

# LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY



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**Perspicuity: The Clarity of Scripture**

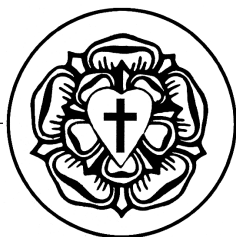
**The Formula of Concord in Light of  
the Overwhelming Arminianism  
of American Christianity**

**The Divine Liturgy and its Use**

**A Half-Century of Mission Involvement: ELS  
Foreign Mission Work Prior to 1968**

**Book Review and Index**

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VOLUME 52 • NUMBER 4  
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*The theological journal of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary*

# LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

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# Foreword

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**T**HE PERSPICUITY, OR CLARITY, OF Scripture, consists in this, that all the doctrines of salvation are set forth in words so simple and plain that they can be understood by all persons of average intelligence. The inerrant Scripture presents the two chief doctrines of the faith, the Law and the Gospel: the Law in all its severity and the Gospel in all its sweetness and beauty. We can take comfort in knowing that all truths necessary for salvation are clearly revealed in the inspired Scripture. The essay, “Perspicuity: The Clarity of Scripture,” is written by the Rev. Shawn Stafford, pastor of Hartland and Manchester Lutheran Churches in Hartland and Manchester, Minnesota.

In his essay, the Rev. Timothy Schmeling provides an overview of classical Arminianism and its evolution in the American religious context. Prompted by Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s critique of the American religious landscape as “Protestantism without the Reformation” and an analysis of the *Formula of Concord* in light of the morphology of Arminianism, the essay joins the call for American Lutheranism to reclaim its classical Lutheran theology. Only in this way can an authentic American Lutheranism truly develop, which is capable of meeting the religious needs of the citizenry of the United States. The Rev. Schmeling is the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Sebastian, Florida.

The essay, “The Liturgy and Its Use,” includes a summary of the development of the liturgy with special reference to the divine service in the Lutheran Church. The divine service is first and foremost God’s

service to us. Here God serves us with Word and Sacrament, and secondarily, we serve Him with praise and thanksgiving. A discussion of present-day worship forms is included in the essay. A beneficial guideline in considering worship forms is that the church follow the historic outline of the divine service because it has served and continues to serve as the preeminent means to present properly the Word and Sacrament.

As we approach the centennial of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) in 2018 and look back at the first half-century of the synod, we can see God's blessings regarding foreign mission work. There were only eleven years when the ELS did not have a foreign mission presence. The ELS never sought a foreign mission field by saying, "Where shall we go with the Gospel?" but the Lord opened many doors and thrust the fields upon us. We did not have the personnel but God sent the missionaries. This is the emphasis of the excellent historical essay entitled, "A Half-Century of Mission Involvement: ELS Foreign Mission Work Prior to 1968," written by the Rev. Craig Ferkenstad. He is pastor of Norseland and Norwegian Grove Lutheran Churches in St. Peter and Gaylord, Minnesota.

Also included in this issue is a review of the book *From Wilderness to Promised Land* by Gaylin R. Schmeling. It was reviewed by the Rev. Timothy Buelow, who is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Carthage, Missouri.

– GRS

# Perspicuity: The Clarity of Scripture

Shawn D. Stafford  
Pastor, Hartland and Manchester Lutheran Churches  
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“**A** SIMPLE LAYMAN ARMED WITH Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it.”<sup>1</sup> This oft-quoted statement from Martin Luther at the 1519 Leipzig debate asserts the principle of *sola Scriptura*, that the Bible is the only source for teaching in the church. Also implicit in this statement is that Scripture is understandable by the average laymen and so can be employed by the layman to defend and test the church’s teaching. This idea “that all Christians had the right to interpret the Bible for themselves” is called “Christianity’s Dangerous Idea” by Alister McGrath.<sup>2</sup> McGrath argues that this is Protestantism’s defining principle throughout its history.

Has this idea of the “simple layman armed with Scripture” stood the test of time? Is it characteristic of today’s heirs of the Reformation? When I was a junior at St. Olaf College, one of my classmates told me she was taught in the freshman religion class there that employing the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation was the starting point for any understanding of the Bible. No small task for “a simple layman.” No wonder so many laymen throw up their hands and surrender the right to read Scripture to the “experts,” the theological professors. Books such as *The Bible Code* would have us believe that the

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther at Leipzig debate quoted in Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1950), 117.

<sup>2</sup> Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution – A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: Harper One, 2007), 2.



real message of the Bible is not to be found in the words themselves but in a code hidden in the text. Therefore, we should use a mathematical formula to decipher the code to find this hidden meaning. Again, a task fitting for a computer or a mathematician, rather than “a simple layman.”

### Perspicuity defined

In the face of these assertions and challenges, Protestant theology, especially Confessional Lutheran theology, asserts the perspicuity of Scripture. This assertion is based on the testimony of Scripture itself. What is the scope of Scripture’s perspicuity? “According to Scripture, the perspicuity of Scripture consists in this, that it presents, in language that can be understood by all, whatever men must know to be saved.”<sup>3</sup> “When we say that Holy Scripture is perspicuous, or clear, we mean that it sets forth all doctrines of salvation in words so simple and plain that they can be understood by all persons of average intelligence.”<sup>4</sup> “Speaking of the clarity of Scripture, we mean, above all, to say that, as God’s revelation to man, it clearly sets forth all that a person must know to have everlasting life. The two chief doctrines of Scripture are sin and grace.”<sup>5</sup> “In God’s revelation in the Bible He clearly, in language unmistakable, presents to us a true picture of sin as it appears to the eyes of the Holy One. He does this in His holy law. And in His Gospel, the tidings of great joy, He presents in equally clear language His plan of eternal salvation.”<sup>6</sup>

Reformed apologist “The Bible Answer Man” Hank Hanegraff sums it up this way:

When the Protestant Reformers spoke about the perspicuity of Scripture, they meant that the Bible was clear when it came to its central message. Contrary to the dominant Roman Catholic idea which said that the Bible was difficult and obscure, Protestants said that anyone who is literate could comprehend the gospel and the Scriptures. The Reformers were not saying that all of Scripture was equally understandable or even that scholarly study wasn’t necessary, what they were saying was

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<sup>3</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Volume 1 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 320.

<sup>4</sup> John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), 138.

<sup>5</sup> P. Schumm, “The Clearness and Sufficiency of Scripture,” *The Abiding Word*, Volume 1 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), 59.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

that the essential clarity of the Word of God was self-evident. Bottom line, they were saying that the Roman idea, that the Magisterium, (or the teaching office) of the church was the only one that could interpret Scripture, was simply in error. Responsible interpretation of the Bible by those in the pews was not only accepted, but also encouraged.<sup>7</sup>

### External and internal clarity

The clarity of Scriptures is twofold. There is both an external clarity and an internal clarity. **External clarity** means that “in the words and sentences of intelligible, comprehensible human language, it clearly expresses all the truths which God is pleased to reveal to us and which we need to know for our salvation hereafter.”<sup>8</sup> “God moved His holy writers to write in a simple and clear way. They wrote so that all men would have a clear account about the one and only true God and about the plan of salvation which He wrought through Christ Jesus, our Savior.”<sup>9</sup> The Bible was written in languages spoken at the time. The Hebrew of Old Testament was spoken for many centuries. The *koine* (common) Greek language of the New Testament was spoken throughout the Roman Empire as a universal language. “God did not employ a divine language of His own but ordinary human language, language which in its grammar, syntax, rhetorical figures, carries all the basic characteristics of common human speech.”<sup>10</sup> This means that the Scriptures, at the time they were written, could be read by anyone able to read, and that “to this day may be understood by anyone who takes the time and trouble to study these languages.”<sup>11</sup>

The Bible was not written in a code that needs to be declassified by some code experts.<sup>12</sup> As opposed to the claims the Latter Day Saints make about the *Book of Mormon*, “God did not give His Word to us in a mystic code, for the deciphering of which an added revelation would have been necessary.”<sup>13</sup> The words of Scripture have a simple, plain

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.equip.org/perspectives/the-perspicuity-of-scripture>.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Lawrenz, “The Clarity of Scripture,” *This Steadfast Word: Essays on the Holy Scriptures* (Lutheran Free Conference Publications, 1965), 116.

<sup>9</sup> Paul H. Kolander, *The Scriptures: How Shall I Read Them?* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1970), 22.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrenz, 115.

<sup>11</sup> Schumm, 58.

<sup>12</sup> David Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995), 71.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrenz, 115.

meaning that is able to make a child wise for salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). The Psalms point out a number of times that one does not need to be a scholar to read and understand God's Word:

- Psalm 19:7 – The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple....
- Psalm 119:130 – The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. (NKJV)

Likewise, Moses told the Israelites in Deuteronomy 30:11–14, “For this commandment which I command you today *is* not *too* mysterious for you, nor *is* it far off. It *is* not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor *is* it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it” (NKJV).

The **external clarity** of Scripture also applies to reliable and faithful translations. “Since God wants them to be read by all people, they also have been translated into languages that are spoken by people today. Language is not the problem.”<sup>14</sup> “Because of its simplicity the language of the Bible can be translated into plain and simple words of any human language and thus become available to all that dwell on earth, to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”<sup>15</sup> “The translations made by reliable men are sufficient to acquaint men with the contents of God’s revelation and make them wise unto salvation.”<sup>16</sup>

The **external clarity** of Scripture

is the same for all readers, alike for the regenerate and the unregenerate. As the true and intended meaning is but one—*sensus literalis unus est*—so also the external clearness is but one. The Holy Spirit has not shed a light on the sacred page for the believer which is not there also for the unbeliever. Neither does the Spirit’s action by which man is led to the saving knowledge of the Bible consist in casting an additional light on the Scriptures, but in shining in the heart of man. The action is not upon the Book, but wholly on the readers. This book is

<sup>14</sup> Kolander, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Schumm, 59.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. “Yet wherever a dissension arises, as to the exact meaning of a Scripture passage, only the original text can decide the question.”

luminous. It is a “lamp,” a “light,” “a light that shineth in a dark place.”<sup>17</sup>

In the *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* (1528), Luther applies the **external clarity** even to a Muslim who reads the Words of Institution: “Even if I were a Turk, a Jew, or a pagan, who thought nothing of the faith of the Christians, but heard or read these Scripture passages on the Sacrament, I should have to say: I do not believe the doctrine of the Christians, but this I feel constrained to say: If they want to be Christians and hold to their doctrine [on the basis of what Scripture says], they will have to believe that Christ's body and blood are eaten and drunk orally in the bread and wine.”<sup>18</sup>

In Lutheran theology, a distinction is made between the **external clarity** or understanding of Scripture of which unbelievers are also capable and the spiritual or **internal** understanding of Scriptures, which is found only in Christians. Luther discusses the distinction in the *Bondage of the Will*: “If you speak of the external clearness, nothing whatever is left obscure or ambiguous; but all things that are in the Scriptures, are by the Word brought forth into the clearest light, and proclaimed to the whole world.”<sup>19</sup>

If you speak of the **internal clearness**, no man sees one iota in the Scriptures, but he that hath the Spirit of God. All have a darkened heart; so that, even if they know how to speak of, and set forth, all things in the Scripture, yet, they cannot feel them nor know them: nor do they believe that they are the creatures of God, nor anything else: according to that of Psalm xiv, 1. “The fool hath said in his heart, God is nothing.” For the Spirit is required to understand the whole of the Scripture and every part of it.<sup>20</sup>

This distinction is further expounded by Walther in his *The Proper Distinction Between the Law and the Gospel*:

However, while the historico-grammatical meaning of Scripture can readily be opened up by any one who understands its language, it is impossible without the Holy Spirit for any one to understand the Holy Scriptures unto his salvation, no matter

<sup>17</sup> Theological Quarterly, Vol. XII, No. 2, p. 98 in Schumm, 63.

<sup>18</sup> LW 37:359.

<sup>19</sup> LW 33:28.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

how great a linguist, how famous a philologist, how keen a logician he may be. The Apostle Paul declares, 1 Corinthians 2:14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Again, the same apostle says, 1 Corinthians 1:23, "We preach Christ Crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness."<sup>21</sup>

According to Luther, the **internal clarity** of Scripture consists in faith in Christ. As Nestingen explains, "The internal perspicuity of Scripture is not a matter of reason but of faith that has been worked by the Holy Spirit through the proclaimed word and administered sacraments."<sup>22</sup> The **internal clarity** of Scripture is "a spiritual one and consists in this that Scripture possesses the power to win acceptance for the truths of faith and life, of Law and Gospel, which it clearly teaches. It has the divine power to effect a change in us, to effect in us a spiritual understanding and comprehension of these truths, a blessed comprehension of faith."<sup>23</sup> The Scriptures "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Lawrenz warns that "It is vital that we do not confuse this spiritual clarity of Scripture with its outward clarity, but that we keep both in their proper relation."<sup>24</sup> The specific threat he first addresses is that of neo-orthodoxy with its existential components. "Some say: Scripture becomes God's Word when it convinces me. Not Scripture *is* God's clear Word of itself as it comes to me, but it *becomes* spiritually clear to me and I experience it as God's saving Word when it humbles me with its message of the Law and wins my heart in faith with its message of the Gospel."<sup>25</sup> The second form of confusion between external and internal he addresses is a confusion of inspiration and enlightenment. In Psalm 119:105, "Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path," the psalmist "acknowledges that Scripture is God's Word in itself, acknowledges the truth of inspiration. He also confesses that this divine Word is a light and lamp, thus paying tribute to the outward and objective clarity of that inspired Word." The psalmist prays in Psalm 119:18,

<sup>21</sup> C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1929, 1986), 60.

<sup>22</sup> James Arne Nestingen, "Biblical Clarity and Ambiguity in the Bondage of the Will," Essay Delivered at Lutheran Free Conference (New Ulm, MN: Martin Luther College, November 9-10, 2011), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrenz, 121.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

“Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.” This is a prayer for “enlightenment, a prayer that God would overcome all the human weaknesses by which some of the wondrous things clearly stated in God’s Word might remain hidden.”<sup>26</sup> That is “not a prayer by which we ask God to make His Word clear in itself but rather a prayer to make God’s clear Word both outwardly and spiritually clear to us and to do that, not apart and aside from God’s Word, but through that divine Word itself.”<sup>27</sup>

## Perspicuity the Teaching of the Bible

*The Holy Scriptures assert their clarity implicitly*

Perspicuity is presupposed in that not only those who are specially gifted, but all Christians are to read the Scriptures, are to believe on the basis of Scripture, and to judge truth and error on the same basis.<sup>28</sup>

1. Perspicuity is presupposed in all passages in which all are exhorted to search the Scriptures for salvation.
  - Luke 16:29 – “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.”
  - It is because the Scriptures are clear that Jesus could tell the people of His day, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39).
  - Acts 17:11 – Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.
  - 2 Thessalonians 2:15 – So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.
2. Perspicuity is presupposed in every admonition to beware of false prophets, to mark those who depart from apostolic teachings, and to hold fast the faithful word, the pattern of sound words.
  - Matthew 7:15 – Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>28</sup> Pieper, I: 320.

- Romans 16:17 – Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.
  - 2 Timothy 1:13 – Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)
  - Titus 1:9 – ... holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. (NKJV)
3. Perspicuity is asserted in every earnest warning against adding anything to God's inspired word or against subtracting anything from it. "For how could anyone know whether he were adding or subtracting if Scripture were not clear?"<sup>29</sup>
- Deuteronomy 4:2 – You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. (NKJV)
  - Revelation 22:18–19 – For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (NKJV)
  - Matthew 5:19 – Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (NKJV)
4. How can anything be profitable for doctrine if it is not clear?
- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 – All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)

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<sup>29</sup> Lawrenz, 115.

5. Perspicuity is implied by the Word, so that is possible for us to know whether we are continuing in it or not.
  - John 8:31 – Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” (NKJV)
6. Perspicuity is presupposed by the fact that the apostolic epistles are, for the most part, addressed to whole congregations and were to be read at their meetings.
  - Colossians 4:16 – And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:27 – I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

### *Perspicuity taught explicitly by Scripture*

Scripture not only presupposes perspicuity as self-evident but definitely teaches it expressly in clear passages in both the Old and New Testaments.

- 2 Peter 1:19 – And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.
- Psalm 119:105 – Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (ESV)
- Psalm 19:7 – The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple.... (NKJV)
- Psalm 119:104 – Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. (NKJV)
- Psalm 119:30 – I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me. (NKJV)

“Only because the Word of God possesses clarity can it make wise, impart blessedness, move us to hate every false way, and give understanding even to the simple.”<sup>30</sup>

Even children can understand it.

- 1 John 2:12–13 – I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am

<sup>30</sup> Lawrenz, 113.



writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

- 2 Timothy 3:15 – ... from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Scripture had been presented to Timothy by his mother and grandmother, simple, common people, and by its own clarity had imparted full wisdom unto salvation. This is possible only if the Word is clear.<sup>31</sup>

### Roman Catholic Church's Denial of Perspicuity

In *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, Walther laments that,

Within the Christian Church, in the Papacy, the teaching is current that the Scriptures are so obscure that you can scarcely understand a single passage in them; at any rate, very many important teachings of the Christian religion, it is asserted, cannot be substantiated from Scripture. To this end the traditions of the Church are said to be absolutely necessary. This claim of the papists is evidence of their blindness. To them applies what Paul says 2 Corinthians 4, 3: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."<sup>32</sup>

"The Church of Rome has placed tradition, that is, the interpretation of Scripture as held by the Holy Mother Church, which is infallible, side by side with the Bible, in fact above the Bible."<sup>33</sup> This placing tradition side by side with Scripture as sources of doctrine is testified by the decrees of Vatican Council II:

21. The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body. She has always maintained them, and continues to do so, *together with sacred tradition*, as the supreme rule of faith, since, as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God Himself without

<sup>31</sup> Kolander, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Walther, 59.

<sup>33</sup> Schumm, 63.

change, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles.<sup>34</sup>

“The Fathers of the Church plainly expressed their belief that the written Word of God by itself, without the help of tradition, would always leave disputes unsettled, points of beliefs and morals undetermined, and true religion a problem unsolved.”<sup>35</sup> This is also the view of Vatican Council II:

9. Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For *both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring*, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. *Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.*<sup>36</sup>

Since both Scripture and tradition are said to be equally inspired by the Holy Spirit, the obvious conclusion is that “it is *not* from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.” According to Roman doctrine, Scripture becomes clear through the light emanating from “the church,” that is, from the Pope.<sup>37</sup> The right of interpreting the Scriptures is the exclusive right of the teaching office of the church. This teaching is upheld by Vatican II:

But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, (15) has been entrusted

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<sup>34</sup> Documents of Vatican Council II: On Revelation *Dei Verbum*, Chapter VI, par. 21; <http://www.crivoice.org/creeddeiverbum.html>.

<sup>35</sup> J. Fan Di Bruno, *Catholic Belief* (Benziger Bros.), 29 in Schumm, 650.

<sup>36</sup> Documents of Vatican Council II: On Revelation *Dei Verbum*, Chapter I, Par. I; <http://www.crivoice.org/creeddeiverbum.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Pieper, I: 319.

exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, (16) whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.<sup>38</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.<sup>39</sup>

### Perspicuity the Teaching of Luther and the Confessions

The earliest work in which Luther explicitly refers to the clarity of Scripture is *Against Latomus* (1521). Against Latomus' persistent appeal to the fathers, Luther says,

Who has shown that they made the Scriptures clearer—what if they obscured them? ... But doesn't obscure Scripture require explanation? Set aside the obscure and cling to the clear. Further, who has proved that the fathers are not obscure? ... The Scriptures are common to all, and are clear enough in respect to what is necessary for salvation, and are also obscure enough for inquiring minds?<sup>40</sup>

But, he says, "What did the fathers do except seek and present the clear and open testimonies of Scripture?"<sup>41</sup>

Luther asserts in his exposition of Psalm 37,

There is not a plainer book on earth than the Holy Scriptures. It is, in comparison with all other books, what the sun is compared with all other luminaries. The papists are giving us their twaddle about the Scriptures for the sole purpose of leading us away

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<sup>38</sup> Documents of Vatican Council II: On Revelation *Dei Verbum*, Chapter II, Par. I; <http://www.crivoice.org/creeddeiverbum.html>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> LW 32:17.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

from the Scriptures and raising up themselves as masters over us in order to force us to believe their preaching of dreams. It is an abomination, a disgraceful defamation of Holy Writ and the entire Christian Church, to say that the Holy Scriptures are obscure, that they are not clear enough to be understood by everybody and to enable everybody to teach and prove what he believes.<sup>42</sup>

In his "Open Letter" to the city councils Luther says that the fathers often erred in their teaching because they did not understand Hebrew or Greek. Even when they taught correctly, they often, on account of their ignorance of the languages, used proof texts which made them ridiculous in the eyes of the world, for the educated unbeliever could know that the text did not say what the fathers claimed to find in it. In other words, an intelligent unbeliever understands the meaning of the Bible better than an ignorant but pious believer.<sup>43</sup> Luther said that the scholastics' contention that the Bible is an unclear book is due to their ignorance of the languages.

The sophists have claimed that the Scriptures are obscure, meaning that it is the very nature of the Word of God to be obscure and to speak in strange fashion. But they do not see that the whole trouble is caused by the languages. If we understood the languages, there would not be anything that has ever been spoken easier to understand than the Word of God. Of course, a Turk will talk obscure things to me because I do not know Turkish; but a Turkish child seven years old understands him readily.<sup>44</sup>

Becker comments, "The significance of this statement crystallizes when we contrast it with the explanation that is often given, namely, that the Scriptures are unclear to the unconverted because they have not been enlightened by the Holy Ghost."<sup>45</sup> "The 'enlightenment' of the Holy Ghost, for Luther did not have to do with the bare understanding

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<sup>42</sup> St. L. Ed. V, 335 in Walther, 59.

<sup>43</sup> Siegbert Becker, *The Foolishness of God: The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982), 79.

<sup>44</sup> *Appeal to the Counselors of All Cities of Germany in Behalf of the Establishment and Maintenance of Christian Schools*, St. L. Ed. X, 473 in Walther, 60.

<sup>45</sup> Becker, 79.

of the meaning or the words of Scripture but rather with acceptance of those words in faith.”<sup>46</sup>

Luther’s teaching on the perspicuity of Scripture is most fully developed in the *Bondage of the Will*. In opposition to Erasmus, who argued for human free will and choice and the ambiguity of the Bible even in key doctrines, Luther found the opposite to be true: that the Scriptures themselves are clear and human will is bound. Larry Pettegrew has summarized the key points of Luther’s teaching on perspicuity in “The Bondage of the Will” (1525) as follows:<sup>47</sup>

## Martin Luther’s Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture

### The Principle

1. Nothing in Scripture is obscure.

2. Anything that seems to be obscure is so because of the ignorance of man, not the obscurity of Scripture.

### Luther’s Statement in *Bondage of the Will*

“... in opposition to you I say with respect to the whole Scripture, I will not have any part of it called obscure. What we have cited from Peter holds good here, that the Word of God is for us ‘a lamp shining in a dark place’ (II Peter 1:19). But if part of this lamp does not shine, it will be a part of the dark place rather than of the lamp itself” (LW 33:95).

“It is true that for many people much remains abstruse; but this is not due the obscurity of Scripture, but to the blindness of indolence of those who will not take the trouble to look at the very clearest truth” (LW 33:27).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Larry Pettegrew, “The Perspicuity of Scripture,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* (Fall, 2004): 221–223. I have added the references to where the quotations are found in Luther’s Works American Edition (LW).

3. Some texts are obscure because the reader does not understand key words and grammar. “I admit, of course, that there are many texts in the Scriptures that are obscure and abstruse, not because of the majesty of their subject matter, but because of our ignorance of their vocabulary and grammar; but these texts in no way hinder a knowledge of all the subject matter of Scripture” (LW 33:25).
4. Satan also tries to blind human eyes to the meaning of Scripture. “It is due to the malice of Satan, who sits enthroned in our weakness, resisting the Word of God. If Satan were not at work, the whole world of men would be converted by a single word of God once heard, and there would be no need of more” (LW 33:100).
5. If a scriptural topic seems to be obscure in one place, it will be clear in other places. “If the words are obscure in one place, yet they are plain in another ...” (LW 33:26).
6. There are two kinds of clarity in Scripture. “To put it briefly, there are two kinds of clarity in Scripture, just as there are also two kinds of obscurity: one external and pertaining to the ministry of the Word, the other located in the understanding of the heart” (LW 33:28).
7. External clarity extends to the whole world, not just Christians. “If, on the other hand, you speak of the external clarity, nothing at all is left obscure or ambiguous, but everything there is in Scripture has been brought out by the Word into the most definite light, and published in all the world” (LW 33:28).

8. Internal obscurity comes from depravity. “All men have a darkened heart, so that even if they can recite everything in Scripture, and know how to quote it, yet they apprehend and truly understand nothing of it” (LW 33:28).
9. The Holy Spirit brings about internal clarity. “If you speak of the internal clarity, no man perceives one iota of what is in the Scriptures unless he has the Spirit of God” (LW 33:28).
10. One of the worst results of the Roman Catholic doctrine of Scripture is that it has kept people from reading and studying the Bible. “Yet with such a phantasmagoria [bizarre illusion] Satan has frightened men away from reading the Sacred Writ, and has made Holy Scripture contemptible ...” (LW 33:25).
11. Another result of Roman Catholic doctrine is that it has sometimes set wicked men above Scripture. “Nothing more pernicious could be said than this, for it has led ungodly men to set themselves above the Scriptures and to fabricate whatever they pleased, until the Scriptures have been completely trampled down and we have been believing and teaching nothing but dreams of madmen” (LW 33:90).

Luther’s teachings on the clarity of Scripture were not only directed against Roman teaching that the Scriptures were obscure and could only be understood and explained by the ordained clergy and teachings of the church.<sup>48</sup> He also directs his assertion that the Scriptures are clear and accessible against the radical reformers, such as Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and Karlstadt. Luther found that according to the radical reformers’ view, whatever teachings were at odds with human reason or empirical evidence, such as the doctrine of real presence, were

<sup>48</sup> “A clear understanding of Scripture is dependent upon the schoolmen and the ordained, upon professional skill in the allegorical method (which suggests some interesting observations about the historical-critical method).” Erling T. Teigen, “The Clarity of Scripture and Hermeneutical Principals in the Lutheran Confessions,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 46, nos. 2–3 (April–July 1982): 147.

given another interpretation that would agree with human reason.<sup>49</sup> “While Luther harshly attacks the Roman church for arrogating to itself as an external church the office of interpreting an obscure Scripture, he polemicizes against the radical reformers for indulging in private interpretation which ignores the general consensus of the church, good grammar, and logic, to say nothing of the testimony of Scripture itself.”<sup>50</sup>

In the *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* (1528), Luther states,

We know, however, that these words, “This is my body,” etc. are clear and lucid. Whether a Christian or a heathen, a Jew or a Turk hears them, he must acknowledge that they speak of the body of Christ which is in the bread. How otherwise could the heathen and Jews mock us, saying that the Christians eat their God, if they did not understand this text clearly and distinctly? When the believer grasps and the unbeliever despises that which is said, however, this is due not to the obscurity or clarity of the words but to the hearts that hear it.<sup>51</sup>

In *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1525) Luther sees another kind of obfuscation of the clear word of Scripture: “[Karlstadt has not derived] his interpretation from but outside of Scripture, [and] wants to bring this kind of notion to Scripture, bending, forcing, and torturing it according to his own conceit instead of letting his stupid mind be changed and directed by the Word and Scripture of God.”<sup>52</sup> *Against the Heavenly Prophets* also brings out another aspect of Luther's teaching on the clarity of Scripture. For Luther the Scriptures are clear externally, without any mystical, internal, or subjective revelations by which they might be interpreted. Both Karlstadt and Zwingli, Luther thought, were interpreting on the basis of dreams, visions, and other revelations of the Spirit, apart from the external Word. Zwingli purportedly had arrived at his “significat” through a dream in which an angel referred him to Exodus 12:11. Karlstadt too operated with such an internal revelation.<sup>53</sup> Against such notions of an inward revelation by which the externally clear Word is to be interpreted, Luther protests, “We do not believe anyone who presents his own explanation and interpretation of

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<sup>49</sup> “Here we should note some interesting parallels in modern Protestantism, Lutheran Pietism, and Fundamentalism.” *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>51</sup> LW 37:27ff.

<sup>52</sup> LW 40:153.

<sup>53</sup> Teigen, 158.



Scripture. For no correct understanding can be arrived at by one's own interpretation."<sup>54</sup>

### *The External Clarity of Scripture in the Confessions*

The authors of the *Formula of Concord* held the conviction that "After careful and conscientious study of the Holy Scriptures, they were willing to set up binding formulations concerning points of doctrine that had been in controversy; they were willing to assert that these formulations were meant not only for themselves and for those then living but for their posterity as well."<sup>55</sup> In this, they echo Luther who in the *Smalcald Articles* says that he was ready to take his stand on these scriptural teachings on the Day of Judgment.<sup>56</sup> "Our Lutheran confessional fathers were not reluctant to speak thus because they not only believed firmly in the authority of the Holy Scriptures to establish articles of faith, but together with such authority of Scripture also associated most closely the clarity of the Scriptures."<sup>57</sup> This principle is laid out at the beginning of the *Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm: 1. First *the Prophetic* and Apostolic Scriptures *of the Old and New Testaments* as the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged.<sup>58</sup> Bohlmann notes that "an unclear source of doctrine could hardly function authoritatively as a norm of doctrine."<sup>59</sup> Throughout the confessions the clarity of Scripture is intimately tied together with the principle that Scripture alone is the only source and standard of doctrine.

- In the *Apology Preface*, 9, Melancthon contends that the authors of the Roman *Confutation* "have condemned several articles contrary to the **manifest Scripture** of the Holy Ghost so far are they from overthrowing our propositions by means of the Scriptures."
- Ap XXIV, 94–95: Now, as regards the adversaries' citing the Fathers concerning the offering for the dead, we know that the ancients speak of prayer for the dead, which we do not prohibit; but we disapprove of the application *ex opere operato* of the

<sup>54</sup> LW 40:167.

<sup>55</sup> Lawrenz, 112.

<sup>56</sup> SA Part III, XV, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Lawrenz, 112.

<sup>58</sup> FC, SD Rule and Norm, Triglot 851:3.

<sup>59</sup> Ralph A. Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968, 1983), 57.

Lord's Supper on behalf of the dead. Neither do the ancients favor the adversaries concerning the *opus operatum*. And even though they have the testimonies especially of Gregory or the moderns, **we oppose to them the most clear and certain Scriptures**. And there is a great diversity among the Fathers. They were men, and could err and be deceived. Although if they would now become alive again, and would see their sayings assigned as pretexts for the notorious falsehoods which the adversaries teach concerning the *opus operatum*, they would interpret themselves far differently.

- FC SD Rule and Norm 6: In the fourth place, as regards the proper and true sense of the oft-quoted Augsburg Confession, an extensive Apology was composed and published in print in 1531, after the presentation of the Confession, in order that we might explain ourselves at greater length and guard against the Papists, and that condemned errors might not steal into the Church of God under the name of the Augsburg Confession, or dare to seek cover under the same. We unanimously confess this also, because not only is the said Augsburg Confession explained as much as is necessary and guarded, but also proven by **clear, irrefutable testimonies of Holy Scripture**.
- Ap XXVII, 60: Besides, examples ought to be interpreted according to the rule, *i.e.*, according to **certain and clear passages of Scripture**, not contrary to the rule, that is, contrary to the Scriptures.

“Implicit in such statements, especially in the use of the superlative ‘clearest,’ is the acknowledgement that some passages in Scripture are not so clear as others. The confessions maintain, however, that their doctrine in no point is based on such passages.”<sup>60</sup>

- AC XXII 2: where Christ has **manifestly commanded** concerning the cup that all should drink.
- AC XXIII 3: the Scriptures **clearly assert** that the estate of marriage was instituted by the Lord to avoid immorality
- AC XXVIII 43–44: But there are **clear testimonies** which prohibit the making of such traditions, as though they merited grace or were necessary to salvation.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 58.

- Ap II 40: For they **clearly** call concupiscence sin, which, nevertheless, is not imputed to those who are in Christ, although by nature it is a matter worthy of death where it is not forgiven.
- AP XVIII 10 [distinction between civil and spiritual righteousness]: Nor has this distribution been invented by us, but Scripture **most clearly** teaches it....
- Ap IV 314 [Regarding Roman 5:2]: We stress this statement so often **because it is so clear**. It summarizes our case very well, and a careful consideration of it will teach us much about the whole issue and bringing consolation to well-disposed minds.
- FC SD II 87: For the conversion of our corrupt will, which is nothing else than a resuscitation of it from spiritual death, is only and solely the work of God (just as also the resuscitation in the resurrection of the body must be ascribed to God alone), as has been fully set forth above and proved by **manifest testimonies** of Holy Scripture.

“The use of Scripture in this unadorned way in documents that at least in part were intended for a nonclerical audience argues strongly for the confessional belief in the fundamental clarity and general understandability of the text of Scripture.”<sup>61</sup>

The confessions appeal that the Words of Institution of the Lord’s Supper must be understood only “in their usual, strict, and commonly accepted meaning.”<sup>62</sup>

- FC Ep VII 42: 21. Hence we hereby utterly condemn the Capernaite eating of the body of Christ, as though His flesh were rent with the teeth, and digested like other food, which the Sacramentarians, against the testimony of their conscience, after all our frequent protests, willfully force upon us, and in this way make our doctrine odious to their hearers; and on the other hand, we maintain and believe, **according to the simple words of the testament of Christ**, the true, yet supernatural eating of the body of Christ, as also the drinking of His blood, which human senses and reason do not comprehend, but as in all other articles of faith our reason is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and this mystery is not apprehended otherwise than by faith alone, and revealed in the Word alone.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>62</sup> FC SD VII 48.

- FC SD VII 50: Now, surely there is no interpreter of the words of Jesus Christ as faithful and sure as the Lord Christ Himself, who understands best His words and His heart and opinion, and who is the wisest and most knowing for expounding them; and here, as in the making of His last will and testament and of His ever abiding covenant and union, as elsewhere in all articles of faith, and in the institution of all other signs of the covenant and of grace or sacraments, as circumcision, the various offerings in the Old Testament and Holy Baptism, **He uses not allegorical, but entirely proper, simple, indubitable, and clear words**; and in order that no misunderstanding can occur, He explains them more clearly with the words: Given for you, shed for you.
- FC Ep VII 15: 6. We believe, teach, and confess that the body and blood of Christ are received with the bread and wine, not only spiritually by faith, but also orally; yet not in a Capernaiteic, but in a supernatural, heavenly mode, because of the sacramental union; as the words of Christ **clearly show**, when Christ gives direction to take, eat, and drink, as was also done by the apostles; for it is written Mark 14, 23 : And they all drank of it. St. Paul likewise says, 1 Cor. 10, 16 : The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? that is: He who eats this bread eats the body of Christ, which also the chief ancient teachers of the Church, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Leo I, Gregory, Ambrose, Augustine, unanimously testify.
- LC V 45: And we have, in the first place, the **clear text in the very words of Christ**: *Do this in remembrance of Me*. These are bidding and commanding words by which all who would be Christians are enjoined to partake of this Sacrament. Therefore, whoever would be a disciple of Christ, with whom He here speaks, must also consider and observe this, not from compulsion, as being forced by men, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please Him.

Against the Gospel-reductionism then current in his own church body, Bohlmann writes,

We note that all articles of faith, the sacraments, and Old Testament sacrifices are included within the compass of Biblical clarity. It is therefore not in keeping with the confessional understanding of the clarity of Scripture to limit it primarily

to those passages “which display the teaching of justification by grace through faith in all its force and glory.” As also the earlier citations in this section indicate, the confessions claimed the authority of “clear” Scripture for many other articles and practices as well.<sup>63</sup>

### *The Internal Clarity of the Scriptures in the Confessions*

Luther, Melancthon, Chemnitz, and the other confessors were agreed that the statements of Holy Scripture are fundamentally clear and the Holy Spirit is necessary for us to comprehend the spiritual meaning of its content. “But understanding what the words say is not always the same as spiritually comprehending the truth which God speaks in the Scriptures. For the confessions emphasize that comprehending the Scriptures in this deeper sense means to believe their Christological message, and this is possible only by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>64</sup>

FC SD II 26: Reason and free will are able to a certain extent to live an outwardly decent life; but to be born anew, and to obtain inwardly another heart, mind, and disposition, this only the Holy Ghost effects. **He opens the understanding and heart to understand the Scriptures** and to give heed to the Word, as it is written Luke 24, 45 : Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.

One of God’s significant gifts to the baptized is the gift of biblical interpretation.

LC IV 49: That the Baptism of infants is pleasing to Christ is sufficiently proved from His own work, namely, that God sanctifies many of them who have been thus baptized, and has given them the Holy Ghost; and that there are yet many even today in whom we perceive that they have the Holy Ghost both because of their doctrine and life; as it is also given to us **by the grace of God that we can explain the Scriptures** and come to the knowledge of Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Ghost.

<sup>63</sup> Bohlmann, 59.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

The interpreter of Scripture who permits himself to be guided by the Lutheran Confessions knows that God Himself must enlighten his understanding to believe what God is saying in Holy Scripture. He therefore reads the clear Scriptures of God as one who has the Spirit and expects the Spirit. He needs the Spirit, not because the Scriptures are unclear, but because his own understanding is darkened by sin. Accordingly he recognizes that not even the best of Biblical scholarship can mine the depths of God's saving Word without the Spirit's gift of interpretation.<sup>65</sup>

### **Why isn't the Bible clear to me? What gets in the way of clarity?**

*1. The Bible is an obscure book to those to whom the language of Scripture is altogether unknown or unfamiliar or those who do not understand human language in general.*

“Just so the knowledge of, and familiarity with, the Hebrew and Greek is needed in order to understand the Scriptures in the original tongues. Whoever commands but a meager knowledge of these tongues will find the Scriptures more or less unintelligible. In short, Scripture will be clear to him who, as Luther reminds us, knows the languages and trains himself in the languages by the diligent reading of Scripture.”<sup>66</sup> Knowledge of the biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew is an indispensable necessity for correct understanding and interpretation of the Bible. “As intensely as we love the Gospel,” says Luther, “so intensely let us study the languages.”<sup>67</sup> Diligent reading and study of Scripture is directly enjoined by both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

- Psalm 1:2 – his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.
- Deuteronomy 6:6–9 – And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

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<sup>65</sup> Bohlmann, 63.

<sup>66</sup> Pieper, I: 321.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Schumm, 59.

- John 5:39 – “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”
- Colossians 3:16 – Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
- 1 Timothy 6:3f – If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

2. *The Bible teaches that the Word remains hidden to those who maintain a hostile attitude toward the Scripture in their heart and seek to criticize it by human reason and opinion.*

“More often than not the unbeliever, and frequently even the believer, insofar as he unwittingly still clings to error, lets his own prejudices and misconceptions hinder him in ascertaining even the outward meaning of Scripture. Such failure to understand is, of course, due to sinful depravity of man’s inborn nature. It is not due to Scripture’s lack of clarity.”<sup>68</sup>

- Matthew 11:25 – At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.”
- 2 Corinthians 4:3–4 – And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- Psalm 18:26 – With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.
- John 8:43–47 – “Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of *your*

<sup>68</sup> Lawrenz, 117.

father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." (NKJV)

3. *Scripture remains dark to those whose bias against certain teachings of the Bible keeps them from taking note of the Words of Scripture speaking of these teachings.*

This includes those "who foolishly endeavor to comprehend the divine mysteries by means of their blind reason."<sup>69</sup> An example of this would be the Reformed view of the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, who use human reason to find a "symbol." "For the Reformed who approach Scripture with the axioms that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite and that God does not bid us to believe anything that we cannot comprehend with our reason, the blessed truths bound up with Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper will of necessity be hidden."<sup>70</sup> "Zwingli laid down a principle fully as vicious as that of Rome when he said that God would not ask us to believe impossible things, such as the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. And to this day Reformed Churches make their reason the criterion of accepting or rejecting doctrines clearly taught in Holy Writ, while others overemphasize human ordinances, such as ordination, and make them church-divisive."<sup>71</sup>

Other examples would be the answers given to the question "Is the Bible clear?" by those who hold a Gospel-reductionist, an existential demythologizing, or a divine-human mystery view of Scripture. To the Gospel-reductionist,<sup>72</sup> the Bible is clear *only* in what the gospel promises. To Bultmann and his followers in existential demythologizing,<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Mueller, 141.

<sup>70</sup> Lawrenz, 120.

<sup>71</sup> Schumm, 65.

<sup>72</sup> According to Gospel-reductionism, the Bible's authority is its power to accomplish its purpose for saving mankind. Its authority lies *not* in what it says to us but what it does for us. Kuske, 237.

<sup>73</sup> According to existential demythologizing, the Bible becomes God's Word only in the kerygmatic encounter, the authority of Scripture is only that which is experienced by the individual in his own personal decision of response. Kuske, 236.



the Bible is clear *only* in what it means, not in what it says. To those who hold a divine-human mystery view of Scripture,<sup>74</sup> the Bible is clear *only* where it does not contain disparities.

## Answering the Objections to Perspicuity

*Objection #1: If Scripture is clear, why did God institute the office of the ministry?*

Answer: The purpose for which Christ instituted the ministry was not to make the Bible clear, but to preach the Gospel.<sup>75</sup>

- Mark 16:15–16 – He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (NKJV)
- Matthew 28:19–20 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen. (NKJV)

That God instituted the ministry alongside the clear Scripture shows how earnestly God desires our salvation. While someone may come to faith and persevere in faith by use of the Scriptures only (John 5:39), God has additionally appointed watchmen to watch over our souls, “with doctrine, admonition, reproof, and consolation from Scripture and with Scripture.”<sup>76</sup>

- John 5:39 – “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” (NKJV)
- Hebrews 13:17 – Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. (NKJV)
- Ezekiel 3:18 – When I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked

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<sup>74</sup> In the divine-human mystery view of Scripture, the “authority of Scripture is supposedly upheld” “by setting aside some historical passages that reveal themselves as the human garb in which the absolute truths are clothed.” Kuske, 237.

<sup>75</sup> Mueller, 141.

<sup>76</sup> Pieper, I: 322.

from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. (NKJV)

Furthermore, the clarity of Scripture is “evident from the fact that Christians are able to judge on the basis of Scripture whether pastors are true or false prophets, whether they depart from the Word of the Apostles or continue in it.”<sup>77</sup>

- Matthew 7:15 – “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” (NKJV)
- Romans 16:17 – Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. (NKJV)

*Objection #2: If Scripture is clear, why are there so many different interpretations and denominations within the visible church?*

Answer: Schumm states, “The clearness of Holy Scripture is not disproved by the many different interpretations found among the various denominations and even among orthodox interpreters.”<sup>78</sup> Why not? This disagreement is “not caused by the obscurity of Scripture but by the departure of the theologians from the Word of Scripture and by their substituting for it and peddling their own thoughts concerning God and divine matters and taking these thoughts to market.”<sup>79</sup> In addition, “Many of these differences of interpretation may be due to imperfect knowledge of the language of circumstances on the part of the interpreters; or the exegete may have been guilty of negligent reading, of flighty work; or the cause may lie in some doctrinal error or prejudice held by the interpreter, which makes it difficult or impossible for him to see the clear sense of the passage.”<sup>80</sup>

The faultiness of the argument that different interpretations negate the clarity of the Scripture is demonstrated by Schumm:

It is illogical to use the varying interpretations of the Bible as an argument against its clarity. By the same argument no law passed by any legislature would be clear, for there is no law

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Schumm, 62.

<sup>79</sup> Pieper, I: 323.

<sup>80</sup> Schumm, 63.

which has not been variantly interpreted. And yet we maintain the clarity of many human laws though there are different interpretations. Why charge the Word of the God of truth with lack of clarity merely because human minds differ in the interpretation of this Word? Rather let God be true and every man a liar (Ro 3:4) than deny the clarity of Scripture which God Himself asserts time and again in no uncertain terms.<sup>81</sup>

Luther warns us not to substitute an interpretation or gloss (today we would say “study Bible note”) for words of Scripture themselves: “Be it known, then, that Scripture, without any gloss, is the sun and sole light from which all teachers receive their light, and not the contrary.”<sup>82</sup> As we sing in “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” “The Word they still shall let remain.” “It is characteristic of the Lutheran Church that it does not base its doctrine on any exegesis, not even the exegesis of Luther, but on the bare words of Scripture, while the Papists and the Reformed in all doctrines in which they differ from the Lutheran Church do not stand on the word of Scripture, but on an ‘exegesis’ of the Pope, Zwingli, Calvin, etc.”<sup>83</sup>

*Objection #3: If the Word of God is clear, then why are there difficult passages in the Bible?*

Answer: “The clarity of Scripture does not imply that there are no passages which appear dark to us or which we are unable to explain to our own satisfaction. The reason for this darkness lies not in our Bible or in the supposition that God failed to express Himself with sufficient clarity. It lies in the human reader.”<sup>84</sup>

Several factors may lead to a passage being difficult for the reader. It could be that the reader is too far removed from the people to whom the words were originally addressed. The reader may be ignorant of historical, geographical, and social conditions, events and customs, existing at the time the sacred texts were written.<sup>85</sup> “There are passages, which, though clear in themselves and perfectly intelligible to those who first heard or read them when they were written, are difficult to us in one point or another because we no longer possess the exact meaning of this

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Pieper, I: 323.

<sup>83</sup> Pieper, I: 323.

<sup>84</sup> Schumm, 61.

<sup>85</sup> Kolander, 24.

or that term in the original language.”<sup>86</sup> “Many difficulties arise because readers fail to explain a dark passage in the light of a clear one. They neglect to keep on reading and thus do not allow the Scripture to solve the difficulty.”<sup>87</sup>

“How then shall we deal with passages that are difficult and seemingly unclear?” While this may be tempting to do, we are not automatically to turn to some outside resource to see how experts in the field have interpreted these passages and then select from differing interpretations the one that seems most logical.<sup>88</sup> This would violate a basic rule of interpretation: “When reading the Scripture, we must allow the Scripture to interpret itself.” “The dark passages very frequently become clear to us by further study of the Bible. There are enough clear passages in the Bible to cast a light on many passages we did not understand at the first reading.”<sup>89</sup> “We need to let Scripture explain Scripture, to compare Scripture with Scripture, considering all texts in Scripture teaches any certain truth.”<sup>90</sup> Doing this, we will seek to “clarify all passages which are unclear to us through careful and patient study of the Word itself.”<sup>91</sup> When we read and keep on reading, comparing Scripture with Scripture, in most instances the difficulties will then be clarified.<sup>92</sup>

When we come across passages that are unclear to us, “they must never be made to conflict with other clear statements of God’s Word.”<sup>93</sup> “Never must our interpretation of dark passages, of symbolic prophecies, of figurative language, conflict with clearly revealed truths.”<sup>94</sup>

For example, Revelation 20 may not be interpreted as referring to a 1,000-year reign of Christ here on earth, before the end of the world, during which time the church will be granted great glory and prosperity. Revelation 20 in its intended sense is speaking in figures and symbols and must be interpreted in light of what Scripture teaches elsewhere regarding Christ’s Kingdom and the Last Days. Christ’s kingdom is spiritual and not temporal. “Nowhere does Scripture teach that Christ will reign over a visible kingdom here on earth.”<sup>95</sup> As Jesus told Pontius Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this

<sup>86</sup> Lawrenz, 119.

<sup>87</sup> Kolander, 24.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>89</sup> Schumm, 62.

<sup>90</sup> Lawrenz, 117.

<sup>91</sup> Kolander, 25.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Schumm, 62.

<sup>95</sup> Kolander, 25.

world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36). Jesus prophesies that suffering and persecution, not glory and prosperity, will be the lot of His church on earth during the days preceding the end of the world (Mark 13; Luke 17 and 21).

When we are unable to understand a passage, we should pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and help. Such a prayer is, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (Psalm 119:18). This prayer is “not asking the Holy Spirit to make His Word clear; it is clear. Rather, we are petitioning Him to enlighten our understanding through the Scriptures themselves.”<sup>96</sup>

If a passage remains unclear to us even after careful and diligent searching, “it is best to admit the difficulty and to hope that it may become clear sometime in the future. If it does not become clear this side of eternity, it will be clearer hereafter.”<sup>97</sup> It is better to admit “I don’t know” than to engage in idle speculation, which would be a great injustice to God’s Word. To “put our own interpretation on its language and boast of having discovered a new and important truth ... would not be interpreting God’s Word but forcing one’s own opinion and fancy and error upon the sacred Word of the Holy God.”<sup>98</sup>

We should take comfort in knowing that “All truths necessary for us to know are clearly revealed to us” and “The dark passages are placed into the Bible to keep us humble, to make us realize our own ignorance and helplessness in matters divine, to test our willingness to confess that God is wiser than we, and learn to wait for full understanding in the realms of love.”<sup>99</sup>

“Those who call the clarity of Scripture into question on the grounds that many portions of Scripture have been and continue to be misunderstood, have to face the fact that this argument practically rules out the existence of any clear statement.”<sup>100</sup> “Such passages do not disprove the perspicuity of Scripture since the doctrines of salvation are taught with great clarity.”<sup>101</sup>

Luther states, “If you encounter an obscure passage in Scripture, do not doubt that it certainly contains the same truth which is elsewhere

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Schumm, 62.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Lawrenz, 120.

<sup>101</sup> Mueller, 142.

stated in clear language.”<sup>102</sup> Luther advises, “If you cannot understand the obscure, then stay with the clear.”<sup>103</sup> Augustine states, “For hardly anything is derived from those obscure passages but what is stated elsewhere most clearly.”<sup>104</sup>

*Objection #4: How can Scripture be clear when it contains teachings that human reason cannot comprehend?*

Answer: The Bible indeed teaches many “mysteries,” beyond human understanding. These include the Holy Trinity, the personal union of the divine and human natures in Christ, and the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. Though these remain a mystery to our human reason, “beyond the grasp of the human intellect,” “even these facts, incomprehensible to narrow human reason, are so clearly revealed in Scripture that faith, which relies on the Word of Scripture, can comprehend them.”<sup>105</sup> “These mysteries are indeed beyond the grasp of human reason, but they are taught in language so plain that it is intelligible even to a normal child.”<sup>106</sup> “When we speak of the clearness of Scriptures, we do not mean to say that our intellect can fully understand, our reason can fully fathom, all doctrines revealed to us in the Bible.”<sup>107</sup>

Paul definitely says that such intellectual comprehension is impossible.

1 Corinthians 2:7–11 – But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: “*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*” But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (NKJV)

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<sup>102</sup> St. L. V: 338, quoted in Pieper, I: 324.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Pieper, I: 324.

<sup>105</sup> Pieper, I: 326.

<sup>106</sup> Mueller, 142.

<sup>107</sup> Schumm, 61.

From the time of the Enlightenment to the present, there has been a tendency among modern scholars to reject any teachings of the Bible that do not harmonize with human reason or to even edit them out of the Bible. Kuske responds, “Miracles by definition are events that transcend human understanding. But if one fails to grasp the one intended sense, there is one thing that this failure does not give him a right to do. It does not give him the license to deny the clarity of Scripture and then give the words a different meaning.”<sup>108</sup>

Matthew 11:25–27 – At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.” (NKJV)

*Objection #5: How can the Scriptures be clear, when the Bible itself admits that there are passages that are difficult?*

Several Scripture passages have been used to call into question the perspicuity of Scripture and to practically destroy the authority of Scripture. An example is 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (NKJV).

Answer: The contrast here is between our knowledge of God and divine things in this life and that in eternal life. The verse “does not speak of Holy Scripture but of our knowledge of God and divine truth, which now is mediate and imperfect, but which in heaven will be immediate and perfect. Hence also this passage does not disprove the perspicuity of Scripture.”<sup>109</sup>

Another passage used to question the perspicuity of Scripture is 2 Peter 3:15–18:

...and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation— as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to

<sup>108</sup> Kuske, 72.

<sup>109</sup> Mueller, 142.

understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen. (NKJV)

Answer: As Quenstedt points out, this passage does not say *all* things but *some* things in Paul's letters are hard to understand. The context shows what kind of things they are: the Last Things, the destruction of this universe, and the new heaven and the new earth; things that will come to pass on Judgment Day and thereafter are difficult to understand things, mysteries for us. "When Scripture does speak of such things, we have all the more reason to note with the greatest of care just what Scripture does say and does not say so that we do not fall into the pitfalls of the unlearned and unstable, or wrestling Scripture, of doing violence to it."<sup>110</sup> What Paul says is that these mysterious things are "wrested" and "perverted" not by intelligent and well-read Christians but by the "unlearned" and "unstable." The criticism here is not raised against Paul's epistles or against Scripture but against their abuse by the unlearned and unstable.<sup>111</sup> [LSQ](#)

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<sup>110</sup> Lawrenz, 120.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



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# The Formula of Concord in Light of the Overwhelming Arminianism of American Christianity

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**C**ONCLUDING A UNITED STATES LECTURE tour, Dietrich Bonhoeffer deftly summarized American Protestantism in 1936 as “Protestantism without the Reformation.”

God has granted American Christianity no Reformation. He has given it strong revivalist preachers, churchmen and theologians, but no Reformation of the church of Jesus Christ by the Word of God.... American theology and the American church as a whole have never been able to understand the meaning of “criticism” by the Word of God and all that it signifies. Right to the last they do not understand that God’s “criticism” touches even religion, the Christianity of the church and the sanctification of Christians, and that God has founded his church beyond ethics. In American theology, Christianity is essentially religion and ethics.... Because of this the person and work of Christ, must for theology, sink in the background and in the long run remain misunderstood, because it is not recognized as the sole ground of radical judgment and radical forgiveness.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Protestantism without the Reformation,” in *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes, 1928–1936*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (London: Collins, 1965), 92–118.

Robert Jensen suggests that Bonhoeffer's critique of American Protestantism also aptly sums up what the famous author of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741), Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), rebuked as Arminianism in his 1734 sermons, *Justification by Faith Alone* and the *Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners*, which sparked the “Awakening” in Northampton, Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> Jensen goes on to argue that what Edwards describes as Arminianism “was the Christian version—then there was no other—of the American culture-religion,” that has assumed a myriad of seeming contradictory forms in its evolution within the cultural context of American religion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Perry Miller, et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957–), 22:400–418, 19:144–243, 19:337–77 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Jensen writes, “In Edwards’ use, and that of New England generally, it was not necessarily advocacy of the particular principles of the Dutch theologian, Jacob Arminius, but rather a religious and theological mood of which Arminius has been the most notorious instance in Puritan memory. Broadly, ‘Arminianism,’ was New England’s name for a kind of religion that appeared in all times and places of the church, and has other times been known as ‘semi-Pelagianism,’ ‘synergism,’ etc. ‘Arminianism’ is our inevitable self-serving interpretation of human responsibility over against God’s mercy, according to which, if we are blessed it is at least partially because we have chosen and labored to be, while when we suffer God is suddenly invoked for our unilateral rescue. But what Edwards called ‘Arminianism’ should be seen as a somewhat more specific phenomenon, the particularly American form of this religion. What Edwards called ‘Arminianism’ has perhaps never been more succinctly described than by Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s phrase for American religion: ‘Protestantism without the Reformation.’ Edwards’ ‘Arminianism’ was the Christian version—then there was no other—of the American culture-religion. It had and has many sects. The first to become theologically aware, whose dogma may perhaps be stated. ‘God never violates human personality,’ is that which rules ‘mainline’ Protestantism and found its first self-conscious statement in the writing of... [Edwards’] contemporaries. Another sort of ‘Arminianism’ ruled the experience of those in Edward’s congregation who eventually obtained his dismissal. This is the religion of achievers; since the Civil War its dogma has regularly been made explicit in the collocation of God and capitalism as defining ‘American individual freedom.’ At present, perhaps the most pervasive churchly ‘Arminianism’ is that of those in all denominations who conceived of faith on the model of therapy. Among those who intend to remain faithful to original American evangelical Christianity, it is regularly—a notable irony!—their version of revival that embodies yet another Arminianism. And where American religiosity is not entirely disencumbered of the gospel, there appears the distilled Arminianism of the religiously assisted quest for self-fulfillment. But what, univocally, was ‘Arminianism’? It was Protestantism without the Reformation. It was the assimilation of Protestant protest against spiritual bondage to Enlightenment protest against religious authority, that is, given the situation in the eighteenth century, against precisely the most specific elements of Christianity. ‘Arminianism’ was Protestantism carried not by the Reformation’s demand for greater fidelity to the gospel’s radically upsetting promises, but by the exactly opposite concern, that the promises not upset bourgeois satisfaction. ‘Arminianism’ was and is the religion whose first question over against the gospel of God’s act is, ‘But what is *our* part?’ and over against the divine

After surveying contemporary Evangelicalism in his *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church*, Michael Horton largely resonates with Bonhoeffer's critique of American Christianity as well. He uses Bonhoeffer's assessment of American Christianity as a call to return to Reformation theology as well as a call to resist the American church's captivity to a "moralistic, therapeutic deism."<sup>4</sup> Can Orthodox Lutheranism then afford to disregard this invitation to proclaim an alternative to the Arminianism of cultural American Christianity when there is such a resounding cry for a return to Reformation theology from voices even beyond the pale of Confessional Lutheranism?

The title assigned for this conference paper was *Formula of Concord II in Light of the Overwhelming Arminianism of American Christianity*.<sup>5</sup> But one can already see that the term *Arminianism* has been used in a number of different ways and that FC II cannot address every aspect of Arminianism, both for historical and systematic reasons. This paper then will focus on two questions. The first question is what is Arminianism and how has it developed in America? The second question is how does the FC help American Lutherans address the tenets of Arminianism?

Jacobus Arminius (Jacob Harmensz or Hermanszoon; 1559–1609)<sup>6</sup> was a Reformed cleric in Amsterdam from 1583–1603, a professor of

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law that judges our acts is, "But surely God will not hold us so strictly accountable?" 'Arminianism' was a 'Protestant principle' mustered not on behalf of threatened 'catholic substance' but rather for the further mitigation of its offensive promise and demands." See *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 53–55.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 237–239. See also the discussion about the rise of "The New Calvinism" in "10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now," *Time* (March 12, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> All reference to original texts of the Lutheran Confessions are made on the basis of the critical edition, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 11th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). All English translations of the Lutheran Confessions are taken from Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). The standard abbreviations for the Lutheran Confessions can be found in the latter, xi–xii.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971); Carl Bangs, "Arminius, Jacobus," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1:72–73; Paul Merritt Bassett, "Arminianism," in *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, ed. Hans Joachim Hillerbrand (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1:152–66; Benjamin J. Kaplan, "Arminius, Jacobus," in *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New

theology at the University of Leiden from 1603–9, and the rallying point for a modified Reformed theology over against the Calvinism that was prevailing in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>7</sup> Born in Oudewater near Utrecht in Holland, the theological context of Arminius' youth was broadly Reformed, but not strictly Calvinist.<sup>8</sup> Upon the death of his father, his education was overseen by two of his mother's cousins, first by Theodorus Aemilius (d. 1574) and then by Rudolphus Snellius (1546–1613). The latter taught Ramist logic, a simpler, deductive, and visual alternative to Aristotelian dialectic, in the arts faculty of the University of Marburg, the university of a now confessionally mediating Church of Hesse.<sup>9</sup> Here Arminius began his early university formation in 1574. The next year, he briefly went home after learning that Spanish

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York: Routledge, 2004), 1:166–168; Keith D. Stanglin, "Arminius and Arminianism: An Overview of Current Research," in *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60–1609)*, ed. Th. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Standlin, and Marijke Tolsma (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 3–24.

<sup>7</sup> The standard editions of Arminius' collected writings are Jacobus Arminius, *Opera Theologica* (Leiden: Godfrey Basson, 1629); Jacobus Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996). The former contains Latin translations of a number of Dutch texts. All citations will be made from the latter, which is a translation of the former, but includes more writings and primary source material. The most recent studies of Arminius' theology are Richard Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991); William Gene Witt, "Creation, Redemption and Grace in the Theology of Jacob Arminius" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993); E. Stuart Clarke, *The Ground of Election: Jacobus Arminius; Doctrine of the Work and Person of Christ* (Waynesboro: Paternoster, 2006); Keith D. Stanglin, *Arminius on the Assurance of Salvation: The Context, Roots, and Shape of the Leiden Debate, 1603–1609* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Th. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Standlin, and Marijke Tolsma, eds. *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/50–1609)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), William den Boer, *God's Twofold Love: The Theology of Jacob Arminius (1559–1609)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Alistair Duke, "The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism in the Netherlands, 1561–1618," in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 109–134.

<sup>9</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). Interestingly enough the Swabian Lutheran theologian, Aegidius Hunnius (1550–1603), who would come to coin the term *intuitu fidei*, would soon be called as theology professor at Marburg (1576–92). The net result of his attempts to shore up its Lutheranism was a Calvinist Hesse-Kassel and Lutheran Hesse-Darmstadt. Ultimately Hunnius helped reorganize the Wittenberg theology faculty after the Second Crypto-Calvinist Controversy. See Markus Matthias, *Theologie und Konfession: Der Beitrag von Aegidius Hunnius (1550–1603) zur Entstehung einer lutherischen Religionskultur* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004).

soldiers had slaughtered his entire family, but then returned to Marburg. In 1576, Arminius left Germany and became the twelfth student to matriculate at the newly founded University of Leiden (1575). At the same time, one of its lecturers, Caspar Coolhaes (c. 1534–1609), was embroiled in an ecclesiological controversy with the advancing Genevan theology in Holland, because of his support for the early Dutch Reformed Church's Erastian church polity, a position that Arminius shared.<sup>10</sup> After six years of study, Arminius came to the attention of the Amsterdam merchants' guild, who awarded him a grant to complete his education abroad, provided that he promise to return and serve the church of that city, which had only recently been reformed (1578). As a result, he attended the Genevan Academy between 1582–87, where he studied under Theodore Beza (Théodore de Bèze; 1516–1605), who was John Calvin's (Jean Calvin; 1509–64) successor, a French humanist with a penchant for Aristotelianism, as well as a father of supralapsarian double predestination.<sup>11</sup> However, the theological position in Geneva was still somewhat fluid at this time, because it was not Arminius' theology, but his Ramism that caused him conflict with the Aristotelian faculty. What is more, Beza would ultimately give Arminius a positive letter of recommendation.<sup>12</sup> At Geneva, Arminius became friends with

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<sup>10</sup> Bassett, "Arminianism," 1:154–155. Erastian church polity stressed the civil control of the church and was typical of Reformed Zurich, Lutheran Württemberg, and the Reformed Palatinate. Presbyterian church polity stressed ecclesiastical control of the church and was typical of Reformed Basel, Reformed Strasburg, and Reformed Geneva.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Muller opposes the idea that predestination functions as "a 'central dogma' or fundamental constructive principle in Reformed theology." He maintains this position with respect to Calvin's generally infralapsarian double predestination with supralapsarian accents, Beza's more developed supralapsarian form of double predestination, and the even more developed form of supralapsarian double predestination of William Perkins that helped bring about the Arminian Controversy. That being said, he also insists that infralapsarianism was the norm in Reformed theology. To explain further, predestination can be described in terms of double (God decrees election and reprobation) and single predestination (God decrees election only) as well as supralapsarian (God's decree of election [and reprobation] preceded the decree of the fall) and infralapsarian predestination (God's decree of election [and reprobation] succeeded the decree of the fall). See Muller's "Predestination" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3:332–338 and his *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:126–129.

<sup>12</sup> Carl Bangs has argued that there is little evidence that Arminius ever held to Beza's supralapsarian double predestination, rather than his own conception of conditional predestination. See Bangs, *A Study*, 138–141. Theodore Beza wrote the city council of Amsterdam, "God has gifted him (Arminius) with an apt intellect both as respects the appreciation and discrimination of things. If this henceforth be regulated by piety,



Johannes Wtenbogaert (Jan Uytenbogaert; 1557–1664), who would become his own immediate theological successor. During this period, Arminius studied at Basel and Padua, and visited Zurich and Rome as well. Interestingly enough this visit to Rome would later be used to discredit his theology as papist.

In 1587 Arminius was installed as the minister of the Old Church (*Oude Kerk*) of Amsterdam, and became a favorite of the merchant oligarchy. Suspensions soon began to arise about his orthodoxy.<sup>13</sup> First he failed to refute two written challenges to supralapsarian double predestination, even when the Amsterdam ecclesiastical senate petitioned him to refute the second one. Then he affirmed a more optimistic anthropology in sermons arguing that Romans 7 was speaking about man under the law or prior to conversion.<sup>14</sup> Next he charged that Calvin's position on double predestination necessitated sin in a letter exchange with Leiden theology professor, Franciscus Junius (1545–1602).<sup>15</sup> In another attempted letter exchange, he questioned the basis of the supralapsarian double predestination of the Cambridge Puritan, William Perkins (1558–1602), who had attacked the synergism of the Melanchthonian Danish Lutheran, Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600).<sup>16</sup>

... it cannot but happen that his power of intellect, ... will be productive of the richest fruits." Cited in Th. Marius van Leeuwen, "Introduction: Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe," in *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60–1609)*, ed. Th. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Standlin, and Marijke Tolsma (Leiden: Brill, 2009), xi.

<sup>13</sup> For a good overview of the Arminian Controversy in the context of Reformed theology, see Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 300–316.

<sup>14</sup> See Arminius' posthumously published "Dissertation on the True and Genuine Sense of the Seventh Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," reprinted in *The Writings*, 2:471–683 and his "Analysis of the Ninth Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," reprinted in *The Writings*, 3:485–519. They express the logic of his sermons.

<sup>15</sup> See Arminius' posthumously published "A Friendly Conference of James Arminius, the Illustrious Doctor of Sacred Theology, with Mr. Francis Junius, about Predestination, Carried on by Means of Letters," reprinted in *The Writings*, 3:1–248. In truth Calvin is not systematically consistent on the question of supralapsarianism or infralapsarianism. For some supralapsarian statements by John Calvin, see I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 17; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.23.

<sup>16</sup> See Arminius' posthumously published "Dr. James Arminius's Modest Examination of a Pamphlet, which that Very Learned Divine, William Perkins, Published Some Years Ago, on the Mode and Order of Predestination, and on the Amplitude of Divine Grace," reprinted in *The Writings*, 3:249–484. Melanchthonian Lutheranism would play a role in Arminius' defense of himself as well. See *The Writings*, 1:640–643.

In 1602, two seats in the theology faculty at University of Leiden opened. After an extensive negotiation, the university curators selected a man from each of the emerging ecclesial parties. Arminius was then appointed as Junius' successor, *professor ordinarius*, and Leiden's first Dutch theology professor in 1603. He earned his doctorate under his colleague, Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641) that same year. The subsequent year, Arminius conducted disputations that taught a conception of single predestination founded on Christ and connected with faith.<sup>17</sup> In response, Gomarus reaffirmed supralapsarian double predestination in a public disputation held on October 31, 1604 and attacked Arminius' concept of election for diminishing God's role in election. The university, in turn, split between Gomarists and Arminians, and soon the theological controversy would manifest itself in political unrest. In his final February 1606 rectoral address, Arminius made an Erastian appeal to the civil authorities to convene a synod, where the controversy could be decided on the basis of the Scriptures alone. But this move was regarded to be a challenge to the symbols of Holland and Calvinist church polity, which opposed state interference in ecclesiastical matters.<sup>18</sup> When attempts to convene a national synod came to an impasse, Arminius and Gomarus were called to present their views to the States of Holland and West Friesland. There Arminius gave his *Declaration of His Sentiments with Respect to the Predestination* on October 30, 1608. In this succinct but guarded summation of his core theology, he articulated in four decrees his own mature conception of a conditional, infralapsarian, and single predestination grounded in the foreknowledge of a man's synergistic cooperation with prevenient grace and perseverance in grace.<sup>19</sup> The Leiden theology professor proceeded to

<sup>17</sup> Arminius, "On Divine Predestination," reprinted in *The Writings*, 2:226–30. See also his "On the Free Will of Man and its Powers," reprinted in *The Writings* 2:189–96.

<sup>18</sup> Arminius, "On Reconciling Religious Dissensions Among Christians," reprinted in *The Writings*, 1:434–541. The Belgic Confession (1561) and Heidelberg Catechism (1563) had been made normative by the 1571 Emden and 1574 Dordrecht Synods. While both confessions affirm justification by faith alone, only the Belgic Confession really treats election. However, its 16th article only speaks of an infralapsarian single predestination. The official French text and an English translation of the Belgic Confession can be found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 3:383–436. The official German text and an English translation of the Heidelberg Catechism can be found in Schaff, *The Creeds*, 3:307–355.

<sup>19</sup> Arminius writes, "I. The First absolute decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful men, is that by which he decreed to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest, and King, who might destroy sin by his own death, might by his obedience obtain the salvation which had been lost, and might communicate it by



insist that God is not the author of evil in his discussion of providence. In the sections dealing with free will, grace, and justification, he avoided Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism,<sup>20</sup> but assigned to the human will certain powers or a capacity to cooperate in its conversion, although only when prompted by prevenient grace.<sup>21</sup> The perseverance of the saints

his own virtue. II. The Second precise and absolute decree of God is that in which he decreed to receive into favor *those who repent and believe*, and, in Christ, for His sake and through Him, to effect the salvation of such penitents and believers as preserved to the end; but to leave in sin and under wrath, *all impenitent persons and unbelievers*, and do damn them as aliens from Christ. III. The Third Divine decree is that by which God decreed to administer *in a sufficient and efficacious manner* the means which were necessary for repentance and faith; and to have such administration instituted (1.) according to the *Divine Wisdom*, by which God knows what is proper and becoming both to his mercy and his severity, and (2.) according to Divine Justice, by which He is prepared to adopt whatever his wisdom may prescribe and put in execution. IV. To these succeeds the Fourth decree, which God is decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, which he knew from all eternity those individuals who, *would* through his preventing [i.e., prevenient] grace, *believe*, and, through his subsequent grace *would persevere*, according to the before described administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who *would not believe and persevere*." See *The Writings*, 1:653–654. Note that this translation is based on a Latin translation of the original Dutch oration. The Latin translation was not produced by Arminius and some dispute has arisen about its accuracy. Unfortunately this author was not able to consult or read the current Dutch critical edition of this text, *Verklaring van Jacobus Arminius, afgelegd in de vergadering van de Staten van Holland op 30 Oktober, 1608*, ed. G. J. Hoenderdaal (Lochem, 1960). Note that Arminius also favored universal atonement. See *The Writings*, 2:9–10.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Muller once asserted that Arminius' position is Semi-Pelagian in his *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 294. However, Arminius never seems to posit that the will can initiate conversion without grace. Moreover, Arminius did reject the Nominalist's Semi-Pelagian soteriological axiom, "God will not deny his grace to anyone who does what is in him." See *The Writings*, 2:19–20. Pelagianism denies original sin and presupposes that man can be saved without grace. Semi-Pelagianism affirms a sort of original sin, presupposes that man can initiate his conversion, but maintains that God must cooperate by supplying him grace. Synergism also affirms a version of original sin, but maintains that God must initiate man's conversion, although man must cooperate with God's grace. See FC Ep II, 9–11; FC SD II, 74–77.

<sup>21</sup> "But in his *lapsed and sinful state*, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and in all his powers, by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to understand, esteem, consider, will, and perform whatever is truly good. When he is made a partaker of this regeneration or renovation, I consider that, since he is delivered from sin, he is capable of thinking, willing, and doing that which is good, but yet *not without the continued aids of Divine Grace*." See *The Writings*, 1:659–660. "Because grace is so attempted and

was affirmed, but he confessed that he had some strong doubts about it.<sup>22</sup> Arminius pointed to the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit as grounds for the assurance of salvation. The possibility of the perfection of believers in this life on the basis of grace was left an open question.<sup>23</sup> He defended a sort of subordinationism that Christ was only *autotheos* in the sense that he “is truly God,” but not in the sense that he “is God of himself.”<sup>24</sup> Finally, he proposed a revision of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. The following year Arminius died. His chair was assumed by Conrad Vorstius (1569–1622), an Arminian who came to be suspected of Socinianism.

Three months after his death, around forty-three Arminian ministers gathered at Gouda (January 1610) to draft five articles of faith called the 1610 *Remonstrance*, which resonated with Arminius’ own theology. The confession’s chief author was Johannes Wtenbogaert. The Calvinists soon responded with the *Counter-Remonstrance*. Henceforth

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commingled with the nature of man, as not to destroy within him the liberty of his will, but to give it a right direction, to correct its depravity, and to allow man to possess his own proper motions.” See *The Writings*, 1:629. See also Arminius, *The Writings*, 1:700–701. Note also that Arminius shows some sympathy with the position levied against him that, “in every nation, all infants who die without [having committed] actual sins, are saved.” See *The Writings*, 2:10–14.

<sup>22</sup> “Though I here openly and ingenuously affirm, I never taught that a *true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith, and perish*, yet I will not conceal, that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect; and those answers to them which I have been permitted to see, are not of such kind as to approve themselves on all points to my understanding. On the other hand, certain passages are produced for the contrary doctrine [of Unconditional Perseverance] which are worthy of much consideration.” See *The Writings*, 1:667.

<sup>23</sup> “... it is reported, that I entertain sentiments on this subject [perfection of believers in this life] which are very improper, and nearly allied to those of the Pelagians, viz. ‘that it is possible for the regenerate in this life perfectly to keep God’s precepts.’ To this I reply, though these might have been my sentiment, yet I ought not on this account to be considered a Pelagian, either partly or entirely,—provided I had only added that ‘they could do this by the grace of Christ, and by no means without it.’ But while I never asserted, that a *believer could perfectly keep the precepts of Christ in this life*, I never denied it, but always left it as a matter which has still to be decided.” See *The Writings*, 1:673–678.

<sup>24</sup> “At a disputation held one afternoon in the University, when the Thesis that had been proposed for disputation was *the Divinity of the Son of God*, one of the students happened to object, ‘that the Son of God was *autotheos* [“God in his own right”], and that he therefore had his essence from himself and not from the Father.’— In reply to this I observed, ‘that the word *autotheos* was capable of two different acceptations, since it might signify either “one who is truly God,” or “one who is God of himself”; and that it was with great propriety and correctness attributed to the Son of God according to the former signification, but not the latter.’” See *The Writings*, 1:691.

Arminians were known as the Remonstrants and Calvinists as the Counter-Remonstrants. For this reason, the 1610 *Remonstrance* and the writings of Arminius came to represent Classical Arminianism.<sup>25</sup> The 1610 *Remonstrance* taught a conditional, infralapsarian, and single predestination grounded in Christ and in the foreknowledge of a man's synergistic acceptance of and perseverance in grace (I). The *Remonstrance* affirmed universal atonement, but asserts that only the believer enjoyed the fruits of it (II). It opposed Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, but affirmed a more optimistic anthropology than Calvinism, insofar as man possessed the capacity once activated by prevenient grace to cooperate in his conversion (III). The confession rejected irresistible grace (IV), and retained the perseverance of the saints with some reservations about its biblical foundations (V).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The Calvinist Church historian, Richard Muller, has called for "a new perspective on Arminius' theology." He argues that Arminius' theology is more than a modified doctrine of predestination, but "a full-scale alternative to Reformed theology." He has also identified a subordinationist tendency in his Christology and pointed out that some Remonstrants had Socinian tendencies. See Muller, *God, Creation*, 271; Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 3:87, 3:96, 3:324–332; Richard Muller, "The Christological Problem in the Thought of Jacobus Arminius," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 68 (1988): 145–163. The Arminian apologist, Roger Olsen, conversely has argued that Classical Arminianism is an orthodox system that "is not incommensurable with the Reformed tradition," "even if Arminianism should not be included under the rubric 'Reformed.'" Above all he maintains that Classical Arminianism is neither Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian, but he does acknowledge that many Arminians have become liberal and Semi-Pelagian if not Pelagian. Still he insists that Arminius cannot be blamed for this any more than Calvin can be blamed for Schleiermacher. See Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove; IVP Academic, 2006), 45, 23–24. See also Roger Olsen, "Don't Hate Me Because I'm An Arminian," *Christianity Today* (September 9, 1999); 87–94.

<sup>26</sup> The official Dutch edition of 1610 *Five Arminian Articles* or the *Remonstrance* can be found in Schaff, *The Creeds*, 3:545–549. This edition omits the preface, five negative articles, and conclusion, but includes a Latin and English translation. The five articles read as follows, "I. That God, by an eternal and unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the Gospel in John 3:36: 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,' and according to other passages of Scripture also. II. That agreeably thereunto, Jesus Christ the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel

Theological and political tensions were now heating up and the country would soon be on the brink of civil war. The Remonstrants found support in the States of Holland's Grand Pensionary, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547–1619). But the Grand Pensionary did not see eye to eye with the Prince of Orange, Maurits van Nassau (1567–1625), who served as Stadtholder of Holland and the Zeeland as well as the captain- and admiral-general over the army and navy of the provinces. Oldenbarnevelt's signing of the Twelve Year Truce (1609–1621) with Habsburg Spain, moreover, not only irritated Maurits van Nassau, but it also bolstered rumors that Arminianism was a papist plot. In 1617, the Calvinists won Maurits van Nassau to their side. He would provoke Oldenbarnevelt, have him executed, and then facilitate a national synod. The Synod of Dordrecht was convened from November 1618–May 1619, met for 180 sessions, consisted of 100 theologians, and included 25 foreign representatives. The successor of Gomarus at Leiden, Simon

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of John 3:16, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And in the First Epistle of 1 John 2:2: 'And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' III. That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, John 15:5, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' IV. That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and cooperative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements, that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ, but respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible; inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. Acts 7, and elsewhere in many places. V. That those who are incorporated into Christ by true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory; it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by no craft or power of Satan, can be misled nor plucked out of Christ's hands, according to the Word of Christ, John 10:28: 'Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginning of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds."

Episcopius (1583–1643), was now the leader of the Remonstrants, but he and the rest of the Remonstrant representatives were refused a seat at the synod and were considered to be on trial. The synod drew up the Canons of Dordrecht. This refutation of Arminian theology is customarily summarized with the nineteenth-century Calvinist acronym T (total depravity), U (unconditional [infralapsarian double] election), L (limited atonement), I (irresistible grace), and P (perseverance of the saints).<sup>27</sup>

In the aftermath of the Synod of Dordrecht, “Arminianism” would spread to England and New England. At this time Arminianism became an umbrella concept for a number of Anti-Calvinist ideas, which largely evolved in a liberal direction under the influence of Enlightenment thought. The Remonstrants were suppressed until the death of Maurits van Nassau. Thereafter the Remonstrants would achieve a tolerated status, establish a school in Amsterdam, and issue the 1621 *Arminian Confession*.<sup>28</sup> Theologically speaking, the Remonstrant lawyer, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), would come to develop a moral governmental theory of atonement, which maintained against Socinianism that Christ suffered to preserve God’s justice, but that he did not suffer the punishment of all human sin. Later the Remonstrant theologian, Philipp van Limborch (1633–1712), would take Arminianism in a Semi-Pelagian direction that foreshadowed liberal theology.<sup>29</sup> English Arminianism began as a movement independent of Arminius. For instance Cambridge Professor, Peter Baro (1534–99), had already expressed a conception of a conditional election based on foreseen faith in a 1596 letter to his Lutheran friend Niels Hemmingsen. However, Stephan Hampton explains further,

The Arminianism of the post-Reformation period was a far more formidable beast than it had been in the early part of the seventeenth century. The systematizing and publishing efforts

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<sup>27</sup> The official Latin edition of 1618–19 the *Canons of the Synod of Dortrecht* along with an abridged English translation can be found in Schaff, *The Creeds*, 3:550–597.

<sup>28</sup> For an original Latin text with English translation see, Mark A. Ellis, *The Arminian Confession of 1621* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2005). Even though the Arminians issued this confession, given their past experiences, they were hesitant to make it binding in any enforceable manner and tended towards biblicism.

<sup>29</sup> Hugo Grotius, *Defensio Fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christi adversus Faustum Socinimum* (Leiden: Patius, 1617). Philipp van Limborch’s Latin dogmatics was soon translated in English as *A Compleat System, or Body of Divinity: Both Speculative and Practical, founded on Scripture and Reason*, trans. John Wilkins and William Jones (London: J. Taylor and A. Bell, 1702).

of Simon Episcopius, Hugo Grotius, Etienne de Courcelles, and Philip van Limborch meant that Arminian Anglicans could call upon theological resources of immense sophistication and subtlety, resources already tempered by half a century of debate with their reformed opponents. Indeed, it is probably fair to say that the later Stuart period is as decisively shaped by the advent of this new, systematic form of Arminianism, as it is by the Reformed reaction to such thinking. After the Restoration, there was a much more explicit alliance between English and continental European Arminianism than there had been in the days of Lancelot Andrewes and William Laud.... Despite the active opposition of several primates, despite the increasing influence of systematic Arminian thinking, despite its polemically disadvantageous associations with lawlessness, rebellion, and regicide, the reformed tradition retained a significant level of support within the Church of England well into the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

In Colonial New England, Puritan Congregationalism, much like their English counterparts, complained about what they deemed to be Arminian theology. Eventually some Congregationalists, like Charles Chauncy (1705–87), came to profess a liberal Semi-Pelagian universalism that stigmatized Arminian theology as inherently liberal.<sup>31</sup>

In context of the Great Awakenings, Arminianism would follow a different trajectory and emerge as the predominant form of Evangelicalism,<sup>32</sup> if not a fundamental component of American Civil

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<sup>30</sup> Stephan Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 271, 274. See also Peter Baro's letter to Niels Hemmingsen, reprinted in Arminius, *Writings*, 1:91–100.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations, Made Manifest by the Gospel Revelation: or, The Salvation of All Men* (London: Charles Dilly, 1784). See also Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 151–165, 280–313, 388–402; E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 25–156.

<sup>32</sup> In the sixteenth century, Lutherans referred to themselves as *Evangelicals*, *Catholics*, and *Adherents of the Augsburg Confession*. Terms such as *Protesting Ones* and *Lutherans* were originally legal or pejorative terms respectively. However *Evangelical* would come to have the meaning of *Protestant* in the Holy Roman Empire, because the Reformed insisted on being called *Evangelicals* both out of conviction and for the purpose of legal protection in the empire.



Religion.<sup>33</sup> Without a doubt, the term *Evangelicalism* is notoriously difficult to define and has been used in a number of different ways, but two of the leading Evangelical historians today can shed some light on this movement. Mark Noll defined Evangelicalism as “culturally adaptive biblical experientialism.”<sup>34</sup> David Bebbington lists four key marks or characteristics of Evangelicalism. They include “*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the Gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ in the cross.”<sup>35</sup> What is more, Evangelicalism was no repristination of European Protestantism, but a new phenomenon in the history of Christianity.

A shift [took place] away from the European theological tradition, descended directly from the Protestant Reformation, towards a Protestant evangelical theology decisively shaped by its engagement with Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America. It is not an exaggeration to claim that this nineteenth-century Protestant evangelicalism differed from the religion of the Protestant Reformation as much as the sixteenth-century Reformation Protestantism differed from the Roman Catholic theology from which it emerged. The changes taking place in American religious thought from the 1730s to the 1860s were part of a general shift within Western religious life. Other English speaking regions were also experiencing the move from early modern to modern religion marked by a heightened spiritual inwardness, a new confidence in individual action, and various accommodations to the marketplace. Without attempting a full and comparative history, [Noll] suggest[s] that the pace and direction of theological change in the United States differed from what occurred in other largely Protestant countries of the North Atlantic region.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See also Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96 (1967): 1–21.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 2.

<sup>35</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Ltd, 1989), 2–3.

<sup>36</sup> Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3, 5, 64–72, 116–137, 227ff. See also Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

Even though some Calvinists have tried to exclude Arminianism from Evangelicalism, Evangelicalism's two chief manifestations are Experiential Calvinism and Experiential Arminianism. The movement had an impact on Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Jews as well.<sup>37</sup> The First Great Awakening (1734–50) was predominantly Calvinistic as evident by its two great spokesmen, the Calvinist Methodist, George Whitefield (1714–70), and the New England Congregationalist, Jonathan Edwards. But eventually Evangelicalism's stress on experientialism and conversionism found Arminianism to be a natural ally, so that the Second Great Awakening (1800–40) was largely dominated by Arminianism.<sup>38</sup> This transition from a predominantly Experiential Calvinism to a predominantly Experiential Arminianism is illustrated by George Whitefield's break with John Wesley (1703–91) over the latter's Arminianism. Wesley's warm Arminianism embraced all the marks of Classical Arminianism, as well as accepted the moral governmental theory of atonement and accepted Christian perfectionism.<sup>39</sup> Not surprisingly, it would be the Methodists along with the Baptists who deserve most of the credit for making Arminianism the predominant form of Evangelicalism, "the American culture-religion," and "Protestantism without the Reformation." Still two other factors need to be acknowledged if one is going to understand why Evangelicalism's hold on the American mind has been profound to say the least.

Why did Lincoln, though never a church member, use the Bible more freely in this speech (Second Inaugural Address) and also address questions of theological significance more directly than his near-peers as heads of state in other Protestant lands who were more dedicated members of Christian churches like William Gladstone in Britain or Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands?... By the early nineteenth century, a surprising intellectual synthesis, distinctly different from the reigning intellectual constructs in comparable Western societies, had

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<sup>37</sup> See also Bassett, "Arminianism," 1:165; Noll, *America's God*, 64–72, 116–137, 227ff.

<sup>38</sup> Douglas A. Sweeny suggests that the traditional interpretation of the transition from the First and to the Second Great Awakening in terms of a shift from Calvinism to Arminianism is oversimplistic and ignores the diversity of the movements. See his *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 21–23, 66–76. That being said, one can still see a Calvinistic predominance in the former and an Arminian predominance in the latter.

<sup>39</sup> John Wesley, *The Question, What is an Arminian? Answered. By a Lover of Free Grace* (London: Whitfield, 1798).



come to prevail throughout the United States.... The synthesis was a compound of evangelical Protestant religion, [civic] republican political ideology, and [Scottish] commonsense moral reasoning. Through the time of the Civil War, that synthesis defined the boundaries for a vast quantity of American thought, while also providing an ethical framework, a moral compass, and a vocabulary of suasion for much of the nation's public life. It set, quite naturally, the boundaries within which formal theological effort took place. Since the Civil War, the synthesis has declined in importance for both formal thought and public life, though not without leaving an enduring stamp upon the mental habits of some religious communities and episodic marks upon public discourse.... The process by which evangelical Protestantism came to be aligned with republican convictions and commonsense moral reasoning was also the process that gave a distinctively *American* shape to Christian theology by the time of the civil war.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the decline of this synthesis, Arminianism or at least Arminian-like theologies have continued to evolve and leave their mark on American religious thought. Nevertheless, an apologist for a return to Classical Arminianism, Roger Olsen, states:

One of the most prevalent myths spread by some Calvinists about Arminianism is that it is the most popular type of theology in evangelical pulpits and pews. My experience contradicts this belief. Much depends on how we regard Arminian theology. The Calvinist critic would be correct if Arminianism were semi-Pelagianism. But it is not, as I hope to show. The gospel preached and the doctrine of salvation taught in most evangelical pews, is not classical Arminianism but semi-Pelagianism if not outright Pelagianism.... Today, semi-Pelagianism is the default theology of most American evangelical Christians. This is revealed in the popularity of clichés such as “If you’ll take one step towards God, he’ll come the rest of the way towards you,” and “God votes for you, Satan votes against you, and you get the deciding vote,” coupled with the almost total neglect of human depravity and helplessness in spiritual matters.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 7, 9, 11.

<sup>41</sup> Olson, *Arminian*, 30–31.

One of the clearest examples of this is Charles Finney (1792–1875), who is still celebrated by Evangelicals as the “Father of Modern Revivalism.” His new measures, which sought to choreograph and market conversion, have continued to be developed by revivalists, Evangelicals, and mega-churches today. But what is often overlooked is the Semi-Pelagian presuppositions that form the skeleton of Finney’s new measures. He taught that “religion is the work of man,” and that “a revival of religion is not a miracle,” but rather “a revival is the result of the *right* use of the appropriate means.”<sup>42</sup> He called original sin “an anti-scriptural and nonsensical dogma.”<sup>43</sup> In an attempt to negotiate between limited atonement and universal salvation, Finney rejected substitutionary atonement for the moral government theory of atonement: “If he [Christ] had obeyed the Law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon as a *sine qua non* of our salvation.”<sup>44</sup> Finally his Pelagian tinged Semi-Pelagianism is demonstrated by his conception of regeneration: “Regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, preference; or in changing from selfishness to love or benevolence.”<sup>45</sup>

If Evangelicals have managed to soften Finney’s rhetoric, they have also moved beyond him in new ways. Two of the newest doctrinal developments in Evangelicalism are dual-covenant theology and Christian Universalism. Dual-covenant theology teaches that Jews can be saved by adherence to the old covenant of the Torah, while Christians must be saved by the new covenant of Christ. San Antonio non-denominational Evangelical, John Hagee, has expressed such sentiments in interviews and books.<sup>46</sup> Christian Universalism, conversely, posits that there can be

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<sup>42</sup> Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 2d. ed. (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1935), 9, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Finney, *Finney’s Systematic Theology* (Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 1976), 179.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 224

<sup>46</sup> The *Houston Chronicle* quotes Hagee saying, “In fact, trying to convert Jews is a “waste of time,” he said. The Jewish person who has his roots in Judaism is not going to convert to Christianity. There is no form of Christian evangelism that has failed so miserably as evangelizing the Jewish people. They (already) have a faith structure.’ Everyone else, whether Buddhist or Baha’i, needs to believe in Jesus, he says. But not Jews. Jews already have a covenant with God that has never been replaced by Christianity, he says. ‘The Jewish people have a relationship to God through the law of God as given through Moses,’ Hagee said. ‘I believe that every Gentile person can only come to God through the cross of Christ. I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.’ ‘The law of Moses is sufficient enough to bring a person into

salvation at least for some outside of the Torah or Christ. Both Billy Graham and Joel Osteen have asserted this position in live television interviews.<sup>47</sup> Now both of these theories could be predicated on a sort of grace-based system, but it appears that human merit plays a critical role in ultimately determining who will be saved outside of Christ in both of these doctrinal developments.

After conducting the broadest study of American adolescent religion and spirituality to date, the latest development in Arminian-like theology has been a move from Experiential Arminianism to what Christian Smith and his fellow researchers with the *National Study of Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* have defined as “moralistic therapeutic deism.” Moralistic therapeutic deism envisions God to be a divine therapist most concerned about your

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the knowledge of God until God gives him a greater revelation. And God has not,’ said Hagee, giving his interpretation of Romans 11:25. ‘Paul abandoned the idea (of Jews knowing Christ). In the book of Romans, he said, “I am now going to the Gentiles from this time forward.” Judaism doesn’t need Christianity to explain its existence. But Christianity has to have Judaism to explain its existence.’” See Julia Duin, “San Antonio Fundamentalist Battles Anti-Semitism,” *Houston Chronicle* (April 30, 1988), sec. 6, p. 1. See also the tenth chapter of John Hagee’s unrevised *In Defense of Israel: The Bible’s Mandate for Supporting the Jewish State*, First Edition (Lake Mary: Frontline, 2007).

<sup>47</sup> In a 1997 television interview, Robert Schuller asked Billy Graham, “Tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity?” Graham responded, “Well, Christianity and being a true believer—you know, I think there’s the Body of Christ. This comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they’re conscious of it or not, they’re members of the Body of Christ.... I think James answered that, the Apostle James in the first council in Jerusalem, when he said that God’s purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name. And that’s what God is doing today, He’s calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ, because they’ve been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don’t have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think they are saved, and that they’re going to be with us in heaven.” Schuller continued, “What, what I hear you saying, that it’s possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and soul and life, even if they’ve been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you’re saying?” Graham replied, “Yes, it is, because I believe that. I’ve met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and never heard of Jesus, but they’ve believed in their hearts that there was a God, and they’ve tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived.” See Billy Graham, interviewed by Robert Schuller, *Hour of Power*, May 31, 1997. See also Joel Osteen, interview by Larry King, *Larry King Live*, June 20, 2005.

personal self-esteem than anything else. The tenets of this new form of religiosity are spelled out below.

1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.<sup>48</sup>

While many might attribute this to a failure on the part of American Christianity to inculcate its faith, one of the members of this research team articulates a very different conclusion. Kendra Dean explains the phenomenon has shown that American Christianity has been all too effective in remolding the next generation in their own image.

The problem does not seem to be that churches are teaching young people badly, but that we are doing an exceedingly good job of teaching youth what we really believe; namely, that Christianity is not a big deal, that God requires little, and the church is a helpful social institution filled with nice people focused primarily on “folks like us”—which, of course, begs the question of whether we are really the church at all. What if the blasé religiosity of most American teenagers is not the result of poor communication but the result of excellent communication of a watered-down gospel so devoid of God's self-giving love in Jesus Christ, so immune to the sending love of the Holy Spirit that it might not be Christianity at all? What if the church models a way of life that asks, not passionate surrender but ho-hum assent? What if we are preaching moral affirmation, a feel-better faith, and a hands-off God instead of the decisively involved, impossibly loving, radically sending God of Abraham and Mary, who desired us enough to enter creation in Jesus Christ and whose Spirit is active in the church and in the world today?<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162–163.

<sup>49</sup> Kendra Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 12.

To be sure, Classical Arminianism still exists in an Experiential Evangelical form in the Wesleyan, Baptist, and non-denominational churches. But the fact that Arminianism has never really known an orthodoxy, but rather bifurcated into rationalism or experientialism, does not bode well for a renaissance of Classical Arminianism. From an orthodox Lutheran perspective this survey of Classical Arminianism and some of its manifestations shows exactly why a call for Reformation theology is so imperative in America today. Even at its best Arminianism represents a biblical and pastoral crisis that only Reformation theology can really address. The Lutheran Reformation was at its heart an authentic return to the biblical theology of the church and the application of that theology in pastoral *praxis*. In point of fact, Lutheranism's most theologically penetrating symbol of all, the FC, is fundamentally a pastoral response to the spiritual questions of the day.<sup>50</sup> For this reason, we shall focus on how the FC can help American Lutherans address the tenets of Arminianism.

As mentioned earlier, the FC, much less FC II, cannot address every aspect of Arminianism, both for historical and systematic reasons. The FC was penned long before the Arminian Controversy and some components of Arminianism were not specifically addressed by it. Nevertheless, the controversies addressed by the FC bear a great deal of resemblance to Arminianism and inferences can be drawn from it about how the sacred Scriptures should be brought to bear upon Arminianism. The articles of the FC that address the central tenets of Arminianism are Articles I, II, and XI. It should be noted that FC IV supplements FC II in addressing the Arminian conception of the function of the human will in preserving one in salvation. But article VIII does not specifically address Arminius' type of subordinationism.<sup>51</sup> FC V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X, naturally, speak to Arminianism as a part of the broader Reformed tradition. Finally, article XII speaks to some elements of the Radical Reformation that have synthesized with certain expressions of Experiential Arminianism.

The Arminian Controversy emerged within the discussion concerning predestination in Reformed tradition. Jacobus Arminius believed that supralapsarian double predestination was contrary to the foundation of Christianity, salvation, and certainty, not to mention the Gospel, the first six hundred years of patristic theology, and the

<sup>50</sup> Timothy Wengert, *A Formula for Parish Practice: Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> Johann Quenstedt refutes Arminius' subordinationism in his *Theologia didactico-polemica, sive systema theologicum* (Wittenberg: Henckel, 1685), I, 376–377.

1581 *Harmonia Confessionum Fidei Orthodoxarum, & Reformatarum Ecclesiarum* just for starters.<sup>52</sup> For this reason, he asserted a conditional single election on the basis of foreseen faith. In the process of safeguarding the goodness of God, he made the human response to prevenient grace the determining factor in election. Even though the formulators of the FC were aware of John Calvin's conception of election as well as the 1563 controversy in Strassburg between the Reformed Girolamo Zanchi (1516–90) and the Lutheran Johann Marbach (1521–81) concerning election, etc., FC XI was not written to settle any controversy within Lutheranism, but to forestall the emergence of such a controversy in Lutheranism. On the basis of Matthew 10:29, Psalm 139:16, and Isaiah 37:38, FC XI, like Arminius, distinguished God's foreknowledge (*praescientia vel praevisio*) ("that is, that God sees and knows everything before it happens," which "applies to all creatures, good and evil") from a single election grounded in Christ ("that is, God's preordination to salvation," which "does not apply to both the godly and the evil, but instead only to the children of God, who are chosen and predestined to eternal life, 'before the foundation of the world' was laid as Paul says in (Eph.1[:4, 5]).").<sup>53</sup> While Calvinism is not specifically mentioned and would have denied that its conception of election made God the author of evil, FC XI, like Arminius, rejected double predestination<sup>54</sup> and insisted that God is not the author of evil on basis of Psalm 5:4 and Luther's translation of Hosea 13:9, "Israel, you bring yourself into misfortune, but your salvation is found in me alone."<sup>55</sup> In this same regard, FC XI discouraged speculation into the hidden mind of God, lest one might fall on one hand into "false security and impenitence" or on the other hand into "faintheartedness and despair."<sup>56</sup> Even more important than FC XI's affirmation of single election grounded in Christ over against double predestination,<sup>57</sup> is its pastoral focus on the outline of the book of Romans and the universal promise of the Gospel in the means of grace. This scriptural and pastoral quality was lacking in both the Calvinist tradition, which pointed parishioners to their works

<sup>52</sup> Arminius, *The Writings*, 1:618–622. See also *Harmonia Confessionum Fidei Orthodoxarum, & Reformatarum Ecclesiarum, quae, in praecipuis quibusque Europae Regnis, Nationibus, & Provinciis, sacram Evangelij doctrinam pure profitentur: Quarum catalogum & ordinem sequentes paginae indicabunt* (Geneva: Santandreamum, 1581).

<sup>53</sup> FC SD XI, 4–8.

<sup>54</sup> FC SD XI, 80–82.

<sup>55</sup> FC SD XI, 6–7, 62.

<sup>56</sup> FC SD XI, 9–11, 13, 26, 55, 58.

<sup>57</sup> FC SD XI, 5, 8, 88.

to make their election sure and the Arminian tradition, which pointed parishioners to their decision and the inward testimony of the Spirit to make their election sure. In contradistinction, FC XI states,

Now, God does not call apart from means. He calls through the Word, which he has commanded us to preach, the word of repentance and the forgiveness of sins [Luke 24:47]. St. Paul also testifies to this very thing when he writes, “We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5[:20]).... Therefore, if we want to consider our eternal election to salvation profitably, we must also firmly and rigidly insist that, like the proclamation of repentance, so the promise of the gospel is *universalis*, that is, it pertains to all people (Luke 24[:47]). Therefore, Christ commanded preaching “repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations.”<sup>58</sup>

By making this pastoral move, the FC refocused the Christian on God’s universal promise of the Gospel in the means of grace as well as restored the comfort of the doctrine of election as expressed in Romans 8:29–39.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, it made it possible to still remind the spiritually idle of the sacred Scriptures’ function as a basis “for reproof, for correction, for improvement” (2 Timothy 3:16). Similarly, it located damnation in the despising of God’s Word (Matthew 23:37), and it recalled the example of Pharaoh as a warning that God can harden the hearts of persistent despisers of God’s Word.<sup>60</sup>

It is also well-known that Lutheran Orthodoxy developed a formulation of the doctrine of election that looks very similar to Arminius’ conception of election in view of foreseen faith. Even though some have tried to trace the Lutheran orthodox position back into the FC, we have already seen that the FC confessed a single election in Christ not *an election in view of foreseen faith*. Still it is important to show the Lutheran orthodox position was never intended to foment synergism, even if some in Late Orthodoxy would eventually take it in that direction. On the basis of a problematic exegesis of passages like Ephesians 1:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, and Romans 8:29–30, orthodox Lutherans following the Swabian Wittenberg theology professor,

<sup>58</sup> FC SD XI, 27–29, 33–40, 76.

<sup>59</sup> FC SD XI, 48.

<sup>60</sup> FC SD XI, 12, 41–42, 73, 78, 84–85.



Aegidius Hunnius (1550–1603), would come to speak about God's *absolute or antecedent will* to save all and his *ordinate or consequential will* to elect some *in consideration of or in view of faith* (*ex praevisa fidei* or *intuitu fidei*).<sup>61</sup> In the Lutheran mind, both Calvinism and the Swiss Wittenberg theology professor, Samuel Huber (1547–1624), located election in the antecedent will of God, albeit they rejected the distinction between God's antecedent and consequential will altogether. To resolve this issue, Lutherans introduced this conceptual distinction in God's will to preserve on one hand universal grace against Calvinism's notion of an absolute, unconditional, or bare election. In addition, it was intended to maintain on the other hand a real or limited election against Samuel Huber's universal election. Despite the inherent problems with this move beyond the *Formula of Concord*, the orthodox Lutherans were not synergists, because they maintained that the faith in question was the full and complete creation of the Holy Spirit alone.<sup>62</sup> For example, the Jena divine, Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), writes,

Therefore we have shown that the merit of Christ is the cause of our election. But since the merit of Christ is of no use to anyone without faith, therefore we say, that the consideration of faith (*fidei intuitum*) must be included in the decree of election. With one voice we confess, that we teach, that God will find nothing good in man to elect him to eternal life, that there is no good work, use of free will, or even faith itself that he looked back on, that moved him or on account of which he elected certain ones: but we say that this is entirely and only the merit of Christ, on whose worth he looked back on and it was by grace alone that the decree of election was made. Nevertheless, because the merits of Christ only have a place in man through faith, therefore we

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<sup>61</sup> Aegidius Hunnius, *Articulus De Providentia Dei et Aeterna Praedestinatione Sev Electione filiorum Dei ad salutem* (Frankfurt: Becker, 1603), Synopsis.

<sup>62</sup> See Robert Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method: From Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 266; Robert Preus, "The Doctrine of Election as Taught by the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (1958): 229–261; Gottfried Adam, *Der Streit um die Prädestination im ausgehenden 16. Jahrhundert: Eine Untersuchung zu den Entwürfen von Samuel Huber und Aegidius Hunnius* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970); Rune Söderlund, *Ex Praevisa Fidei: Zum Verständnis der Prädestinationslehre in der lutherischen Orthodoxie* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1983).



say, that the election happened in view of the merit of Christ apprehended through faith. Therefore we say that all those and these alone have been elected from all eternity by God to salvation who he foresaw that they would by the power of Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Gospel truly believe in Christ, the redeemer, and preserve in faith until the end of their lives.<sup>63</sup>

As result of this formulation, Calvinist theologians nearly equated the orthodox Lutheran position on election in view of faith with the later Arminian position, which the Calvinists deemed Pelagian. While not accepting the Reformed tendency to equate Lutheranism and Arminianism, Lutherans used the Calvinist's trial of Arminianism at Dordrecht as proof that the Reformed were being disingenuous about their repeated irenic contention that fundamental unity existed between them and the Church of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>64</sup> In the end the potential pitfalls of election in view of faith were exploited by such Lutherans as the Helmstedt theology professor and Lutheran irenicist, Georg Calixt (1586–1656), and the Jena theology professor and father-in-law of Johann Baier (1647–95), Johannes Musaeus (1613–81). They would make the merit of Christ apprehended by faith a lesser impelling principle cause of election (*causa impulsiva*

<sup>63</sup> Johann Gerhard writes, "Atque ita confirmatum dedimus, quod Christi meritum sit causa electionis nostrae. Cum vero Christi meritum nemini prosit absque fide ideo dicimus, etiam fidei intuitum decreto electionis esse includendum. Sonora voce profitemur, nos statuere, quod Deus nihil boni in homine ad vitam aeternam eligendo invenerit, quod nec bona opera nec liberi arbitrii usum neque adeo ipsam etiam fidem ita respexerit, ut hisce motus, vel propter ea quosdam elegerit: sed unicum et solum Christi meritum illud esse dicimus, cujus dignitatem Deus respexerit et ex mera gratia decretum electionis fecerit. Quia tamen Christi meritum non nisi per fidem in hominibus locum habet, ideo docemus, electionem factam intuitu meriti Christi per fidem apprehendendi. Illos ergo omnes et solos ab aeterno a Deo ad salutem electos esse dicimus, quos efficacia Spiritus sancti per ministerium evangelii in Christum redemptorem vere credituros et in fide usque ad vitae finem permansuros praevidit." See *Loci theologici cum pro abstruenda veritate tum pro destruenda quorumvis contradicentium falsitate per theses nervose solide et copiose explicati*, ed. Ed. Preuss (Berlin: Gust. Schlawitz, 1863–85), 7, § 161.

<sup>64</sup> Francis Turretin (1623–87), *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Giger (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1992), 1:355–64; Nikolaus Hunnius (1585–1643), *Diaskepsis Theologica: A Theological Examination of the Fundamental Difference between Evangelical Lutheran Doctrine and Calvinist or Reformed Teaching*, trans. Richard J. Dinda (Malone: Repristination Press, 1999), dedication, § 520–521. See also August Pfeiffer (1640–98), *Anti-Calvinism*, trans. Edward Pfeiffer (Columbus: Printing House of the Joint Synod of Ohio, 1881), 162–194.

*minus principalis*)<sup>65</sup> and come to teach a synergistic conception of election in view of faith.<sup>66</sup>

At the heart of Arminius' conception of election was a synergistic anthropology that shifted the deciding variable in one's salvation from Christ to the human will. The FC discusses anthropology in two inter-related articles, FC I and FC II, which focus on original sin and free will respectively. The controversies behind these two articles have their origin in the writings of Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560), but the controversies really only emerged in the aftermath of the Philippists so-called 1548 Leipzig Interim, which inaugurated the Late Reformation controversies resolved by the FC. Melanchthon's distaste for stoic fatalism, the Peasants' War, and his pedagogical interest in human improvement led him to make synergistic statements. Some of his statements such as the three causes of conversion (the Spirit, the Word, and the human will) could be defended by the formulators and retained in the Torgau Book for two reasons: First, the human will could be understood as the passive material on which the Spirit

<sup>65</sup> Abraham Calov opposed making the merit of Christ apprehended by faith an impelling cause of election against Johannes Musaeus and notes its similarities with Arminianism. See his *Systema Locorum Theologicorum, E Sacra Potissimum Scriptura, & Antiquitate, Nec Non Adversariorum Confessione, Doctrinam, Praxin & Controversiarum Fidei, Cum Veterum, Tum Imprimis Recentiorum, Pertractationem Luculentam Exhibens* (Wittenberg: Hartmann and Wilcke, 1655–1677), 10:629–632. See also Johann Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae Secundum Editionem Anni 1694*, ed. Ed. Preuss (Berlin: Schlawitz, 1864), 571–575. A latent synergism is evident in David Hollaz. He writes, “Resp. Dist. inter resistentiam naturalem & malitiosam. Illam Spiritus S. per gratiam praevientem frangit & refrænat: hæc in allis hominibus minor, in allis major & ferocior est, quæ sæpe impedit, quo minus vera fides in corde homini irrogeniti accendatur.” See *Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum Universam Theologiam Thetico-Polemicam* (Stargrad: Ernesti, 1707), 3.1.1.9. See also Baier, *Compendium*, 436.

<sup>66</sup> Georg Calixt, “Epitome Theologiae 1619,” in *Dogmatische Schriften*, vol. 2 of *Werke in Auswahl*, ed. Inge Mager (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 181–188. The Electoral Saxon *Consensus Repetitus* charges the following statement from the *Epitome Theologiae* with synergism, “Certum est hominem posse esse suscipere curam de mediis ad eam: Hoc qui faciunt, eos Deus majoribus auxiliis dignatur, ut intelligant verbum &c. Et hoc ab homine præstari vult, priusquam ipsi majora & specialiora, & suo genere supernaturalia suppeditet auxilia Iterum: Non negamus, esse quodam actus in hominis potestate sitos quos ab ipso Deus præstari velit, priusquam ad auxilia & dona supernaturalia progressus fiat.” See *J. N. J. Consensus Repetitus Fidei Vere Lutheranae In illis Doctrinæ capitibus, Quæ Contra puram, & invariata Augustanam Confessionem, aliosque; libros symbolicos, in Formulae Concordiæ comprehensos, scriptis publicis impugnant D. Georgius Calixtus, Professor Helmstadiensis, eiusdemque complices. In gratiam Eorum, qui distantiam D. Calixti, Rintelensium, & aliorum Novatorum a fide Lutheranae in Synopsi intueri discipiunt, Ob præsentem Ecclesiae necessitatem, seorsim editus*, ed. Abraham Calov (Wittenberg: Borckard, 1666), XII, 2.

and the Word, the efficient and instrumental causes respectively, worked actively upon in conversion. Second, the term *conversion* was treated as a synonym of *repentance*, and therefore it did not just refer to the transition from the unregenerate state to the regenerate state, but also to the regenerate's continual or daily renewal.<sup>67</sup> Other statements were harder to explain away such as Melanchthon's use of Pseudo-Basil's (300–360) (Eusebius of Emesa) remark, "The human will is not idle in conversion but also does something," or John Chrysostom's (349–407) remark, "God draws [those who come to him], but he draws those who will it."<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> The Torgau Book reads, "Also auch wenn man drei Ursachen der Buße oder Besserung und ander guten Werk und Tugenden zusammensetzt, ist solchs recht und eigentlich zu erklären. Dann die weil das ganze Leben eines Christenmenschen in dem nach der ersten [Geburt] Wiedergeburt viel Gebrechen und Sünden übrig bleiben, ein täglich und stets währende Buß und Besserung des Lebens ist darin des Menschen bekehrter und neugeschaffener Wille nicht ganz kraftlos und müßig ist, auch nicht mehr dem Heiligen Geist widerstrebet, sondern neben dem Heiligen Geist mitwirket, so werden drei Ursachen der Besserung des Lebens und des neuen Gehorsams und aller guten Werke in den Widergeborenen, nämlich der Heilige Geist die Betrachtung des göttlichen Wortes und unsers neuen wiedergeborenen Willens Fleiß und Mitwirkung wohl und christlich zusammengesetzt. Aber doch eigentlich zu reden, ist allein Gott der Heilige Geist die wahre wirkliche Ursach oder causa efficiens principalis; der solches mit seiner kraft alles wirket. Das gepredigte Wort aber ist das Mittel oder Instrument dardurch der Heilige Geist den Menschen bekehret und in ihm wirket; des menschen Herz und Will aber ist das subjectum oder causa materialis, in qua efficax est et operatur Spiritus sanctus et quae ad Deum conversa et a spiritu sancto acta simul agit, sicut Augustinus loquitur... Wenn man aber de primo motu conversionis, das ist, von dem Anfang unser Bekehrung und also von den Ursachen handelt,... so ist allein der Heilige Geist die Ursache, welcher solche unsere Bekehrung schafft. Das Wort ist das Mittel oder Werkzeug, dardurch der Heilige Geist die Bekehrung wirket; der menschliche und natürliche, unwiedergeborene Wille aber ist in keinem Wege causa vel efficiens vel adiuvens primae conversionis, das ist, keine Ursache, so die Wiedergeburt wirket oder zu derselbigen unserer ersten Wiedergeburt etwas helfen sollte, sondern materia in qua oder subiectum convertendum, das ist, anders nicht denn das so bekehret werden soll, darin der heilige Geist die Bekehrung und andre geistliche Bewegung wirket und anzündet, uf die Weise, wie oben im vierten Stück dieses Artikuls nach der Länge erkläret ist." See Torgau Book on three causes reprinted in BSLK, 910–11, Critical Apparatus. See also FC SD II, 90; Philipp Melanchthon, "Enarratio Symboli Niceni," in *Corpus Reformatorum. Philippi Melanchthonis opera quae superses omnia*, ed. Karl Bretschneider and Heinrich Bindweil (Halle: Schwetschke, 1834–60), 23:280. Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci Communes 1543*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 43; Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 2:250, 2:602; Lowell Green, "The Three Causes of Conversion in Philipp Melanchthon, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus, and the Formula of Concord," *Lutherjahrbruch* (1980): 89–114.

<sup>68</sup> FC SD II, 86; Philipp Melanchthon, *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555*, trans. Clyde Manschreck (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 60; Melanchthon, *Loci Communes 1543*, 43.

In addition, the Leipzig Interim had asserted, “Nonetheless the merciful God does not deal with human creatures as with a block of wood but draws them in such a manner that their will cooperates, if they are of the age of reason. They do not receive Christ’s benefits if the will and heart are not moved by prevenient grace, so that they stand in fear of God’s wrath and detest sin.”<sup>69</sup> Two of Melanchthon’s students, Victor Strigel (1524–69) and Johann Pfeffinger (1493–1573), would further develop his positions into full blown synergism. Strigel posited that original sin was a mere accident (*accidens*), and affirmed a human mode of acting (*modus agendi*) in spiritual matters prior to conversion to the exclusion of divine coercion against Matthias Flacius (1520–75), who taught that original sin had become the formal substance (*substantia formalis*) of man, albeit not a material substance. Pfeffinger defended his synergism against Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483–65).

Now Arminius and his Calvinist opponents could agree to the following:

...this also is an indisputable, incontrovertible axiom in theology, that each *substantia* or independent essence, insofar as it is a substance, is either God himself or a product and creation of God. Thus, in his many writings against Manichaeans, Augustine, along with all faithful teachers, after serious deliberation, condemned and rejected the expression,... “original sin is the nature and essence of the human being.” All scholars and intelligent people have always held to this: that whatever does not exist in and of itself or is not a part of another independent essence, but may change as it exists in something else is not a *substantia* (that is, something self-subsistent), but is an *accidens* (that is, something contingent).<sup>70</sup>

They could also all affirm that “even after the fall, God is the creator of human beings,” that “original sin does not come from God,” and that original sin was not the essence or substance of man on the grounds of Job 10:8-12, Psalm 139:14-16, and Ecclesiastes 12:7.<sup>71</sup> While this designation was well-intentioned and not meant to invoke even a hint of Manichianism on the part of Flacius, the Aristotelian substance-accident framework made it impossible to really affirm that original sin

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<sup>69</sup> The *Leipzig Interim* is reprinted in Robert Kolb and James Nestingen, eds., *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 185.

<sup>70</sup> FC SD I, 1, 55.

<sup>71</sup> FC SD I, 1, 33–42.

was a formal substance and still avoid the charge that God became, as a result, the author of evil.<sup>72</sup> But this Flacian terminology had another problem. It conflicted with Lutheran Christology, which confessed with Gregory of Nazianzus (329–90) the axiom: Christ redeems that which he assumed.<sup>73</sup> On basis of Hebrew 2:17, “he [Christ] ‘became one of us, in every respect like us’ apart from sin,” FC I shored up its position by pressing the Flacian terminology to the absurd (*reductio ad absurdum*): If man’s substance was sin, then “Christ either did not assume our nature because he had not assumed our sin, or because he assumed our nature, he would also have assumed sin.”<sup>74</sup> Finally to alleviate any confusion about terminology FC I pointed out that the term *nature* could refer to both *substance* and *character*, and showed that Martin Luther had only used it in the latter sense when he said that “sin and sinning are the character and nature of the corrupted human being.”<sup>75</sup>

Unlike the FC, Arminius could only have accepted the following: “The description of original sin deprives the unrenewed human nature of the gifts, powers, and all capacity to initiate and effect anything in spiritual matters,” provided that this meant without prevenient grace.<sup>76</sup> Therefore he also could not really have affirmed that original sin was far more than a mere accident (*corruptio tantum accidentium aut qualitatum*) in the same manner as FC I did.<sup>77</sup> While FC I recognizes that “in other—natural, external—matters, which are subject to reason, the human being retains to a certain extent, its understanding, powers, and abilities—even though greatly weakened,”<sup>78</sup> it is fully aware that original sin is a “horrible, dreadful, inherited disease corrupting [man’s] entire nature,”<sup>79</sup> and not merely “a deprivation or lack of spiritual powers.”<sup>80</sup>

The Holy Scripture testifies that original sin is an indescribable impairment and a corruption of human nature so deep that

<sup>72</sup> FC SD I, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Martin Chemnitz writes, “Moreover, the statement of Nazianzus is most significant, a statement which all antiquity accepted, namely that that part of the human nature ‘which was not assumed by Christ was not healed’ (τὸ ἀπρόσληπτου ἀθεράπευτον).” See his *The Two Natures of Christ*, tr. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 60.

<sup>74</sup> FC SD I, 43–44. See also FC SD II, 81.

<sup>75</sup> FC SD I, 51, 6.

<sup>76</sup> FC SD I, 10.

<sup>77</sup> FC SD I, 21.

<sup>78</sup> FC SD I, 12.

<sup>79</sup> FC SD I, 5.

<sup>80</sup> FC SD I, 22.

nothing pure and good remains in it or in any of its internal and external powers. Instead, all is so deeply corrupted because of this original sin that human beings are truly spiritually dead in God's sight, having died, with all their powers, to the good.<sup>81</sup>

Thus FC I maintained the fundamental goodness of God and his creation without leading man to take away from the goodness of Christ and it affirmed the carnality of man without undermining the incarnation of Christ. It further insisted that as important as a proper understanding of substance and accident is to theologically defining original sin: "Holy Scripture alone provides a full understanding and explanation" of original sin.<sup>82</sup> In typical pastoral fashion, it advises that these terms should be avoided "in public preaching to the uninstructed, because such words are unfamiliar to the common people."<sup>83</sup>

In contradistinction to the previous two articles there is little that Arminius could affirm in FC II with the notable exception of its condemnation of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism.<sup>84</sup> This article strikes at the heart of Arminianism. FC II begins by laying out the four Augustinian states of man: "before the fall," "after the fall," "after they have been reborn," and "when they arise from the dead." The article then centers on "what the mind and the will of the unregenerated human beings are able to do in conversion and rebirth on the basis of their own powers that remain after the fall, when God's Word is proclaimed and God's grace is offered to us."<sup>85</sup> In response to this question, FC II puts to rest any notions of Semi-Pelagianism and synergism.

This means that in this human nature, after the fall and before rebirth, there is not a spark of spiritual power left or present with which human beings can prepare themselves for the grace of God or accept grace as it is offered.... Nor do they have the ability, on the basis of their own powers, to help, act, effect, or cooperate— completely, halfway, or in the slightest, most insignificant way—in their own conversion; they cannot bring about or cooperate in it "of ourselves, as coming from us" [2 Cor. 3:5].

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<sup>81</sup> FC SD I, 60.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> FC SD I, 54.

<sup>84</sup> FC Ep II, 9–11; FC SD II, 74–77. The FC considered the Nominalist version of Semi-Pelagianism to be an outgrowth of the Semi-Pelagianism condemned at the Council of Orange (529), and associated with John Cassian (360–435) and the monks around Marseilles. The FC Ep also appears to have coined the term *Semi-Pelagianism*.

<sup>85</sup> FC SD II, 2.

Rather they are “the slave of sin” (John 8[:34]) and prisoners of the devil, by whom they are driven (Eph. 2[:2]; 2 Tim. 2[:26]). Therefore, according to its own perverted character and nature, the natural free will has only the power and ability to do whatever is displeasing and hostile to God.<sup>86</sup>

Lest there be any lingering confusion about synergism, FC II adds “on the basis of its own natural powers the free will not only cannot effect anything or cooperate in any way in its own conversion or in the attaining of righteousness and salvation: it cannot follow the Holy Spirit (who offers grace and salvation through the Gospel), believe in him, or give him its ‘yes.’”<sup>87</sup> To facilitate this restoration of a proper explication of the human will in conversion, FC II tackled a number of problematic phrases and concepts that had arisen. It rejects the idea that man possesses an ability to dispose himself to grace (*facultas applicandi se ad gratia*),<sup>88</sup> and the notion that man possesses a human mode of acting (*modus agendi*) in spiritual matters prior to conversion.<sup>89</sup> It insists that the synergistic remarks of Pseudo-Basil and Chrysostom are “not compatible with the form of sound teaching,”<sup>90</sup> and discourages the use of the three causes of conversion because it misled students.<sup>91</sup> But it affirms Luther’s notion that “human beings conduct themselves in their conversion *pure passive* (that is, they do absolutely nothing at all).”<sup>92</sup> FC II even provides illustrations of the human condition, so that all segments of society could deal with this challenging article of the faith. FC II states, “Holy Scripture compares the unregenerated heart to a hard stone [Ezek. 36:26; Jer. 5:3], which does not yield when touched but resists, or to an unhewn block of wood [Hos. 6:5], or to a wild, ferocious beast [Ps. 73:22],”<sup>93</sup> but it also makes its readers aware that the former two metaphors limp because “a stone or a block of wood does not resist the person who moves it; neither does it understand or feel what is being done to it.”<sup>94</sup> Just in case someone might deduce from all this that God then must coerce the human will into conversion—a

<sup>86</sup> FC SD II, 7.

<sup>87</sup> FC SD II, 18.

<sup>88</sup> FC SD II, 78.

<sup>89</sup> FC SD II, 61.

<sup>90</sup> FC SD II, 86.

<sup>91</sup> FC SD II, 90.

<sup>92</sup> FC SD II, 89.

<sup>93</sup> FC SD II, 19.

<sup>94</sup> FC SD II, 59.



charge Arminius would levy against the Calvinists—FC II carefully refutes such a claim.

Although God does not force human beings in such a way that they must become godly... nonetheless God the Lord draws those people whom he wants to convert and does so in such a way that an enlightened understanding is fashioned out of a darkened understanding and an obedient will is fashioned out of a rebellious will.<sup>95</sup>

Much like FC XI, FC II navigates a narrow scriptural heading between the Scylla of Calvinism and the Charybdis of Arminianism. Both ultimately end up grounding the hope of salvation in the experience of man. The FC counsels Christians against such navel gazing once again by appealing to the means of grace.

Therefore, neither the preacher nor the hearer should doubt this grace and activity of the Holy Spirit, but they should be certain that when the Word of God is preached purely and clearly according to God's command and will and people listen to it seriously and diligently and meditate upon it, God will certainly be present with his grace.... For the presence, effectiveness, and gift of the Holy Spirit should not and cannot always be assessed *ex sensu*, as a person feels it in the heart. Instead, because the Holy Spirit's activity is often hidden under the cover of great weakness, we should be certain, on the basis of and according to the promise, that the Word of God when preached and heard, is a function of the Holy Spirit, through which he is certainly present in our hearts and exercises his power there (2 Corinthians 2 [I Corinthians 2:11ff. or 2 Cor. 3:5-6]).<sup>96</sup>

Now when it comes the third state of man, FC II recognizes that the regenerate will possess a limited synergy or ability to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the performance of good works. It cautions the Christian against misinterpreting this new relationship with the analogy of two equal horses pulling a cart.<sup>97</sup> In anticipation of FC IV on good works, FC II safeguards God's grace by preempting the notion seemingly latent in Arminianism that human will is empowered by God's grace to preserve one in salvation through works.

<sup>95</sup> FC SD II, 60, 64

<sup>96</sup> FC SD II, 55, 48, 80.

<sup>97</sup> FC SD II, 65-66.



Holy Scripture ascribes conversion, faith in Christ, rebirth, renewal, and everything that belongs to the actual beginning and completion of these things, not to the human powers of natural free will—neither totally, halfway, somewhat, nor in the slightest and smallest bit—but rather ascribes all this *in solidum* (that is, complete and totally) to divine activity and to the Holy Spirit alone, as the Apology says [XVIII, 7, 8].<sup>98</sup>

Unlike Arminius, FC II takes a more decisive stance against the perseverance of the saints: “However, if the baptized act against their conscience, permit sin to reign in them, and thus grieve the Holy Spirit in themselves and lose him, then, although they may not be rebaptized, they must be converted again, as has been demonstrated above.”<sup>99</sup> It likewise dismisses Christian perfectionism, i.e., “the teaching of the popes and monks, that after rebirth human beings can fulfill the law of God completely in this life and through this fulfilling of the law be righteous before God and merit life.”<sup>100</sup> Most surprisingly of all, FC II does all this without trying to undo the tension between the four states of man and spiritual growth on one hand,<sup>101</sup> and need for daily conversion<sup>102</sup> and the fact that man remains both saint and sinner at the same time (*simul iustus et peccator*) on the other hand.<sup>103</sup>

In conclusion, the Evangelical historian, Mark Noll, writes, “Protestantism has been one of the truly formative influences in American history, but in the process much of the original Protestant vision has been modified, distorted, or lost. Lutherans are the major denominational family in the best position to redeem the deficiency.”<sup>104</sup> Lutherans provide “an Augustinian conception of human nature,” “the Reformation conviction about the objectivity of salvation,” a Lutheran ecclesiology to counter the “American weakness simply to think of the church as another voluntary society,” and the “Lutheran gift of ambiguity,” such as, “Luther’s tension with culture, which saw him committed to Christian activity, but always with

<sup>98</sup> FC SD II, 25.

<sup>99</sup> FC SD II, 69.

<sup>100</sup> FC SD II, 79.

<sup>101</sup> FC SD II, 70–72.

<sup>102</sup> FC SD II, 68.

<sup>103</sup> FC SD II, 64.

<sup>104</sup> Mark Noll, “American Lutherans Yesterday and Today,” in *Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Richard Cimino (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 20.

the sharpest reservations.<sup>105</sup> But Noll also recognizes that American Lutheranism is suffering from a “waning Lutheran identity” and a “missed opportunity,” considering the large number of Lutherans in America and all that Lutheranism has to offer. Since Lutherans have become too much “at home in the historic American culture,” he fears that Lutherans might never make the contribution that they could.<sup>106</sup> He concludes, “Whether Lutherans are in the position to offer such gifts from their own tradition to Americans more generally would seem to depend on two matters: on how much genuine Lutheranism is left in American Lutheranism, and on whether Lutherans can bring this Lutheranism to bear.”<sup>107</sup> If the popularity of the new revisionist biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which attempts to remodel him

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<sup>105</sup> Noll, “American Lutherans,” 20–21. See also Noll’s remarks about the contribution Lutheranism’s “dialectical theological framework” could offer to political thought over against Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Calvinist, and Anabaptist politics in Noll, *American*, 224–228.

<sup>106</sup> Noll, “American Lutherans,” 20. Noll writes, “From the beginning of immigration, Lutheranism ministers, no less than their people, were relating old-world-expectation to the circumstances in the New. In particular, they were forced to adjust habits of political deference, aristocratic authority, religious uniformity, and liturgical worship to American tendencies towards democracy, republicanism, religious pluralism, and revivalism.” See Noll, “American Lutherans,” 5. But after surveying the acculturation of Lutheranism, Noll still suggests that the following “judgment could be premature”: “It might be possible, therefore, to conclude that American Lutheranism turned aside from Samuel Schmucker’s American modification of Lutheranism in the nineteenth century only to yield to Americanizing pressures in the twentieth century—for the ELCA, becoming less and less distinguishable from older mainline Protestant denominations, and for the LCMS, taking on the colors of American fundamentalism.” See Noll, “American Lutherans,” 15–16. Similarly Richard Cimino has suggested that American Lutheranism is undergoing an identity crisis: “In 1958 American Lutherans were newsworthy enough to find themselves on the cover of *Time* magazine. They had not done anything sensational, but they stood out in an era when American churches of different denominations were beginning to look and act alike as they moved to suburbia and assimilated to mainstream America. Lutherans were influenced by the same forces, but their strong confessional nature, with a stress on theology rather than practical Christian living, as well as their liturgy and ethnicity, set this tradition apart from other Protestants, suggesting a promising future. They were Protestants with a difference at a time when differences were supposed to be dissolving in the American melting pot. Whether or not the 1950s was a golden age for American Lutheranism, there is the wide perception that the years that have followed are posing serious questions to Lutheran identity.” Richard Cimino, ed., *Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), ix. See also *The Pieper Lectures: Evangelicalism/Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Historical Institute, 2007).

<sup>107</sup> See Noll, “American Lutherans,” 21.

into an Evangelical saint, rather than heed his call for Reformation theology, has anything to say to Lutherans, it is that America's need for a genuine Lutheran theology in the land of Arminianism is all the more imperative.<sup>108</sup> The old Nominalist axiom that once gave Luther such pangs of conscious is knocking once again on our church doors: *God does not deny grace to the one who does what is in him (Facientibus quod in se est, deus non denegat gratiam)*. LSQ

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<sup>108</sup> Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).

# The Divine Liturgy and its Use

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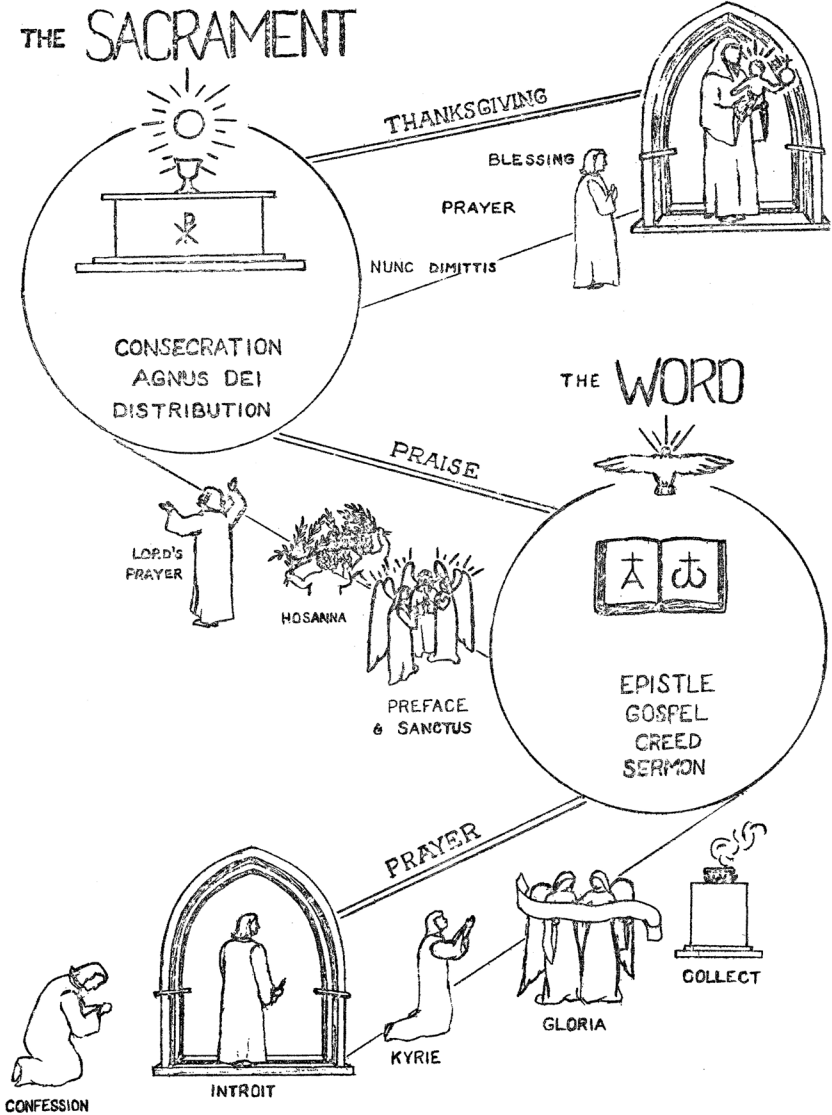
**I**N THE LUTHERAN CHURCH THE liturgy is usually referred to as the “divine service” (*Gottesdienst* or *Gudstjeneste*). The divine service is first and foremost God’s service to us. Here God serves us with Word and Sacrament, and, secondarily, we serve Him with praise and thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup> This is in keeping with Luther’s famous definition of worship: “...that our dear Lord Himself may speak to us through His Word, and we respond to Him through prayer and praise.”<sup>2</sup> Through the means of grace, we have union and communion with the Triune God (John 14:23-24). God the Father loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son so that we could be sons of God by adoption (Galatians 4:4-5). God the Son, Jesus Christ, washes us clean from sin with His holy, precious blood (1 John 1:7). And God the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts through the means of grace which trusts in Christ’s redemptive work and makes it our own (1 Corinthians 12:3). In the divine liturgy, through Word and Sacrament, we leave for a time our mundane workaday world and have a foretaste of heaven. We are caught

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<sup>1</sup> Here we are using a narrow definition of worship. In its broad sense worship is the Christian’s entire life of high doxology to the blessed Trinity. In Romans 12:1, Paul urges, “Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (NIV). In the broad sense worship is the entire faith, life, and attitude of a Christian. See also Fredrich Kalb, *Theology of Worship in 17th Century Lutheranism*, trans. Henry P.A. Hamann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 39.

<sup>2</sup> LW 51:333: Sermon at the Dedication of the Castle Church in Torgau, October 5, 1544.

# The Divine Liturgy



*Prepared by Bruce R. Backer*

up in the saints' and angels' heavenly worship all around the throne of the Lamb once slain (Revelation 7:9–17; 5:11–13). Thus we sing in the communion liturgy, "Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You...." This is indeed the very portal of heaven, the gateway to the eternal. We feast with the Lord which will culminate in the Lamb's high feast of heaven.

## The Origin of the Divine Liturgy

The divine liturgy as we know it today can be divided into two parts: the service of the Word and the service of the Sacrament. The service of the Word has its origins in the synagogue worship of the Old Testament era. The synagogue and its service, which developed during the Babylonian Captivity, or even before, included responsive singing of the Psalms, the reading of the Law and the Prophets, and exposition of Scripture. The early Christians continued to use the framework of synagogue worship, underscoring its Messianic intent.<sup>3</sup> The service of the Sacrament finds its origin in the Passover liturgy<sup>4</sup> in which context the Lord instituted the Supper. As the Old Testament believers ate the Passover lamb which pointed to the Messiah, so we eat the true Passover Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world (John 1:29).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 385–387; Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 67–73.

<sup>4</sup> The institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–25, Luke 22:15–20, and in 1 Corinthians 11:23–25. When our Lord and His disciples gathered that first Maundy Thursday evening, they came together to celebrate a meal most unique. This was the Passover, the most solemn meal for God's Old Testament people. It was to remind Israel of how the Lord once saved their first-born in Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb. This meal, however, not only pointed back to God's liberation in Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb, but it also pointed forward to the blood of the true Lamb of God who would ransom all men on the cross. As our Lord reclined at this meal for the last time, He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover rite.

Jesus used this setting to establish His New Testament meal of redemption. In the Passover, Old Testament believers ate the meat of the Passover lamb, which was to picture for them the true Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. Here Jesus, the very Lamb of God, did not give New Testament believers merely a picture of His flesh and blood with bread and wine. He gave them His true body and blood wherein He bestowed upon them all the blessings of His redemptive sacrifice.

<sup>5</sup> There is definite similarity between Old Testament worship and New Testament worship.

These traits common to the Jewish and the Christian outward service are first the *assembly* (*convocatio sancta*, Lev. 23:2, 3, 7, 8, 21, 27). There follows *the*

The Savior, in John's Gospel, reminds Christians that God is a spirit and His worshipers are to worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Christian worship is spiritual worship, not based on outward ritual, but on the Word made flesh revealed in the written Word. Concerning the worship of the early Christians, St. Paul encourages, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16; NKJV). The Word concerning Christ—the Gospel—is the principal part of Christian worship. This worship will include Scripture lessons, sermon, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. This worship always centers in Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2), the message of the Gospel which is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). The killing word of the Law will be proclaimed in all its severity and the saving word of the Gospel in all its sweetness. Baptism will be conducted here, where one is born again and united with Christ's body, the church, dying and rising in Him (John 3:5; Romans 6). The Lord's Supper will be celebrated often here, where Christ's body and blood are received for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Christian worship will be conducted decently and in order, for ours is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:40).<sup>6</sup> Here there is apostolic

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*preaching and hearing of the Word of God*, as prescribed in Lev. 10:11, but also Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14f., 44; 15:21. The *dispensing of the sacraments* continues under the New Covenant with a change as to form, but not as to content: the sacraments are no longer Circumcision and the Passover, but Baptism and the Holy Supper. Under *invocatio ac celebratio* Gerhard understands all the other parts, briefly designated as "liturgy," such as hymns, confession, prayer, etc. (Ps. 22:23, 26; Acts 16:13). To this is added *the collection for the support of the poor* as another divinely commanded component part of the external service (Is. 58:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2) (Kalb, 74-75).

<sup>6</sup> There is a certain direction in the action and the will of the Godhead. The Father, who is divine love, reveals His love *through* the Son of His love Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh for our salvation, *in* the Spirit by the means of grace (Romans 5:1,5). The Father manifested His love through the redemption in His Son, and that treasure is brought to humanity by the Spirit in the means of grace, the Word and Sacraments.

Our salvation is of God, *from* the Father, *through* the Son, *in* the Holy Spirit. As the Church worships it responds to this salvation full and free in praise and a life of high doxology. The Bride of Christ worships the Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit. We are able to worship God the Father through (on the basis of) the redemptive work of Christ, gathered in the fellowship of the Spirit around the means of grace. We are the body of Christ vivified by the Spirit through Word and



insistence on decorum, good order, and edification in the divine service.<sup>7</sup>

St. Luke gives a simple outline of worship in the New Testament church: “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42; NKJV). This summary statement concerning early Christian worship reminds us that the service centered in the apostles’ doctrine, the teaching of the inspired, inerrant Scriptures. It included the fellowship which may be a term implying a general gathering of Christians or it may refer specifically to the agape meal. The breaking of bread, which is a Lukan term for the Lord’s Supper, was a part of this Christian worship. In addition, prayer formed a part of early Christian worship. The prayers were either prayer in general, or the liturgical form of the service of the Word. Christians were to gather regularly around the means of grace (Hebrews 10:25). The early Christians may have celebrated the Lord’s Supper weekly (Acts 20:7) or at times daily for Acts 2:46 says that they continued “daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (NKJV).<sup>8</sup>

Originally the service of the Word and the service of the Sacrament may have been separate. The Lord’s Supper with an agape meal occurred in the evening and the service of the Word in the morning (1 Corinthians 11). When the Lord’s Supper was separated from the agape meal it was connected with the service of the Word in the morning.

By the time of Justin Martyr (ca. 150),<sup>9</sup> the service of the Word and the service of the Sacrament were combined into one order, and thus we have the basic outline of the historic liturgy. In reading chapters 65-67 of his *First Apology*, one can discern the basic structure of the divine liturgy as it is known today. The faithful came together in Christ’s name

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Sacrament. St. Paul says, “There He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through Him we have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Ephesians 2:17-18; emphasis added). “There is only one God and Father, from whom all things came, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom all things are, and one Holy Spirit, in whom all things are” ([The Council of Constantinople (553)] P. Toon, *Yesterday, Today and Forever*, 41). See Addendum 1.

<sup>7</sup> Kalb, 110.

<sup>8</sup> See Addendum 2 concerning the frequency of communion.

<sup>9</sup> Justin Martyr was born in Nablus in Samaria at the beginning of the second century. He was converted to Christianity around 135. At this point he turned his skills as a philosopher to the defense of the faith. In 150 he wrote his great *First Apology* while at Rome. Here he was martyred around 165.

on Sunday.<sup>10</sup> They gathered on this day because this was the day God created light out of darkness, and the day the Savior arose triumphant from the grave. At the assembly there were readings from the “memoirs of the apostles” (the Gospel lesson) or from the writings of the prophets (the Old Testament lesson); the homily; the prayers of the faithful; the kiss of peace; the offering of the gifts, including the elements for the Sacrament; the thanksgiving, including prayers, the Verba and the ending Amen of the faithful; and finally the distribution and reception.<sup>11</sup>

Hippolytus<sup>12</sup> produced a liturgical work (ca. 215) entitled *Apostolic Tradition*. This work is a polemically conservative guide to ecclesiastical observances. It gives valuable information concerning Baptism, including the catechumenate, ordination and the Lord’s Supper. It contains one of the earliest complete thanksgiving or eucharistic prayers<sup>13</sup> used to bless the elements in the Lord’s Supper celebration.<sup>14</sup> Here the Words of Institution are encapsulated in the prayer.

<sup>10</sup> Gathering on the Lord’s Day for the Lord’s Supper was the case already at the time of the writing of the *Didache*, where it states, “On every Lord’s Day, after you have assembled, break the bread and give thanks, first confessing your sins, that your sacrifice [of praise?] may be pure” (*Didache* 14 [Daniel J. Sheerin, *The Eucharist* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986), 284]).

<sup>11</sup> Justin’s important statement concerning the Eucharist is found in his *First Apology* 66:

And this food is called among us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food *which is blessed by the prayer of His Word* (δὲ εὐχῆς λόγου τοῦ παρ’ αὐτοῦ), and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, said, “This do ye in remembrance of Me, This is My body;” and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, “This is my blood,” and gave it to them. Roberts and Donaldson, *The Antenicene Fathers*, Vol. I, 185.

<sup>12</sup> Hippolytus was an anti-bishop in Rome about 200. He was exiled in Maximinus’ persecution of 235 and probably died shortly thereafter.

<sup>13</sup> For a summary of the reason why Lutherans are opposed to the Words of Institution embedded in a eucharistic prayer, see Gaylin Schmeling, *Bread of Life from Heaven* (Mankato, MN: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Press, 2009), 217–220. See also Addendum 3.

<sup>14</sup> See Addendum 4 for an outline of the liturgy in history.

Various forms of the liturgy developed such as the Celtic, Gallic, and Mozarabic liturgies in the West and the Coptic, Syriac, and Assyrian liturgies in the East. But they all followed the basic outline of the liturgy of the Ancient Church. With the rise of Charlemagne, crowned Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas 800, the Roman form of the liturgy became predominant in the West. The Hadrianum mass of the seventh century is the culmination of the Roman form and the ancestor of our present Common Order.<sup>15</sup>

In the Reformation, Luther restored the central article of the faith in its truth and purity. We are justified or declared righteous by nothing we do or accomplish but alone on the basis of Christ's redemptive work. This declaration of not guilty is brought to us through the means of grace and is received by trusting in the Savior (Ephesians 2:8–9). In addition, there was a reformation of the liturgy. Luther's reforming of the liturgy was conservative in nature; his purpose was to preserve as much of the ancient liturgy as possible. He changed only those parts of the mass which were contrary to God's Word.<sup>16</sup> He absolutely rejected the idea that the mass was a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. He restored a proper understanding of the liturgy as God's service (*Gottesdienst*) to us. Luther's first liturgical revision was the *Formula Missae*, his Latin mass, which is like the Common Order.<sup>17</sup> Luther's second liturgical revision was the *Deutsche Messe* or the German mass. This is more like the Bugenhagen Order.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Bruce R. Backer, *Lutheran Worship*, 72.

<sup>16</sup> The Lutheran principle is not the legalistic one of "Whatever is not prescribed in the New Testament is proscribed," but the evangelical one of "Whatever is not explicitly proscribed is permitted." Horace Hummel, "What's Lutheran in Worship," 6, unpublished essay.

<sup>17</sup> Akin to Rite Two in the ELH.

<sup>18</sup> Akin to Rite One in the ELH. Rite One is based on the Danish-Norwegian Order. The Ordinance of 1537, influenced by the reforming work of Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558), established the basic outline of this liturgy. In 1688 an agenda was published as a service book for the Danish and Norwegian churches. It contained the lectionary and prayers for use on Sundays. Three years earlier, in July of 1685, King Christian V (1648–1699), King of Denmark and Norway, issued the decree establishing the order of service which was to be used in the Lutheran Church and has become known as the Ritual of 1685 or the Danish-Norwegian Order, affectionately known as the Bugenhagen Order. This order still maintained the thoughts and emphasis of Bugenhagen. The order translated for the Hymnary of 1913 represents a reorder of the 1685 ritual adopted by the Church of Norway in 1889 and the Norwegian Synod in 1899. See also Craig A. Ferkenstad, "About God's Service in the Church," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (June 1982): 8ff.

The integrity of the Lutheran liturgy was maintained and embellished during the period of confessionalization and the age of Lutheran Orthodoxy. We think mainly of the great dogmaticians of this era, such as Johann Gerhard, but this was also the time of the devotional writers and the major Lutheran hymnwriters. There were Nicolaus Herman (1480–1561) in Joachimstal; Philipp Nicolai (1586–1608), who produced the king and queen of Lutheran chorales; Josua Stegmann (1588–1632); Johann Heermann (1585–1647) in Schlesien; Martin Rinckart (1586–1649) with his “Now Thank We All Our God”; Johann von Rist (1607–1667); Sigismund von Birken (1626–1681); Thomas Kingo (1634–1703), the great Danish hymnwriter; and the Lutheran composer Johann Crüger (1598–1662), whose anniversary we remember this year. Yet beyond a doubt the most important Lutheran hymnwriter was Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676), who suffered persecution from Prussian absolutism.<sup>19</sup> The melodies of many of the great Gerhardt hymns were composed by Crüger and by Johann Ebeling (1620–1676). During this time the Saxon Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, was producing some of the most magnificent church music of all times. Lutheran liturgical life was seen in all its splendor and glory in Leipzig and Electoral Saxony.<sup>20</sup> Lutheran church architecture reached its apex in the construction of the Frauenkirche of Dresden in 1734.

In the age of Lutheran Pietism and especially in Rationalism there was a dismantling of the Lutheran liturgy, art, and culture. Under the leadership of Jakob Spener (1635–1705), the father of Pietism, and Hermann Francke (1663–1727), the organizer of the movement with his famous Halle Institutions (*Die Francke'schen Stiftungen*), there was a general disinterest in the means of grace and Lutheran liturgical forms of worship. It was not that these forms were immediately discarded, but their meaning and value were deemphasized. They meant little to the fervent Pietists. Thus when Rationalism and the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) gained predominance, the liturgy began to slowly disintegrate. There were places that retained the historic service with its liturgy and customs, such as areas in Saxony, Mecklenburg, Pommern,

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<sup>19</sup> Gaylin R. Schmeling, “Paul Gerhardt: Pastor and Theologian,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (March 2008). See Addendum 5 for an example of Lutheran worship in Gerhardt’s Berlin.

<sup>20</sup> See Günther Stiller, *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984). This book describes the rich liturgical heritage that was still present in Leipzig during the first half of the eighteenth century.

and Nürnberg, but these were the exceptions.<sup>21</sup> Rationalism rejected the miraculous and mystical in theology and worship, stressing common sense.

The utilitarian principle of sound common sense (“der gesunde Menschenverstand”) in its least vital form usurped the place of revelation and became the slogan of the day. The men of the movement conceived it their duty to remove the barnacles that had fastened themselves upon the body of Christian doctrine during the centuries. They did this not to destroy, but, as they sincerely believed, to purify the Church. They thought they were doing God, and especially man, a service. The miraculous and the mystical in dogma and life were removed. Christ was retained not as the Son of God and the Redeemer from sin, but as the great religious philosopher who reveals and interprets God to man. The pulpit descended to a purely “practical” choice of subjects for presentation: “The value of early rising”; “the value of feeding cows in the stable during the winter” (this on Christmas Day); “the value of vaccination against smallpox”; etc., etc.<sup>22</sup>

With the Lutheran Renewal<sup>23</sup> (*Erweckungsbewegung*) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there began a slow revival of the Lutheran liturgy. The infamous agenda of Friedrich Wilhelm III, the intention of which was the union of Lutherans and Reformed in Prussia, drove thousands of Old Lutherans to Australia and the Americas. As negative as this agenda was for confessionalism, “from the standpoint of form—based as it was on historic 16th-century models—it was not only a step in

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<sup>21</sup> Fred L. Precht, editor, *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 83.

<sup>22</sup> Carl S. Mundinger, *Government in the Missouri Synod: The Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 19.

<sup>23</sup> In the year 1817, on the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, Claus Harms’ publication of his Ninety-Five Theses is usually considered to be the beginning of the Lutheran renewal. There were Scheibel at Breslau in Silesia; Grabau in Prussia and Pomerania; and Rudelbach, a Dane, in Saxony who influenced the founders of the Missouri Synod. Soon Wilhelm Löhe spread his far-flung Lutheran net of missions from Neuendettelsau. Also at the universities (Erlangen, Leipzig, etc.) outstanding work was done in exegesis by Harless, von Hofmann, Franz Delitzsch (converted Jew and student friend of C.F.W. Walther); and in dogmatics by Thomasius and Philippi. The Lutheran renewal blossomed in Norway with the Johnsonian Awakening under Gisle Johnson (1822-1894) and Paul Caspari (1814-1892) who were professors at the University of Christiania.

the right direction, but it also gave impulse to the movement of liturgical study and worship renewal.”<sup>24</sup> Wilhelm Löhe (1808–1872), pastor at Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, performed a yeoman’s task in restoring the historic liturgy in the Lutheran Church. He, together with men such as Theodore Kliefoth (1810–1895), Lutheran theologian and cathedral preacher at Schwerin, had a major influence on confessional Lutheranism in Europe and America.<sup>25</sup> In America this restoration was evident in the 1856 *Kirchen-Agende* of the Saxons, which was a return to the old Orthodox Saxon agenda.<sup>26</sup> The same was true of the Buffalo Synod agenda, which was based on the old Pomeranian and Saxon agendas.<sup>27</sup> The leading liturgist among the Missouri Synod fathers, Friedrich Lochner (1822–1902), produced an important liturgical resource in his book, *Der Hauptgottesdienst*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the common service in English, based on the liturgical studies of Löhe and other Lutheran Renewal scholars, began to be used among Synodical Conference Lutherans. Here the basic outline of the liturgy was restored to common use.

### The Proper Use of the Divine Liturgy

Today many questions have arisen concerning the liturgy and worship forms. There are issues in regard to nontraditional formats in worship and contemporary worship. What are the proper guidelines for Lutheran worship?

The main principle in the discussion of worship forms is that the liturgy properly proclaims Law and Gospel—that the doctrine of the Gospel be correctly taught, and the Sacraments rightly administered. The historic outline of the liturgy as it has been found in both the Eastern and Western churches has been an excellent vehicle for accomplishing this. Obviously in the Reformation certain parts of the liturgy were reformed so that there were no false or confusing teachings. The same is true of the Eastern liturgy as it is used in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. **Therefore a beneficial guideline as we discuss**

<sup>24</sup> Precht, 84.

<sup>25</sup> Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, revised ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 153–154.

<sup>26</sup> *Kirchen-Agende für Evang.-Luth. Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgerischer Confession. Zusammengestellt aus den alten rechtgläubigen Sächsischen Kirchen-Agenden.*

<sup>27</sup> *Evangelisch Lutherische Agende, auf Grund der alten Pommerschen und Sächsischen Agenden bearbeitet und mit den nöthigen Zusätzen für hiesige Bedürfnisse vermehrt.*

**liturgy is that we follow the historic outline of the divine service<sup>28</sup> because it has served and continues to serve as the preeminent means to present properly the Word and the Sacrament.**

Stating that we desire to follow the historic outline of the liturgy or divine service does not mean that we are bound to a particular type of music or exact wording. We see a great variation between the historic liturgy as it is found in the Coptic church, the Greek Orthodox church, and the Western church. Also there was variation in the different Lutheran services of the sixteenth century. Rather it means that we will want to follow the basic outline given in those liturgies. Our Confessions are very clear that the Lutheran church does not demand complete uniformity in outward rites.

And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere. As Paul says [Eph. 4:5, 6]: “One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all ....”<sup>29</sup>

For this reason the churches are not to condemn one another because of differences in ceremonies when in Christian freedom one has fewer or more than the other, as long as these churches are otherwise united in teaching and in all the articles of the faith as well as in the proper use of the holy sacraments. As it is said, “*Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*” (dissimilarity in fasting shall not destroy the unity of faith).<sup>30</sup>

The liturgy has provided an excellent vehicle for the presentation of Law and Gospel. All new forms of worship will include the basic outline of the historic liturgies. If such is the case, there would seem to be no great difficulty in new forms of worship. Different types of music, different instruments, and alternative texts should not be a hindrance

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<sup>28</sup> This outline will include confession and absolution, the lessons, the Creed, sermon, prayer, Lord’s Prayer and a frequent use of the Lord’s Supper. At times it is stated that our service has a two-fold mountaintop: Word and Sacrament; or even a three-fold mountaintop: the return to Baptism in confession and absolution, the use of the Word in the lessons and sermon, and the Lord’s Supper. It is assumed that the main worship service is being discussed here. Matins and vespers, etc., may have a different format.

<sup>29</sup> AC VII, 2-4 (Latin), 43.

<sup>30</sup> FC SD X, 31, 640.



as long as they are in accord with Scripture. However if the outline of the divine liturgy is carelessly or purposely discarded, then questions and suspicions may easily arise. It is assumed that the basic points or outline of Lutheran worship (as noted above) are being covered and not readily dismissed for various unbecoming alternatives. The time-tested outline of the divine liturgy (e.g., invocation, confession and absolution, the readings, the Creed, sermon, prayer, Lord's Prayer, frequent use of the Lord's Supper) is worthy to uphold, not only because of the rich theology presented, but also for the sake of unity among our congregations. This is the point of our Confessions:

Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. In fact, the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence. Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained, except that German hymns, added for the instruction of the people, are interspersed here and there among the Latin ones. For ceremonies are especially needed in order to teach those who are ignorant. Paul advised [1 Cor. 14:2, 9] that in church a language that is understood by the people should be used. The people have grown accustomed to receiving the sacrament together—all who are fit to do so. This also increases reverence and respect for public ceremonies. For people are admitted only if they first had an opportunity to be examined and heard. The people are also reminded about the dignity and use of the sacrament—how it offers great consolation to anxious consciences—so that they may learn to believe in God and expect and ask for all that is good from God. Such worship pleases God, and such use of the sacrament cultivates piety toward God. So it does not appear that the Mass is held with greater devotion among our adversaries than among us.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, many traditions are kept among us, such as the order of readings in the Mass, holy days, etc., which are conducive to maintaining good order in the church. But at the same time, people are warned that such acts of worship do not justify before God and that no punishable sin is committed if they are omitted without offense.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> AC XXIV, 1-9 (Latin), 69.

<sup>32</sup> AC XXVII, 40-41 (Latin), 81.

Furthermore, we gladly keep the ancient traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquility, and we interpret them in the best possible way, by excluding the opinion that they justify. But our enemies falsely charge that we abolish good ordinances and church discipline. We can claim that the public liturgy in the church is more dignified among us than among the opponents. If anyone would look at it in the right way, we keep the ancient canons better than the opponents. Among the opponents, unwilling celebrants and hirelings celebrate the Mass, and very often they do so only for the money. They chant psalms, not in order to learn or pray, but for the sake of the rite, as if this work were a required act of worship, or for the sake of financial reward. Many among us celebrate the Lord's Supper every Lord's day after they are instructed, examined, and absolved. The children chant the Psalms in order to learn them; the people also sing in order either to learn or to pray.<sup>33</sup>

Among the opponents there are many regions where no sermons are delivered during the entire year except during Lent. And yet the chief worship of God is to preach the gospel. And when the opponents do preach, they talk about human traditions, about the devotion to the saints and similar trifles. This the people rightly loathe, and so they walk out on them immediately after the reading of the gospel. A few of the better ones have begun now to speak about good works, but they still say nothing about the righteousness of faith, about faith in Christ, and about the consolation of consciences. Indeed they rail against this most salutary part of the gospel in their polemics. On the contrary, in our churches all the sermons deal with topics like these: repentance, fear of God, faith in Christ, the righteousness of faith, consolation of consciences through faith, the exercise of faith, prayer (what it should be like and that everyone may be completely certain that it is efficacious and is heard), the cross, respect for the magistrates and all civil orders, the distinction between the kingdom of Christ (the spiritual kingdom) and political affairs, marriage, the education and instruction of children, chastity, and all the works of love. From this description of the state of our churches it is possible to determine that we

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<sup>33</sup> Ap XV:38-40, 229.

diligently maintain churchly discipline, godly ceremonies, and good ecclesiastical customs.<sup>34</sup>

This is a description of the divine liturgy in Luther's Wittenberg in 1536:

At the seventh hour we returned to the city church and observed by which rite they celebrated the liturgy; namely thus: First, the Introit was played on the organ, accompanied by the choir in Latin, as in the mass offering. Indeed, the minister meanwhile proceeded from the sacristy dressed sacrificially and, kneeling before the altar, made his confession together with the assisting sacristan. After the confession he ascended to the altar to the book that was located on the right side, according to papist custom.

After the Introit the organ was played and the *Kyrie eleison* sung in alternation by the boys. When it was done the minister sang *Gloria in excelsis*, which song was completed in alternation by the organ and choir. Thereafter the minister at the altar sang "Dominus vobiscum," the choir responding "Et cum spiritu tuo." The collect for that day followed in Latin, then he sang the Epistle in Latin, after which the organ was played, the choir following with *Herr Gott Vater, wohn uns bei*. When it was done the Gospel for that Sunday was sung by the minister in Latin on the left side of the altar, as is the custom of the adherents of the pope. After this the organ played, and the choir followed with *Wir glauben all an einen Gott*. After this song came the sermon, which Bucer delivered on the Gospel for that Sunday in the presence of Luther and Philipp [Melanchthon]. After the sermon the choir sang *Da pacem domine*, followed by the prayer for peace by the minister at the altar, this in Latin as well.

The Communion followed, which the minister began with the Lord's Prayer sung in German. Then he sang the words of the supper, and these in German with his back turned toward the people, first those of the bread, which, when the words had been offered, he then elevated to the sounding of bells; likewise with the chalice, which he also elevated to the sounding of bells. Immediately communion was held. Pomeranus [Johann Bugenhagen] went first, then Fabricius Capito, and after him Bucer. During the communion the Agnus Dei was sung in

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<sup>34</sup> Ap XV:42-44, 229.

Latin. The minister served the bread in common dress but [the one serving] the chalice dressed sacrificially [i.e., in mass vestments]. They followed the singing of the Agnus Dei with a German song: *Jesus Christus [unser Heiland]* and *Gott sei gelobet*. After the sermon the majority of the people departed. Even Luther himself, because he felt dizzy during the communion, had to leave attended by Philipp. The minister ended the Communion with a certain thanksgiving sung in German. He followed this, facing the people, with the benediction, singing “The Lord make his face to shine on you, etc.” And thus was the mass ended.<sup>35</sup>

## Two Extremes Should Be Avoided

Two extremes should be avoided in this consideration. One extreme would be to demand strict conformity to the rites and music of the sixteenth century. While no one in our midst would adhere to such an extreme view, we can easily fall into this mentality. There is no question that many of the greatest Lutheran hymnwriters lived during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. That does not mean, however, that there isn't other excellent music that can be used within the church.<sup>36</sup> We are not bound by the style or the music of a particular era. Nor are we bound to a particular type of music.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod has never been dogmatic on specific liturgical forms, hymns, or hymnals. At the 1979 synod convention, it was stated concerning Lutheran worship, “The ELS has never officially adopted any hymnbook as its official book of worship but has enjoyed a freedom of use among its congregations of various liturgical services and worship materials.”<sup>37</sup>

We do not want to develop a legalistic approach in our midst concerning liturgy and other practices. This occurs when motivation is based on the Law rather than allowing Christian actions to flow freely from the Gospel. This is evident when demands are made which have no

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<sup>35</sup> Wolfgang Musculus, *Travel Diary*; quoted in Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 195–196.

<sup>36</sup> For example, one thinks of hymnwriters such as Martin Franzmann (1907–1976), Werner Franzmann (1905–1996), Jaroslav Vajda (1919–2008), and Stephen Starke (1955– ).

<sup>37</sup> *Synod Report*, 1979, 63.

basis in Holy Scripture. In the church Christian motivation and actions will always be a result of the sweet message of full forgiveness in Christ.

The other extreme is to destroy the outline of the liturgy and move toward a structure of a praise service, as it developed among the Baptists. The key elements in such a service are these:

- Near the beginning of the service there is a lengthy section of singing led by a praise band or other musicians. Several songs are sung in sequence at this point.
- Prayers are included between or after the songs, and at several other times in the service.
- There is little or no use of Scripture apart from the sermon.
- The sermon occurs near the end of the service and is the sole peak of the service's progression. The main point of the sermon is to encourage sanctification, and more often than not this is done apart from any application of the Gospel.<sup>38</sup>

It is better to refer to such a service as a praise service rather than to use the term contemporary worship. The main point is the structure and content of the service, not the particular style of music or accompanying instruments. A praise service using old Baptist hymns may not appear very contemporary, and a liturgical service with piano, guitar, flute and percussion probably does not appear very traditional.<sup>39</sup> A service may be a proper Lutheran service using modern music accompanied by guitar and drums. A Lutheran service will follow the basic outline of the liturgy with the Gospel predominating.

Contrary to the historic liturgy, the primary emphasis of the praise service<sup>40</sup> is not on God feeding us with the means of grace, but rather on our service to God. While the church always desires to praise God for salvation full and free, the primary emphasis of biblical worship is God's service to believers. The praise form of worship that grew out of the American revivalistic background tends to emphasize sanctification over justification and does not clearly present Law and Gospel. Frequently in the praise service, prayer is presented as the real means of grace. Also the praise form of worship, with its highly emotional music, is intended

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<sup>38</sup> Johnold J. Strey, "Proclaiming the Gospel in Worship," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 105, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 251.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> This is a worship form where ordinary, proper, and the ancient texts of the liturgy (Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, or variations of these) are not used and where the lectionary based on the church year is not followed.

to lead people to have an emotional experience of Christ or make a decision for Christ,<sup>41</sup> which is the hallmark of Arminian theology.

## The Lutheran Difference

For Lutheran theology to be maintained in the twenty-first century, a Lutheran difference must be evident both in contradistinction to Rome and to Geneva. There are tendencies alive within Lutheranism that are causing Lutheranism to fade into mainline Protestantism or conservative Evangelicalism. There are other tendencies that are moving in the direction of Rome, with a swim or two in the Tiber. If the Lutheran church is to continue to exist, it must show the Wittenberg way in doctrine and practice. The Lutheran body of doctrine is clearly distinct from that of both Rome and Geneva. Likewise its practice and use of adiaphora will be clearly distinguishable as Lutheran. The rites and rituals of the church are not indifferent.<sup>42</sup> Having pure Lutheran doctrine will do no good if our rites and practices portray us as Romanists or Evangelicals.

Authentic Lutheranism is defined by the Lutheran Confessions for they are the correct exposition of the Holy Scripture, which is God's errorless Word. Lutheranism is both Trinitarian and Christological. Confessional Lutheranism has a precious heritage centered in the Word made flesh present in written Word, the means of grace where

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<sup>41</sup> Modern Reformed Evangelicals are preoccupied with the born again experience or making a decision for Christ. A leading world evangelist declared, "The greatest news in the universe is that we can be born again!" I'm sure that many of us have been asked at one time or another, "Have you been born again?" or "Have you had a born-again experience?" The real question is: What do Reformed Evangelicals mean when they speak of being born again? By this term Evangelicals mean that a person has come to a point in life when he or she has accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord and made a decision for Christ. The person feels saved and experiences within himself or herself the forgiveness, peace, joy, and victory of Christ. The person feels Christ in his or her life and has a personal relationship with him. This viewpoint tends to base the assurance of salvation on the feeling or experience of being saved. It bases the certainty that we are believers on how sorry we are for our sins, how much peace we have in life, how Christ-like our lives are, or our decision to follow Jesus. Salvation becomes our decision to accept God rather than God's acceptance of us. Before the throne of God, a person might say, "God you should let me into your heaven because I chose to accept Jesus as my personal Savior and follow him." This implies that one can do something to help in his own salvation, which is contrary to the clear word of Scripture (Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 5:4 [Gaylin Schmeling, *Baptism: My Adoption into God's Family* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999), 56ff]).

<sup>42</sup> The picture for our people Lutheran doctrine as the baptismal exorcism and the rejection of the *fractio panis* (the breaking of bread in the Lord's Supper) did in Germany in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

the treasures of redemption are brought to us, the divine service (*Gottesdienst*) around Word and Sacrament in which God feeds us with Himself, and a rich Lutheran spirituality and devotional life. *Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr vergebet nun und nimmermehr!* – God’s Word and Luther’s doctrine pure now and forever! These are the Lutheran distinctives that can be brought to bear on the culture!

### **Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi**

A principle very much in vogue today is the ancient dictum ascribed to Prosper of Aquitaine, *lex orandi, lex credendi* – the law of worshiping directs the law of believing (or *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*). This means that theology as a statement of the church’s belief is drawn from the liturgy. This principle states that how a congregation worships will affect what it believes. If a congregation is fed a steady diet of charismatic music, don’t be surprised if the members begin to speak in tongues. If a congregation cannot distinguish its worship from that of Rome, don’t be surprised that the members begin to pope. How we worship will affect the confession of our members and their children.

At the same time church historians know that *lex orandi, lex credendi* is the same as *lex credendi, lex orandi*—the law of believing directs the law of worshiping. This means that our confession will dictate the structure of our worship service. Remember that Luther reformed the outline of the mass in order to emphasize justification by faith. The worship service will always conform to the dictates of our confession.<sup>43</sup>

### **Liturgical Movement**

The modern liturgical movement is predominantly a Roman Catholic phenomenon. Its origins are usually traced to Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805–1875) who refounded the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes, France, in 1832.<sup>44</sup> It includes important names such as Dom Odo Casel, Josef Jungmann, Jean Danielou, and Dom Gregory Dix. Dix, who was an Anglican, not a Roman Catholic, especially influenced

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<sup>43</sup> The principle is considered very important in Roman Catholic theology. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “The Church’s faith precedes the faith of the believer who is invited to adhere to it. When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles - whence the ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi* (or: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, according to Prosper of Aquitaine [5th cent.]). The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition” (para. 1124).

<sup>44</sup> Frank C. Senn, *The People’s Work: A Social History of the Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 292–293.



Protestantism in this country with his book entitled *The Shape of the Liturgy*. In this country the center of the liturgical movement is St. John's College Abbey in Collegetown, Minnesota. The fruit of the liturgical movement is very evident in the results of Vatican II.

As confessional Lutherans, we must be aware of the influence of the liturgical movement. There are times when we assume that a particular rite or ceremony is part of our Lutheran heritage when actually it developed as a result of the study of the patristic fathers by the liturgical movement. There certainly have been benefits of the liturgical movement, such as the three-year cycle of readings. At the same time, there are definite dangers involved in the movement: the unification of the rites of initiation, the four-fold shape of the liturgy, and the four-fold shape of the eucharistic prayer.<sup>45</sup>

### Art and Architecture

The worship space in a proper Lutheran church will emphasize the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. Throughout history Lutheran churches usually have had two primary sections which correspond to the two-fold service of worship: a distinctive chancel where God comes in Word, Baptism, and the Supper and a distinctive nave where the people offer prayer, praise, and adoration.

We build churches and they are precious to us because they are the places where we encounter God in the Word and the Sacraments. They are places where we kneel and pray and God does His work in us through the means of grace. The building is precious not primarily because of what it is, but because of what our gracious God does there.

Lutheran art and architecture, which properly facilitates the Word and Sacrament liturgy, will always be other-worldly in nature. This is the place where we meet the holy and blessed Trinity in the means of grace, and the architecture and art of our worship center will emphasize this. In God's house, God's people step away from the distractions and difficulties of daily life and meet their Lord, having heaven on earth. This is the portal of heaven, the gateway to the eternal.

### Incarnation and Liturgy

St. John records, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14; NKJV). The Divine Logos, who is the only-begotten of the Father from all eternity (Psalm 2:7), became true man in the womb

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<sup>45</sup> Timothy C.J. Quill, "The Modern Liturgical Movement and American Lutheranism," *The Bride of Christ* 24, no. 4: 3-20.

of the blessed Virgin. As Christ became incarnate for our salvation, so He is incarnate in the Word and the Sacraments to distribute to us all the blessings of salvation. As He took a weak human form and died on a shameful cross to accomplish our salvation, so He uses insignificant earthly forms, such as an unimportant book, a palmful of water, and some bread and wine, to distribute salvation. Likewise, He uses human art, architecture, pictures,<sup>46</sup> and symbols to portray the sweet message of the Gospel. These outward physical forms are used to picture all the blessings of God clothed in the flesh for our redemption.

## The Liturgy and Eschatology

The divine liturgy will always have an eschatological emphasis. Each time we gather for worship we are anticipating our Lord's second coming on the Last Day as St. Paul tells us, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26; NKJV). We await His second coming, and He gives us a foretaste of His coming in Word and Sacrament. He is present for us in the means of grace.

In the means of grace the Christian has an eschatological event in the here and now. He has the already and the not yet. Through the Word of God we were born again to a living hope (1 Peter 1:23). We are a new creation and we already have the new heaven and new earth in the Gospel. We already have the new creation but not yet in fullness (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Baptism the Christian already experiences death and resurrection which will climax in the death of the body and the final resurrection. He has the already in foretaste but not yet in fullness (Romans 6; Colossians 2:11-12). In the Lord's Supper the Christian already feasts with the Lamb once slain which will culminate in the Lamb's high feast in eternity. He has the feast of the lamb already in foretaste but not yet in fullness (Luke 22:16-18<sup>47</sup>; 1 Corinthians

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<sup>46</sup> Think of the center panel of the altar painting in the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Weimar, Germany by Lucas Cranach (1472-1553). It certainly portrays the message of salvation.

<sup>47</sup> In Luke 22:16 Jesus says, "I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Here the suffering Savior on Maundy Thursday indicated that He would not eat with the disciples again until the kingdom comes. When the risen Lord ate with the Emmaus disciples, He declared that the kingdom had come. The Emmaus meal and each successive Lord's Supper celebration in the divine liturgy is a foretaste of the messianic wedding banquet of heaven (Arthur A. Just, Jr., *The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus* [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993], 36).

11:26). The divine liturgy, grounded in Word and Sacrament, is our heaven on earth until we enter heaven.

The Stranger (Luke 24:13–35) who walked with the disciples on the way, who became a guest at their home, and then host at their meal, is a stranger no more. He taught them His Word and revealed Himself to them in the breaking of bread. Now as the church gathers in Word and Sacrament worship, He is the host who gives Himself to us for food as the beginning of the messianic victory banquet, where all tears are wiped away and death is swallowed up forever, a foretaste of heaven. Dying You destroyed our death, rising You restored our life. Lord Jesus, Risen One, come quickly! <sup>LSQ</sup>

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### A Lord's Supper Prayer

O Lord, although I am not worthy that You would today enter my heart, yet I need Your help and desire Your grace for the strengthening of my faith. My only confidence as I near Your holy altar is that You have invited me, a poor miserable sinner, to receive Your body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

O Lord Jesus, now unite Yourself with me so that I remain in You and you in me, ever undivided both here in time and forever in all eternity. May Your holy body, Lord Jesus Christ, nourish me, Your rose-colored blood quench me, Your bitter suffering and death strengthen me. O Lord Jesus Christ, hear me, and in Your holy wounds hide me, that I never be separated from You. From the old evil foe redeem me, and in the true faith keep me. Then I, together with all the elect, may joyfully sing Your praises both here and hereafter in eternity. Amen.

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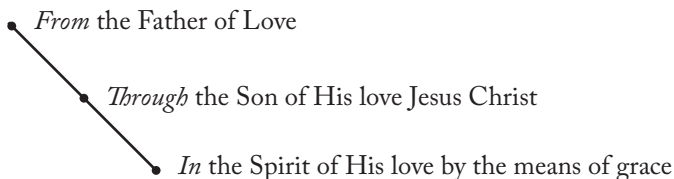
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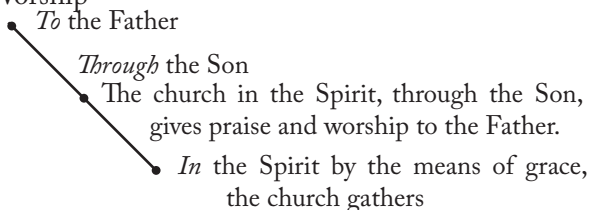
## Addendum 1: The Direction and Motion in Salvation and Worship

Our salvation is of God, *from* the Father, *through* the Son, *in* the Holy Spirit.

Salvation is



Worship



The Bride of Christ worships the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

There is a certain direction in the action and the will of the Godhead. The Father, who is divine love, reveals His love *through* the Son of His love Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh for our salvation, *in* the Spirit by the means of grace (Romans 5:1,5). The Father manifested His love through the redemption in His Son, and that treasure is brought to humanity by the Spirit in the means of grace, the Word and Sacraments.

Our salvation is of God, *from* the Father, *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit. As the Church worships it responds to this salvation full and free in praise and a life of high doxology. The Bride of Christ worships the Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit. We are able to worship God the Father through (on the basis of) the redemptive work of Christ, gathered in the fellowship of the Spirit around the means of grace. We are the body of Christ vivified by the Spirit through Word and Sacrament. St. Paul says, “There He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for **through Him we have access in one Spirit to the Father**” (Ephesians 2:18). “There is only one God and Father, from whom all things came, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom all things are, and one Holy Spirit, in whom all things are.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The Council of Constantinople (553) in P. Toon, *Yesterday, Today and Forever*, 41.



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## Addendum 2: Response To The “Every Sunday Communion” Memorial

The 2001 convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod instructed the Doctrine Committee to study and respond to a memorial urging our congregations “to restore every Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Supper” as a matter of practice. After study of the matter and discussion by the Doctrine Committee, the committee offers the following response to the 2002 convention:

WHEREAS, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, instituted the Lord’s Supper and commanded that it be celebrated in His church until He comes again in glory (Luke 22:15-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25), and,

WHEREAS, In His Supper the Lord distributes to us His true body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation (*Small Catechism* VI), and,

WHEREAS, The Lord has clearly indicated that the church is to celebrate the Lord’s Supper often, and commanded that it be celebrated in remembrance of Him (1 Corinthians 11:23-25), and,

WHEREAS, The Scriptures do not define the term “often” but rather leave the frequency of communion to Christian freedom, and,

WHEREAS, Examples from the New Testament seem to imply that at times the Lord’s Supper was celebrated weekly (Acts 20:7) and at times daily (Acts 2:46), and,

WHEREAS, The motivation for attendance at the Lord’s Supper should not be a legalistic requirement but rather the loving invitation of our Lord and the sweet message of the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we encourage our congregations to celebrate the Lord’s Supper regularly and often in order to receive the wonderful blessings of the Sacrament, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

*Synod Report, 2002, 103, 105*

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## Addendum 3: The Eucharistic Prayer

In the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (170–236) we find the eucharistic prayer in its complete form. It is not to be found in all the liturgies of the Early Church. The outline of the eucharistic prayer was influenced by the Jewish table blessings. The prayer begins with the thanksgiving which praises and thanks God for the creation and the redemption. Following the thanksgiving, one finds the Verba, the Words of Institution, which are encapsulated

in the prayer. They explain why the church has such a eucharistic meal and they are the words which the Lord gave for blessing in the Supper. The Verba are followed by the anamnesis, the remembering of Christ's death and resurrection for salvation, and by the epiclesis which is a calling down of the Holy Spirit either to strengthen the communicants through the eucharistic meal or to make the elements the body and blood of Christ.

1. The eucharistic prayer is made up of the following:
  - a. Thanksgiving – for creation and redemption
  - b. Verba – Words of Institution
  - c. Anamnesis – remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection
  - d. Epiclesis – calling down of the Holy Spirit
2. The eucharistic prayer turns the meaning of the Sacrament upside down. The Words of Institution are no longer a proclamation of God's grace to the congregation and the effectual cause of the Real Presence, but a prayer man offers to God.

He takes bread and wine and with the word which He speaks He makes of them His body and blood and gives it to His disciples to eat.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore these two things—mass and prayer, sacrament and work, testament and sacrifice—must not be confused; for the one comes from God to us through the ministration of the priest and demands our faith, the other proceeds from our faith to God through the priest and demands his hearing. The former descends and the latter ascends.<sup>50</sup>

3. The Words of Institution are not our words of prayer to God but God's words of grace to His people. Thus whenever the Words of Institution are enclosed in a prayer the essence of the Sacrament, the forgiveness of sins, is obscured.
  - a. The Sacrament is God's gift to us. If there is the slightest thought that the Supper is an offering to God, a gift given to God, the Gospel is rendered null and void.
  - b. The eucharistic prayer obscures the central article of the faith, justification by faith alone. When the Verba are enclosed in a eucharistic prayer the emphasis of the Sacrament is not God's presentation of Christ's free forgiveness but our offering of praise and thanks to God.

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<sup>49</sup> LW 36:166.

<sup>50</sup> LW 36:56.

4. History and the eucharistic prayer:

- a. Early eucharistic prayers without the Verba such as that of Addai and Mari indicate that the Verba were separate from the prayer.

Some have offered historical reconstructions which allow for the existence of prayers that do not include the narrative. While the argument used to be largely over Addai and Mari, it has broadened to include the presence in the Egyptian and Antiochene traditions of much shorter thanksgiving prayers, which do not have this component. ... It is also possible that this type of prayer could give validity to the Lutheran practice of separating the narrative from the prayer, as Martin Luther did. This allows for a mode of joining proclamation with memorial thanksgiving in the celebration of the Lord's Supper different to that which occurs when the attempt is to include the proclamation in the prayer.<sup>51</sup>

- b. Gregory the Great writes in Epistle XII to John, Bishop of Syracuse, a passage also cited by Chemnitz in his *Examen*<sup>52</sup> and by Friedrich Lochner in *Der Hauptgottesdienst*.<sup>53</sup>

[I]t was the custom of the apostles to consecrate the host oblation to that same prayer only. And it seemed to me very unsuitable that we should say over the oblation a prayer which a scholastic had composed, and should not say the very prayer which our Redeemer composed over His body and blood.<sup>54</sup>

- c. Chemnitz writes:

And surely this blessing or consecration is not to be divided between the Word of God and words handed down by men. For it is not just any word, but the Word of God which is necessary for a sacrament. And to the Word of God, seeing it has been tried with fire, nothing is to be added (Proverbs 30:6). And especially, nothing is to be added to the testament of the Son of God (Galatians 3:15–27). In short, Christ has commanded us to do in the action of the sacrament what He Himself did. He did not, however, perform a mute action, but spoke. And what He said is

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<sup>51</sup> Frank C. Senn, ed. "The Eucharistic Prayer: Another Look," *New Eucharistic Prayers: An Ecumenical Study of Their Development and Structure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 241–242.

<sup>52</sup> Ex 2:226.

<sup>53</sup> Friedrich Lochner, *Der Hauptgottesdienst der Evangelisch Lutherischen Kirche* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1905), 235.

<sup>54</sup> *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Vol. 13 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 9.

reported to us in Scripture, as much as the Holy Spirit judged to be necessary for us.<sup>55</sup>

5. From history it is seen that the eucharistic prayer gradually developed into the canon of the Mass with its sacrifice. Why should we return to a questionable custom which led the Medieval Church to blur the central article of the faith?
6. In the eucharistic prayer the pastor calls to God's remembrance (anamnesis) all that Christ has done for our salvation. Here the character of the sacrament is turned from God's gift to us, to our act of remembrance directed toward God.
7. Some of the forms of the epiclesis are an invocation of the Holy Spirit to make Christ's body and blood present in the Sacrament. Such an epiclesis clouds the fact that the Verba effect the presence.
8. When the Words of Institution stand alone in the liturgy they are more in harmony with the theology of the Formula of Concord, Article VII.

Gaylin Schmeling, *Bread of Life from Heaven* (Mankato, MN: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Press, 2009), 217–220.

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## The Eucharistic Prayer of Hippolytus

Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* is dated around AD 215. This work is a polemically conservative guide to ecclesiastical observances. It gives valuable information concerning Baptism, Ordination, and the Eucharist. It contains the earliest complete thanksgiving or eucharistic prayer used to bless the elements in the Lord's Supper celebration.

The Lord be with you.

And let all say: And with your spirit (2 Tm 4.22).

[Let us lift] up our hearts.

We have them [lifted] to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

It is fitting and right (2 Th 1.3).

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<sup>55</sup> Ex 2:226.

And then let him continue as follows:

We give thanks to you, O God, through your beloved servant Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to us in the last times (Ga 4.4) as Saviour and Redeemer and Angel of your Will (Is 9.5). He is your inseparable Word, through whom you have created all things (Jn 1.3), and in Him you were well-pleased (Mt 3.17). You sent Him from heaven into the womb of the Virgin, and He, dwelling in the womb, was made flesh, and was manifested as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin.

When He had fulfilled your will, and obtained (Ac 20.28) a holy people (1 P 2.9) for you, He stretched forth His hands when He suffered, that He might free from suffering those who believed in you.

When He was handed over to His voluntary suffering, that He might destroy death, and burst the bonds of the devil, and tread upon the nether world, and illumine the just, and fix the limit, and reveal the Resurrection, taking bread, He gave thanks to you, and said: Take, eat, this is my body, which will be broken for you.

Similarly also the cup, saying: This is my blood which is shed for you. When you do this, you are making a remembrance of me.

Wherefore remembering His death and Resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the cup, giving thanks to you because you have accounted us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. And we ask that you send your Holy Spirit upon the oblation of holy church, and that gathering it together into one, you grant to all who partake of the holy things a fullness of the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of faith in truth, that we may praise you and glorify you through your Servant Jesus Christ, through whom be glory and honor to you, to the Father and to the Son with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, both now, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

D. Sheerin, *The Eucharist*, 355-356

Addendum 4

JUSTIN MARTYR (100-150)	HIPPOLYTUS	CLASSIC ROMAN MASS	FORMULA MISSAE-1523	ORDER OF HOLY COMMUNION - 1941
Memoirs of Apostles & Homily or Baptismal Service	Consecration of Bishop of Baptism & Confirmation	1. Preparatory Confession/Priest vs. Ps. 43, Conf., Absol., vs. 2. Introit 3. Kyrie 9x 4. Gloria in Excelsis 5. Sal. & Collects 6. Epistle 7. Gradual, Alleluia, Sequence 8. Gospel with prayers & Vs. 9. Sermon 10. Creed	1. Introit 2. Kyrie 9x 3. Gloria in Excelsis 4. Sal. & Collect. 5. Epistle 6. Gradual (long Tracts out) Alleluia: Sequence on Xmas & Pentecost 7. Gospel 8. Creed 9. Sermon (or before Service)	1. Preparatory Confession/Cong. Vs. Conf., Absol. 2. Introit 3. Kyrie (3) 4. Gloria in Excelsis 5. Sal. & Collect 6. Epistle 7. Gradual-Alleluia-Sequence (optional) 8. Gospel with Versicles 9. Creed 10. Sermon
Kiss of Peace Offering of gifts Thanksgiving prayers Verba "Amen" Distribution also to homes to the absent	Kiss of Peace psalm Dialog Eucharistic Prayer a. Thanksgiving b. Verba c. Anamnesis d. Epiclesis (Communion)	11. Offertory: Sal., Off. psalm present/elem. to Grad. 12. Offertory Prayers (6) 13. Preparatory Prayers (7) 14. Preface: Dialog Proper Preface 15. Sanctus 16. Canon: Prayer of 21 sections Including Verba L. Prayer Pax 17. Agnus Dei 18. Communion Proper 4-5 prayers-proper reception Distribution with Confession Absol. & Vs 19. Post-communion Prayers for effectual comm. Communion Chant, v.r. Post-comm. prayers - Salutation - Ite, missa est Deo gratias	10. Preparation of Elements 11. Preface: Dialog 12. Verba 13. Sanctus with Elevation 14. Lord's Prayer Pax 15. Communion/priest & people 16. Agnus Dei, during above 17. Post-communion: Communion (chant optional) Collect Benedicamus Blessing of Aaron	11. Offertory 12. General Prayer (optional Hymn) 13. Preface: Dialog-Proper Pre. 14. Sanctus 15. Lord's Prayer Verba Pax 16. Agnus Dei 17. Distribution Words of Pastor Hymn by congregation Post-communion: Nunc Dimittis Thanksg. Vs & Collect Salutation Benedicamus Blessing of Aaron

## Addendum 5: Gerhardt and the Berlin Christmas Service of 1659

The church is cold. Candles are being lighted. The people are coming and taking their places. A group of schoolboys is at one side of the gallery and a choir of mixed voices at the other side. Below the pulpit we see a *Collegium Musicum*, a voluntary musical society composed of tradesmen and craftsmen, who perform on violins and wood-wind instruments, gathered around a small movable organ. Then there is a male quartet, also a military band with trumpets, kettledrums and drums. After the organ prelude a choral is sung in the following manner: Stanza 1 is sung by the congregation, Stanza 2 is sung as a solo by the cantor, Stanza 3 is performed by four girls *a cappella*, Stanza 4 is sung by a male quartet together with the wind instruments, Stanza 5 is sung by the congregation, Stanza 6 is sung *a cappella* by the schoolboys in the choir, and Stanza 7 is taken by the congregation, the organ, and all the singers.

Now three clergymen with white clergymen's bands and black robes have appeared at the altar. The entire liturgy is sung in Latin, and all the responses and anthems are sung in Latin by the choirs and the school children. Next a college student, dressed as an angel with large white wings, sings from the pulpit an Old Testament prophecy, accompanied by the *Collegium Musicum* below the pulpit.

More chanting from the altar, and then the principal door of the church opens, and in comes a procession of girls, headed by the teacher, all dressed as angels. They proceed to the high altar, where the teacher sings Stanza 1 of "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her," [ELH 123] and Stanza 2 is sung by the girls in two-part counterpoint. The third stanza is taken by the organ and the choir in the gallery as a "beautiful five-voiced motet." While the procession has been marching down the aisle, one of the ministers chants a "Gloria," answered by the electoral court and field trumpeters with fanfares and drum rolls.

After the sermon [by Pastor Paul Gerhardt] there is more chanting by the liturgist, and the instrumentalists play a boisterous *Te Deum*. Then follows another Latin anthem by the school children. Things now begin to happen in the organ loft. Over the railing is raised a cradle with a doll, while some boys with incessant mooing imitate the animals in the Bethlehem stable. The choir and the congregation sing a hymn, and at this point high up on the organ façade a Bethlehem star, illuminated and supplied with small bells, is turned round and round. By the aid of a mechanism, operated by an organ stop, we see three wooden images, representing the three Wise Men, with their traditional tributes, solemnly move forward and bow before the doll in the cradle. At the same time we notice two puppets, representing Moors, standing on each side of the central group. One blows a trumpet, and the other beats a drum. Throughout this scene on the gallery railing the *Collegium Musicum* plays a *ritornello*.

A boy soprano intonates *In Dulci Iubilo* [ELH 135], which is continued by male voices, accompanied by schalmeis (oboes) and bombards. The song is scarcely over before a sight "exceedingly beloved to the children" appears in the



center aisle. It is Old Father Christmas himself in his white beard, with pointed cap on his head and a large sack on his back, soon surrounded by “angels” and children, who vie with one another for the good things that are to be given out. When the large sack is empty and Old Father Christmas has disappeared behind the sacristy door, then is sung as closing chorale *Puer Natus in Bethlehem* [ELH 112].

Hans Joachim Moser, *Die evangelische Kirchenmusik in volkstümlichem Überblick* (60ff.) as recorded in Theodore Graebner, *The Borderland of Right and Wrong* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 6–8.

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## Addendum 6: East-Facing Worship

From the beginning of the Christian Church, believers have worshiped facing the east. When Christians gather for the divine liturgy, they face the east, which means that the chancels of our churches are on the east end of the building. We bury our dead so that when their casket opens on the Last Day, they will arise facing the east.

The reason the church has maintained east-facing worship is based on our eschatological understanding of worship. It is believed that Christ will come from the east on the Last Day. The Lord tells us this when He says, “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27). Each time we gather for worship we are anticipating our Lord’s second coming on the Last Day and He gives us a foretaste of His coming in Word and Sacrament. He is present for us in the means of grace.

The east also reminded early Christians of paradise, the wonderful homeland in heaven which will be ours at the Lord’s second coming. The reason early Christians thought of paradise in the east is based on Genesis 2:8 (“The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden”).<sup>56</sup> As we gather for worship, we are longing to reach the wonderful homeland above, and we have a foretaste of that homeland in the means of grace. This is a foretaste of heaven.

Other passages that refer to east-facing worship are Ezekiel 43:1–2, Zechariah 14:4, and Acts 1:11. Gamber, in his study on east-facing worship, states that the faithful in worship wait for “the Lord who, having ascended

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<sup>56</sup> Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background*, tr. Klaus Grimm (San Juan Capistrano, CA: Una Voce Press, 1993), 162.

to the East (see Ps. 67:34; Zech. 14:4) will come again from the East (see Mt. 24:27; Acts 1:11).<sup>57</sup>

In his *De fide orthodoxa* (IV, 12), John of Damascus has a section on east-facing worship. The direction adopted for worship was one of the clearest marks distinguishing Christians from Jews, Jews from Muslims, and Muslims from Christians in the Damascene's time. Jews faced Jerusalem in worship, Muslims faced Mecca, and Christians turned toward the East.<sup>58</sup> The mandate for east-facing worship, the Damascene bases on Scripture.

Christ is called the "sun of justice" (Mal. 4:2) and the "East" (Zach. 3:8, LXX): both of which suggest the appropriateness of facing East to pray to him. Similarly, paradise is towards the East (Gen. 2:8); so it is looking towards our "ancient fatherland", to use Basil the Great's phrase, that we pray.<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly enough, John of Damascus does not use the eschatological proof for east-facing worship based on Matthew 24:27 as is used by Pope Benedict XVI. The so-called *ad orientem* posture of worship, he contends, has from early church history contained a cosmological and eschatological significance that should not be abandoned. "As far back as the apostolic age, Christians believed that Christ would return 'from the east' (Matt 24:27), so they constructed places of worship to accommodate an eastward facing position of prayer for both minister and worshipping assembly."<sup>60</sup> Christians face the East in the divine service anticipating our Lord's second coming, crying, Maranatha, "Lord, come quickly." The Lord then comes to His people and gives Himself to them in the means of grace as a foretaste of the feast of the Lamb in heaven which will be theirs at the second coming.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 182.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 182–183.

<sup>60</sup> James Massa, "The Gift We Cannot Give Ourselves: The Eucharist in the Theology of Pope Benedict XVI," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (April 2008): 165.

# A Half-Century of Mission Involvement: ELS Foreign Mission Work Prior to 1968

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**M**UST A CHURCH BODY CONDUCT foreign mission work in order to be faithful to the Lord and fulfill the Great Commission? Does the Evangelical Lutheran Synod have the sufficient size and resources to support a world mission field? Those were questions facing the ELS as she approached her golden anniversary. They also were questions which, no doubt, were faced by the synod during her infancy.

Following the storm of 1917, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS; until 1958, The Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, also referred to as the Norwegian Synod) looked over the former field. The previous year, just prior to the synodical merger, the foreign mission work of the Norwegian Synod consisted of

- a field in China, consisting of six missionaries serving three congregations with seventy-two members and 171 individuals receiving instruction; there also were five schools consisting of 119 pupils;
- the independent Schreuder Mission in Zululand and Natal, South Africa which was supported by individuals in Norway and many



congregations of the Norwegian Synod.<sup>1</sup> In 1916, this field consisted of six missionaries;

- the Bethany Mission at Wittenberg, Wisconsin with approximately 140 students receiving instruction and care; and
- the Brevig Mission near Teller, Alaska.

Now it was all gone; it was blown away by the storm of merger.

Mission work within the old Norwegian Synod had followed a pattern similar to that of other Lutheran bodies in America and Europe when church bodies did not necessarily directly commission missionaries to foreign fields. Foreign mission work was accomplished through independent mission societies. It was only later in time that the synods began their own autonomous mission fields. In 1918 the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (Missouri Synod) conducted foreign mission work in India and China; the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States (Wisconsin Synod) considered the Apache Indian Mission in Arizona to be a foreign field. The Synodical Conference was conducting mission work among the “Freedmen of the South.”

### Missouri Synod Years (1918–1938)

The early years of the re-organized synod, after 1918, were dominated by a need to reach out to those individuals who had been left without a church home. But although workers were few and the world was big, the Savior’s Great Commission was not forgotten. At the Lime Creek convention, the Rev. H. Steger from the Missouri Synod, preaching a sermon based on the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31–32), said that God’s kingdom has a small beginning but by the power of God’s Word there are great results. He then reminded the small band that they did not exist for the sake of themselves but to extend the kingdom of God. He said, “That we might build and extend this, our Lord’s glorious kingdom of heaven on earth, that is the reason why He lets us remain in this wicked world. You have assembled here for this purpose and to find ways and means to perform this work to the best advantage. Surely we should not weary in this work.”<sup>2</sup> At this first convention, where only the most pressing business essentials were cared for, two committees were formed: missions and publications. The

<sup>1</sup> The story of the Schreuder Mission is told by Andrew Burgess in *Unkulunkulu in Zululand* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934).

<sup>2</sup> H. Steger in Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (May 14–19, 1918), 139.

first Mission Committee consisted of the Rev. Christian Anderson (Minneapolis, Minnesota), the Rev. H. Ingebritson (Lake Mills, Iowa), and Mr. L. G. Mellem (Northwood, Iowa).

The importance of foreign missions to the fledgling body is seen at the 1919 constituting convention when the synod consisted of only fourteen congregations. The Foreign Mission Committee which had been formed the previous year was enlarged as committees were established for both home missions (*Indremissionskomite*) and foreign missions (*Ydremissionskomite*). The first Foreign Mission Committee consisted of Pastor G. O. Lillegard (Chicago, Illinois), Pastor L. S. Guttebø (Deerfield, Wisconsin), and Mr. G. H. Kiland (Madison, Wisconsin). These men were instructed to investigate possibilities for foreign mission work. The following year, they reported that the most practical plan would be participation in the work of the Missouri Synod and to place a representative on the Missouri Synod Board for Foreign Missions. The immediate result of this enabling resolution is seen the following year where the disbursements for foreign missions identified the foreign mission fields.

Mission in India	\$132
China Mission	344
Negro Missions	684
Indian Missions	603
Schreuder Mission	35

This totaled \$1,798 out of total disbursements of \$10,624.<sup>3</sup> It is striking that these fields paralleled the mission fields of the old synod.

Throughout the first half-century of the ELS, foreign mission work was thrust upon the synod. The synod did not seek it nor did it have the financial resources to do so. Yet the Lord of the Harvest was repeatedly opening doors for His gospel and His work.

### *China*

The first door for foreign mission work was opened in China where the reorganized Norwegian Synod established her first foreign missionary presence. The Missouri Synod recently had received a

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<sup>3</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (May 29–June 4, 1921), 117.

mission field centered at Hankow, China where work had started only four years earlier.<sup>4</sup>

The Lord already had given our small synod a trained missionary in the person of the Rev. George Lillegard.<sup>5</sup> The former Norwegian Synod missionary to China was serving as the pastor of Lake View Lutheran Church in Chicago, Illinois. Already in 1918 Pastor Lillegard offered his services to return to China under the auspices of the Missouri Synod.<sup>6</sup> In 1920

a call was extended and, in December of that year, the Missouri Synod Board for Foreign Missions announced, "... in China the saving work of our mission is well established. But there also there is a severe shortage of manpower. How joyous for us then that a young brother from our Norwegian sister synod, who has already worked in China, Pastor G. Lillegard, with his young bride, will quite soon travel to China and work side by side with our missionaries."<sup>7</sup>



Map of China Showing Location of Hubei Province together with Our Three Mission-Station.

Kungshan (shihgenzssahn) and Kuling (Kuling) are summer resorts. At Peking is the language school. Shanghai is the landing place.

*Our Task in China*, page 11.

<sup>4</sup> The China Mission Society, later known as the Evangelical Lutheran Mission for China, was established in May 1912 by Pastor Edward L. Arndt who, at that time, was a professor at Dr. Martin Lutheran College in New Ulm, Minnesota. The following year Missionary Arndt arrived in China and established himself at Hankow. In 1916 an offer was made to turn this work over to the Synodical Conference. The matter was deferred until individual synods and districts could react; however, in 1917, the work of this society was transferred to the Missouri Synod. In time, Missionary Arndt would become a protagonist of George Lillegard concerning the "Term Question."

<sup>5</sup> Missionary Lillegard's story is told in "George O. Lillegard, Foreign Missionary in China," *Oak Leaves; Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society* 2: special (Annual Meeting 1998), and *Called According to His Purpose: Missionary Letters from China* by Deborah Blumer (n.p., n.d.). The story of Missouri Synod mission work in China is recorded in *Our Task in China* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1922).

<sup>6</sup> R. Krezchmar on behalf of the Board for Foreign Missions, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, to Rev. George O. Lillegard, 17 April 1918, quoted by Blumer, 87.

<sup>7</sup> R. Krezchmar on behalf of the Board of Foreign Missions, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States to Rev. George O Lillegard; 14 December

He was first stationed at Ichang (*EE-chang*) which is located 400 miles above Hankow on the Yangtze River. The Missouri Synod mission board explained this location was chosen because “it is at the eastern end of a vast territory hardly yet touched by missionaries” and “because we have work farther west at Shihnanfu.” In recording this history in 1922, the Missouri Synod also reports:

The missionaries stationed at Ichang are Rev. Geo. O. Lillegard and his wife, members of the small Norwegian Synod, which is a member of the Synodical Conference and which will, if possible, support this mission alone. Quite an undertaking for a body having only 33 pastors and supporting a professor in St. Paul! May God bless the plucky little band and by their example teach us that we can maintain a body of one hundred missionaries in China and India, if we try seriously.<sup>8</sup>

Earlier that same year, Missionary Lillegard had written:

I was glad to hear that our Synod Mission Committee was getting busy and that it would come with definite recommendations to the next Synod Meeting with regard to Foreign Mission work. It has always been my hope that the Norw. Synod would support my work, in part to begin with, and eventually, entirely. \$3000.00 gold would be enough to cover all expenses at this station per year, including my salary, although not the purchase of land and building [sic]. Is it too much to expect that the Norwegian Synod should be able to raise that much for the China Mission? Although our membership is small, \$3000.00 would not mean any large amount per capita. If the will is there, it could surely be done. I fear that some of our pastors are not very much interested in heathen Missions. It seems to be the case that those who are zealous for the preservation of the true doctrine are likely to be less zealous for its propagation throughout the world and to confine themselves to the work in their immediate neighborhood with those who already are Christians. I suppose that is because it is hard for mortal men to be zealous for the carrying out of every part of such an all-inclusive command as: Go ye forth into *all* the world, teaching them to observe *all* things If one part is carried out, the other is

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1920, quoted by Blumer, 112.

<sup>8</sup> *Our Task in China* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 11.



likely to be neglected. The Reformed Churches emphasize the first part, the Missouri Synod and other conservative Lutherans have emphasized the latter part. Only in exceptional cases do men seem to have a real interest in the work of carrying out both parts of the command. But I wish that the Norwegian Synod as a whole could show itself such an exception!<sup>9</sup>

The synod gave significant financial support to this first effort at foreign mission work. Whereas, in 1919, contributions to the “China Mission” were \$46.26, the following year that number increased nearly ten-fold to \$344. In 1924 the board reported, “... our Synod last year, has contributed the amount of \$1,661.86, which sum includes the balance of \$688.10 from the previous year. The amount this year has been sufficient to take care of Missionary Lillegard’s salary, but fell short of paying the other expenses incidental to foreign mission work.”<sup>10</sup> Financial support continued through the years that the synod had its own representative on the field. After 1927 the support declined significantly but small gifts continued to be given for work in this field until 1945.

In 1922, George wrote to his sister:

I guess nobody has written you any details about our work here yet. Well, I start the day’s work by teaching religion in our boys’ school from 8 to 9 in the morning. Then I read with my teacher for an hour. Am studying the Chinese Classics now, which are pretty hard stuff. After that I generally study by myself for an hour or two. There are so many things to talk over and arrange now with regard to the work with the school, the catechumens, and the orphan boys, that most of the afternoon goes in looking after various business details. Then we are having repairs made on the place by several carpenters, who have to be looked after more or less.... Then we have meetings almost every evening. Tuesdays and Fridays I also have a class of women in the catechism. On Wednesday, Thursday, Sundays and Mondays, I also have meetings with the men. So you see we do not get very much leisure. We have no Chinese Christians here yet to whom

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<sup>9</sup> George Lillegard, to Dad, 27 February 1924, quoted by Blumer, 379–380 (emphasis in original).

<sup>10</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (19–25 June 1924), 78.

we can entrust things, so that all the work and responsibility devolves upon us.<sup>11</sup>

There were two doctrinal issues which occurred during this time. The first related to the name of the mission. Most Lutheran missions in China, including the Missouri Synod, identified themselves with the name "The Faith-Righteousness Society." However, during these years, the Missouri Synod mission felt that the use of the historic Lutheran name was a confession of faith and discontinued the use of the alternate name.

The other larger issue was the "Term Question" which centered on which Chinese term should be used to express the name of the one true God of the Bible. The two "terms" were "Shang-Di" which was the name of the foremost Chinese deity and "Shen" which was the generic name for god in the Chinese language. Six months before their departure from China, Missionary Lillegard described the situation in a letter:

... I must say that I am getting rather tired of this Term Question—a question which orthodox Christians should be able to settle without any difficulty at all, it would seem to me, but which these St. Louis people for some mysterious reason insist on looking at it in about as "skak-kjoert" ["distorted," "perverse;" literally "pulling to one side" (Norwegian)] a way as possible. ... Bernice and I have been indulging in plans for coming home next year accordingly! I have told the Board plainly that I did not care to work in a Mission that defended the use of the term Shang-Di and shall stick to that.... To identify a god of the heathens with the true God ought to be considered a far more dangerous sin than unionism, synergism, or any of the evils which have caused the Norw. Synod to separate from other Norwegians. As yet these Missourians, one after the other, have been criticizing me for "separatism" and what not, because I take that stand! Of course they do not admit that the use of Shang-Di involves syncretism, but the fact is that it does, and they will never be able to get away from that fact by any amount of quibbling or fallacious reasoning.... It is really too bad that these St. Louis professors were not present to tell Paul and the other apostles that they should use Zeus or Jupiter for the true God, instead of Theos, which was so "contaminated

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<sup>11</sup> George Lillegard, to Louise, 26 October 1922, quoted by Blumer, 273.

by idolatry,” even Venus, Bacchus, and all the other immoral gods being included under that term!<sup>12</sup>

The discussion of this question continued for several years after George Lillegard returned to the United States even prompting the (later withdrawn) resignation of S. C. Ylvisaker as a representative on the Missouri Synod Mission Board.<sup>13</sup> In 1932 the synod referred this discussion to the General Pastoral Conference which reported four years later:

2. We hold that the proper name of an idol cannot be used for God since Scripture prohibits its use ....
5. The question as to which term in Chinese correctly translates God ... must be decided in accordance with the accepted linguistic usage in China. We agree with the Term Question Committee Report that this term is “Shen.”<sup>14</sup>

These also were years of unrest in a politically fragmented land when warlords fought for the control of China and the presence of soldiers and bandits was common. These years included the rise of Chiang Kai-shek and in 1927 turned into civil war between the governing Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek) and the Chinese Communist Party (led by Mao Zedong). George writes in 1923,

So far as our own personal safety is concerned. I do not think there is any need to worry. So long as we do the work for which we have been called, I feel that our lives are in God’s hands, and that we are humanly speaking, as safe here as any other place. If conditions become too bad, we have been directed by the Board to go to Hankow or some port city, where we should be safe, unless the Chinese take up war against the whole world. They are hardly stupid enough to try that now. If we travel in the inland there is, of course, a chance that we may run into bandits, but we need not worry about that bridge till we get to

<sup>12</sup> George Lillegard, to his father-in-law, 26 June 1926, quoted by Blumer, 449–450.

<sup>13</sup> A brief summary of this issue was reported by the Board for Foreign Missions in the 1930 *Synod Report*, pages 90–91. A detailed presentation of the issue was written by George O. Lillegard, *The Chinese Term Question: an Analysis of the Problem and Historical Sketch of the Controversy*. Originally published in Shanghai: The Christian Book Room. Transcribed and edited by David Lillegard, Sebastian, Florida, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (5–11 June 1936), 62.

it. We shall take all precautions and try to keep out of districts in which bandits are operating.<sup>15</sup>

The Lillegards were scheduled to begin a furlough in the summer of 1927 but, in January of that year, the American Consul urged all Americans to withdraw from Szechwan Province. Great Britain also had ordered the evacuation of its citizens. The Lillegards sailed, with other missionaries, from Shanghai on February 20, 1927. This ended the direct personal involvement of the ELS in the China mission field. Of course, the synod continued to support this field in accord with the 1920 resolution to support the mission work of the Missouri Synod. Reports continued to be made to the ELS conventions; for example, in 1935 it was reported "In China we have a total of 19 white workers ... [and] 707 communicant members."<sup>16</sup> Finally, after gaining control of mainland China in 1949, the Communist Party of China expelled all remaining Christian missionaries.

### *Red Springs Indian Mission*

While George Lillegard was the first international missionary, one year before he sailed to China the memory of the former mission field in Alaska and the Bethany Indian Mission converged at Gresham, Wisconsin. A former Norwegian Synod pastor, who had been a missionary among the Eskimos in Alaska and who had not entered the merger, accepted a Missouri Synod call to serve at the Red Spring Indian Mission. At the time of the 1920 enabling resolution, the Rev. H. M. Tjernagel already was serving in this field. He served here until 1923 when he accepted a call to the Jerico and Saude congregations in Iowa. ELS support of this mission continued until the boarding school portion of the mission was closed in 1933.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> George Lillegard, to Father, 8 August 1923, quoted by Blumer, 322.

<sup>16</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (12–18 June 1935), 63.

<sup>17</sup> H.M.Tjernagel had served the Norwegian Synod Brevig Mission in Teller, Alaska from 1910–13. In 1917 he was serving a congregation in Santa Barbara, California but, because that congregation entered the merger, he accepted a 1918 call to two Missouri Synod congregations near Crookston, Minnesota. Because of his experience he was called to the Indian Mission in 1919. He joined the ELS in 1923 when he received a call to the Jerico and Saude congregations in Iowa.

The story of H.M.Tjernagel's mission work in Alaska is found in the unpublished document, H. M. Tjernagel, *Breezes From Alaska*, H. M. Tjernagel file, Evangelical Lutheran Synod Archives, Mankato, Minnesota. Typewritten.

## India

The Lord of the living harvest opened another mission door in India when Miss Anena Christensen captured the interest of the ELS.<sup>18</sup> Following her graduation from the Norwegian Synod's Lutheran Normal School at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, she arrived in South Africa in December 1915 to teach at the Schreuder Mission. At this time her fellow missionaries in Natal were the Rev. Johannes Astrup and C. U. Faye; serving in Zululand, among others, were the Rev. Nils Astrup and the Rev. Hans Astrup. In 1923 George Lillegard wrote to S. C. Ylvisaker asking,

Is Faye going to take your place at Concordia or is someone else expected to take over your work next fall? I just received a letter from Rev. Brand saying that he had met Faye. According to that letter, I gather that the Missouri Synod will be ready to start a mission in Africa if Faye wants to go back. I have heard that Miss Anena Christensen is also going to leave the Norw. Church and affiliate with us or the Mis. Synod. Is it not about time that Astrup also "gets on the bandwagon"? It is a source of increasing wonder to me how the conservatives in the Union Church can tolerate the things they do....<sup>19</sup>

After serving as a teacher both in Natal, South Africa and then also teaching four years in the larger mission field in Madagascar, Christensen



completed a colloquy with Missouri Synod and was recommended for work in India where the Missouri Synod had conducted work since 1894. She was commissioned by the ELS at a formal service on April 18, 1926 at Fairview Lutheran Church in Minneapolis and was referred to as "our representative" on the field when S. C. Ylvisaker wrote, "Let us

<sup>18</sup> Her obituary is printed in the *Lutheran Sentinel*, 24, no. 2 (January 25, 1962): 29.

<sup>19</sup> George Lillegard to S. C. Ylvisaker, 11 May 1923, quoted by Blumer, 307.

remember her in our prayers, and let her work in India be a new bond connecting us the more intimately with this mission.”<sup>20</sup> Within a year, George Lillegard returned from China and for the next eleven years Anena Christensen was our only foreign missionary face. The financial contributions of the synod turned toward this new field, especially during her first years there, when financial support was second only to the Synodical Conference Negro mission.

Christensen was stationed at Ambur and managed a Girls’ Boarding School where many children received care. An important part of the school was instruction in the teachings of the Bible. In 1934, while on furlough, Miss Christensen visited many congregations of the synod. A result was an attempt to establish a scholarship fund for the boarding school; however, this did not materialize. Upon her return, she wrote to Mrs. G. A. Gullixson about her travel in the United States using her railroad “clergy certificate.”<sup>21</sup> She remained in India until 1938 when she left the field due to ill health.

Financial support of the work in India began to wane after she returned to Mankato, Minnesota. When she died in 1961, the president’s report to the synod convention made no mention of the death of this longest-tenured missionary in the first fifty years of our synod’s history. Yet in memoriam her pastor wrote, “Miss Christensen is remembered by former students at Bethany Lutheran College for her lectures based on her mission field experiences, and for her displays of Oriental clothing, jewelry and utensils. Many remember, too, her large private library, containing among others, many well-chosen theological books.”<sup>22</sup>

### Synodical Conference Years (1945–1957)

The Lord of the Church continued to open doors for mission work through the Synodical Conference which the synod rejoined in 1919. ELS representatives who served on the Missionary Board of the Synodical Conference, and reported to each subsequent ELS convention were: S. C. Ylvisaker (1920–22), J. A. Moldstad (1922–45), N. A. Madson (1945–50), E. G. Unseth (1950–51), C. Hanson (1951–52), G. A. R. Gullixson (1952–63).

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<sup>20</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (23–29 June, 1926), 79.

<sup>21</sup> Anena Christensen, to Mrs. Gullixson, 20 December 1934, Anena Christensen folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

<sup>22</sup> Hugo Handberg, “In Memorium,” *Lutheran Sentinel* 24:2 (January 25, 1962), 29.

### *Freedmen of the South*

Since 1877 the Synodical Conference had been conducting mission work among the “Freedmen of the South.” This was a large and important field. In 1919 this field consisted of Luther College in New Orleans, Louisiana; Immanuel College at Greensboro, North Carolina; and Alabama Lutheran Academy and College in Selma, Alabama.<sup>23</sup> In 1937 this mission field comprised 76 congregations and 7 preaching stations, over 10,000 souls, 5,107 communicants, 2,455 pupils in Christian Day Schools, and 4,683 in Sunday schools.<sup>24</sup> Financially this was the most highly supported field by our synod until Paul Anderson arrived in Nigeria in 1946.

A direct effort was made in this field by the ELS in Minneapolis where, under the heading of “Negro and Foreign Missions,” it was reported in 1949 that a congregation had been formed in south Minneapolis. At that convention Pastor Julian Anderson, who served this congregation, appealed that the synod adopt St. Philip’s Lutheran Church as their “pet-project.”<sup>25</sup>

### *Nigeria*

The most substantial mission field of the ELS was in Africa as a constituent synod of the Synodical Conference. By 1930, the Synodical Conference was cautiously considering work in central Africa. Four years earlier, a resolution was passed by the Synodical Conference’s General Conference of Negro mission workers asking that mission work be started in Africa. They also began to gather funds for this project.<sup>26</sup>



<sup>23</sup> Luther College was closed in 1925. Immanuel College in Greensboro, North Carolina was closed in 1961. The college in Selma, Alabama was sold to the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod in 1962. After 1946, the congregations in this field were absorbed into the districts of the various synods of the Synodical Conference.

<sup>24</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (10–15 June 1938), 69.

<sup>25</sup> “St. Philip’s,” *Convention Sentinel: Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (1949, Sunday): 1.

<sup>26</sup> The story of the work of the Synodical Conference in Africa is told by Armin W. Schuetze in *The Synodical Conference Ecumenical Endeavor* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 159–177.



By God's providence, the people of the Ibibio (*i-BI-bio*) tribe living in the Calabar Province in southeastern Nigeria had sent their favorite son, Jonathan Udo Ekong, to the United States with the instruction to find missionaries for them. One of the requirements of such a church body was it practiced infant baptism. In 1932 Jonathan Udo Ekong read an article entitled "Africa—we ought to be there."<sup>27</sup> He writes,

I was still a student. The president of the college, President James, was very fond of me. All the members of the faculty loved me. The bishop of their church, too, liked me and would occasionally invite me to give a talk in his church. One day during this period, a great miracle happened. I was going out on a certain evening, when one of my fellow students, who was also a newspaper vendor, handed me some newspapers and said, "Please, Mr. Ekong, could you keep these papers for me? I'll pick them up when I come back." This was about five o'clock in the evening. As I got into my room to keep the papers, I glanced at the pages and stumbled on a news item, that at a certain North American Lutheran convention, the black American Lutherans had raised the sum of \$60,000 [sic] for the work of the Gospel ministry in Africa. They wanted this money to be used specifically for the Gospel outreach among their kinsmen in Africa. When I saw this news item, my heart jumped. I read it again and again to make sure I was seeing correctly. The newspaper article also indicated the survey teams were being planned for north Africa, south Africa, east Africa, and the Cameroons. I could not sleep that night. How I wished I were God, to make the night pass more quickly. I waited for the dawn; and as soon as dawn came, I collected a copy of that newspaper from that friend and went downtown to meet one of my friends. He was a member of the United Lutheran church, where I had worshipped several times before. So I went to inquire from him how I could get more information on the story I had found in the paper. He said he wasn't sure, that this was not his church but the Conference of North American Lutherans. However, he did give me the address and location of

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<sup>27</sup> Nyong M. Uko, *A Short History of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, 1936–1986* (Nigeria: The Lutheran Press), 11.

a Lutheran church downtown, where I could contact a minister for further information....<sup>28</sup>

Very quickly, Jonathan Udo Ekong appealed to the Synodical Conference and let his people in Africa know about the possibility. In a letter written in December 1930 the Ibesikpo people pleaded for help from the Synodical Conference.<sup>29</sup> Yet, the Synodical Conference was hesitant to begin work in this particular field because of concerns of proselytizing. The Rev. J. A. Moldstad, the Norwegian Synod representative to the Synodical Conference Missionary Board, reported to the 1934 ELS convention, "Considerable time and earnest study have been given by the Mission Board to the possibility of establishing a mission among the Ibesikpo people of Nigeria, Africa. These people have for several years been urging and begging the Board to come to their assistance."<sup>30</sup>

After several years of investigation, a survey committee was sent to Nigeria in 1935. Based upon the report of Pastor Immanuel Albrecht (Wisconsin Synod), Pastor Otto Boecler (Missouri Synod), and Dr. Henry Nau (president of Immanuel College at Greensboro, North Carolina and former Missouri Synod missionary to India), the Missionary Board of the Synodical Conference resolved to begin work in Nigeria.

Ratification came from three synods of the Synodical Conference. ELS ratification was delayed for one year because the ELS convention already had met. Yet ELS President C. A. Moldstad assured the Synodical Conference president that he supported this action and had instructed our representative on the mission board to represent our interests. The following year the Rev. J. A. Moldstad again reported,

The Mission in Nigeria has been established. Dr. H. Nau and wife are temporarily at work in the field. Other experienced pastors have been called to serve in the mission; but so far none has accepted. This mission is unique in its origin, as well as in the plans for its establishment and continuation. It is hoped, that it will be about self-supporting from the beginning. Our sister Synods would naturally be pleased, if our Synod, at this

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<sup>28</sup> Udo Etuk, *Jonathan Udo Ekong: The Log-Bell Ringer: Memoirs of a Patriarch* (Nigeria: The Lutheran Church of Nigeria, 1997), 62–63.

<sup>29</sup> Uko, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (6–12 June 1934), 53.

convention, resolves to cooperate with them in this blessed work.

The Norwegian Synod entered this foreign mission field with the simple resolution in 1936, "Resolved that we lend our whole-hearted support to the Nigeria Mission."<sup>31</sup>

The following year, the report was made:

It is with great joy that we are able to report an increase in the interest of our Synod in its obligations, divinely imposed by the Great Commission of our Savior, to preach the Gospel to all nations, "unto the uttermost parts of the earth." This is evidenced chiefly by a decided increase to the contributions of our members as compared with the previous year. The totals of our four Foreign Mission treasurers show an increase of over 100% over the previous year.

The following figures from the Treasurer's report show this improvement:

For India Missions.....	\$ 34.45
For China Missions.....	115.00
For Heathen Missions.....	100.69
For Nigeria Missions.....	135.72 <sup>32</sup>

The first resident missionary to Nigeria was Henry Nau who had taken a one-year leave of absence from Immanuel College.<sup>33</sup> He was soon replaced, in 1937, by the Rev. Venon Koeper (Missouri Synod), the Rev. William H. Schweppe (Wisconsin Synod),<sup>34</sup> and Miss Helen Kluck (Beaver Dam, Wisconsin). A report about this field also was made to the 1938 ELS convention:

Dr. Nau returned from Africa in December 1937. Our two young missionaries, the Rev. Wm. Schweppe and Vernon Koeper, are carrying on the work in thirty-two stations. They are overburdened and need help. In June, Jonathon [sic] Udo Ekong, a native African, will graduate from Immanuel Lutheran

<sup>31</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (5–11 June, 1936), 58.

<sup>32</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (10–16 June 1937), 43.

<sup>33</sup> Missionary Henry Nau's story is told in *We move into Africa: The Story of the Planting of the Lutheran Church in Southeastern Nigeria* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1945).

<sup>34</sup> Missionary Schweppe's story is told by Ernst H. Wendland in *To Africa with Love* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1974).

College, Greensboro, North Carolina, and then proceed on to Africa.... Deaconess Helen Kluck, R.N., as may be expected, is devoting her entire time to the sick and to the promotion of better home conditions.... Our missionaries are still living in homes erected by the natives....<sup>35</sup>

The next years were difficult for the missionaries because World War II prevented cross-Atlantic ocean travel. Missionary Schweppe had returned home on furlough in 1939 and was unable to return. But in 1945 a report was made saying,

Missionaries Schweppe and Rusch and Mrs. Rusch [Emma Anderson] finally reached Nigeria a year ago after many delays and have been exceedingly busy. Mrs. Rusch has been in charge of the girls' school besides doing much other work. It has been a great task, but the Lord has been ever present with His help and blessing.... It would be a blessing for our Norwegian Synod, as well as for the Mission, if one or more of our ministers could be spared for work in Nigeria. Pray the Lord to make it possible.<sup>36</sup>

God answered those prayers the following year when it was reported:

With regard to Africa, we are happy to report that our small staff of workers has been considerably increased. After several years of a serious undermanned staff the Lord has graciously answered our prayers and provided a group of consecrated missionaries.... Another fine group of workers is to go out this summer, namely Rev. and Mrs. Paul Anderson of the Norwegian Synod....

The synod responded to this report saying,

The Synod is grateful to the Lord for his mercy in providing additional missionaries for the Nigerian field, among whom is a pastor of our own synod, Paul G. Anderson, who is scheduled to enter upon his new work this summer."<sup>37</sup>

Paul Anderson graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri in 1945 and was assigned to the Nigerian mission. He was

<sup>35</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (10–15 June 1938), 70.

<sup>36</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (3–7 June 1945), 39–40.

<sup>37</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (2–6 June 1946), 51.

married the same year but passage to Nigeria was delayed until the next year. After a delay in Liberia, they finally arrived in October 1946.<sup>38</sup>

Missionary Anderson's first assignment was to work with Carl Rusch, his brother-in-law, who served twenty-four congregations. He was assigned to an additional ten congregations. On one day, in October 1948, he baptized fifty-seven people at one church! He describes the three-hour service at the village of Okon.

The day came when [the teacher] announced that he had a group ready. I would come and examine them.... They came all day Friday and again Saturday and then Sunday was the big day. As I examined each one and found him ready, understanding the way to heaven and the power and essence of Baptism, I gave him a Baptism Certificate with his name on it with the instruction to bring it on Sunday. On Sunday they lined up in the aisle of the church at the time of Baptism. As each came forward for Baptism he would hand me the certificate so I could read his name, then, after Baptism, I would give the certificate back and go on to the next.<sup>39</sup>

There were frequent requests for the missionaries to visit additional villages. Yet Missionary Anderson explains that the principle was that the missionaries didn't begin any work which the nationals could not continue by themselves.<sup>40</sup> For example he tells that one day a delegation from Okon was waiting with the request that he come and teach them. "After about an hour of Law and Gospel teaching, showing the way to heaven as clearly as I could in the time I dared to take, we turned to business. Would they provide a place for meeting for this teaching? Would they pay the salary of a teacher who would teach them daily? Would they provide a place for the teacher to live?"<sup>41</sup>

With a rapidly growing church body the need for national pastors and teachers was very important. In 1949 a seminary was opened. Two years later a Lutheran School, for teacher training, was opened near the

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<sup>38</sup> Missionary Paul Anderson's story is told in "Mission Work in Nigeria through the Synodical Conference," *Oak Leaves; Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society 2*: special (Annual Meeting 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Paul G. Anderson, "Mission Work in Nigeria through the Synodical Conference," *Oak Leaves; Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society 2*:special (Annual Meeting 1998): 9.

<sup>40</sup> Paul G. Anderson, interview by author, 1 September 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Paul G. Anderson, "Mission Work in Nigeria," 9.

village of Ibakachi (*i-BAK-a-chi*) with Missionary Anderson in charge of its establishment and construction. He writes,

Having never seen a teachers' college, I was ill prepared to do what was necessary to do. A very qualified African teacher was assigned to help me. Mr. E. W. Amamkpa took the lead in drawing up the curriculum and assisted in determining what buildings we would need.... I drew plans for a combination kitchen, storeroom and dining hall, two class room buildings, four dormitories and a practicing school.... The Synodical Conference Mission Board approved the building project but forgot to approve the funding for it. By the time all was built I personally owed various European businesses about \$22,000. When our first class of twenty-five students graduated in 1952 and the school was approved by the Nigerian government, the money became available and I was debt free.<sup>42</sup>

The dedication of the first buildings was held on April 7, 1951.

During two furloughs to the United States, Missionary Anderson visited most of the congregations of the synod. The 1950 *Synod Report* says, "For the benefit of those who did not hear him, we would like to include in this report some comparative statistics from Africa which we believe will be of interest to everyone.

	<u>1946</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>
Churches.....	83	108	130	140
Baptized members..	11,125	13,295	16,225	19,576
Communicants.....	4,148	4,682	5,448	6,304
Baptisms.....	1,603	2,935	3,268	3,534
Communed.....	10,395	11,893	13,627	16,464
Confirmations.....	500	821	983	1,196
Schools.....	67	87	94	109
Pupils.....	4,657	6,201	7,430	8,851 <sup>43</sup>

Missionary Anderson returned to the United States in 1952 and was succeeded in the field by ELS Pastor Gerhard Becker who served 1953–57.

Whereas we cannot measure the interest and prayerful support of this mission field and its missionaries, the actual financial support shows a minimal involvement in the Nigerian field. Even though the

<sup>42</sup> Paul G. Anderson, "Mission Work in Nigeria," 12.

<sup>43</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (11–16 June 1950), 48.

missionaries received only a subsistence salary, Missionary Anderson received more than the ELS contributed. The financial support of the Synodical Conference missions was proportionate to the membership of the synod. In 1961, the proposed budget was \$324,500 and the ELS share was 0.53% of the total budget. Ten years earlier, it was reported that the budget for the Nigerian mission was \$134,900 and the ELS share was \$643.03.

At the time of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nigerian mission, in 1961, there were 18 missionaries, 7 teachers, 9 medical staff, and 2 lay workers on the field. By this time, the field had grown to 35,606 baptized members and 200 congregations.<sup>44</sup> An appeal also was received for the Synodical Conference to begin work in the nation of Ghana and a mission field was opened in 1958. Four years later, there were 2 missionaries and 2 congregations in Ghana.

ELS foreign mission work in Africa was brought to a close with our resignation from the Synodical Conference in 1963.<sup>45</sup> Both the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod offered to independently assume full responsibility for the mission work in Nigeria. The Missouri Synod had provided the greatest financial support and the Wisconsin Synod had provided the longest tenured missionary in W. Schweppe. The Lutheran Church of Nigeria decided to remain affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In 1969 a group of fifteen congregations and three pastors broke away from the Lutheran Church of Nigeria for reasons of doctrine and practice. They formed their own church body, “Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria.” In 1991 another group of churches also withdrew from the Lutheran Church of Nigeria. They formed “All Saints Lutheran Church of Nigeria.” Today, both of these synods are members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

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<sup>44</sup> Armin W. Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference Ecumenical* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 169–170.

<sup>45</sup> A complete roster of Synodical Conference mission workers in Nigeria, including their years of service, is printed in the *Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America*, Chicago, Illinois, November 13–15, 1962 (St. Louis, Missouri; Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 81–84.



## Independent Work (1951–63)

### *Cornwall*

Foreign mission work was not something which was sought by the ELS; rather it was placed upon us. The Lord again opened doors in England.

Lutheran mission work had been started in Cornwall county in the extreme southwest corner of England by Mr. Joseph Pedlar. He was a native of Cornwall who had immigrated to the United States where he was confirmed in a Missouri Synod congregation. He returned to Cornwall in 1935 and became a self-appointed lay preacher and also conducted Bible studies. The Missouri Synod also had started mission work in England under the auspices of the Atlantic District but had shown little interest in the work in Cornwall. In 1948 an appeal was received concerning work in Cornwall. This appeal reached the ELS Board of Missions who reported, “He asks any orthodox Lutheran Synod or group of Lutherans only to send a missionary who with his help may preach to the unchurched.”<sup>46</sup>



The open door in Cornwall also seems to have created at least a small vision of beginning mission work in Norway. The initial appeal from England was met with the following response:

Primarily we ought to seek to get an opening in Norway but at the present we do not seem to have any leads which will open the way for us. Pastor [Jacob] Preus will contact some sources of information in Norway, but it seems logical to begin operations in the British Isles if the opening presents itself, since it would be comparatively easy to work out from that base and across to the Scandinavian countries. When you speak of the Scottish Highlads [sic] you give some reason to hope that we might turn the tables on history and attack Norway from Scotland instead

<sup>46</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (12–17 August 1949), 60.

of having the marauding Vikings pounce upon Scotland from the Ports of Norway.<sup>47</sup>

The Board for Foreign Missions recommended to the August 1949 convention that a missionary be sent to work with Mr. Pedlar for at least three months with the expenses being covered by special gifts. Rev. Joseph Petersen (then serving Pinehurst and Ascension Lutheran Churches in Eau Claire, Wisconsin) spent three months in England. Upon his return he urged the synod to send a missionary. The 1951 convention concurred with the recommendation and resolved to send a man to Cornwall, England with the caveat that the synod does not “embark upon any program of building or financing of buildings” and “That Cornwall moneys continue to remain a fund separate from the Home Mission Budget.”<sup>48</sup>

Several calls were extended by the board until Pastor Joseph Petersen accepted the call and was commissioned as a missionary at large in September 1951. The center of Missionary Petersen’s work was in Redruth (*re-DRUTH*) which was the largest urban area in Cornwall. Work also was conducted at Goonhavern and Falmouth. The work progressed slowly. In part this was due to a reluctance to receive a foreign missionary. In March 1952 Missionary Petersen reported to the Mission Board:

Since active work began last October, two Bible classes have been organized and are meeting weekly.... Attendances have averaged 10 and 7 respectively.... From the very first I had been warned against making house-to-house calls or canvassing. Both Pedlar and Rev. Pearce (London) [LCMS] advised me not to do it. Contrary to their advice and opinion I went ahead doing some canvassing. I reasoned thus: How can anyone do effective mission work without making personal calls? It is very difficult work, to be sure, and at times disheartening, especially when one has to take that “gruff” from the masses. In the months of January and February I made 348 calls, some being social calls. What will be the result should show up when regular services are held....

Much to my regret no formal services have been conducted, but the matter is on the future agenda....

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<sup>47</sup> Unsigned letter to Pastor Webber, 7 July 1948, Cornwall folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

<sup>48</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (13–19 June 1951), 61.

In general progress has not been spectacular, but far from discouraging, especially when one considers that Lutheranism is entirely new to these folks. We also must cope with a way of life which is quite different from our way. The Cornish are slow and reticent, not very receptive to new things. They are steeped in multiple false doctrines. John Wesley did a bad job in Cornwall with his Arminian views. How can we alter things overnight? We shall carry on with the pure Truth and trust the Head of the Church for the fruits. With patience and with careful instruction, by the Grace of God, we shall not be ashamed.<sup>49</sup>

After eighteen months of work there still was no one in confirmation instruction and the combined average attendance at two preaching stations was twenty-four individuals. Upon urging from the missionary, it was determined in 1953 to purchase a building for use as a residence and a chapel in Redruth. Yet, the following year, the situation had not improved and Missionary Petersen reported to the 1954 convention, "I feel strongly that our church has a God-given mission in Cornwall, but we must be reconciled to the fact that it is a field for native workers."<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, there was a native of Cornwall who was a student at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. Desmond Jose (pronounced *JOES*) previously had been a member of the Church of England. He had become a Lutheran under the instruction of Joseph Pedlar and enrolled in our seminary in 1951. Four years later he was ordained on Synod Sunday and commissioned by the ELS as a missionary to Cornwall. At this same time Pastor Petersen's visa expired and he returned to the United States. The synod continued to subsidize the salary for Pastor Jose.

The members of the synod provided financial support for the work in Cornwall. In 1951 the contributions were nearly double of the need. During the ten years that the "Cornwall Mission" account existed there were approximately \$22,677 in contributions and \$22,237 in disbursements.

Even with the arrival of a national pastor, the size of the Cornwall mission did not grow. Pastor Jose felt the lack of a "proper church building" was a hindrance; but the cost of a building was estimated at \$30,000 and would need to be the sole financial responsibility of

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<sup>49</sup> Joseph Petersen to the Board for Foreign Missions, 1 March 1952, Cornwall folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

<sup>50</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (21–27 June 1954), 48–49.

the synod. An arrangement was made with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE) to allow for a one-year vicarage for Desmond Jose under their supervision.<sup>51</sup> At the conclusion of his vicarage, he accepted a call to serve an ELCE congregation. Our synod did not feel it was in a position to send another missionary to fill the vacancy at Cornwall and at the 1959 convention resolved that work in Cornwall be terminated. The synod also expressed its concern about the spiritual welfare of the people in Cornwall and resolved to ask the ELCE to take over the work in Cornwall.<sup>52</sup> Three years later, the ELCE established a new congregation in nearby Plymouth.

### *Hong Kong*

The synod had no more heard the sound of the closing door in Cornwall when another open door was opened. In March 1961 Mr. Peter Chang came to Mankato, Minnesota seeking admission to the seminary. He previously had established two congregations and schools in Hong Kong.

Until the fall semester began he was privately tutored by Professor Milton Otto. He then enrolled in the seminary for the 1961–62 school year. The Wisconsin Synod urged the ELS to take over the supervision of the work in Hong Kong but the ELS did not feel this was financially possible. The ELS wanted to conduct work jointly with the WELS but the WELS did not think this was feasible.

On the basis of a call from the two congregations in Hong Kong, Peter Chang was ordained at a service conducted on May 30, 1962 at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato with ELS Field Secretary, the Rev. Stuart Dorr, preaching the sermon. He then was graduated from the seminary on June 1. Following his ordination and graduation, the minutes of the Mission Board noted, "We have made no commitment as to money matters, but Pastor Chang was assured of our prayers and the future consideration." It also was pointed out that "efforts on our part to keep in touch with Pastor Chen [sic] and the opportunities afforded in Hong Kong for a foreign mission field ought not to be lost."<sup>53</sup>

Following his return to Hong Kong there were concerns about some of the practices in the mission. In addition, Pastor Chang contacted both the ELS and the WELS for financial support. At the 1962 ELS

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<sup>51</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE) was organized in 1954 as a sister-church of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LC-MS).

<sup>52</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (23–28 June 1959), 46.

<sup>53</sup> Board for Missions, "Minutes ELS M.Bd.," 6 December 1962. Typewritten.

convention it was resolved to make appeals for the support of this mission outside of the synod budget. In September of that same year, a typhoon struck Hong Kong and the ELS made a \$1,000 emergency grant to the Christian Chinese Lutheran Church (CCLC). In an open letter, dated November 5, 1962, addressed "To all E L S pastors" the Rev. Stuart Dorr wrote on behalf of Mission Board:

...And we should like to make it very clear that the first use to which sufficient of these gifts will be put is to send a commission to Hong Kong for investigating the whole matter. Much as we would like to escape the burden and expense of such a thing, we do not believe that we can make long-range plans, can say "yes" or "no" to the idea of making this mission our own, without an on-the-spot investigation. Our proposal, then, is to send investigators, probably two men, to Hong Kong as soon as feasible after your contributions make it possible. We say this with complete awareness of the fact that this course of action puts the matter squarely up to you and the people in your spiritual care. Simply put: No receipts, no investigation, no commitment to Hong Kong.

You will note that we are seeking to proceed carefully, even cautiously, for we wish to make no beginning which we cannot hope to complete; we also wish to consult properly with brethren, etc. But if you should ask our personal feelings, they're like this: *Let's move!* Consider: We did not seek Rev. Chang and his mission; they came unsought and in a manner that would make us unfaithful stewards if we failed to investigate thoroughly the opportunity that seems to be there; we must do *that* much. Consider this, too: Rev. Chang is a man whose work has already begun; he has a great deal of "know-how"; he is a Chinese on the inside, not a white man trying to find his way inside. Consider this also: Our synod has no foreign mission of its own: you cannot help being optimistic as to the probable effects on *all of our synod's work* which such a mission would have. We judge that if we do not even look through this open door to see what is there, we are unfaithful stewards. May the Lord's will be done.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Stuart Dorr, to "all E L S pastors," 5 November 1962, Hong Kong folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (emphasis in original).

Field Secretary Dorr and Prof. Milton Otto visited Hong Kong for two weeks in 1963 and filed a detailed report about many matters facing the mission. Before leaving Hong Kong, an agreement was made that the ELS would provide limited financial support and also send a worker to serve both as the head of the religion department of the schools and also as an advisor.

While the Board for Missions was preparing a favorable report for the synod convention, Peter Chang informed the board that the agreement was no longer acceptable. The board reported that Peter Chang

... and those associated with him cannot accept our proposal to send one man to work with him (which proposal, in fact, was originally his own proposal). He states that, as matters now are, the Synod would have to be willing to underwrite his entire budget before his group, the Christian Chinese Lutheran Mission, could accept the man whom we would send. Inasmuch as this would involve, for the current year, an expenditure of about \$36,000, our board cannot recommend this procedure. We wish to emphasize, however, that this change has been brought about, not by any change in demands or requirements on the part of our board, but solely because the people in Hong Kong who made the proposal now state that they cannot accept it.<sup>55</sup>

With this report the ELS involvement in Hong Kong came to a conclusion. At that time the field consisted of 896 souls and 381 students in the schools.

In 1964 the WELS sent a “Friendly Counselor” to Hong Kong to assist Pastor Chang. Eight years later Pastor Chang left Hong Kong to enter private business in San Francisco. Today the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission Limited is result of the work started by Chang and consists of 820 souls with three national pastors, two missionaries (WELS), and one teacher (WELS).

## Conclusion

As we approach the centennial of the ELS and look back at the first half-century of the synod, we can see God’s blessings regarding foreign mission work. There were only eleven years when the ELS did not have a foreign mission presence. The ELS never sought a foreign mission field by saying, “Where shall we go with the gospel?” but the

<sup>55</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (14–19 August 1962), 51.

Lord opened many doors and thrust the fields upon us. We did not have the personnel but God sent the missionaries. The ELS could not independently have sent workers to China, India, or Nigeria but the Lord provided the resources through our sister synods. He trained us as He opened a door in England. He matured us through an open door in Hong Kong. Oh the mystery of the grace and the knowledge of God!

Yet, in the years approaching 1968, the synod was still asking the questions: Must a church body conduct foreign mission work in order to be faithful to the Lord and fulfill the Great Commission? Does the Evangelical Lutheran Synod have the sufficient size and resources to support a world-mission field?

As mission involvement ended in Hong Kong, a 1963 convention resolution authorized the Mission Board to begin work in Hong Kong according to the original proposal if circumstances made it possible. A resolution also was passed stating, "RESOLVED, That at the same time the Mission Board be instructed to investigate the possibility of working in other foreign fields and report its findings and recommendations to the subsequent conventions of the Synod."<sup>56</sup> With that resolution the door was opened to other fields and to the establishment of an independent ELS foreign mission field in the second-half of the first century of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. [LSQ](#)

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<sup>56</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (14–19 August 1962), 56.



1919

H.M. Tjernagel

1923

1920

G. Lillegard

1927

1926

A. Christensen

1939

1946

P. Anderson

1953

1953

G. Becker

1957

1951

J. Petersen

1959

1962 1963

P. Chang

## Appendix A: China

Christian mission work began, in earnest, in China in the mid-nineteenth century. The Norwegian Missionary Society (Stavanger, Norway) began work in China in 1847 but, concentrating their efforts on Africa, withdrew from the field until 1889 when letters were published in both Norway and America describing the field in China. One of the letters was published in *Lutheraneren* and this prompted the first Norwegian-American to go to China. In 1890 the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran China Mission Society of America was established. Although this society was organized within the Hauge Synod, it was considered to be a mission society for all Norwegian Lutheran churches in America.<sup>57</sup> A brother and sister from the Hauge Synod were sent to China as the first missionaries.<sup>58</sup>

The Norwegian Synod's first direct involvement in this field came through Miss Oline Hermanson from Norseland, Minnesota who went to China in 1892 and served under the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran China Mission Society of America. Her presence is significant because she was the Norwegian Synod's first missionary in the field and also was one of the first two women who were foreign missionaries from among Norwegian-American Lutherans. She eventually married Missionary Sigvald Netland and, remaining in China after her husband's death, served there until 1927.

The Norwegian Synod directly entered the mission field in China with her first ordained missionary in 1912.<sup>59</sup> The previous year, the Student Missionary Society at Luther Seminary (St. Paul, Minnesota) offered to pay the salary of a missionary in a location to be determined by the Synod.<sup>60</sup> The Synod took immediate action and decided to open a field in China. Calls were extended to two men but only one accepted; George Lillegard arrived in China in December 1912, only nine months after the fall of the last Chinese dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China. The field centered in the Honan (today, Henan) province with Kwangchow (today, Huangchuan) as the location of the headquarters. This field was known as the Lutheran Synod Mission.

Slightly over one year later, it was reported:

The Lutheran Synod Mission, representing the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod of America which is the oldest of the Norwegian

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<sup>57</sup> J. C. K. Preus, ed., *Norsemen Found a Church* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1953), 358.

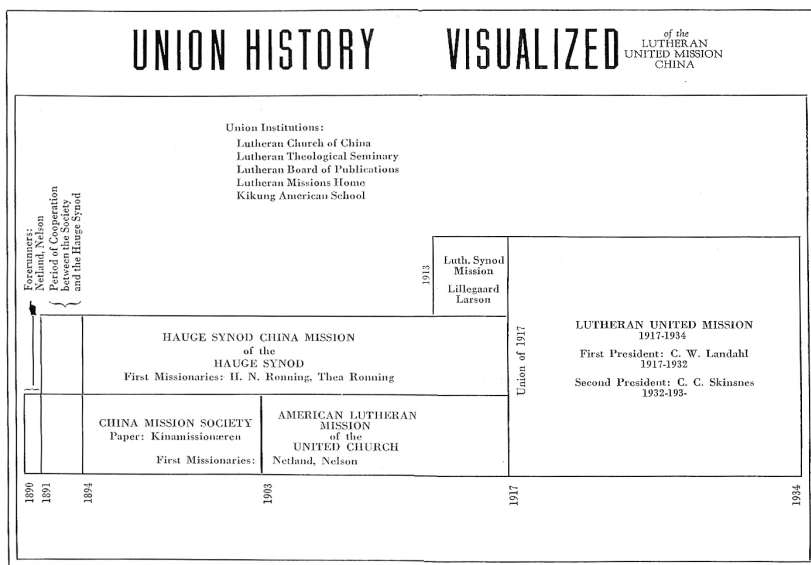
<sup>58</sup> Board of Foreign Missions, *White unto Harvest in China; A Survey of the Lutheran United Mission the China Mission of the N.L.C.A., 1890-1934* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934), 9-10.

<sup>59</sup> The story of Norwegian Synod mission work in China, along with a chronological list of missionaries, is found in *White unto Harvest in China; A Survey of the Lutheran United Mission the China Mission of the N.L.C.A., 1890-1934*, written by the missionaries, published by The Board of Foreign Missions (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934).

<sup>60</sup> *White Unto Harvest in China*, 25.

church bodies in America, has just begun its work in China .... The first missionary [George Lillegard] arrived in December, 1912, and will not be in a position to begin active work till towards the end of this year. Eight more workers have come out since the fall of 1913. As soon as these have had their allotted time for language study, the work will be opened in the three cities chosen for our field to begin with. These cities are Kwangchow [today, Huangchuan], Kwangshan, and Sihsien.... Kwangchow, the largest city in southern Honan, which for a number of years has been without any resident foreign missionary, was considered open territory, and the first pastor of the mission is stationed there now. He is in the "North City," while the non-denominational China Mission [formed in Britain in 1865, by Hudson Taylor], which now has stationed a foreign missionary in the long-unoccupied city has its station and the bulk of its work in "South City," across the river.<sup>61</sup>

In 1907 it was reported that there were twenty-five different Lutheran organizations conducting mission work in China. This proliferation of bodies led to a union movement which culminated with the formation of the Lutheran United Mission in 1917. In 1915 Missionary Lillegard expressed concerns about the proposed merger both in the China mission field and also of the Norwegian Lutheran synods in the United States. He wrote:



*White Unto Harvest in China*, pages 28-29.

<sup>61</sup> The Lutheran Synod Mission, 22 January 1914, quoted by Blumer, 44.

I am becoming more and more certain as the days pass that it would be best for all concerned if I could part company with the rest of our present forces.... it looks to me as though there is pretty sure to be a split in our church. I believe that the minority will grow with the years, according as some of this unreasoning enthusiasm for union that has possessed so many of the lay people subsides. Now it depends much, of course, upon what turn matters take at home. But I should think it would be possible for the minority to keep at least some of the property belonging to our synod. Luther College and the congregations in that vicinity are quite consistently minority, as I understand it. Our seminary in St. Paul and some of the Twin City congregations likewise.... But if there is a split and enough of the synod remains to support a small mission in China, then please fight for Kwangchow .... The principal reason I wanted to go home this summer was to feel around a little as to what prospects there were for getting the minority interested in mission work out here in case there should be a split in our synod. But now you can take care of that. I fear that the committee would not have let me go home, even if you had not gone. They were too afraid that I would hurt the union cause.<sup>62</sup>

Union Lutheran Theological Seminary was established by six Scandinavian mission organizations in 1913. The first president was the Rev. Oscar R. Wold, who was born at Norwegian Grove in Sibley County, Minnesota and served as a missionary of the Hauge Synod Mission, was elected as the first president. Already in 1915, the Temporary Committee of the Lutheran Church of China was formed and took up the task of establishing a single national Lutheran Church.

In 1915 Missionary Lillegard requested to return to the United States due to his father's illness. Following his father's death the following year, he felt it was impossible to return to China immediately and wished to remain in the United States until after the "Synod Meeting." As a result, the Board of Foreign Missions felt he had severed his relations with the mission. He remained in the United States and was able to attend both the 1917 Norwegian Synod convention and also the 1918 reorganizing convention at Lime Creek, Iowa.

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<sup>62</sup> George Lillegard to Gynt, 28 June 1915, quoted by Blumer, 63–65.

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## Appendix B: Bethany Indian Mission at Wittenberg, Wisconsin

A Norwegian Synod Indian mission was privately started by several pastors in Shawano County, Wisconsin in 1884 and three years later the property was deeded to the Norwegian Synod. The work consisted primarily of an elementary school which was subsidized by the government. When the government subsidy ended, in 1895, donations were not able to sustain the school and it was sold to the government in 1900. The mission then was relocated to a farm located in nearby Ingersoll. In 1918 the Government Indian School was closed and the property was repurchased by the mission. The boarding school closed in 1933, yet the Bethany Indian Mission continued its evangelization in widely scattered sites until 1955. The remaining buildings were razed in 1962.

Thirty miles away, near Gresham, Wisconsin, the Missouri Synod started an Indian mission among the Stockbridge Indians in 1899. The mission was known as "Red Springs." In 1918, there were slightly more than 100 pupils enrolled in the eight-grade boarding school. The boarding school closed in 1933 and continued as a Christian Day School until 1958. The church, parsonage and school building remain in use by the Mohican Immanuel Lutheran Congregation.

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## Appendix C: India

Missouri Synod's first venture into a foreign mission field began in 1894 when two men were commissioned to serve as missionaries for the Missouri Evangelical Lutheran India Mission (MELIM). They previously had served under the Leipzig Mission Society which had been working in India since 1836. The two men left the society because of doctrinal differences. In 1896 mission work began in Ambur and land was purchased for the construction of a school and other buildings.

In 1947 the government forced all missionaries to leave the country. Today this synodical body is known as the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC). Along with the Missouri Synod, it is a member of the International Lutheran Council and numbers 55,000 members.

## Appendix D: Nigeria

Christian mission work began in Nigeria, Africa in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1887 an independent mission station was established among the Ibibio tribe at the mouth of the Qua Iboe River, east of Calabar.<sup>63</sup> As other missionaries arrived this became known as the Qua Iboe Mission. Eventually the interdenominational Qua Iboe Society was formed in support of this work. This group received considerable support from Presbyterian Christians in Ireland who instructed them concerning infant baptism. By 1925 the Qua Iboe Mission included sixty congregations.<sup>64</sup>

Beginning in 1926 a rift occurred among the congregations in this field when the congregations in Afaha were denied the establishment of a local school at Obit Idim, Ibesikpo. The congregations also requested that a native be trained as a pastor but the Qua Iboe mission declined immediate action.

The congregations already were making plans to send forty-five year old Jonathan Udo Ekong to the United States to receive a seminary education.<sup>65</sup> Jonathan was the eldest surviving son of Chief Udo Ekong Nedem Ekping of Afaha in the Ibesikpo clan. Qua Iboe missionary J. W. Westgarth wrote about him, "Jonathan was one of our first converts and for many years worked with me in an intimate and personal way as an Evangelist, and was a most trustworthy worker."<sup>66</sup>

Jonathan spent eleven years in the United States. He attended Price Elementary and High School, Livingston College, Agricultural and Technical College, and Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary all located in Salisbury, North Carolina. He was ordained on July 3, 1936 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Chicago, Illinois.

In the meantime, the sixteen Ibesikpo congregations had withdrawn from the Qua Iboe Mission. In 1933 Jonathan responded with a short cablegram saying, "The Lutherans Will Come."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The missionary was Samuel A. Bill (1864–1942) who was born in Belfast, Ireland. While attending school in London, a letter was received from Scottish missionaries working in Calabar with an appeal for help from people farther to the east in the Niger Delta. Samuel Bill offered his service.

<sup>64</sup> The history of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria is told in *A Short History of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, 1936–1986*, published by The Golden Jubilee History Sub-Committee, Nyong M. Uko, et. al., eds. (Obit Idim, Nigeria: The Lutheran Press, 1986).

<sup>65</sup> The story of Jonathan Udo Ekong is told by Udo Etuk in the biography *Jonathan Udo Ekong: The Log-Bell Ringer: Memoirs of a Patriarch* (Nigeria: The Lutheran Church of Nigeria, n.p., 1997).

<sup>66</sup> Nyong M. Uko, et. al., eds., *A Short History of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, 1936–1986* (Obit Idim, Nigeria: The Lutheran Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>67</sup> Uko, 7.

## Appendix E: Cornwall

In urging the ELS to begin a mission in Cornwall, England, Missouri Synod Pastor F. R. Webber wrote:

... Please do not get the wrong idea. There is no organized congregation there, and not even a chapel. I have been urging the matter for over ten years, but with no results. When I came back in 1938, after having spent some time in Cornwall in 1937 and in 1938, I went before the mission board of the Atlantic District [LCMS], gave them an account of the field and the work there, but one man summed up the general statement by saying, "Sheep stealing!"

This is not the case. Mr. Pedlar has made no attempt to make Lutherans out of Methodists. He will borrow a chapel that is not otherwise being used, or else a school house. He will announce his coming, and the people will come. They told me, "The people come because they have learned that the Luther-aneans [sic] always give us God's Word."

Mr. Pedlar works just as we do when we open up a in a new town. He announces his coming, and his service is open to any who cares to come. He asks nobody and urges nobody to stay away from the Methodist chapels and come to his. It's entirely up to them.

For over thirteen years he has been going from village to village, as he says "sowing the seed" which he has hoped others may come to harvest. He preaches simple Law and Gospel, and the people who seem to have a genuine Gospel-hunger, know that he has something worthwhile to offer them....

Mission boards in this country seem to resent it when I tell them that my acquaintance with Cornwall has convinced me that our American system would only confuse the people. They have their own methods, which are quite like those of Scotland and Wales. If we rush in, try to organize right away and expect big results, it will frighten them.

Their method is that of Mr. Pedlar: seed sowing. A man goes from place to place, preaches to the people, gets acquainted with them, and they gradually gain confidence in him and become convinced of the truth of his teachings. It would prove fatal to rush in, as they do in the Atlantic District, make at least 100 calls a day, and organize a congregation inside of 30 days. The Cornishman would merely stay away, for he isn't accustomed to such mad haste. I very much fear that this is one reason why our boards are not interested. They want quick results....



Mr. Pedlar was a thoroughly conservative man when I knew him, and I have every reason to think he is yet. He has received shameful treatment at our hands—and yet it may be the great wisdom of the Lord, Who may have kept the field from falling into unfaithful hands, so that the faithful men might do the work that is to be done there... in spite of all the eloquent pleas of Mr. Pedlar, whose constant request has been: not support for himself, but just an ordained man to work with him.<sup>68</sup>

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## Appendix F: Hong Kong

In 1950 a young Buddhist man by the name of Peter Chang, who had fled from China, was brought to the Christian faith in Hong Kong through the work of a Missouri Synod mission. He was determined to bring the gospel to his fellow Chinese refugees and, in 1956, started a school in a refugee village. In 1957 a rift occurred between Peter Chang and the Missouri Synod Hong Kong Conference.

Soon the Christian Chinese Lutheran Mission (CCLM) was established by Peter Chang. He graduated from Canton College. He then attended Lok-Yuk Theological Seminary and the Concordia Bible School, both in Hong Kong. In 1960 he came to the United States and enrolled at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Seattle, Washington. After four-months, he enrolled in Augsburg Seminary (Minneapolis, Minnesota) but, because its impending merger with The American Lutheran Church, he sought out Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Earlier, while he was a student at the Lutheran Bible Institute, Peter Chang had circulated a letter among the pastors of the Wisconsin Synod seeking financial support. At that time WELS President Naumann published a notice in the *Northwestern Lutheran* stating that, since they had not been able to dissuade Peter Chang from attending the Lutheran Bible Institute, the mission could not be recommended for support by the WELS.<sup>69</sup> Later President Naumann wrote, “Had he been studying at Bethany instead of the Bible Institute at Seattle, I think I would not have inserted the notice in the church paper.” He also stated that “Mr. Chang’s mission might prove to be the first place in which the Wisconsin Synod can expand its world mission program.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> F. R. Webber, to Pastor Theiste, 18 June 1948, Cornwall folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

<sup>69</sup> *Northwestern Lutheran*, 48:5 (February 26, 1961): 78.

<sup>70</sup> G. O. Lillegard, Milton H. Otto, and B. W. Teigen, “Peter Chang and Bethany,” 5 October 1962, Hong Kong folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, page 6. Photocopied.

# Book Review

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LSQ Vol. 52, No. 4 (December 2012)

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## Book Review: From Wilderness to Promised Land

Gaylin R. Schmeling. *From Wilderness to Promised Land: A Series of Sermons Based on the Exodus Theme*. Mankato, Minnesota: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Press, 2012. 121 pages. \$19.95.

Order from the Bethany Lutheran College Bookstore, 1-800-944-1722.

In days gone by, most pastors collected sermon books in their libraries. Only the more well-known preachers and theologians published them in Lutheran circles, and they were generally of high quality. Today, many Lutheran sermons are available on the internet in printed, audio or even video format, which has made newly published sermon books less common, but not less worthwhile. They are useful for lay people who can

use them for daily meditations. They are useful for scattered Christians who do not have an orthodox congregation nearby. But they are also useful for pastors who wish to broaden their own preaching style and sharpen their abilities by studying the sermonizing of others, especially since sermon books are more highly edited for content and quality than internet manuscripts.

In addition to offering pastors homiletical instruction by example, this small volume also offers hermeneutical insights and reminders. So much in the books of Moses foreshadows what we have in New Testament fulfillment and what we will see fully fulfilled when we “tread the verge of Jordan” ourselves. The introduction to *From Wilderness to Promised Land* provides a brief overview of Mosaic types and their New Testament antitypes, including a handy chart.

In reading and studying the sermons, pastors have the opportunity to see and study in practice the various ways Law and Gospel can and should be presented making use of the color provided by each individual text. As I reviewed these sermons, I found it useful to note in the margins where the specific Gospel was presented, paying particular attention to how the author sought to vary its presentation in a way that took account of each text's specifics. I also noted where the law harshly mirrored for me my own sinfulness and where it showed me, as a guideline, how to put into practice the renewed zeal given me in each sermon's rich Gospel. I was pleased with the avoidance of an outlining formula that would have forced each text into a predetermined mold and made the sermons overly predictable. The specific Gospel, pointing out Jesus' active and passive obedience on our behalf, was always present, varied in word choice, sometimes stated more than once, so that no proverbial one-time visitor would miss the essential information about the Savior and the Way to eternal life. Nor could the frequent listener grow bored and think, "Okay, we had the first use of the law, then the obligatory Gospel formula, now comes the third use of the law." Pres. Schmeling gives a wonderful example of *not* falling into that trap. Rather he lets the Spirit lead him through the text to present the Law and Gospel as they are cradled in those particular inspired words.

I found the author's use of literary devices such as alliteration to be helpful. In describing idolatry, for example, one sermon referred to

"sex, shekels and stomach," "pleasure, possessions and position," while "Football, the firm and family" can become idols to others (62). Another sermon spoke of the temptations to "power, prestige, pleasure and pampering oneself" (73). Such expressions are reminders to the preacher who might like to write only an outline that there are distinct advantages for the hearer when one takes the extra time of polishing a manuscript to keep one's preaching fresh.

These sermons also serve as a helpful guide in the use of the sermon for catechetical purposes. In a few cases there were recitations of paragraphs from Dr. Luther that each communicant should know word for word. But in most of sermons there were short phrases or wording from the catechism or liturgy subtly injected, not only keeping God's people familiar with what they learned as children, but showing the unity of catechesis, liturgy, and sermon in the Lutheran church. The same could be said of Pres. Schmeling's use of hymns. After almost every sermon a hymn has been printed that reiterates what the text has taught. This is done for the readers of the book. But in a good number of the sermons, hymn verses are an integral part of the sermons themselves as they were preached, and in many others, phrases which should be familiar to our Lutheran people are used as part of a sentence. Thus these sermons make use of the opportunity provided by the text itself to also draw our Lutheran hymnody and sermonizing together into the unified package they should be. When

hymns, catechism, and Scripture are woven together in this natural way, it should be so much easier for a pastor to explain, when necessary, why we gladly worship the way we do.

One of the main features of our worship, of course, is that it is centered on the means of grace. It is refreshing to have the means of grace so prominently highlighted in these sermons, as the texts demand. The passing of the children of Israel through the Red Sea is a picture of baptism according to St. Paul (1 Corinthians 10). Pres. Schmeling beautifully teaches this truth in his sermon on Exodus 14:10–18. Passover is connected to both John 1:29 and the accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper. But throughout these sermons, the less obvious symbolism is also expounded as it pointed not only to Christ's redemption, but the daily, rich giving of the gifts of forgiveness in the blessed Sacraments alongside the Word. Absolution, Baptism, and the Supper are central highlights throughout.

Lutheran theology also shows respect for the fathers of the church. That is also reflected in these sermons, as we are reminded on occasion what the teachers of old saw in these texts (e.g. Barnabas; 58).

None of these 25 sermons, filled with rich catechetical content, is written in a way that puts them beyond the simple farmer or the catechumen. They are written in ordinary language. Nor will they leave the most educated wondering, "Is there not more?" By example, these sermons show how one preaches the sermon to a whole congregation with members

both young and old, and more or less educated.

While never "resorted to" nor over-used, Pres. Schmeling does make use of the occasional story to make his point:

The story is told that when the Norsemen discovered Greenland they named it Greenland, which was exactly opposite of what it was. It was anything but green. It was barren and cold. They named it Greenland to fool Norse peasants in Iceland to come and settle there. Likewise Satan, the prince of this world, makes this world out to be the land of our heart's desire.... (Sermon on the Twelve Spies, Numbers 13:26–14:9; 83)

The wooden foundations of Venice, a cobbler serving his neighbors, missionaries on a burning ship, and a ragged Indian begging food all served to teach a Scripture truth. But primarily it was the trove of details hiding in plain sight in the texts which provided all the illustrations that were needed to convict this reader of his sins, beat and kill him, and then—thankfully—pull him back out of the depths and raise him up again.

This book will serve both laymen and pastors as fine devotional material. It will also provide pastors with a refresher course by example in some of the things they were taught in their homiletical training.

—Timothy H. Buelow



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