning sign of spiritual illness (Hebrews 10:25). As St. Augustine once said, "One cannot truly claim God as his Father in heaven, who refuses to acknowledge the Church as his mother on earth."

How interesting it would have been to observe the first worship gathering of Adam's family. In this era of oral transmission, what text from God's Word did he expound? Dr. Martin Luther elaborates,

> "Calling upon the name of the Lord" includes the preaching of the Word, faith or trust in God, confession, etc. …The generation of the godly gradually increases, and a small church is formed in which Adam, as high priest, rules everything by the Word and sound doctrine. …Adam, Seth, Enos, exhorted their descendants to wait for their redemption, to believe the promise about the woman's Seed. …What better and more useful message could Adam and Seth preach than the Savior Christ, who was promised to their descendants? [1]

Through the patriarchal age, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cling to God's grace in the promise of the Messiah, as they erect altars for thanksgiving and monuments to His providential care. When the Lord records mandates for worship, every aspect of the Levitical priesthood paints this Messianic image before our eyes. The sacrificial rites, the Passover, and accompanying services were all about the Lamb who would remove the curse of sin. Through these ceremonies the faithful embraced Christ and all the benefits He would win. Salvation, grace, peace with

God were not to be considered far removed from sinful man, but through the Lord's prescribed distribution system they were here in time. Then as now, all true worship is about Christ, and the divine justification He alone provides with His gift of righteousness. Though worship stirs up the believer's response, the spotlight of is always primarily focused on God's gifts to man. This continues to be the defining characteristic of all true worship. As C.F.W. Walther stated, "Only hypocrites believe…that they attend church in order to be pious. We attend church, not really to serve God but rather that He may serve us there; not to create righteousness but to receive it from God." [2]

Jewish worship life was not focused on converting the unbeliever (even though this may have happened at times), but was to strengthen, edify and teach the faithful, and serve them in their spiritual lives. For the Old Testament believer liturgical activity took place in three locations: the tabernacle/temple, the synagogue, and the home. Each had its own ceremonies, traditions and liturgies. All of them contained the use of particular Psalms for various festivals. The customary rubrics attached to these various rituals demonstrated a reverence for what they contained and conveyed. Even a child could clearly see that these sacred acts were special, since they were far different than any other aspect of daily life.

The temple liturgy centered around the sacrificial system which God had commanded, typifying the coming vicarious sacrifice of the Messiah through a massive outpouring of blood each day. Establishing any altar void of God's command, as with King Jeroboam, meets with God's extreme displeasure for it attempts to replace the divinely appointed Victim who alone wins our salvation. Following the destruction of the temple, the accompanying orders of service likewise ceased. New Testament believers understand there is no longer a need for such orders, since our true High Priest, in the order of Melchizedek, has accomplished His great and final sacrifice, through the shedding of His innocent blood once and for all. Our present-day lack of familiarity with the temple liturgy is evidence that the atonement is complete. "It is finished." Christ, our Temple, destroyed but raised up again in three days, now sits in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22). The sacrifices commanded by God have fulfilled their purpose in pointing the faithful to the one great offering of His Son. The curtain has been torn. We have peace with God.

The Passover was rightly considered to be the defining ceremony for God's faithful, reminding them of His deliverance through the lamb. Its accompanying liturgy, commonly celebrated in the home, came to be known as the "*seder*" (order, or structure), a term which would become

synonymous with the entire ceremony. In the upper room, Christ Himself follows this set order, and in so doing bridges a connection between the believers of both covenants. The early church marked this bridge with the singing of the *Agnus Dei*. Arthur Just, Jr. notes that our traditional Christian liturgy of the Sacrament is based on Jesus' Passover with His disciples. Unlike the temple liturgy, this rite has great familiarity for us, since the Passover liturgy at the Lord's Supper forms the basis for what the early Christians received in the liturgy of Holy Communion.[3]

The liturgy used in the synagogue was focused entirely on the Word (prayers, readings from Scripture and sermons), since no animal sacrifices were offered apart from the Temple. Centrally located at the front of the sanctuary was a special chest, similar to many enclosed altars today, which contained a full copy or portion of an old scroll. A special seat, or pulpit, was located near the front of the hall from which the readings were expounded to show the significance of the sermon. This sermon was not to be seen as a pep talk from a coach, but reflected the authority of God's Word among them. The one who read and/or preached would cover his head to show reverence and humility before God. Wherever Jews were located geographically, the synagogue worshipers always faced toward the temple, even as we today look toward the heavenly Temple (Christ) in the Jerusalem above. The service followed a set order which became rather consistent among the dispersed Jewish family. Many modern synagogues have not changed the liturgical order for thousands of years. The early origins of numerous Christian liturgical prayers, as well as the Service of the Word, are deeply rooted in Jewish synagogue worship.

Every setting of Old Testament ceremonies and rituals had strong corporate, community, and familial aspects. Commenting on the Jewish mindset, Just notes that by the time of Christ, a person's identity was not formed by thoughts of individualism or what might please him personally. Rather, one's identity came from his relationship to the larger community and how he fit in as part of the whole. This mindset greatly impacted the Jewish view of worship, and carried over into the early Christian church as well. It is a concept lost today on much of American society where individualism has become such a valued ideal. Expecting the church to change its ways in order to accommodate what you might want was foreign to those in Jesus' day.

How sad that for many Jews, obedience to traditions came to replace the doctrine of justification which these traditions were originally made to serve. Compliance to the rites and customs became the method by which sinful man saw himself earning God's favor. In this way the devil

permitted the outward trappings of the faith to remain, while gutting them of the very treasure they were intended to offer. We see a similar abuse of tradition even today inside much of the visible church. Many are caught up in following the customs and outward trappings of the faith, while having the very substance of the Gospel removed. How many around the world ritualistically kiss crucifixes in hopes of earning God's favor, while the very Gospel symbolized by that crucifix is never given to them? The devil is a clever thief.

New Testament Worship

As our Lord begins the work of His public ministry, we see Him embracing and following the traditional liturgies and customs of Jewish worship life in all three locations. He also respects the established rubrics that accompany the service. In His home synagogue Jesus probably saw some bored teenagers in the seats, but He brings out no clowns and no puppets. Luke records, "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (Luke 4:16). As we would expect, Jesus was rather critical of the twisted doctrine promoted by the teachers of the Law in His day, and yet never utters any disapproval of their liturgical life. Even the Son of God accommodates Himself to the rituals of the church which served the truth, despite the fact that many of its leaders were espousing falsehood.

In all of the areas of Jewish worship life there were set Psalms for various services and occasions. This divinely authorized hymnbook presents us with poetry of great dignity and a beautiful display of the art of language. Through the pen of St. Paul, the Lord also commands that the New Testament church continue in the use of His Psalms, as well as hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19). We see evidence of the familiarity of these Psalms in a believer's worship life as reflected in the similar songs of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon (Luke 1 & 2). They were then and are now the language of the church.

Jesus instructs us on the true nature of worship when He declares, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). Here our Lord condemns the concept of *ex opere operato*, instructing us that true worship must flow from a heart of faith. Simply going through the proper motions does not constitute true worship.

Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to the Lord, but Cain's was not, though they both appeared similar on the surface (Hebrews 11:4).

The book of Acts introduces us to the New Testament church with a wonderful display of God's work. Before His ascension our Savior had commanded that repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name, beginning in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). We again see how central this doctrine of justification is in Peter's sermon, and also in the distribution system which Christ has now instituted. Baptism, the breaking of bread, and continuing in the apostles' doctrine are all displayed as the marks of the church and the fellowship around which the church is united. Despite how odd such new ordinances may have appeared to the masses, the apostles practice them openly without apology, knowing that it is through these means alone that God adds His elect to the number of His church.

During the apostolic era we see the early evangelists very comfortable with staying inside the parameters of the synagogue liturgy as they now present the Messiah who *has* come. Though there would be a great division among the Jews over Christ, nonetheless we see no dismissal of traditional Jewish worship practices by the apostles. Salvation Won and Salvation Distributed stand as two shining principles for worship in the opening chapters of Acts, and are easily blended with the customary Jewish worship of their day. The apostles are simply reclaiming the doctrine of justification which has always been present in these rites.

This central doctrine shows itself as the defining rule among the apostles, even while retaining the structure of synagogue life. Paul's anger toward the Judaizers in Galatia was only over their legalism which perverted the Gospel, teaching justification through the Law. Despite Paul's reaction to their false ideas, he does not challenge their liturgical life throughout the entire letter. Though the apostles at times employ different tactics in various evangelism settings outside of the synagogues, yet in corporate worship they exhibit a great respect for the traditions of the church. The preaching of Law and Gospel is established as the chief jewel in the crown of public worship. Paul even sets limits on the use of tongues, so as not to impede what is preached (1 Corinthians 14). At this point, the celebration of the Holy Supper, with its own liturgy, is done in private settings, and not yet combined with the service of the Word.

The New Testament authors use three Greek words, all of which are at times translated "worship" or "service" in English.[4] We will briefly examine each of them.

Προσκυνέω means the outward act of worship as seen in "falling down before someone," thereby showing reverence or respect. Jesus

quotes this word from the LXX in His response to the devil, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'" (Luke 4:8).

Λατρεία typically implies "man's service to God" (in the context of faith) and is most often used in reference to the general service toward God which all men owe. In the Apology, Phillip Melanchthon hopes to redirect the use of λατρεία away from Rome's understanding of it as man offering something of merit to God to earn His favor. He comments on the passive nature of λατρεία: "Faith is that worship (λατρεία), which receives God's offered blessings. … It is by faith that God wants to be worshiped, namely, that we receive from Him what He promises and offers."[5]

Finally, the word λειτουργία denotes a special service through an office and ministry – God's service to man, primarily in the context of the ministry. It is a word also used to describe the work of Christ: "We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1-2). Richard Trench notes, "Every λειτουργία will of necessity be a λατρεία but not the reverse, that every λατρεία will be a λειτουργία." [6] The primary function of the λειτουργός is to serve men in the stead of Christ and by His command.

Worship in the Early Church & Middle Ages

In confirmation classes, and now in college religion courses, I have made a point of having students read Justin Martyr's description of a worship service from early in the second century AD. Each year a student comments on just how familiar it sounds to us today. At some point in the early life of the church the Eucharist and the Service of the Word were joined together into one liturgical service. Already "by the time of Justin (153AD), the primitive division of worship into two assemblies, one for prayer and instruction and the other for the Lord's Supper in connection with a common meal had ceased."[7] Alongside the sermon, the celebration of the Eucharist had taken on great significance due to the wonderful treasure it delivered. Ancient services were designed with a preparatory portion in the Word, followed by and concluding with the Sacrament.

Orders of service from the synagogue are molded into the Christian community's worship life. Scholars have uncovered evidence that portions of the Psalms were chanted with great regularity at Sunday services even before the end of the first century AD. Vigils held on the eve of great festivals were generally structured around the singing of

Psalms.[8] Our traditional order still shows this amazing connection to the ancient church with its prolific use of the Psalms as the vocabulary of the faithful. In times of persecution the church has a tendency to preserve her rites tenaciously. "Very little creative liturgy goes on, for what is most important is preserving the faith and handing it on to another generation."[9] We see a similar love for traditional orders among those who in recent decades have come out from the heavy hand of Communism. In addition, the importance of ritual in the early church may have been heightened in an era where printed copies of Scripture were somewhat scarce, and few had access to them. Just notes:

> Prosper of Aquitane, a lay monk and disciple of Augustine, first coined the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi*, . . that is, "the law of worshiping founds the law of believing." …This maxim maintains that since the time of the apostles, liturgy has been the primary way the church has handed down the faith to future generations. … The church's belief and confession are inseparable from her liturgical life.[10]

Very slight changes in the liturgy begin to emerge only after the time of Constantine, when Christianity becomes the imperial religion. Four ancient rites are found by AD 400 (all in Greek): the Oriental, attributed to St. James; the Alexandrian, attributed to St. Mark and revised by Cyril; the Ephesine-Gallic, attributed to St. Paul, St. John & Polycarp; and the Roman, attributed to St. Peter. All show great similarities in structure (see Appendix A).

Once Christianity had the imprimatur of the Emperor, new sanctuaries would be built, a professional clergy would be established, and highly trained craftsmen, artisans and singers would now be employed, committing their talents in service to the church. Along with this would come a growth of new liturgies and special rites. Services could be offered daily at all hours in the larger cities, and long, repetitive liturgies would permit the faithful to come and go during the day. In the centuries that followed, as Christianity expanded north into Europe, changes in worship orders were sometimes made in order to reach a new people who had not heard the Gospel. Along with many of these compromises came abuses and liturgical changes, that led to the demise of faith and doctrine.[11] As time went along, innovations in liturgies began to include the perversion of the Gospel growing under Rome's leadership. Eucharistic prayers were expanded, to include false doctrine of our works meriting the grace of God through the unbloody offering by the priest. These changes began

to place more importance on the priest and his role, rather than on Christ, our true High Priest. Whenever the sacrificial part of worship trumps the sacramental, the work of Christ is diminished or negated. The church was primed for reform.

Lessons in Worship from the Reformation Era

Attempts at reformation in the medieval church had always focused on correcting various abuses, usually among the clergy. By God's grace, the Lutheran Reformation began with the Gospel, and Luther was enlightened to see that restoring this wonderful treasure was of utmost importance. All else would soon fall into place once this jewel was restored in the crown. Worship became simply an extension of this central concept. The liturgy, above all else, must present the doctrine of justification front and center. Early on, Luther and his followers primarily saw worship as the place where sinful man receives the mercy of God for Jesus' sake. One can see this direct connection even in the structure of the articles in the Augsburg Confession: Article IV on Justification is followed immediately by Article V on the Office of the Ministry.

As the early Lutherans went about reform, basic doctrinal themes—Law and Gospel, the emphasis of the sacramental over the sacrificial, Gospel-centeredness, Salvation Won/Salvation Distributed, the proper place of tradition beneath Scripture, the three *solas*, etc.—were all brought to bear on cleansing the service. Knowing of Rome's corruption of the Gospel, one might expect Luther to have been rather dismissive of the church's rites. (If there ever was a time when the preceding, traditional order of worship handed down to a generation could have been completely abandoned it would have been in the Reformation era.) Hoping to lead the church out of its captivity in Babylon, Luther and his followers simply cleansed the order of the Roman Mass to restore the Gospel, and continued to use a conservatively modified liturgy. He set the tone: "It is not our intent to do away with the service (liturgy), but to restore it again to its rightful use."[12] His conservative liturgical reforms were always for doctrinal and theological reasons, and never for sociological reasons or to introduce a new dynamic to worship. Even his desire for a German service had theological motives, so that the Gospel was not hindered. One passage the good doctor repeats frequently in the context of liturgics is St. Paul's directive, "Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

Paul Kretzmann comments, "Luther had no intention of tearing

down and destroying without regard to history and custom, but aimed to edify and build up."[13] Andreas Carlstadt pushed for an entire reform of the liturgy, since it was an *adiaphoron*, and he felt that it only got in the way of true spirituality. Luther reacted strongly against such an approach, and separated himself from this thinking. He did not want to appear as a sect, removed from the church catholic. The Lutherans were disturbed to be labeled as radical change artists.

> Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass, for the Mass is retained by us and celebrated with the highest reverence. All the usual ceremonies are also preserved, except that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone: that the unlearned be taught. And not only has Paul, in I Corinthians 14, commanded that the Church use a language understood by the people, but it has also been so ordained by human law.[14]

Again, regarding the Mass,

> To begin with, we must repeat the prefatory statement that we do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it. In our churches Mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals when the sacrament is offered to those who wish for it after they have been examined and absolved. We keep traditional liturgical forms such as the order of the lessons, prayers, vestments, etc.[15]

This conventional approach demonstrated itself even in the use of terms. "In spite of the fact that Luther has such a strong antipathy against the word Mass,…and although he cordially wished that he might return to the ancient designation 'Communion,' he retained the name 'Missa,' thus signifying that in the external form of service he did not wish to establish anything new, but merely had the intention of leading back to the old, correct form of worship." [16]

The first German Mass at Wittenberg was celebrated in 1525, five years before the Augsburg Confession. Luther writes in its preface,

> In the first place I would kindly and for God's sake request all those who see this order of service or desire to follow it: Do not make it a rigid law to bind or entangle anyone's conscience, but use it in Christian liberty as long, when, where, and how you

> find it to be practical and useful. For this is being published not as though we meant to lord it over anyone else, or to legislate for him, but because of the widespread demand for German masses and services and the general dissatisfaction and offense that has been caused by the great variety of new masses, for everyone makes his own order of service.[17]

Luther's desire to retain the old rites was so thorough that in the larger cities he believed the liturgy should continue to be done in Latin, since it was the common language of people of various backgrounds. Melanchthon comments frequently on the thinking of the reformers, "We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquility, and we interpret them in an evangelical way."[18] Though the confessors do not bind us to any particular order, this approach to worship is part of our confessional subscription, and may explain why many who strive to remain faithful to them are often disturbed by radical changes in liturgy.

In the history of all orthodox Lutheran reformation movements, the reason for changing anything in regard to worship is always to purify an order or correct false doctrine, not simply to come up with new and "refreshing" ideas. Other than a shift in the language of the service, changes have always been made for the sake of doctrinal substance and not for a trend or fad in society. It should also be noted that no Lutheran church body in history has ever died because of attempting to hold on to its worship heritage. However, many have died—at least theologically—by letting go of it.

Despite their high regard for the historic liturgy, the Lutherans at the same time saw no need to elevate it to the status of doctrine.

> It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be rightly administered in accordance with divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places.[19]

Charles Porterfield Krauth describes the truly reforming nature of our Lutheran church:

> Over against the abuses of a separatistic and one-sided progressiveness, she is to see to it that her Reformation

> maintains that due reverence for history, that sobriety of tone, that patience of spirit, and that moderation of manner, which are involved in Conservatism…. The Reformation, as Christian, accepted the old foundation; as reformatory, it removed the wood, hay, and stubble; as conservative, it carefully separated, guarded, and retained the gold, silver, and precious stones, the additions of pious human hands, befitting the foundation and the temple which was to be reared upon it.[20]

The Reformers saw their love for traditional worship as an extension of their mission and evangelism. Many times we may falsely see traditional worship as a hindrance to such work. Yet, how many souls have been saved and preserved in the faith due to the repetitive nature of the historic liturgy? Even today inside of liturgical church bodies whose pulpits completely lack the Gospel, were it not for the liturgy, hymns and readings the true faith would scarcely be heard. Tradition does have an evangelistic nature to it as well. It is interesting to note that more tradition-minded Pharisees converted to Christianity in the early church than did Sadducees. How many converts from Rome have been drawn to Lutheran altars by finding familiarity and comfort in our traditional forms of worship?

The Proper Place of Tradition

As noted above, Jesus demonstrates a high regard for the churchly customs of His day. Similar to the use of human reason, we may draw a distinction regarding traditions: Christ held highly ministerial traditions which served the Word, and yet condemned magisterial traditions which added to the Word or distorted it, as seen by His chastisement of the Pharisees (Matt. 15:6). The Lutheran reformers follow a similar pattern in renovating the worship life of the church. Traditions which serve the truth were maintained and practiced, but those which do not were abandoned. This thinking ruled all aspects of their reform. They even painted Bible passages over the images of saints in previously Roman sanctuaries so that they would be understood in the proper context of the Gospel.

Likewise, they understood that many of the rubrics of worship serve a wonderful purpose. It is not the mindset of Lutheranism to either insist upon such things, or to overtly throw them aside. Many of our historic worship customs have been well-vetted through the centuries: pastoral garb, vestments, the pulpit, the altar, the font, the sign of peace, etc. Casting them aside in our day appears to undermine our connection to the historic church and unintentionally implies a disregard for the path the

Gospel has taken to reach us. We must instruct our members against two extremes: on the one hand considering these traditions to be equal with doctrine, and on the other hand treating them as if they have no relevance for us today.

In studying the historic tradition of liturgics, you gain a great appreciation for our connection to the ancient church, but you also realize how easily one could wrongly turn the practice of tradition into a mark of the true faith. This sort of adoration would be just as damaging as throwing the customs aside. The liturgy is intended to strengthen us internally through Word and Sacrament, but can itself also become the object of an improper focus on externals. Luther frequently urged caution regarding what he calls a "godless regard for the ceremonial," and writes against the use of liturgies where there is no preaching, which only encourages such views.[21]

Melanchthon also warns against an adoration of the liturgy in various parts of the Apology:

> Our opponents say that universal traditions should be observed because they are supposed to have been handed down by the apostles. How devout they are! Apostolic rites they want to keep, apostolic doctrine they do not want to keep. We should interpret those rites just as the apostles themselves did in their writings. They did not want us to believe that we are justified by such rites or that such rites are necessary for righteousness before God. They did not want to impose a burden on consciences.[22]

> Although the holy Fathers themselves had rites and traditions, they did not regard them as useful or necessary for justification. …They observed these human rites because they were profitable for good order, because they gave the people a set time to assemble, because they provided an example of how all things could be done decently and in order in the churches, and finally because they helped instruct the common folk. For different seasons and various rites serve as reminders for the common folk. For these reasons the Fathers kept ceremonies, and for the same reasons we also believe in keeping traditions.[23]

> As the different length of day and night does not harm the unity of the church, so we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men, although we like it when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquility. So in our churches we willingly observe the order of the Mass, the Lord's day, and the other more

> important feast days. With a very thankful spirit we cherish the useful and ancient ordinances, especially when they contain a discipline that serves to educate and instruct the people and the inexperienced.[24]

Luther had little time for those who clamored for change, simply for the sake of something new:

> I have been hesitant and fearful, partly because of the weak in faith, who cannot suddenly exchange an old and accustomed order of worship for a new and unusual one, and more so because of the fickle and fastidious spirits who rush in like unclean swine without faith or reason, and who delight only in novelty and tire of it as quickly, when it has worn off. Such people are a nuisance even in other affairs, but in spiritual matters, they are absolutely unbearable.[25]

Our customs and liturgy should not become the sole definition of our faith, and yet they do help to define us and what we profess. In our present American culture, when continually pressured to throw aside our traditions of worship, we might heed the words of C.F.W. Walther, who faced similar pressure in his day:

> We refuse to be guided by those who are offended by our church customs. We adhere to them all the more firmly when someone wants to cause us to have a guilty conscience on account of them...It is truly distressing that many of our fellow Christians find the difference between Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism in outward things. It is a pity and dreadful cowardice when a person sacrifices the good ancient church customs to please the deluded American denominations so they won't accuse us of being Roman Catholic! Indeed! Am I to be afraid of a Methodist who perverts the saving Word, or ashamed in the matter of my good cause, and not rather rejoice that they can tell by our ceremonies that I do not belong to them?
>
> We are not insisting that there be uniformity in perception or feeling or taste among all believing Christians, neither dare anyone demand that everyone be of the same opinion as his in such matters; nevertheless, it remains true that the Lutheran liturgy distinguishes Lutheran worship from the worship of other churches to such an extent that the houses of worship of the latter look like lecture halls, while our churches are in

> truth houses of prayer in which Christians serve the great God publicly before the world…. Someone may ask, "What would be the use of uniformity in ceremonies?" We would answer, "What is the use of a flag on the battlefield? Even though a soldier cannot defeat the enemy with it, he nevertheless sees by the flag where he belongs. We ought not refuse to walk in the footsteps of our fathers."[26]

The traditions of worship connect us to the historic church, even before the time of the Reformation. There is a legacy which has come down to us through the effort, energy, offerings, gifts, and even the blood of many confessors before us. Kretzmann refers to it as "the beautiful and pure heritage of the ages."[27] Luther Reed made similar points regarding its "Spirit of Permanence":

> The church may undergo reformation and reorganization, but the spirit of devotion and the desire for common communion with God will not perish. An institution which survived in the bare chambers of the catacombs, which filled the cathedrals of Europe with beauty and which lives in countless communities throughout the world today has within it the vigor of eternal youth. …Worship as an experience therefore rests upon worship as an institution. This must be appreciated as something more than a passing interest or phase. It must be understood as having within it the momentum of history, the assistance and inspiration of art, the power of intellect, and the strength of discipline and order.[28] (See Appendix B)

Worship as a Symbol of Unity

One can see easily how extremely important worship is in presenting the church's confession. Any union between two church bodies of different doctrinal confessions (e.g., the Prussian Union) is accompanied by the creation of a new liturgy for the newly "united church." Most frequently such ungodly unions in the history of Lutheranism involve movements toward Reformed church bodies. Herman Sasse saw such deterioration when he wrote regarding the Lutheran churches in his land, "Just how is it that every founding of a union between the Evangelical churches of Germany has also simultaneously been an outbreak of enthusiasm?"[29] The change in confession automatically produces a change in worship. F. Bente comments on the laxity in the General Synod of the nineteenth century, "Wherever Lutherans unite with the Reformed, the former gradually sink

to the level of the latter. Unionism always breaks the backbone of true Lutheranism."[30] For many people, how we worship is a more powerful confession of our faith than the actual confessional statements we agree to, since worship is much more visible and easily understood.

Like injecting red dye into a can of white paint, weaker doctrine will always color the stronger doctrine. It will always be shaded with pink. Visit a Covenant church in your community and it will become obvious that the capitulation to the Reformed by the Lutheran Church of Sweden ultimately sold the theological farm. Their present worship bears witness to the defeat of Lutheranism. The weaker always suffocates the stronger when forced to unite.

"It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places," states the Augsburg Confession, VII. Such words would appear to give free license to us for experimentation and change. Yet the confessors also balanced these words with a larger concern for preserving unity, since, as Luther writes, "(Satan) will even use external divisions about ceremonies to slip in and cause internal divisions in the faith. This is his method, which we know well enough from so many heresies." [31] Dr. Luther often encourages pastors to use a traditional order so as not to discourage or confuse the members. He finds it interesting that prior to the Reformation, while still under Rome, the devil was happy to let there be peace over issues of worship, but now that the Gospel has been restored he must stir up all sorts of trouble in this regard.[32] One will find many statements such as these in his writings: "As far as possible we should observe the same rites and ceremonies, just as all Christians have the same baptism and the same sacrament, and no one has received a special one of his own from God."[33] Again, "Let us feel and think the same, even though we may act differently. And let us approve each other's rites lest schisms and sects should result from this diversity in rites."[34]

One of the forefathers of our Norwegian Synod, Herman Amberg Preus, lists this as one of the benefits of having the church body agree upon standards for worship:

> Uniformity in ceremonies and liturgical customs is not, to be sure, necessary to preserve unity in faith, but it is indeed edifying while diversity in ceremonies often fosters deplorable antagonisms and the cooling of love. On the other hand, the inward bond and collaboration between congregations can be promoted by the greatest possible uniformity in liturgical customs and church order.[35]

St. Paul reminds us not to make decisions which will hurt the harmony we have in the Body of Christ: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you'" (1 Cor. 12:21). Decisions on how we will worship must take into consideration how it will impact the others, especially those inside of our fellowship.

This matter of doctrinal unity exercised through worship is very real. Once unity in worship is lost, it often leads to a loss of unity in confession. According to the headquarters of the Wisconsin Synod, six congregations have left their fellowship in the past twenty years to become independent/community churches. In at least four of them a dramatic change in worship style preceded their leaving. In this same time frame, the WELS has also lost nineteen pastors, of which fourteen have left for independent churches. Among them I personally know of six who had begun using non-traditional formats for worship. LC-MS pastors refer to similar statistics in their midst.

How you worship matters. It begins to define you and your confession. Worship style is a powerful force, which for many unknowing souls often trumps doctrine. If we look, sound, and feel like the worship of other heterodox church bodies, we should not be surprised when our members join them someday.

Shall We Drink Wine with Zwingli?

It is interesting to note that Luther was willing to preserve much of Rome's Mass, though they buried the Gospel, and yet he would borrow nothing from the radical Reformers, despite their willingness to praise the Gospel. This demonstrates how important the sacramental aspect of worship had become for him. It is also an important lesson for us to learn, since most of the worship ideas tempting present-day Lutherans away from our traditional roots have been picked from the tree branches of the radical Reformers. Paul Kretzmann marks this distinction:

> When Luther, at Marburg, in 1529, uttered the memorable words: "Yours is a different spirit from ours," he had reference mainly to the doctrine. But his words receive their application also in externals, in the cultus (worship, liturgy) and in life. The Lutheran Church developed the science of theology, the Reformed that of morals. …This difference became apparent as early as the time of Zwingli. …Zwingli's service deteriorated with his theology. …In a similar manner, Calvin was not in sympathy with anything that savored of Roman liturgy.[36]

Why did Luther keep the forefathers of present-day Reformed churches at arm's length? For two primary theological reasons: the doctrine of justification was not central to their theology, and they had mutilated God's distribution system. Before we run to borrow worship styles which are championed by their spiritual descendants, we need to understand whence many of these ideas are born.

Reformed churches approach spirituality through human emotion since this has become their means of grace. On purpose they target emotion as a channel to reach a person's soul. Lutherans do not fear emotion (contrary to popular opinion – we just look like we do), but do not intentionally target it with our theology as if the Holy Spirit needs our help. For a Lutheran, when emotion is touched it is by doctrine which has moved the heart, in other words, at the end of the sequence. The Reformed seek to stir emotion deliberately on the front end in order to make a path for the doctrine to reach the heart. The preacher or the music must arouse an emotional impulse through which the Holy Spirit can then carry out His work. There is no trust in the efficacy of the Word. This may appear to be a very slight difference, yet it exposes a great difference in theology and in understanding the sacramental nature of worship.

One of the great American revivalist preachers, Charles Finney, explains this concept well:

> Religion is the work of man. It is something for man to do. It consists in obeying God. It is man's duty. …Men are so sluggish, there are so many things to lead their minds off from religion and to oppose the influence of the Gospel, that it is necessary to raise an excitement among them, till the tide rises so high as to sweep away the opposing obstacles. They must be so aroused that they will break over these counteracting influences, before they will obey God. …There must be excitement sufficient enough to wake up the dormant moral powers, and roll back the tide of degradation and sin. [37]

Kretzmann observes, "In most evangelistic services, a sentimental climax is carefully worked out, and the exhorters, choir leaders, and various other officers and assistants are carefully drilled in their role, in order that everything may reach the culmination according to the prearranged plan."[38]

Many Reformed hymns and songs take biblical stories and attempt to stir up an emotion one would have as if he had been there: How would you feel if you were sitting in the barn the night of Jesus' birth? What

was it like to carry Jesus' cross? What would it have been like to have experienced seeing the stone rolled away? There is nothing wrong with such thoughts, but we must recognize the theology behind them.

As an example, consider the theology in the song, "Were You There?" Q: "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" (A: No, I'm sorry, I wasn't.) "Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble." Notice there are no means of grace, but your feelings become the very thing that opens you up to Christ. Just thinking about Him on the cross causes you to react emotionally, and this is then how spirituality is found. The actual words don't convey anything at all about the atonement. Is it sinful to sing this song? No. Contemplating Christ's passion certainly can have its benefits. But God does not send us to our trembling thoughts about Christ to benefit from His atonement. He sends us to His Word, water, bread and wine, despite how boring and lifeless they may seem to be. This song was born out of a theology which denies the very way God has promised to come to us, replacing His means of grace with an emotional response intended to make me closer to Jesus. It supports the notion, "If you want to really experience Jesus, just look deep inside your own heart, and get in touch with your feelings." By the way, if it doesn't make me want to tremble, then what? And if we sing this in a service, what did it replace from our Lutheran hymns that it improved upon?

In the mid-1800s C. P. Krauth saw similar Reformed influences luring Lutherans in his day. The more he studied Lutheran theology, the more he was drawn to a traditional liturgy. His rival, S.S. Schmucker, on the other hand, always carried an antipathy for it. One historian notes, "His son, B. M. Schmucker, remarked that 'the whole cast of his mind revealed his aversion to a liturgical service, his rejection of all right of past usage to influence the present.'"[39] Knowing that issues from the Reformation era were rearing their ugly head in his day, Krauth frequently makes observations like this:

> Think of the precedent set by the Reformers: They chose to use the liturgical order of the very church which had excommunicated them, by merely purging it of all that harmed or covered up the Gospel. By retaining a cleansed order of the Mass they showed their desire to remain connected to the *Una Sancta*, demonstrating their belief that the true, invisible Church had always been alive even under the abuses of Rome. The radical reformers could not stomach such a view, and chose to reject everything which had Rome's seal on it. The difference between Luther and Calvin on the subject of the visible and

> invisible church can be seen in their handling of the Roman liturgy. One kept it and purified it, the other destroyed it. The descendants of each theologian continue on the same paths today.[40]

It is common for those who push for contemporary Christian worship (CCW) to be attracted to it more for emotional rather than theological reasons. We must be alert to recognize that this is an intended target of Reformed theology, since it has become one of their means of grace. (See Appendix C, "Two Different Spirits.")

Lyle Lange provided an important warning in a Reformation lecture:

> It is in three areas in particular that Lutherans today are making liberal use of Reformed materials: in the areas of church growth, worship and hymnody, and teaching about sanctification. Lutheran churches that use church growth materials without understanding their theological background may soon lose sight of the Gospel. The method may get in the way of the message. Contemporary Christian music is so full of the emphasis on how I feel about God that it neglects the needed emphasis on the objective means of grace and on objective justification. … As our forefathers discovered, you cannot package the Gospel in Reformed theology without losing the message of *Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide*.[41]

The great irony is that boredom, or lack of emotion, can grow inside any church body, even those who strive for exciting worship. Even Charles Finney had to wake up his dead church with some new life, though it already claimed to be a "revival church." I have attended a number of Reformed churches (and even a few CCW Lutheran churches) who claim to have conquered this problem, and have observed just as many people visibly bored as we see in our traditional Lutheran services, which are actually designed to be boring (just kidding). "Rituals themselves are neither dead nor alive. Those who participate in them make them appear as living, vital rituals or as dead ones. Said plainly, it is not the ritual that is dead; it is we who are dead."[42] The problem of boredom is not in our liturgy or music, but in us. If I pay more attention to a loud, tearful, emotional prayer from Jimmy Swaggart than I do to the Lord's Prayer, the problem is not in the prayer Christ provided, but in me.

Reformed worship places a heavier emphasis on the sacrificial rather than the sacramental aspects of our faith, on sanctification rather

than justification. It is interesting to note that in their desire to run so far from Rome in their style of worship, they have actually joined Rome in the focus of their worship. Our Lord Jesus says, "I am the Vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). A Lutheran theology of worship places its attention on where the branch meets the Vine: repentance and forgiveness of sins. A Reformed theology of worship places its attention on where the branch produces the grapes.

A Lutheran theology of worship sees repentance as an ongoing, lifelong condition in which we must live; therefore, to paraphrase Walther, "Each service is like a mini-conversion." A Reformed approach sees repentance as something you did once upon entering the faith, and the focus of their theology of worship is on how you can be a better person and praise God. If we feel a need to utilize contemporary ideas for worship, let us at least make sure they are flowing from a source that is in line with the very faith we profess (see Appendix C).

Slowing down the Pendulum

The entrance of CCW practices inside of Lutheranism has produced a negative response among some and a positive response among others. For many college-age confessional Lutherans today this has sadly developed into a great divide, and a wound which may not heal in the near future. Arguments fly on entries to Facebook. Groups of pastors are polarizing inside of synods, often organized primarily by preferences in worship. How wise were the forefathers of the Synodical Conference to work toward and encourage the use of a common hymnal as a way of providing unity among all of their synods!

Between these two camps sit the majority of the members not giving it much thought either way. As with all conflicting ideas in the church, we must avoid the reactionary, pendulum swing. One camp must be careful not to gravitate so far from CCW that we create a new hyper-Lutheranism and further separate ourselves. The other camp must take caution not to so fully embrace CCW that fellow confessional Lutherans feel out of place in their midst. Our spiritual forefathers certainly exercised great caution when adopting anything new for worship, and yet they also avoided the extreme of demanding that anything novel must come only from the sixteenth century or earlier. Luther himself might say, "A pox on both your houses!" We must not elevate our traditions to the level of doctrine, and at the same time do not cast them aside or handle them with contempt. Caution must also be exercised when judging the motives in the

hearts of members or pastors. At the heart of both camps is a love for souls, and a desire to see the church grow, so that more can come to know Christ and remain with Him.

It is important for us to have a burning desire to reach the souls of the lost with the wonderful Gospel delivered to us by the saints. Where this fire does not burn in the heart of the pastor, how low must the flame of faith be burning? Yet, in our fervent desire to bring in the lost, let us not give up who we are in return. Let us not abandon our very identity in hopes of having others join us. May we return again to learn who we are, be confident in God's promise to work through His chosen means, and… just do a good job being Lutheran! Middle-aged, overweight, Caucasian choir members of a Nordic or Germanic background do not look right trying sing and sway like a black gospel choir from the Bahamas. Let us not be shy about who we are, or try to act as though we are something different, as do the Mormons. The way to win over people who have little or no time for the means of grace or justification is not to pretend we are like them, but rather to boldly display to them what biblical, Christ-centered worship is. Rather than running away from who we are, let us run toward it and show it in all its splendor.

> A community with a poor sense of identity will not promote itself with any degree of confidence. A community that knows what it believes and is secure in its traditions will perform its public work with a degree of certainty that commends it to others who are also looking for meaning in their lives and an opportunity to grow in their awareness of God.[43]

We must also refresh our appreciation for the wonderful heritage we have been given and not shy away from it. A growing element of today's "throw-away" generation has a renewed interest in and appreciation for traditional worship. We are seeing it in wedding services and in musical selections. Gene Edward Veith encourages us to rethink how we might reach the modern visitor:

> The traditions of the church—including traditional forms of worship—may have more appeal than we realize, especially to a generation that lacks traditions but yearns for them. … Church growth experts…argue that churches need to change in step with the culture in order to attract members. The purpose of the church, however, is not so much to change as to change lives. …Changes in style tend, often inadvertently, to produce

> changes in content. Revising worship services to make them more emotional and entertaining can only teach the congregation subjectivity and spiritual hedonism. … "The pattern of this world" (Rom. 12:2) is not to determine church ministry.[44]

The following is a summary of practical directives from the sainted Prof. Juul Madson, instructor of liturgics at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary:

1) Stick to the historic liturgy, yet each week change one thing in it (for instance a hymn to replace the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, a different Exhortation, etc.).
2) Conduct the liturgy as if it were the first or last time you were allowed to do it.
3) Practice your readings ahead of time. Be prepared.
4) Speak the responses with meaning, passion and sincerity. Let the people know this is important by how you conduct the service. Don't give the impression that you are just filling time until you can get to the really important thing: your sermon!
5) Do not become so fixated on a liturgy that you are not willing, once in awhile, to make use of a different order of service (note: once in a while).
6) Before using any new song, find out where it came from, who wrote it, and closely examine its theology. Also pay attention to what is does NOT say.
7) Don't let sanctification get in the way of justification.
8) Teach your people how to sing difficult hymns, don't just surprise them. Use your choir to instruct the congregation.
9) Do not pick more than a few challenging hymns each Sunday, and make sure that at least two of them are familiar.
10) If you are not sure if you should chant, don't even try.

"O, come! Let us worship the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our Salvation!"

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Endnotes

[1] LW 1, 327-328.
[2] C.F.W. Walther, *Convention Essays* (n.p.: Lutheran Synod Publishing, n.d.), 15.
[3] Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Heaven on Earth* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 61.
[4] For a more detailed explanation of these terms see "Lutheran Theology of Worship," by James Krikava, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1982.
[5] *The Book of Concord* (AC, Ap IV), ed. T.G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 114.
[6] R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (London: Trubner & Co., 1915), cited in Krikava, 4.
[7] Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1970), 84.
[8] Just, 101, 108.
[9] Ibid., 35.
[10] Ibid., 27.
[11] Ibid., 243.
[12] LW 53, 11.
[13] P. Kretzmann, *Christian Art in the Place and in the Form of Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 275.
[14] AC XXIV.
[15] Ap XXIV.
[16] Kretzmann, 276.
[17] LW 53, 61.
[18] Ap XV, 38.
[19] AC VII.
[20] C.P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation*, Preface.
[21] LW 53, 11.
[22] Ap XV.
[23] Ap XV, 20-21.
[24] Ap VII & VIII, 33.
[25] LW 53, 19.
[26] C.F.W. Walther, "Essay on Adiaphora," in *Essays for the Church*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 193-194.
[27] Kretzmann, 228.
[28] Luther D. Reed, *Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 8-9.
[29] Herman Sasse, *Union and Confession*, 34.

[30] Friedrich Bente, *American Lutheranism*, Vol. II (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), 68.
[31] LW 53, 46.
[32] Ibid., 49
[33] Ibid., 61.
[34] Ibid., 31.
[35] H.A. Preus, *Vivacious Daughter* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1990), 49.
[36] Kretzmann, 307-308.
[37] Charles Finney, 1- 2.
[38] Kretzmann, 310.
[39] Vergilius Ferm, *The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927, reprinted 1987).
[40] Krauth, vii-viii.
[41] Lyle Lange, from 37th Annual BLC Ref. Lectures, Lecture Two, 25.
[42] Just, 35.
[43] Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy, Catholic and Evangelical* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1997), 705.
[44] Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 227-228.

Appendix A

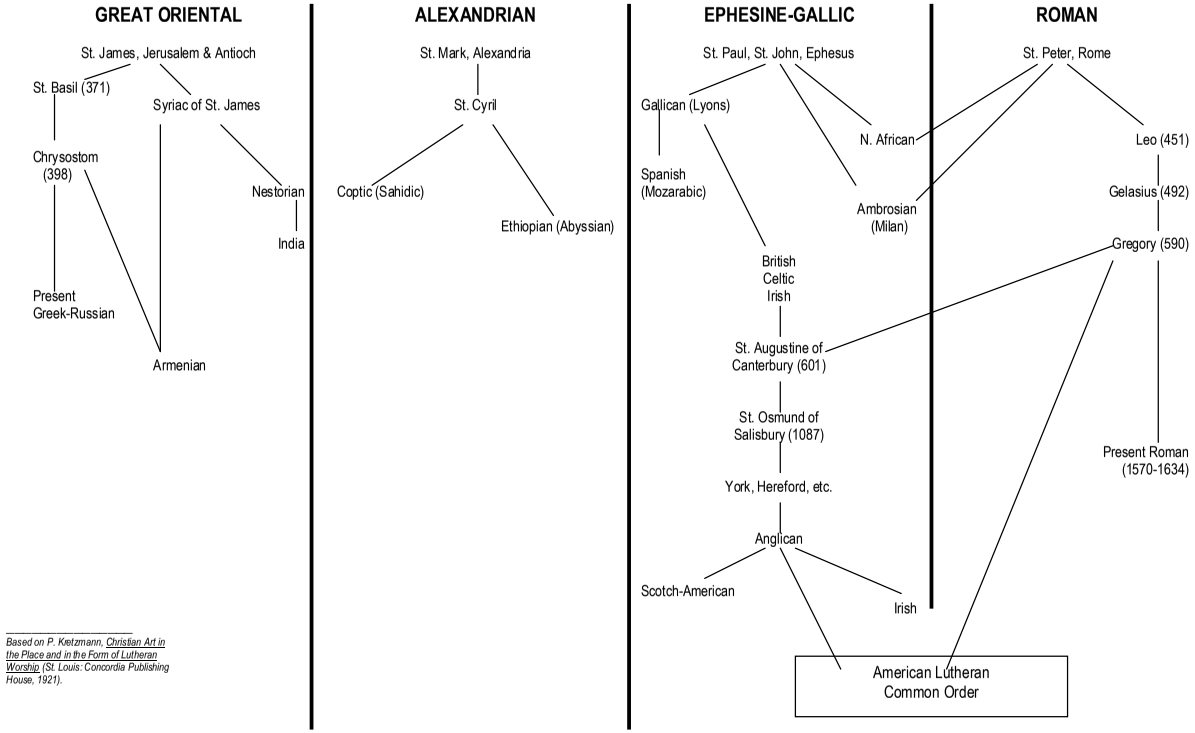
Earliest-known Rites in the Ancient Church

ORIGIN	**GREAT ORIENTAL** (GREEK)	**ALEXANDRIAN** (GREEK)	**EPHESINE–GALLIC** (GREEK)	**ROMAN** (GREEK)
Region used:	Eastern	Egypt	Ephesus, N. Italy, France	Italy
Attributed to:	St. James	St. Mark & Cyril of Alexandria	St. Paul, St. John & Polycarp	St. Peter
Key cities:	Jerusalem & Antioch	Alexandria	Ephesus	Rome
	ORDER OF LITURGY	ORDER OF LITURGY	ORDER OF LITURGY	ORDER OF LITURGY
	Entrance Prayers Salutation & Response Bidding Prayer Song of Praise Lections from Scripture Prayer & Kyrie Gospel Reading & Sermon *(Dismissal of Catechumens)*	Little Entrance (Procession w. Choir) Lections from Scripture Prayers	Anthem & Gloria Patri Salutation & Response Trisagion (Holy, Holy, Holy) Kyrie & Benedictus Prayer (Collect) Lections from Scripture (OT, Ep) Gospel Reading & Anthem Sermon & Prayers	 Prayer (Collect) Lections w. Anthems or Psalm Sermon *(Dismissal of Catechumens)*
	MASS: Intercessory Prayers Great Entrance Creed Kiss of Peace Inclination (bow toward altar) Offertory Prayers Salutation & Response Thanksgiving & "Lift up your hearts…" Preface Sanctus Invocation Intercession Lord's Prayer Blessing Manual Acts Sancta Sanctis Communion (Distribution) Thanksgiving Dismissal Closing Prayer	**MASS:** Prayer Salutation Kiss of Peace Thanksgiving & "Lift up your hearts…" Preface Sanctus Invocation Intercession Lord's Prayer Inclination Manual Acts Communion (Distribution) Thanksgiving Inclination	**MASS:** Preface Prayer & Oblations Offertory Reading Names of Saints (Diptych) Collect Salutation & Kiss of Peace Collect for Peace Eucharistic Prayers, Preface Thanksgiving Sanctus Words of Institution Collect Oblation of Consec. Elements Breaking of Bread Lord's Prayer Benediction w. Amen Communion (Distribution) Collect of Thanksgiving	**MASS:** Silent Prayers & Oblations Offertory Preface Holy, Holy, Holy Prayers Commemoration of Living Eucharistic Prayer Words of Institution Oblation of Consec. Elements Commemoration of Past Saints Prayer to join Church Triumphant Breaking of Bread Lord's Prayer Kiss of Peace Communion (Distribution) Closing Prayer

Based on P. Kretzmann, Christian Art in the Place and in the Form of Lutheran Worship (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).

Appendix B

Historical Development of The Christian Liturgy



Based on P. Kretzmann, Christian Art in the Place and in the Form of Lutheran Worship (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).

Appendix C

Two Different Spirits

Reformed	Lutheran
Stems from a sinner struggling to become sanctified	Stems from the relief a sinner feels when he knows God has justified him in Christ
Law is a means of helping us make a moral choice & commitment toward God	Law is God's tool to make us see our sin, and realize we can never measure up on our own
Law is a teaching tool to make people happy by following commands of God	Law is a teaching to make man miserable; happiness comes later as we know of Christ
Word is important because it tells us God's will for our lives	Word is important because it contains God's forgiveness in Christ
Emphasizes person's experience & emotion as channel Holy Spirit works through	Emotion flows from a heart already touched by the Holy Spirit
Conversion is turning from wrong to right	Conversion is turning to a Savior whose work is completed for us
Theology of Glory promises to effect empirical results in a person's life if we just obey God	Theology of the Cross, where the sinner glories only in the cross by faith
Presents the Christian life as one of joy, happiness and success	Christian may experience some joy, but lives under the cross in a real world of sorrow as we hope in the glory to come in heaven.
Millennial hope that the world can become more godly and moral	Focus is on our heavenly home, the home of righteousness
Worship is primarily seen as our praise to God	Worship is primarily God's outpouring of grace toward us
Forgiveness of sins is an important doctrine among many others	All doctrine is viewed through the lens of the forgiveness of sins in Christ

Compiled from Robert J. Koester, Law and Gospel, Foundation of Lutheran Ministry (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997).

Book Review: Sacred Meditations

Gerhard, Johann. *Sacred Meditations*. Translated by Wade R. Johnston. Saginaw: Magdeburg Press, 2008. 291 pages. $14.99

by S. Piet Van Kampen

It is easy to appreciate a 1968 Mustang whose owner has done the work to restore it to its original pristine condition. One can come away with a deep respect for the design engineers and the manufacturers who originally put the car together. At the same time, one can also recognize that the owner has put considerable resources into making this old car new again.

It is that same sort of appreciation that one can have for the latest translation of Johann Gerhard's *Sacred Mediations*, published by Magdeburg Press of Saginaw, Michigan. When one reads this book of devotions—with its faithfulness to Scripture, its beautiful imagery and illustrations, and its classical Christian themes—it immediately becomes evident why it is a classic among confessional Lutherans. At the same time, the reader can understand and appreciate the great labor of love performed by Wade Johnston in returning to the Latin and bringing the first new (and highly readable) translation of *Sacred Meditations* in over a hundred years.

Of all the theologians of early Lutheranism, Johann Gerhard is ranked third, with only Martin Chemnitz and Luther himself ahead of him. Born October 17, 1582, he lived through turbulent times: the rise of the Jesuits, the crypto-Calvinist movement, and the Thirty Years War. In 1616 Gerhard became a professor at the University of Jena, where he remained until his death in 1637. At Jena, Gerhard and faithful co-workers Johann Major and Johann Himmel were known as the "Johannine Triad" of Lutheran orthodoxy. While his most significant work was his *Loci Theologici*, which set the standard for orthodox Lutheran dogmatics texts for generations, Gerhard published many other books, including several devotionals. *Sacred Meditations* was his most popular devotional, published in 1606, when he was only twenty-three years old, the same year he obtained his doctorate in theology from the University of Jena.

Gerhard, in writing his *Sacred Meditations*, sought to encourage

piety among Lutherans. He perceived that the Lutheran Church had come a long way in terms of scholarship and disputation, but was in danger of becoming a dead orthodoxy, where people know the truth and teach the truth, but do not live the truth. For this reason, in the past some have accused Gerhard of being an early pietist. However, this is not the case. In his preface he explains his position on the matter and his purpose in writing: "It is certainly most correct that orthodoxy is defended in books, disputations, public assemblies, and in every way, but let the life of the professing correspond to this orthodox teaching by the production of works" (15). While the pietists emphasized the Christian life and downplayed doctrine's importance, Gerhard sought balance between doctrine and life. He believed that theology was practical doctrine, doctrine that could be put into practice in daily life. So regarding this book of fifty-one meditations, "You will not find thorny questions here, but earnest exhortations to a holy life" (18).

The first eleven meditations deal with that most basic distinction of Law and Gospel. The harsh power of the Law drives us to the comfort and consolation of the Gospel. Meditations twelve and thirteen deal with the topics of true faith (revealed in deeds) and how Christ unites Himself with us. Meditations fourteen and fifteen draw the reader's attention to the manger of Christmas, the mystery and blessings of Christ's incarnation. Sixteen through twenty speak of the means of grace, especially Baptism and the Lord's Supper, including a meditation on the proper preparation for receiving the Supper. The Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Church, predestination, prayer, angels, and the devil are the subjects of meditations twenty-one through twenty-seven. The next fourteen meditations address the subject of piety in general: avoiding carnal security, patience in Christ, the imitation of Christ, fleeing lust, and overcoming temptation. Finally, the last nine meditations deal with the subject of the last things: dealing with death (our own death and the death of loved ones), being ready for the last day, keeping hell as a reminder for our old Adam, and the hope of resurrection to eternal life for our new man.

Inasmuch as Gerhard writes to encourage his readers to live a Christian life, it is important to note that his writing is pastoral in nature. Instead of moralizing, he preaches the law in all its severity and harshness with the intent of driving the Christian to repentance. In his third meditation, on repentance, after explaining how repentance is the basis of a Christian's life, Gerhard then questions his reader:

> Why then do we delay our repentance? Why do we put it off

> until tomorrow? Neither tomorrow nor true repentance is in our control…. God promises pardon for the penitent, but he does not promise tomorrow…. Know and grieve over the guilt of your sins. Then you will experience the God who has been appeased in Christ. (27)

For Gerhard, though, the Law, once it has done its work, always leads back to the Gospel. In the very next paragraph, the first line is a quote from Isaiah 44:22: "I have swept away your iniquities."

Gerhard's teaching of sanctification also follows a distinctive Law/Gospel pattern. He instructs his readers how to live in the Christian faith (clearly Law in the third use), but then almost every meditation closes with a prayer. At the end of the thirty-fifth meditation, Gerhard exhorts God's people to avoid greed and the love of money by being cheerful givers, sharing their blessings with others. He closes, though, by quoting Psalm 119: "Incline our hearts, O God, to your testimony and not to avarice" (150). Such prayers not only ask God for the thing spoken of in the meditation, but serve as a reminder that our power for Christian living does not come from within us, but from Christ, through the means of grace.

Aside from its great value as a devotional, *Sacred Meditations* is a veritable gold mine of resources for fellow ministers of the Gospel. First of all, no one is better at "Scripture-stacking" (taking several related passages and mashing them together in one paragraph) than Gerhard and there are many examples of Scripture-stacking to be found in *Sacred Meditations*. Also, *Sacred Meditations* gives the reader a glimpse not just into Gerhard's mind, but also into the thinking of early church fathers like Augustine and Anselm. Gerhard also supplies countless Law/Gospel couplets along with many illustrations.

At times in his *Meditations* Gerhard slips into allegorical and typological interpretations of Scripture. Gerhard freely admits to doing this, albeit for a specific purpose: "Now and then I chase allegories, not because I recommend that all be transformed into allegory, but because the class of writing [that is, allegorical writing] is for teaching and admonishing, not for striving to reject that which is seen to be the plain, literal meaning" (18). While not seeking to wipe away the literal meaning, he finds instructional value in the allegorical and typological interpretation of Scripture. For instance, he uses the image of the destruction of the flood for all who were not on board the ark as a picture of the eternal destruction in store for all those who are outside the ark of the Church (98). Such illustrations serve to bring the doctrine of the Church to life in people's minds.

Wade Johnston's translation of Gerhard's *Meditations* uses modern English, as opposed to the Jacobean English of earlier translations. As a result, it is quite readable, even for laypeople who might be interested in a "heavier" devotion book. The translation may sound a bit wooden at times, but even that is Johnston's intent.. In the translator's introduction Johnston writes, "Gerhard phrased and ordered things as he did for a reason and I do not deem myself qualified or sufficiently gifted to trump his thoughtful arrangement" (9).

Included with this translation of *Sacred Meditations* is an essay by Pres. Gaylin R. Schmeling entitled "Johann Gerhard—Theologian and Pastor." It may benefit new students of Johann Gerhard (i.e., those who obtain a copy of this book) to skip to the back of the book and read Schmeling's essay first. The essay not only provides the details of Gerhard's life, but delves deeply into his theology: the motifs that Gerhard employs, his sacramental theology, etc. Such background information can ease one's first reading of *Meditations*.

With the daily catastrophes and emergencies we face, either as ministers or in our own families, it is tempting for us to use ourselves up, always to help others at the expense of ourselves, and then to leave the tank of faith empty. Our daily study of Scripture, though, fills that tank of faith. It is a feast that nourishes our souls with spiritual strength to persevere in this life and cross the finish line to eternal life trusting in Christ as our Savior. Therein lies the value of *Sacred Meditations*. Each brief meditation feeds your soul with the Word of God. Fill your tank. Read *Sacred Meditations*. May Gerhard's closing prayer be ours: "Vivify, justify, save. Amen" (213).

This book may be ordered from the Bethany Lutheran College bookstore. This book may also be ordered directly from the translator and Magdeburg Press by writing to: 8765 Ederer Road, Saginaw, Michigan, 48609 or by visiting www.magdeburgpress.com.

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