

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY



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**How did Paul Engage Others With
Jesus in Athens? Acts 17:16–34: An
Exegetical and Evangelism Paper**

Preaching Christ to a Postmodern World

**Grace Before, In, and For All Time: The
Election Controversy with Application
to Inter-church Dialogue**

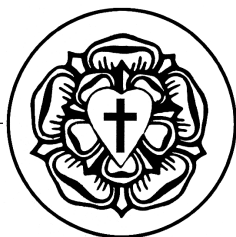
450th Anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism

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Stoeckhardt (1842–1913)**

Stoeckhardt and the Comma Johanneum

Book Review and Index

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LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

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Foreword

LSQ Vol. 53, No. 4 (December 2013)

THE PRESENT VISION STATEMENT OF the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) is “In the next five years, we will learn to engage others more faithfully with Jesus.” With this vision statement in mind, the Rev. Timothy Hartwig wrote the essay entitled “How Did Paul Engage Others with Jesus in Athens?” The essay is not purely an exegetical commentary on Acts 17:16–34, rather its scope is focused on answering the question, “How did Paul engage others with Jesus in Athens?” The Rev. Hartwig is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, Minnesota.

Americans are strongly influenced by postmodernism. The center of postmodernism is the view that there is no real truth—that people in different cultures see things certain ways because their culture has conditioned them to see things in that way. In the essay, “Preaching Christ to a Postmodern World,” Mr. Allen Quist, a member of ELS Doctrine Committee, summarizes postmodernism and gives guidance for Christians proclaiming the Gospel in a postmodern world. Mr. Quist wrote this article in consultation with the other members of the Doctrine Committee.

On April 11–12, 2013, a free conference was held at Parkland Lutheran Church and School in Tacoma, Washington. This was the third time presidents of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) convened for informal discussions in a free

conferencing format. ELS President, the Rev. John A. Moldstad, presented an essay entitled, "Grace Before, In and For All Time: The Election Controversy with Application to Inter-church Dialogue." The Rev. Mark Schroeder, president of WELS, and the Rev. Matthew Harrison, president of the LCMS, served as reactors. Pres. Moldstad's essay is printed in this issue of the *Quarterly* due to its significance in relating the intriguing doctrinal influences on the historical development of the ELS, as well as the anticipated implications for future church-to-church discussions. We hope our readers will appreciate how lessons from our forefathers impact the life of our church body today as we seek to preserve the gospel of our Lord Jesus both now and for succeeding generations.

January 19, 2013, marked the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism. The Heidelberg Catechism has its origin in the Palatinate and was intended to bring harmony among the various divisions in Protestantism at the time. While this was the intention of its writers, it is obvious to confessional Lutherans that the catechism embraces a mild form of Calvinism. The Heidelberg Catechism today is a confession espoused by nearly all Calvinistic Reformed Churches. This essay gives a brief history of the catechism and its contents with special emphasis on the doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

This year is the centennial of the death of George Stoeckhardt (1842–1913). His life spanned two continents and two centuries. He was a stalwart Lutheran confessor and one of the most important exegetes of the Synodical Conference. He had a profound influence on generations of LCMS pastors, inspired the founders of Wauwatosa Theology in the WELS, and through his commentaries and sermon books was a great blessing to our synod.

Stoeckhardt's monogram, entitled *Lectures on the Three Letters of John*, gives an interesting defense for including the *Comma Johanneum* in the sacred text. The *Comma Johanneum* is a section of 1 John 5:7–8 not found in many of the ancient manuscripts or writings of the early church fathers but is a clear witness to the doctrine of the Trinity: "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one." His defense is found in the article entitled "Stoeckhardt and the *Comma Johanneum*." Stoeckhardt also explains that the Spirit, the water, and the blood point to the means of grace: the waters of Baptism, the blood of the Lord's Supper, and the Word which is spirit and life.

This year marks a number of other important anniversaries, including the 170th anniversary of the Old Lutheran immigration in 1843, the 350th anniversary of the birth of August Hermann Francke, the 100th anniversary of *The Lutheran Hymnary* (1913), and the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) in 1993.

Also included in this issue is a review of the book *The Gospel Preached Through Music: The Purpose and Practice of Lutheran Church Music* by Daniel Zager. It was reviewed by the Rev. Alexander Ring, who is pastor of Parkland Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington.

– GRS

How did Paul Engage Others With Jesus in Athens?

Acts 17:16–34: An Exegetical and Evangelism Paper

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THE AUTHOR DOES NOT HAVE the fondest memories of Athens. He arrived there a day behind schedule. The eight-hour layover was a rush from one ruined temple to another. There are a lot of temples in Athens! Maybe more time to stroll leisurely down the streets, breathing in the culture; maybe looking with unrushed eyes at the optically perfect marble columns would have left a different impression. But alas, eight hours of guided tours and waiting in the airport left a sour taste.

Some commentators have proposed that Paul's trip to Athens didn't create the fondest memories either, suggesting that he left Athens disappointed. They speculate that his work there did not enjoy the success that he had elsewhere. Some of them even go so far as to suggest that he tried something new there and failed, even taking his statement in 1 Corinthians, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:2), to be the result of his failed experiment in Athens. The text before us supports none of this speculation. The Paul we see in Athens is the same one we see in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Philippi, in Pisidian Antioch, in Corinth, in every place that Paul travelled. It is the same Paul, being all things to all men that he might save some.¹

This paper is not purely an exegetical commentary of Acts 17:16–34. The program committee supplied the theme: "How Paul 'Engaged

¹ 1 Corinthians 9:22.

Others with Jesus' in Athens." The author, in the spirit of the assignment, takes the liberty of posing a question. Therefore, the scope of the exegesis is limited to answering the question, "How did Paul engage others with Jesus in Athens?" In light of our adopted vision statement, this is certainly a fitting assignment for the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod to consider. God bless our study so that we can follow Paul's example and learn to more faithfully engage others with Jesus.

The Text

16 Ἐν δὲ ταῖς Ἀθήναις ἐκδεχομένου αὐτοῦ τοῦ Παύλου παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ θεωρῶντος κατείδωλον οὔσαν τὴν πόλιν.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit in him was stirred, because he was seeing that the city was full of idols.

17 διελέγετο μὲν οὖν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ τοῖς σεβομένοις καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας.

Therefore, indeed, he was debating in the synagogue with the Jews and those who were worshipping and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

18 τινὲς δὲ καὶ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων καὶ Στοϊκῶν φιλοσόφων συνέβαλλον αὐτῷ, καὶ τινες ἔλεγον, Τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν; οἱ δὲ, Ἐξῆνων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶναι, ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο.

And then, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this babbler say?" And others [said], "A preacher of strange gods he appears to be," because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

19 ἐπιλαβόμενοι τε αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἄρειον Πάγον ἤγαγον λέγοντες, Δυνάμεθα γνῶναι τίς ἡ καινὴ αὕτη ἢ ὑπὸ σοῦ λαλουμένη διδαχὴ;

So, taking him to the Areopagus, they brought him saying, "Are we able to know this new teaching that you are speaking?"

20 ξενίζοντα γάρ τινα εἰσφέρεις εἰς τὰς ἀκοὰς ἡμῶν βουλόμεθα οὖν γνῶναι τίνα θέλει ταῦτα εἶναι.

"For strange things you bring to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these mean."

21 Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ πάντες καὶ οἱ ἐπιδημῶντες ξένοι εἰς οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἠυκαίρου ἢ λέγειν τι ἢ ἀκοῦειν τι καινότερον.

For all the Athenians and the foreigners dwelling [in Athens] were spending time for nothing other than saying something or listening to something new.

- 22 Σταθείς δὲ [ὁ] Παῦλος ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου Πάγου ἔφη, Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ.
And Paul, having been set in the midst of the Areopagus said, "Men of Athens, in all things I see that you are very religious."
- 23 διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν εὔρον καὶ βωμῶν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο, Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν.
"For while passing through and examining your places of worship I found also an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' Therefore, that which you, being ignorant, worship, this one, I proclaim to you."
- 24 ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ
"The God who made the world and everything in it, this one, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in manmade temples."
- 25 οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θεραπεύεται προσδεόμενός τινος, αὐτὸς διδοὺς πᾶσι ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα·
"Neither by the hands of humans is He served, as though He needs anything. He is the one giving to all men life and breath and everything."
- 26 ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πάν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς, ὀρίσας προστεταγμένους καιροὺς καὶ τὰς ὁροθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν
"And He made out of one all the nations of man to live upon the face of the earth, having determined the appointed times and the boundaries of their habitations,"
- 27 ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν, εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὔροιεν, καὶ γε οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἑνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα.
"to seek God, perhaps grope for Him and find Him, although He is not far from each one of us."
- 28 Ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν, Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.
"For in Him we live and move and exist, as also some of your poets have said, 'For also his offspring we are.'"
- 29 γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ὀφείλομεν νομίζειν χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, χαράγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου, τὸ θεῖον εἶναι ὅμοιον.
"Therefore, being offspring of God, we ought not to think the divine being to be of the same nature as gold or silver or stone, an image of the skill and thought of man."

- 30 τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας ὑπεριδὼν ὁ θεός, τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν,
“Therefore indeed God, who overlooked the time of ignorance, now commands all people everywhere to repent
- 31 καθότι ἔστησεν ἡμέραν ἐν ἧ ἔμελλει κρίνειν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἐν ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὤρισεν, πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν.
“because He has set a day on which He is going to judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He appointed, having given proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”
- 32 Ἀκούσαντες δὲ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν οἱ μὲν ἐχλεύαζον, οἱ δὲ εἶπαν, Ἀκουσόμεθά σου περὶ τούτου καὶ πάλιν.
And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some indeed began sneering but others said, “We will hear from you concerning this also again.”
- 33 οὕτως ὁ Παῦλος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν.
So Paul went out of their midst.
- 34 τινὲς δὲ ἄνδρες κολληθέντες αὐτῷ ἐπίστευσαν, ἐν οἷς καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης καὶ γυνὴ ὀνόματι Δάμαρις καὶ ἕτεροι σὺν αὐτοῖς.²
And some men who united with him believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

With a Love for Souls, Paul Engaged Others with Jesus

Luke concisely sets the stage for the unfolding of the story with verse 16:

Ἐν δὲ ταῖς Ἀθήναις ἐκδεχομένου αὐτοῦ τοῦ Παύλου παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ θεωροῦντος κατείδωλον οἶσαν τὴν πόλιν,
While Paul waited for them in Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, because he saw that the city was full of idols.

Why was Paul in Athens? He had been escorted to the coast from Berea when the Jews, yet again, stirred up trouble. It was obviously determined that the coast was not far enough from danger. So, the brothers stayed with him until he safely reached Athens. We can't know for sure whether they travelled by land or sea. The reference to the coast certainly makes us think of travel by ship, but the road to Athens also ran along the coast. When the brothers left to return to Berea, Paul gave

² K. Aland, M. Black, C.M. Martini, B.M. Metzger, M. Robinson, and A. Wikgren, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Morphology) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993; 2006), Acts 17:16–34.

them instructions to have Timothy and Silas come to him as soon as possible.³

While awaiting for Timothy and Silas, Paul did what most would do if visiting this famous city. He took in the sights. The Athens of Paul's day was not what it once had been. It was no longer the center of power in the region as it had been in the 6th through 4th centuries B.C. In the Roman Empire, Corinth emerged as the prominent city of Achaia. Corinth was the capital and more important than Athens in terms of trade. When Paul went to Athens, it was very much living on past glory. That former glory allowed it to be a free city in the Roman Empire. Though its political power had diminished, it was still seen as an important cultural center. It had, after all, accommodated the great philosophers: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Epicurus, and others. At the time of Paul's visit, it was still very much consumed in philosophical discussion as Luke explains in verse 21.⁴

Of all the sights of Athens, what struck Paul the most? *θεωρούντος κατείδωλον*⁵ οὖσαν τὴν πόλιν: *because he saw that the city was full of idols*. This fact is well documented by many historians. This is not just the presence of the Parthenon (temple to Athena) on the acropolis towering over the city. Idols, altars, and temples were everywhere.⁶ How the first commandment must have screamed out to Paul as he surveyed the city. What did he think and feel as he viewed these great pagan monuments?

This leads us to the chief point of verse 16 and the reason for all that Paul did in Athens. Luke masterfully makes the main verb and subject *παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ*: *his spirit in him was stirred*. Some have rendered the imperfect *παρωξύνετο* as strongly as *was enraged or angered*. *Παρωξύνετο* is a strong word but anger would be going too far.⁷ Yes, these idols and temples were false gods and an outrage to Paul,

³ "When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the Word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. The men who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible" (Acts 17:13–15; NIV84).

⁴ "For all the Athenians and the foreigners dwelling [in Athens] were spending time for nothing other than saying something or listening to something new."

⁵ *Κατείδωλον* is not found anywhere else in the New Testament or in Greek literature. Its meaning is clear—full of idols.

⁶ "Ancient descriptions testify that the marketplace was virtually lined with idols, particularly the 'herms,' the monuments to Hermes with the head of the god on top" (J.B. Polhill, *Vol. 26: Acts*, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995], 366).

⁷ Anger is absent from the rest of the story.

but he had dealt with paganism before. The people in Lystra had even attempted to worship him as the god Hermes.⁸ If he did not act in anger in Lystra, why would he do so in Athens? No, something greater was stirring Paul's spirit to action.

As Paul observed the countless objects of worship, as beautiful and expensive as they were from a human perspective, he saw them for what they really were: paths to hell. All the sacrifices, all the energy and time in worship were of no benefit. These man-made gods, though they gave the impression of spirituality, were taking the people of Athens straight to hell. Paul's spirit would not allow him to sit idly by while that happened. He wasn't angry with the people of Athens. He loved them. The great need of the city to repent of their idol worship and hear the Word of the only true God was provoking Paul's spirit. Jesus was the only answer. He had to engage Athens with Jesus.

This is the same spirit that caused Paul to sacrifice so much for the sake of Christ and His church. He expressed it, not only in the previously cited 1 Corinthians 9:22, but also in his letter to the Philippians:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.⁹

Men's souls were at stake. Paul's love for those blood-bought souls caused him to go to great lengths to proclaim Christ and Him crucified.

Paul was modeling what he would later require of the Ephesians:

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.¹⁰

He was imitating Jesus. The love that Jesus has for souls is clearly demonstrated in the Gospels. Matthew recorded:

⁸ Acts 14:8–18.

⁹ Philippians 1:21–26 (NIV84).

¹⁰ Ephesians 5:1–2 (NIV84).

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, *he had compassion*¹¹ on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”¹²

Similarly, Mark wrote the story of the rich young ruler,

Jesus looked at him *and loved him*. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”¹³

Likewise, Luke wrote in his account of Jesus “weeping” over Jerusalem,

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”¹⁴

Jesus tells us His purpose in coming down from heaven: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”¹⁵ Jesus has a love for souls. He showed the extent of His love most clearly when He suffered and died for the sins of the world. Moved by Jesus’ love, Paul was imitating his Savior.

This love for souls, this stirring of the spirit in concern for the eternal wellbeing of people, is not restricted to Jesus, Paul, the other apostles, or those called to proclaim publicly the Good News. Every Christian has the desire to engage others with Jesus. Their fears and shortcomings may suppress it, but it is there. Stirring in the breast of every believer is a Christ-like and a Paul-like spirit. The new man wants to engage others with Jesus, even verbally. In fact, engaging others with Jesus is a natural fruit of the new man created in us.

The gospels are replete with instances of people who heard the good news, were healed or were freed from evil spirits, and told others of

¹¹ Ἐσπλαγγίσθη – to have compassion, to be moved inwardly.

¹² Matthew 9:35–38 (NIV84).

¹³ Mark 10:21 (NIV84).

¹⁴ Luke 13:34 (NIV84).

¹⁵ Luke 19:10 (NIV84).

what they had seen and heard. All did so without a direct command. It was the most natural thing for them to do. We also see evidence of the stirred spirit in our own ministries. How many times have you counseled someone who was troubled over the unbelief of a son or daughter, friend or family member? Whether they have expressed it or not, they want to engage others with Jesus. This is the very same stirring that Paul experienced while seeing Athens. It is a love for souls.

It is the greatest act of love to engage someone with Jesus. "Love your neighbor as yourself" does not only apply to the physical needs of our neighbor. We are our brothers' keepers. We have an obligation to engage them with Jesus. Love demands it and the new man desires it. In fact, the new Adam views it not as an obligation, but as a privilege. As new creations, we, too, are to become all things to all men that we might save some.¹⁶ This is our privilege.

When Jesus gave what we refer to as the Great Commission, was He giving an obligation or a privilege? It is an obligation in the same way that carrying the Olympic torch is one. Most of us would be so honored to carry the torch that we would say that it was no burden at all. Just think, you carry a far brighter torch, God's Word. It shines all the way to heaven. It leads people safely out of sin and death to receive ἄφθαρτον στέφανον, an imperishable crown.¹⁷ What an obligation!

If engaging others with Jesus is viewed as a privilege, Christians will seek opportunities to do it. The Christian spirit is not passive. Paul wrote to Timothy, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord."¹⁸ We are not only obligated to answer when someone asks us the reason for the hope that we have. We are also to seek opportunities. That is, we are to be active and not passive in our efforts to engage others with Jesus.

Why did we, the members of the ELS, adopt the vision statement, "In the next five years, we will learn to more faithfully engage others with Jesus"? Isn't it because we feel the same stirring that Paul did? With the new eyes of faith in Christ, we look at the people, the city, and the world around us and see so many on the path to destruction. We see the idols of our present age deceiving so many and leading them straight to hell. Yet, why did we need to adopt this statement? Is it because our sinful nature is diminishing our love for souls? Are we apathetic concerning

¹⁶ This whole topic is one that we need to explore more thoroughly so that a proper and consistent understanding can be reached.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 9:25.

¹⁸ 2 Timothy 1:7-8 (NIV84).

the eternal destiny of our neighbor? Yes, it is true. We are not what God would have us be. Brothers, let us repent. Let us cling to the cross of the Perfect Evangelist, receive His grace and forgiveness and with renewed spirits be compelled as Paul said to the Corinthians,

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.¹⁹

This is the spirit of the members of the church of Christ. Like Christ, like Paul, we love souls. We will not idly stand by while Satan bears the sheaves away. Therefore, with a love for souls, we seek out the lost and engage them with Jesus.²⁰

Where People Already Gathered, Paul Engaged Others with Jesus

But where should we look? Probably every missionary involved in a cold start has been confronted with that question. We don't have any evidence that Paul knew anyone in Athens. It was a cold start. Luke shows us where Paul found people to engage.

17 διελέγετο μὲν οὖν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ τοῖς σεβομένοις καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας.

Therefore, indeed, he was debating in the synagogue with the Jews and those who were worshipping and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Paul began his mission in Athens by seeking places where people gathered to exchange ideas. He first went to the synagogue, then to the marketplace, and finally to the Areopagus.

In the Synagogue

Paul began where he usually did in any city or town. He sought out the Jewish community and the proselytes to Judaism. Luke clearly establishes his pattern. In Acts 14:1 we read, "At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as *usual* into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 (NIV84).

²⁰ It is the task of the church, through its ministers, to equip believers for this work. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians 4:11–12, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (NIV84).

so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.” In Philippi, where there was no synagogue, he found worshipers at the river.²¹ This led to the conversion of Lydia and others and the establishment of a congregation there.

Why did Paul have this practice? It was not only his love for the sons and daughters of Israel, which he so beautifully expressed in Romans 9,²² it was also very practical. In the synagogue, there were already people waiting for the Messiah and gathering regularly in preparation for His coming. They also had the practice of hearing from itinerant teachers. It was an easily accessible audience for Paul to approach and to engage with Jesus. We would also conclude that he did this on the Sabbath. What was he to do with the rest of his time?

In the Marketplace

Paul was not idle between Sabbaths. Luke tells us that he debated in the marketplace every day. When ἀγορά is translated *marketplace* much of the meaning and purpose is lost to the English reader. Ἀγορά is from ἀγείρω, *to gather or assemble*.²³ It was far more than a place to buy pottery²⁴ and food. In Athens, it was also, and maybe chiefly, a marketplace of ideas.

Paul could easily find an audience to engage with Jesus in the Agora. It was rich with philosophical history. Socrates had walked it with his students.²⁵ The founder of Stoicism, Zeno of Citium, had taught in the Painted Porch, ἡ ποικίλη στοά, on the north side of the Agora. It was a common practice for itinerant teachers to try and gather followers there. In fact, Luke lets us know in verse 21 that the Athenians were obsessed with hearing new teachings.

²¹ “On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there” (Acts 16:13; NIV84).

²² “I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel” (Romans 9:1–4; NIV84).

²³ H. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, Washington: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), 4.

²⁴ The public square is literally “the market place,” and it is felt [by] some [that] this was the market northwest of the Acropolis, where pottery was sold and which was the center of Athenian life and trade (B.M. Newman and E.A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook Series [New York: United Bible Societies, 1972], 336).

²⁵ R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1934), 707.

Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ πάντες καὶ οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες ξένοι εἰς οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἠυκαίρου
ἢ λέγειν τι ἢ ἀκούειν τι καινότερον.

For all the Athenians and the foreigners dwelling [in Athens] were spending time for nothing other than saying something or listening to something new.

Paul found a ready and willing audience in the Agora. He could test his wits against anyone who happened by. This is another aspect of the Agora which played to Paul's advantage. People expected debate.

Athenians were not caught up in political correctness. The arguments may be passionate, but they were not taken personally. It is noteworthy that Athens was one of the few places that Paul did not suffer persecution. He was able to engage others with Jesus without being physically attacked. The marketplace was a great venue for Paul to engage others with Jesus.

Before the Areopagus

It was easy to get an audience in the Agora. How well one reasoned would determine how long one kept it. Paul must have argued well because, after gaining the attention of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, he was invited to the Areopagus.

19 ἐπιλαβόμενοι τε αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἄρειον Πάγον ἤγαγον λέγοντες,
Δυνάμεθα γινῶναι τίς ἡ καινὴ αὕτη ἢ ὑπὸ σοῦ λαλουμένη διδασχῆ;

So, taking him to the Areopagus, they brought him saying, "Are we able to know this new teaching that you are speaking?"

The Areopagus at one time had been the highest court in Athens. It was this Council that had sentenced Socrates to drink hemlock for denigrating the Greek gods. In Paul's day, this Council ruled over religious and moral issues. However, Paul does not seem to be on trial, as some have suggested. Newman and Nida explain:

In the choice of the words for *took* and *brought*, one should not suggest that Paul was under arrest. In some languages it is necessary to render this as "invited him to come to" or "asked him to come to."²⁶

It was certainly an honor for Paul to be called to explain his "new" teaching before this legendary council.

²⁶ Newman and Nida, 337.

The Council takes its name from the hill on which it met to pronounce judgment, Ares Hill or from Latin, Mars Hill. Whether Paul spoke on the actual hill, which overlooked the Agora, or in the Royal Stoa on the northwest corner of the Agora, in which the Council of the Areopagus often met, cannot be determined. The important point is that he had another great opportunity to engage others with Jesus.

Where can we find people today?

What can we learn from Paul in this regard? The synagogue, the Agora, and the Areopagus were places that people were already gathering to converse and exchange ideas. They were culturally acceptable places of interaction. What are our modern-day equivalents? Where are people gathering? Where are people open to the exchange of ideas? Have we lost this aspect of society?

Universities are a place that people congregate, and they are supposed to be marketplaces of ideas. However, it seems evident that the majority of these institutions are no longer free markets. For instance, there can be no discussion of anything that contradicts evolutionism. The anti-Christian movement has taken dictatorial control of these venues. Christian thought is declared the loser, even before a word is spoken.²⁷

The Internet appears to be promising. Every type of information is only a click away. The medium is beneficial for putting an idea out there; anyone can write a blog. People access it from the privacy of their home, which allows them to seek new ideas without a confrontation. However, some caution needs to be exercised. The impersonal nature of this method makes it easy for people to twist words and take them out of context. The uploading of audio and video helps, but it is just not the same as talking to someone face to face. Therefore, we need to make sure that our web presence is very accurate, timely, and of a high quality if we want people to take seriously the “ideas” that we are promoting. Ironically, the ease with which information can be disseminated can be a negative. There are so many blogs and discussions that the truth is drowned out by the cacophony of competing ideas. However, Christians could use this to their advantage and launch more and more Truth into

²⁷ The ELS needs to consider seriously what role Bethany Lutheran College will play in fulfilling our vision statement. We have a wonderful opportunity to see that the students are engaged with Jesus in every class. The vision statement implies that the congregations of the synod need to assess their work. The ELS should also assess the work of Bethany so that it too can more faithfully engage others with Jesus.

the virtual world. Even with the drawbacks, the Internet holds tremendous potential for engaging others with Jesus.

As Christianity is driven from the public square and as people continue to separate from community by withdrawing to the isolation of their homes,²⁸ it will become more and more important for Christians to claim their own personal spheres of influence. This will largely be determined by their vocations. In this regard, our recent synod convention paper is well-timed.²⁹ The church and its mission are well served when Christians are equipped to live out their vocations as God would have them lived. For example, parents are to be Christian parents, doctors are to be Christian doctors, and business owners are to be Christian business owners. ELS members living their vocations will inevitably engage others with Jesus. The new Agora will be the lunchroom at work. The new synagogue will be the dining room table. Is the Divine Service the Areopagus of our culture?

If the church in the United States of America is to continue to survive and grow, it is essential that it constantly monitor where people are gathering to learn new ideas. This will be an important part of our learning to more faithfully engage others with Jesus. More time and thought need to be dedicated to this aspect of fulfilling our vision statement because where people are gathering is changing every day.

We have a love for souls and we have an audience. Therefore, the next question is, “What should we say and how should we say it?”

With an Acute Understanding of His Audience, Paul Engaged Others with Jesus

Luke records Paul’s discourses in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, to the people of Lystra, to the Areopagus, to Jews from the steps of barracks in Jerusalem, as well as others. They are very different audiences, but Paul appears to use a similar approach for every one. He establishes common ground with the audience and attempts to move them in the right direction. He doesn’t always make it to the end, as in the cases of the Areopagus and Jerusalem. A.L. Barry’s comments are astute:

²⁸ People are becoming more segregated. If we wanted to, we could cut ourselves off from the outside world and have everything “piped” to us. We don’t even have to leave the house for groceries. We can order them online and have them delivered. This aspect is probably going to make the Internet a more important tool for reaching the lost, particularly if society persists in this direction.

²⁹ Glenn Obenberger, “Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works,” *Synod Report* (Mankato, MN: Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2012).

It is an axiom of communication that a person with something to say should not talk over the heads of an audience. It is a good idea to “meet people where they are.” But it is also important to help people grow, to take them beyond the place where one first finds them. I always have liked the addition someone made to the maxim, “... but don’t leave them there.” This is good wisdom for the church of every age, and it was certainly on the minds of Paul and companions.³⁰

Paul had an acute understanding of his different audiences. He understood where they were and he understood where they needed to be led.

Even nuances in language are important in this regard. Australians will often use the phrase, “I’m flat out.” It is the shortened form of the colloquial phrase, “Flat out like a lizard drinking.” It means that you are working as hard as you possibly can. The use of such phrases can show the audience that you care enough about them that you have learned their culture and that you are trying to relate to them. Care must also be taken so that unintentional offense is not caused. Even among English cultures, words can have very different meanings. Knowing the audience is essential for effective communication and for engaging them with Jesus. The message is always to be the same—Jesus Christ and Him crucified—but the manner will be different.

Is this what Paul was speaking of in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23?

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law.²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.³¹

So, when speaking with a Jew, he spoke as a Jew and became a Jew. When speaking with a Gentile, he spoke as a Gentile and became a Gentile.

³⁰ A.L. Barry, *To the Ends of the Earth: A Journey through Acts* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 144.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NIV84).

The common ground is the starting point. United with the speaker, the hearer is invited to travel together to a new position. Establishing that common ground requires an acute understanding of the audience. Paul clearly demonstrated that he knew his audience.

In the Synagogue

Luke doesn't record Paul's message in the synagogue in Athens. He quickly moved from the synagogue to the marketplace to the Areopagus because he has elsewhere given an example of Paul's addresses in synagogues. He recorded the discourse in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:13-41. Paul implicitly took advantage of the Jewish heritage that he shared with the audience. This sermon is rich in Old Testament language, history, and promise. It is clearly meant for Jews and proselytes to Judaism who were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Paul understood his audience and spoke in a unique way for them. He engaged Jews with Jesus. He became like a Jew, like one under the law, to win the Jews and those under the law. It is only logical to assume that Paul presented a similar message to the Athenian Jews and engaged them with Jesus.

In the Marketplace and before the Areopagus

Luke summarizes the message of Paul in the Agora with ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο: *because he was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.* This is proof that Paul was not experimenting with a new message in Athens. He was preaching Christ and Him crucified with same resolve that later motivated him in Corinth.

We are treating the message of the marketplace and the Areopagus under the one heading because it is fair to assume that the Areopagus address is the climax of his debate in the marketplace. Paul was most likely using the same arguments in both arenas. That is why Luke does not record what was said in the marketplace. He, instead, lets us see whose attention Paul drew.

18 τινὲς δὲ καὶ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων καὶ Στωϊκῶν φιλοσόφων συνέβαλλον αὐτῷ, καὶ τινες ἔλεγον, Τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν; οἱ δέ, Ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶναι, ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο.

And then, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this babbling

say?" And others [said], "A preacher of strange gods he appears to be," because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

19 ἐπιλαβόμενοι τε αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἄρειον Πάγον ἤγαγον λέγοντες, Δυνάμεθα γνῶναι τίς ἡ καινὴ αὕτη ἢ ὑπὸ σοῦ λαλουμένη διδαχὴ;

So, taking him to the Areopagus, they brought him saying, "Are we able to know this new teaching that you are speaking?"

20 ξενίζοντα γάρ τινα εἰσφέρεις εἰς τὰς ἀκοὰς ἡμῶν· βουλόμεθα οὖν γνῶναι τίνα θέλει ταῦτα εἶναι.

"For strange things you bring to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these mean."

Luke tells us that Paul drew into conversation members of the two chief philosophies in Athens at the time, the Epicureans and the Stoics. Utley gives a good description of the Epicureans:

This group believed that pleasure or happiness was the highest good and goal of life. They believed in no personal, physical afterlife. "Enjoy life now" was their motto (a form of hedonism). They held that the gods were unconcerned with humans. They got their name from Epicurus, an Athenian philosopher, 341–270 B.C., but they overstated his basic conclusion. Epicurus saw pleasure in a wider sense than personal, physical pleasure (i.e. healthy body and tranquil mind). "Epicurus is reported to have said, 'If thou wilt make a man happy, add not unto his riches, but take away from his desires'" (*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. IV, p. 153).³²

Of the Stoics, Vincent summarizes:

Pantheists. God was the soul of the world, or the world was God. Everything was governed by fate, to which God himself was subject. They denied the universal and perpetual immortality of the soul; some supposing that it was swallowed up in deity; others, that it survived only till the final conflagration; others, that immortality was restricted to the wise and good. Virtue was its own reward, and vice its own punishment. Pleasure was no good, and pain no evil. The name *Stoic* was

³² R.J. Utley, *Volume 3B: Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 206.

derived from *stoa*, a *porch*. Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, held his school in the *Stoa Pæcile*, or *painted portico*, so called because adorned with pictures by the best masters.³³

Then some of the Epicureans and the Stoics took issue with Paul's message, calling him *σπερμολόγος*, a babbler. The etymology of this word is unusual. It was originally the name of a bird which picked up seeds around the marketplace. It came to refer to a person who picked up pieces of information and repeated them without making sense. Obviously, it is not a positive term. Wallace classifies *Τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν* as a fourth-class condition (Less Probable Future) with the apodosis implied. He renders it, "[If he could say anything that made sense], what would this babbler say?"³⁴

Others in the audience thought that he was teaching strange or foreign gods. Luke adds the explanation, "because he was preaching the good news of Jesus and the resurrection." Some commentators have wondered if the Athenians thought that Paul was proclaiming two gods, Jesus and Resurrection.

Despite these two negative responses, their curiosity was stirred and they wanted to learn more. Perhaps they were uncertain of their objections and wanted the philosophical heavyweights to weigh in on this discussion. Whatever the case, they took Paul to the Areopagus.

22 Σταθεις δὲ [ὁ] Παῦλος ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου Πάγου ἔφη, Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ.

And Paul, having been set in the midst of the Areopagus said, "Men of Athens, in all things I see that you are very religious."

23 διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν εὔρον καὶ βωμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο, Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὔσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν.

"For while passing through and examining your places of worship I found also an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' Therefore, that which you, being ignorant, worship, this one, I proclaim to you."

³³ M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), Acts 17:18.

³⁴ D.B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 701.

- 24 ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ, οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς
 ὑπάρχων κύριος οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ
*"The God who made the world and everything in it, this one, being
 Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in manmade temples.*
- 25 οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θεραπεύεται προσδεόμενός τις, αὐτὸς διδούς
 πᾶσι ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα·
*"Neither by the hands of humans is He served, as though He needs
 anything. He is the one giving to all men life and breath and every-
 thing.*
- 26 ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου
 τῆς γῆς, ὀρίσας προστεταγμένους καιροὺς καὶ τὰς ὁροθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας
 αὐτῶν
*"And He made out of one all the nations of man to live upon the face
 of the earth, having determined the appointed times and the bound-
 aries of their habitations,*
- 27 ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν, εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὗροιν, καὶ γε οὐ μακρὰν
 ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα.
*"to seek God, perhaps grope for Him and find Him, although He is
 not far from each one of us.*
- 28 Ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς
 ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν, τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.
*"For in Him we live and move and exist, as also some of your poets
 have said, 'For also his offspring we are.'*
- 29 γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ὀφείλομεν νομίζειν χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ
 λίθῳ, χαράγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου, τὸ θεῖον εἶναι ὅμοιον.
*"Therefore, being offspring of God, we ought not to think the divine
 being to be of the same nature as gold or silver or stone, an image of
 the skill and thought of man.*
- 30 τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας ὑπεριδὼν ὁ θεός, τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς
 ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν,
*"Therefore indeed God, who overlooked the time of ignorance, now
 commands all people everywhere to repent,*
- 31 καθότι ἔστησεν ἡμέραν ἐν ἣ μέλλει κρίνειν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἐν
 ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὤρισεν, πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν.
*"because He has set a day on which He is going to judge the world in
 righteousness by a man whom He appointed, having given proof to
 all men by raising Him from the dead."*

The Areopagus address is the focus of Luke's account. He used five imperfections: was stirred, was debating, were conversing, were saying, was

telling the good news, until the aorist, ἤγαγον: *they brought*. Imperfects tell us when an active started but not when it ended. With this use of verbs, Luke made it clear that the Areopagus is to be the focus of our attention. Everything else is just developing and supporting information.

What was Paul's starting point in this discourse? Δεισιδαιμονεστέρους:³⁵ *very religious*. He identified with the Athenians' fear of the divine. In fact, he noticed that they were so worried about upsetting a deity that they even worshipped an unknown god. They wanted to make sure that all the bases were covered. By expressing this observation, Paul showed that he had a genuine interest in the Athenians. He wanted to understand them and to connect with them. The altar to the unknown god was Paul's cultural touch point to lead the Athenians to a new position. He said, "Therefore, that which you ignorantly worship, this one, I proclaim to you." Paul would teach them something new. He would remove their ignorance. How?

To move the Athenians, Paul used the "ally" within them, their natural knowledge of God and their conscience. He didn't quote the Scriptures as he did with the Jews. The Athenians had no appreciation for what the Old Testament said. Instead, he spoke to the law written on their hearts. This is the same approach he used in Lystra when the people began to worship Silas and him.³⁶ The natural knowledge of God is not to be overlooked in our efforts to engage others with Jesus. Using it in no way conflicts with our understanding of the power of the means of grace to create faith.

Using natural theology can be a source of confidence for the evangelist. We should not forget about the ally within the person we are engaging. Often, we view the unconverted as an enemy that needs to be conquered.³⁷ However, not all of the person is our enemy. The law written on the heart agrees with us when we proclaim the law. The person outwardly may deny it, but inwardly, in their heart of hearts,

³⁵ Made up of δεῖδω, to fear, and δαίμων, demon, divinity, supernatural being.

³⁶ "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them (Acts 14:15–18; NIV84).

³⁷ This is true for a number of reasons: the unbeliever is in Satan's kingdom, his sinful nature is hostile to the Word of God, and the worldly influences of what a person thinks.

there is a voice saying, "What he is saying about you is true."³⁸ At least within the realm of the law, natural theology aids us in convincing the person of the truth.

The first truth that Paul proved via natural knowledge was that the God who made all things is self-sufficient: He does not live in temples and does not need anything from us. Therefore, the way that the Athenians were worshipping was wrong. This would have resonated with the Epicureans who believed that the gods, if they existed, were transcendent. The Stoics would have disagreed. Paul quickly burst the Epicurean bubble so that no one could claim he was taking sides.

The next truth that he proved via natural knowledge was that God is immanent. He is intimately involved in human history. He made all nations from one man and determined where and when they would live. God has been close to everyone so that they "perhaps grope for him and find him." Paul was really pointing out what the Athenians had been trying to do, that is, find God. Hence, they had an altar to an unknown god.

To support his deductions, Paul quoted from the Greek poet and Stoic philosopher Aratus of Tarsus, "For also his offspring we are."³⁹ This once again shows his understanding for the Athenians. It also demonstrates that Paul was not some uneducated "babbler." He was pulling out all the stops to convince them that he was speaking the truth.

Verse 29 is the conclusion that Paul wanted the audience to reach: "Therefore, being offspring of God, we ought not to think the divine being to be of the same nature as gold or silver or stone, an image of the skill and thought of man." The Athenians had been preoccupied with their opinions of the gods. At this point, Paul began to direct them to God's thoughts about them. He began his transitions from natural knowledge to revealed knowledge, although he did so without quoting Scripture.

At this moment in the speech, Paul was trying to get them to take a big step out of ignorance into the enlightenment of the revealed Word. He said, "Therefore indeed God, who overlooked the time of ignorance, now commands all people everywhere to repent because He has set a day on which He is going to judge the world in righteousness by a man

³⁸ For this reason, the author agrees with the "Way of the Master" presentation of the law. It is written to use the natural knowledge and speak to the conscience. This is not an outright endorsement of this evangelism presentation because its proclamation of the Gospel leaves a lot to be desired.

³⁹ Some commentators suggest that Paul also quoted Epimenides when he said, "In him, we move and have our being."

whom He appointed, having given proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Paul still spoke to the conscience as he began to tell the Athenians about Jesus. It is as if he were saying, “God has graciously overlooked your ignorance to date, but the time is coming—in fact, it has arrived—when God will no longer excuse it. Repent from your worthless worship of man-made gods. Prepare for the day that God sends the man, whom He already sent and raised from the dead, to judge you.” Paul was hoping that they would ask, “Who is this man?” and “How can we escape this judgment?” It appears that he did not get that opportunity.

It was too big a step for many. Neither the Stoics nor the Epicureans believed that the resurrection was possible. They rejected the revealed knowledge. The resurrection was ridiculous to them. Christ crucified and risen continued to be “foolishness to Gentiles.”⁴⁰ Did any good come from Paul’s time in Athens?

With Success, Paul Engaged Others with Jesus

What results did Paul have in Athens?

32 Ἀκούσαντες δὲ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν οἱ μὲν ἐχλεύαζον, οἱ δὲ εἶπαν, Ἀκουσόμεθά σου περὶ τούτου καὶ πάλιν.

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some indeed began sneering but others said, “We will hear from you concerning this also again.”

33 οὕτως ὁ Παῦλος ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν.

So Paul went out of their midst.

34 τινὲς δὲ ἄνδρες κολληθέντες αὐτῷ ἐπίστευσαν, ἐν οἷς καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης καὶ γυνὴ ὀνόματι Δάμαρις καὶ ἕτεροι σὺν αὐτοῖς.

And some men who united with him believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

It may seem as if Paul’s message to the Areopagus had failed. They didn’t hear him out. Some openly sneered when he spoke of Jesus’ resurrection. Although some expressed a desire to hear him again, it was probably along the lines, “Don’t call us. We’ll call you.”⁴¹ However, this address was not fruitless. Luke deliberately records that some men were converted. Dionysius is highlighted because he was a member of the Areopagus. This is no small victory. Paul’s work among the Gentiles

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:23 (NIV84).

⁴¹ Barry, 149.

in Athens was successful. Paul had engaged Gentiles with Jesus; God, through the power of the Word, had created faith.

It is also logical to assume that God, through the Gospel, worked similar results at the synagogue. It is unjust to assume that the lack of mention of a congregation or Jewish converts means that no congregation was established.⁴² It is also missing the point of Luke's account of Paul in Athens. The Areopagus was the main event of the story. Everything else is only for context. Luke simply tells us that Paul engaged the Jews with Jesus. That is all we need to know.

Conclusion

The author admits that writing this essay has stirred in him an interest in returning to Athens: to see again the Parthenon and from its lofty height to observe the once great city, to walk through the Agora and imagine what it was like when Paul brought the light of Christ into the darkness of its paganism. Maybe a more leisurely and contemplative visit would leave a better impression.

The text stirs something far greater than the desire to travel. It provokes a love for souls and the desire to save them. We don't have to travel far to see idolatry and unbelief. Many of the people around us are on the broad path to hell. They need us to engage them with Jesus. Let us then seek avenues, whether through public discourse or through our vocations, to find the lost. Let's meet them where they are with the message of the Gospel so that God, through us, can move them to where they need to be. Let us learn to more faithfully engage others with Jesus. This is our privilege! [LSQ](#)

⁴² Verse 34 implies that a gathering of Christians was established.

Preaching Christ to a Postmodern World

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NOT MANY YEARS AGO, AMERICANS saw themselves as living in the modern era. Huge advances were being made in the sciences, technology, and medicine. These advances were making our lives very different, and in many ways, much better. We were entering the age of computers, email, the internet, organ transplants, cloning, genetic engineering, iPods, and smart phones. An improving standard of living helped make these breakthroughs available to large numbers of people.

The modern era included an optimistic view of human reason and human progress. We were confident of our ability to discover new information and to use this information for making substantial improvements in our lives.

Now, however, confidence in human rationality and our ability to make improvements in our lives is being eroded. New ideas are replacing the old. Critics of modernism are taking center stage. These critics don't see progress as much as they see unequal access to progress, and they don't see opportunity nearly as much as they see oppression of vulnerable classes of people.

The critics are largely the postmodernists. They are the new relativists. Modernists saw science, technology, laws of economics, and

mathematics as being real and true. Modernists, however, saw morality and other values as being relative. Postmodernists see themselves as going beyond modernism and taking the next step. They not only see morality as being relative, they see truth as being relative as well. Postmodernists believe that what we think is true as being merely defined as true by our culture—and that other cultures see truth differently.

Postmodernism is indeed the next step beyond modernism. If what we think is the result of a naturalistic conditioning process, as the premier modernist B. F. Skinner said, then we have no reason to believe that what we think is actually true. Our thinking becomes strictly a matter of the luck of the draw: whatever forces happened to impinge on us have determined how and what we think. Modernistic determinism leaves no room for right or wrong, nor does it ultimately leave room for knowing something is true.

The center of postmodernism is the view that there is no real truth: that people in different cultures see things certain ways because their culture has conditioned them to see things that way. One group's view of truth must then be just as valid as any other group's view. Pastor Dick Tripp described the prevalence of this postmodern view in our culture when he said:

A recent Barna Research Group survey on what Americans believe asked the question, "Is there absolute Truth?" Sixty-six percent of adults responded that they believe that "there is no such thing as absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct."¹

These 66%—who said that one group's view of truth is just as true as the next—have adopted the central tenet of postmodernism. They interpret the world not in terms of what is true, but rather in terms of what particular groups think is true. "Truth" for them is not genuine truth, it is simply a point of view; truth becomes what postmodernists call "constructs." What people believe is true is viewed as their "perspective" and nothing more.

Postmodernists argue that the real danger to civilization is neither ignorance nor error, but intolerance. Every group's views must be treated as equal to every other group's views. Diversity is valued, not truth. The villains are defined as those who believe they know what is true or

¹ Dick Tripp, *Exploring Faith Today*, reprinted at <<http://christianity.co.nz/truth1.htm>>.

what is right. The true believer is the real danger. History, they say, tells us that when men think they are right, when they are dogmatic, that dogmatism leads to wars, persecutions, racism, xenophobia, and sexism. The postmodernist message is to realize that no one can claim to have genuine truth or the right morality. The operating strategy, in turn, in dealing with “absolutists,” is not to argue that believers are wrong—since truth is not relevant—but rather to call them names such as “hateful,” “narrow-minded,” and “bigoted.”

Postmodernist thinking is now a major influence, if not the major influence, in our colleges and universities. University of Minnesota law school professors, Suzanna Sherry and Daniel Farber, said:

Over the past decade, some radical law professors have been... claiming that there is no such thing as truth or knowledge or merit or reason. All these things... are simply a mask for racism, sexism, and other pathologies. ...According to the radicals... there is no truth, just individual perspectives based on race, gender and the like—and everyone’s perspective is equally valid. Indeed, they argue, there is no such thing as objective reality. Reality is “socially constructed” by the powerful.²

Postmodernism has had a huge influence at all levels of education. The trendy postmodern view of history, for example, holds that, “History is nothing more than a form of literature.”³ And the new math, also called “integrated math,” is based on the postmodern assumption that mathematics is merely a construct and is not real. One-third of U.S. students are now schooled in postmodern math and as a consequence are ill prepared for college-level math.⁴

The author taught for years at a Christian college and often asked his class this question, “How many of you believe there is absolute truth?” Never once did a majority of students raise their hands. The students were then asked, “How many of you think gravity affects different people differently?” No one ever raised their hand. The students were then asked, “So there is absolute truth after all, right?” By this time the student’s heads were spinning from the obvious inconsistency in their thinking, and they had no idea what to say.

² Suzanna Sherry and Daniel Farber, *Star-Tribune*, 19 February 1998.

³ Matthew Frank, “Construction Deconstructed,” *National Review Online*, 3 July 2006.

⁴ Allen Quist, *America’s Schools: Battleground for Freedom* (Chaska: EdWatch, 2005), Ch 2.

There are four worldviews that now compete for dominance in American culture. They are: (1) Naturalism/Darwinism, (2) New Age/Pantheism, (3) postmodernism, and (4) theism, including Christianity. Of these four, postmodernism is now the rage, even though most Americans can't define what it is. Individuals may be partly in more than one camp, or they can be moving from one camp to another.

Postmodernism has been heavily influenced by two 20th-century philosophies. The first is Marxism which sees all of life as being a power struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors, between the haves and the have nots. The second is New Age religion which sees all religions as being products of their culture, and being, therefore, equivalent to one another.

The Marxist strain in postmodernism is primarily that of Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who believed that people are trapped in social constructions devised by the rich and powerful. Gramsci said that people can be liberated only by casting off the old social structures and old philosophies and by adopting a radical new way of operating; where leaders create a new set of structures, narratives, and values that will make all people genuinely equal. Postmodernists call this process "deconstruction." It applies especially to our language, but also to our laws, organizations, beliefs, values and most everything else.

There are three broad themes that define postmodernism. They are:

1. Truth does not exist, or at least is unknowable.

Postmodernists say that one culture defines truth one way, another defines truth differently, so it's all a matter of your point of view. The author once had an email exchange with a high school student who said her class studied the Battle of Pearl Harbor by first watching a video of the event produced by Americans and then watching another video of the event produced by the Japanese. She stated the conclusion of the study by saying, "So it's all a matter of your point of view."

Postmodernists, like this student, are half right in what they say. Different cultures do have differing points of view on important historical events and on most everything else. But the question is not whether various cultures have differing points of view; the question is whether truth and knowledge exist at all. In the example above, the author proceeded to ask the student if the Japanese Air Force did, in fact, attack the U. S. forces at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. At that point the student stopped the conversation. While there are differing points of view on Pearl Harbor, it is a fact of history, a truth of history, that there

was a battle of Pearl Harbor, and that it began on December 7, 1941, with an attack on U. S. forces by the Japanese Air Force.

The author, however, commonly encountered students who responded to important information by saying that we may see the world that way, but other cultures see things differently. These students had adopted the postmodern world view, usually without realizing they had done so. Much of multicultural education is really indoctrination in postmodernism, as Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey pointed out when they said:

Postmodernism rejects any notion of a universal, overarching truth and reduces all ideals to social constructions shaped by class, gender and ethnicity. ... Multiculturalism is not about appreciating cultures; it's about the dissolution of the individual into the tribal group. In postmodernism, there is no objective, universal truth; there is only the perspective of the group, whatever the group may be: African-Americans, women, gays, Hispanics and the list goes on. In postmodernism, all viewpoints, all lifestyles, all beliefs and behaviors are regarded as equally valid.⁵

Our challenge is this: Any individual who has adopted postmodernism will have major obstacles to believing the Christian Gospel. Postmodernists reject the notion of universal truths, including the truth that there is a God and that there is only one way of salvation, that being through the blood sacrifice of Jesus the Christ. The Christian and the postmodernist will have difficulty finding sufficient common ground to even allow meaningful dialogue on spiritual matters. The postmodernist will accept what the Christian says as being "true" but only in the sense of depicting his cultural and personal experiences.

2. What people believe are true and proper are really social constructs.

The idea is that different cultures organize and interpret the world in certain ways that they think are true and proper, but these interpretations and principles are actually nothing more than the way powerful people want vulnerable and exploited people to think in order to keep them under control.

⁵ Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Cambridge: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999), 23.

Postmodernists see the Bible and Christian doctrines just this way: written by powerful white males for the purpose of keeping everyone else under their control. This is largely why some politicians see the Ten Commandments as a barrier to be overcome in their desire to fundamentally transform our world. Many see the U.S. Constitution the same way.

As another example, we think that words like “husband” and “wife” are perfectly good terms, but postmodernists see such words as means by which men keep women under their control. This is one reason why husbands and wives become “significant others.” And there are no “waitresses” and “waiters” anymore, only “servers.” Similarly, we have no “stewardesses,” only “flight attendants.” Our postmodern culture doesn’t want our language to imply that men and women might have differences that are real; only differences that are constructs may be recognized, and they exist to be eliminated (deconstructed).

Similarly, postmodernists see marriage as an institution created by powerful men to keep women under subjection. Consequently, the postmodern left is willing to have welfare programs designed to discourage marriage, and this is why the new health care law persecutes married people as well. Postmodernists want to eliminate marriage because they see it as a construct that is repressive to women and to societal freedom.

The same holds true for sexual morality and abortion. The ill effects of promiscuity and killing the unborn are seen as irrelevant to the postmodern goals of personal freedom and making men and women the same. Women must be liberated from the burden of pregnancy. Gay marriage is viewed the same way. The immoral aspects of homosexuality are not considered genuine anyway, so there can be no preference given to heterosexuality over homosexuality. The many perversions that accompany homosexuality must be ignored.

Postmodernism has easily incorporated the feminist and sexual revolutions into its ideology, as stated below:

[Postmodernism embraced] the sexual and feminist revolutions that began in the sixties [that] were intent on correcting the wrongs perpetuated by Western culture, especially the “puritanical” United States. What was wrong was identified as white, European, male, heterosexual, and Judeo-Christian.⁶

⁶ David Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Religious Worldviews of our Day and the Search for Truth*, 2nd edition (Irvine: Harvest House, 2006), reprinted at <<http://www.allaboutworldview.org/postmodern-politics.htm>>.

According to postmodernists, all these old constructs must be eliminated. Whether it be in our language with words like “waitress;” whether it be in societal organizations with structures like marriage; whether it be in morality that forbids adultery, pornography, abortion, sodomy, theft, and the like; whether it be in law that uses words like “husband” and “wife;” whether it be in religion with claims like truth or moral right and wrong; all the old ways of thinking, evaluating and acting—all the old constructs—must be eliminated.

Christianity Today observed that among the constructs postmodernism wants to replace is what it calls “metanarratives.” *Christianity Today* explained as follows:

They’ve [postmodernists] discovered that at the base of almost every truth claim is a story, a story that privileges certain groups and marginalizes others. Jean Lyotard, the French champion of many postmodern themes, said that postmodernism requires a suspicion of the overarching stories (often called “metanarratives”) that support our claims of truth. Any claim to know truth or any attempt to commend truth to others is likely to be just a power play, they argue, an attempt to impose one’s own metanarrative in the guise of an absolute truth.⁷

Metanarratives are defined as being stories created by the powerful to define a culture as they want it defined. Examples would include the Bible’s creation and resurrection accounts as well as crossing the Red Sea and many other biblical narratives. Metanarratives in American history include George Washington crossing the Delaware River, the Wright brothers flying the first airplane, the Texas Revolution which gave Texas its freedom to join the United States, and many others.

Any historical accounts which suggest the superiority of Western civilization, especially the United States, or the truthfulness or value of Christianity, or the accomplishments of males, whites, and the morally upright are considered to be “metanarratives.”

3. Social justice, meaning the total transformation of society, is the answer.

Postmodernists view social justice broadly to encompass virtually all of life. Social justice is defined not as equal opportunities but as equal outcomes, where “equal” means being the same, not just equivalent.

⁷ *Christianity Today* 44:13 (13 November 2000), reprinted at <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/november13/8.76.html>>.

This means income must be redistributed to minimize the differences between the rich and the poor. It means that all religions must be seen as equally valid. Members of different races and gender must have equal numbers in leadership positions as well as being the same in income, sports participation, occupations, nutrition, and everything else. Obviously allowing churches to preach against homosexual activities, or prohibit women's suffrage in congregations, or ultimately even be against abortion, prostitution, promiscuity, and adultery can't be allowed.

Gay marriage must be seen as being in all respects equal to normal marriage, including the right to adopt children. Affirmative action, even though it discriminates against anyone who is not a member of the protected class, is necessary to have equal numbers of classes of people in certain positions or occupations.

Some nations can't be superior to other nations (with regard to their governing principles or the degree to which they are free, for example). America can be seen as exceptional only in the sense that it is exceptional to Americans while South Africa is seen as exceptional to South Africans. Income redistribution between nations, and within nations, is the order of the day.

Truth and morality are meaningless to the social justice radicals. Even though man-made global warming is highly suspect, that doesn't matter because income redistribution must occur, and whatever it takes to bring that about is viewed as being good (utilitarian ethics). Perpetrating lies about what science has determined is similarly justified, as the end result of equality among the nations requires any means necessary to get there.

Christianity Today summarized this social justice mentality when it said:

... postmodernism refers to a renewed attention to "the other," "the marginalized." Many streams of postmodern thought are animated by the desire to do justice to the claims of those whom the dominant culture has excluded politically, economically, and (probably not least of all from the postmodern perspective) rhetorically. That is, they've simply been omitted from the discourse within Western intellectual life. So women, non-northern Europeans, gays, lesbians, and the poor all loom large in the postmodernist consciousness as hitherto unrecognized groups who deserve the same kind of historical and

philosophical attention as their polar opposites, which would be wealthy, white, heterosexual men.⁸

Postmodernism is trendy, but it is not internally consistent: no one can truthfully say that truth does not exist or is unknowable. Postmodernism actually replaces one set of truth claims—that of modernism—with another set of truth claims. Postmodernist thought, when applied to itself, is merely a set of constructs that provide one way of interpreting and organizing the world, but postmodernism is no more defensible or convincing than any other worldview. The old existentialists were far more honest when they admitted they were making a blind leap of faith in adopting their philosophy.

Postmodernists assert that they want everyone to be equal, but they do not see themselves that way. They put themselves on a pedestal as being the ones who really understand the world while the rest of us are seen as being totally misled. The leaders see themselves as the elite few who genuinely understand the world, as is evident in the film *The Matrix* (1999), a film written and directed to define and illustrate postmodernism, where an inner circle of elitists understand reality but where none of the other people are privy to what the world is really like (much like the Gnostic heresy of two millennia ago). Arrogance resides comfortably within the postmodern elite.

No one can consistently live with a postmodern philosophy, just as no one can consistently live with a modernist philosophy. (See *That Hideous Strength* by C. S. Lewis for an entertaining critique of how attempts to live with a modernist worldview are doomed to failure.) The truth is that everyone necessarily interprets his own experiences as genuine in order to function in the world.

How, then, can Christian people do mission work in a world that is largely postmodern in its thinking? Perhaps we should take a lesson from Paul's letter to the Colossians. In that letter Paul found it necessary to confront the false teaching that was troubling the Colossian congregation at that time—the heresy known as “Gnosticism”—the belief that denied the incarnation of Christ, that denied that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. The Gnostics believed that Jesus couldn't be fully man because, they thought, human beings were essentially sinful and for that reason being human would make Jesus sinful also. Later Gnostics denied the divinity of Jesus. The Gnostics also believed that salvation

⁸ *Christianity Today* 44:13 (13 November 2000), reprinted at <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/november13/8.76.html>>.

was a consequence of their superior knowledge, not a consequence of the vicarious death of Jesus on the cross.

To combat the Gnostic heresy, Paul said:

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:15–20)

In this way, Paul stressed four doctrines of Christianity that directly refuted Gnosticism. They are:

1. Jesus is fully God and fully man.
2. Creation was the work of God himself and not some evil force.
3. Jesus, as fully God and man, died on the cross and rose from the dead (some Gnostics denied that God could die on a cross or any place else).
4. We are reconciled to God by means of Jesus' death on the cross, not by some kind of superior knowledge on our part.

The Apostle John dealt with the Gnostic heresy the same way, by emphasizing that it was God who created the world, not some evil force, and by stressing both the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. Said John: "The Word [Jesus] was made flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). And again: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1–3). Similarly, the early church wrote the Apostles' Creed largely to combat the Gnostic heresy. The Creed states that Jesus is both God and man: the incarnate Christ who died for us and rose again on the third day.

As is evident from Colossians, the Gospel of John, and the Apostles' Creed, the proper way to refute Gnosticism and all other heresies is to

proclaim those biblical truths that directly confront the heresy and to boldly and clearly declare who Jesus is and what he has done.

If we follow these examples—Colossians, the Gospel of John, the Apostles' Creed, and many more biblical examples—we will combat postmodernist thought by emphasizing both the content of the Christian message and its truthfulness, thereby directly refuting postmodernism. Postmodernists will recognize that truth exists by first realizing that Christianity is true. That means we must help them see that Christianity is true in the sense of being really true—not just true for us, but true for everyone—universally true in the absolute sense.

To demonstrate that Christianity is true, we do well to stress the substantial evidence which shows it to be true, especially the evidence for the resurrection of our Lord. We should follow the strategy of the Apostle John who said, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30–31).

A useful point of contact between the Christian and the postmodernist is recorded for us in the Gospel of John, a record that we should emphasize is genuine history and which records for us an instructive portion of the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate. It reads as follows:

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him." (John 18:37–38)

We might say that Pilate was the first postmodernist. He looked at truth in the face and refused to accept it. But he couldn't deny this truth, so he avoided it instead. He dodged the question before him: should he accept what Jesus just said, "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me," or should he reject it? Pilate avoided the all-important message of Jesus by questioning whether truth itself was real or knowable. Postmodernists should take a lesson from Pilate—questioning the reality of truth is to run away from it—to avoid the truth staring you in the face.

We need to approach the postmodern skeptics the same way Paul approached the skeptics of his world: by emphasizing the evidence which shows the Christian message to be true. Paul said to Agrippa:

“I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22–23). After Paul then answered the accusation of being insane, he continued by emphasizing,

“What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.” (Acts 26:25–29)

As we can see, Paul spoke to skeptics in such a way as to emphasize the evidence which demonstrated that the Christian message is true, the evidence showing that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Agrippa clearly understood that Paul was using this evidence in the hope of persuading him and all the others listening to accept the Gospel message of the risen King.

We should also learn from the example of how Paul approached his listeners at Athens (Acts 17). In that setting Paul never once quoted the Scriptures. He did, however, quote an inscription at a Greek religious site, and he did quote a Greek poet. Paul started with common ground that he had with the Athenians, and he then proceeded to argue for the existence of a creator God to whom we are all personally responsible. Paul first used as evidence those observations where he and his listeners would be likely to agree, and only then did he present the message of Christ, the message that did create faith in some of his listeners.

We don't need to immediately challenge the denial of all truth by the postmodernists, but we do need to find common ground as a starting point, and we do need to proclaim the message that Jesus is the truth, real truth, truth that is substantiated by real evidence. Jesus himself spoke in a manner that emphasized and demonstrated that he was the truth. The power to change lives is in the proclamation that Jesus is the truth. From that proclamation follows the rest of the story: truth must exist after all.

We should also observe that in proclaiming the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Apostles didn't restrict themselves to what other believers

said. Peter told his listeners, “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22). That is, Peter appealed to the various reports by Christians and non-Christians alike, of which his listeners were aware, to verify his statement that Jesus had performed miracles. As noted above, Paul also appealed to non-Christian sources when he said to Agrippa, “What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:25–26). To our postmodern world, we need to make use of both biblical and secular evidence. The power of the gospel message is in the gospel itself, in its proclamation as truth, for this is how the Holy Spirit works: “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3b).

Christianity stands or falls as being real history, true history. It needs to be proclaimed as such.

In doing so, we need to remember that the moral code is written in the genetic code of all people (Romans 2:14–15). This means that postmodernists, at some level of their being, understand the universal moral code to which all are accountable. Evangelism would not happen without this instinctive knowledge of the moral law.

Preaching Christ to a postmodern world requires five steps. We should:

1. Establish common ground with our readers or listeners for a beginning point as Paul did on Mars Hill (Acts 17:16–34) and as he did everywhere else for that matter.
2. Emphasize that the Christian gospel message is true, and that it is true, not just for Christians, but that it is true, really true, for everyone.
3. Demonstrate that compelling evidence reveals the Christian message to be true. Emphasize that Christianity is based on history, real history, real events that are well-documented and that actually happened at times and places certain.
4. Explain that God’s moral law is also true for everyone, and that no one has kept this moral law. Paul said, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23–24).

5. Emphasize that being a member of Jesus' kingdom is the result of believing the message, as John said, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30). LSQ

Addendum

Paul Jacobson, in *The American Thinker*, 10-19-2012, describes postmodernism as having the following nine tenets:

1. Rejection of universal, objective truth and meaning.
2. Rejection of universal moral absolutes.
3. Rejection of rationality.
4. Rejection of language as a way to convey objective information from author to reader. Postmodernism informs us that the reader is now in charge of deciding what the text says.
5. Rejection of individualism. An individual's concept of truth and rules of morality are determined solely by the group to which he "belongs," from which there is no exit.
6. "Truth" and "morality" are "social constructs" that vary from one group to another.
7. One group's "truth" and "morality" are as worthy and valid as another's.
8. Historical prevailing truth and morality are merely the opinions of the group in power and are designed to serve their goal of oppressing the powerless, the victims.
9. Because "truth" and "morality" are relative and "reason" is a futile delusion, victim groups must resort to raw power and, if necessary, deceitfulness to throw off the oppressive shackles imposed on them by the powerful. Lies, propaganda and bullying, sometimes even physical violence, are necessary armaments in the arsenal of the oppressed.

http://www.americanthinker.com/2011/09/the_postmodern_party.html

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Grace Before, In, and For All Time: The Election Controversy with Application to Inter-church Dialogue

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TWO YEARS AGO, MAY OF 2011, the Emmaus Conference initiated this free conference arrangement for the three presidents of the synods that once held membership in the old Synodical Conference (SC). The dialogue has proven beneficial. Some might say, long overdue. Will the WELS/ELS and the LCMS ever be back in fellowship? That may not occur in our lifetimes, but exploring carefully the existing obstacles and promoting free conferencing opportunities like this can assist church bodies conscientiously pledging themselves to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. We look to the future while not overlooking meaningful past differences that, God willing, can be addressed in due time and in a God-pleasing manner.

Taking note of the previous Emmaus topics, one could wonder where we are headed this time around. Are we stuck in the past or are we focused more on the present and the years to come? Pres. Schroeder's church fellowship essay dealt with the period of time (mid-1900s) that resulted in the dissolution of the SC in 1962. Pres. Harrison's essay last year took us back to the days of the early free conferences sponsored by C. F. W. Walther, 1856-1859. And now—well, we're going back further—not just a century or two, but beyond Bible times, leaping back *before time began!* But, really, it's also about the future. That's where election or predestination takes us.¹ So, with a feeble attempt to sanctify a

¹ Some Lutheran theologians have distinguished between the terms. D. Hollaz maintained that "election" relates more to the objects elected, whereas "predestination" more to the end and order of means within election (cf. H. Schmid's *Doctrinal Theology*

phrase, *we're going back to the future!* (Hold on to your chairs and buckle up!)

We can say with deep gratitude that each of the previous Emmaus presentations centered on what was at the heart of the *real* Emmaus meeting that first Easter evening. Our prayer is that this modest offering does the same: open our eyes to see Jesus! That's what the topic drives. That's why this subject matter comforts. That's why this deep, humanly impenetrable topic "makes sense." "For he chose us **in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons **through Jesus Christ**, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us **in the One he loves**" (Ephesians 1:4–6).² "This grace was given us **in Christ Jesus** before the beginning of time" (2 Timothy 1:9).

Why delve into predestination for our purposes *here*? As many of you here in the audience know, the election doctrine played a significant role in the origination of the ELS. It served as the reason for beginning worship services at this very location, Parkland Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Washington, under the leadership of Pastor Bjug A. Harstad. But this doctrine and the ensuing controversy also exerted considerable influence on inter-church relations within the old Synodical Conference. Some regarded the dispute as purely theoretical, holding little significance for church fellowship purposes. In fact, that's how the merger church of 1917 (NLCA) treated the matter. When a church fails to see or fully appreciate the connecting link between any given teaching of Holy Writ and that of the Hauptartikel (Justification), it is in grave peril of losing both the *material* principle of the Lutheran Reformation and its *formal* principle.³ In today's theological clime, can the same thing occur with a doctrine like church fellowship, the point of demarcation in the dissolution of the old SC? Turning our sights to God's saving grace in Christ poured out on us *before time, in time, and for all time*, giving no little attention to a bitter controversy that especially affected Norwegian Lutherans, we hope to find a paradigmatic

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 286). Others have contended that "predestination" is not preferable since it carries a Calvinistic connotation (cf. A. Suelflow's *Servant of the Word*, 168).

² The NIV 1984 edition is used throughout the essay, unless passages are found in quotations from others.

³ The material principle is justification. The formal principle is the source of all doctrine, holy Scripture.

legacy for the inter-church relations before us today.⁴ But first, a brief overview of the doctrine itself.

Grace Before Time

Last summer national news outlets showed a number of amazing photos of the Northern Lights. In that same month of July, young people from the ELS visited the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. The Milky Way was on display in the museum's planetarium. This presenter had a chance to be there with them. Who of us is not impressed as we look to the skies? We begin to realize what a vast creation our loving God has put together and how small each of us really is in terms of occupied space. The theme for the national convention held at a neighboring university in Cincinnati was fitting: "From Beginning to End You are Mine."

As much as we fellow Christians marvel at the intricacies of our universe and praise our magnificent Creator, something more amazing involves us that "predates" the *beginning*. Long before you and I were born—even before creation—God chose us to be his believers! "In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Ephesians 1:4–5). "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.... Who shall bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? ...For I am convinced that neither death nor life... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:28–39). "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of

⁴ A 2012 dissertation by John M. Brenner, presented at Marquette U., "The Election Controversy Among Lutherans in the Twentieth Century: An Examination of the Underlying Problems," contends: "The Lutheran doctrine of church fellowship is intimately involved in the failures to resolve the Election Controversy in the twentieth century. These differences continue to divide Lutheranism in America and the divisions will not be mended without a resolution of these differences." Brenner's doctoral thesis appears to be the most comprehensive treatment of the Election Controversy from the vantage point of involving the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Access is available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/204/>.

the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14). “...God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:9–10). Other verses in Scripture also could be cited: e.g., Matthew 22:14, John 10:27–30, and, of course, the entire first chapter of Ephesians.

Our Lutheran confessors link God’s eternal decree of election with the way he in time has individuals apprehend his grace: “In this his eternal counsel, purpose and ordinance God has not only prepared salvation in general, but he has also graciously considered and elected to salvation each and every individual among the elect who are to be saved through Christ, and also ordained that in the manner just recounted he wills by his grace, gifts, and effective working to bring them to salvation and to help, further, strengthen, and preserve them to this end” (FC SD XI:23, Tappert, 619).

Checking the Epitome to the Formula of Concord, we can summarize Article XI this way: *Election* is to be distinguished from God’s foreknowledge; pertains only to believers; is only to be found in the Word and not men’s speculations; is always “in Christ” who is “the book of life”; is not to be judged on the basis of man’s reason or on God’s law; is to be taught as gospel and as comfort; is set forth according to the order that St. Paul gives in his letter to the Romans; does not pertain to those who will perish in unbelief and go to their destruction by their own fault; is not to be investigated outside of what is revealed in the Word of God; has us “put forth every effort to live according to the will of God”; is a teaching that gives God the glory entirely and completely, without any merit in us.

A mysterious but comforting doctrine

So, from where comes the *reason* for this mysterious but gracious decree? It’s not inside us. How can it be? By nature we not only are bad apples externally but sinners to the core, so that the expected, deteriorating course for us all would not simply be that of rotting in a basket under some garden tree but rotting for eternity in the never-ending casket of hell! The effects of original sin go beyond the grave in this life. Yes, “death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12) and “the

wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Yet the deadly pall cast over each sinner by nature is even that of a lasting variety: damnation! “The result of one trespass was condemnation for all men” (Romans 5:18). No, the reason for this gracious election is all found in his Son: Jesus Christ, the Savior. God wants us so much to know and believe this that he tells us he even chose his Son to be sacrificed at the cross *before* any of his acts in creating the universe. Jesus is “the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). The inspired Pentecost sermon referenced the same: “This man,” said Peter, “was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge...” (Acts 2:23).

Can you and I know we personally are chosen for heaven? The ELS catechism answers this question with emphasis: “Yes! Whenever a person hears the Gospel and trusts in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins, that person can be confident he is one of the elect” (#231). Romans 8:28–30 is listed as proof. The election teaching is ditto or double assurance that we are saved fully by God’s undeserved love freely given in his Son. Not only did salvation come by the incarnation and the life and death and resurrection of Jesus; not only did it come by the Holy Spirit working faith in us; not only did it come through the washing of water with the Word at the font; not only did it come by God preserving us in the truth until life everlasting through Word and Sacrament; no, it even came by a Trinitarian act of mercy in predestining our souls! Commenting on Paul’s powerful election discussion in the eighth chapter of Romans, Luther remarks, “This doctrine is not so incomprehensible as many think, but is rather full of sweet comfort for the elect and for all who have the Holy Spirit.”⁵

For personal comfort and joy

FC SD XI contains this important sentence: “Accordingly, if any one presents the doctrine concerning the gracious election of God in such a manner that troubled Christians cannot derive comfort from it, but are thereby incited to despair, or that the impenitent are confirmed in their wantonness, it is undoubtedly sure and true that such a doctrine is taught, not according to the Word and will of God, but according to [the blind judgment of human] reason and the instigation of the devil.”⁶ The pastoral nature of the Lutheran confessors comes through.

⁵ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. J. T. Mueller (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1976), 128. For a similar translation see *LW* 25:371.

⁶ FC SD XI:91 (*Triglotta* version, 1093).

The treatment of this scriptural doctrine is to occur in the context of consolation.

Believers in Christ are invited to view the entire subject of predestination as pure gospel.⁷ Contrary to Calvin's theology, there is no consideration here of the reprobate (double predestination⁸). The doctrine is all in the realm of God's grace and is meant to give added strength for those looking to the merits of Christ for every ounce of spiritual goodness. If for some reason—as for Luther in his early years—doubts arise from within the heart of a Christian because sin still lurks in its corners, this does not mean abandoning the election doctrine for comfort. It does mean, however, going where election itself directs: God's grace and the merits of Christ.⁹ Advice provided young Martin from Johann Staupitz is well-known as the father-confessor countered the idle speculation toying with Luther's mind: "Look at the wounds of Christ and at the blood that was shed for you. From these predestination will shine. Consequently, one must listen to the Son of God, who was sent into the flesh and appeared to destroy the work of the devil (1 John 3:8) and to make you sure about predestination."¹⁰

Pastorally, a mature Luther dealt similarly with others. Writing to a man troubled with uncertainty about his election, he once provided this excellent counsel:

God has given us his Son, Jesus Christ, whom we should remember every day and to whom we should look as in a mirror. For outside of Christ there is only danger, death and devil, but in him everything is peace and joy. Whosoever is constantly tormented by the predestination wins nothing else than fear.

⁷ A comforting devotion on election is included in **Appendix A**. The devotion by J. Gerhard concludes with this evangelical invitation: "Seek your election and your writing in the book of life in Christ alone."

⁸ Often known also as unconditional or absolute election, John Calvin (1509–1564) taught that not only some people but also some angels have been predestined to eternal death. A clear summation of Calvinism can be found in the Westminster Confession (1647) of the Presbyterians; cf. Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III, 608–609.

The handy acronym TULIP shows "logical consistency" for Calvin in his approach: T—total depravity, U—unconditional election, L—limited atonement, I—irresistible grace, P—perseverance of the saints (once saved, always saved).

⁹ Sometimes we speak of these as the two causes of our election. In reality, these are really one and the same.

¹⁰ *LW* 5:47.

Therefore avoid and flee these thoughts that look like Satan's temptation in paradise and, instead of that, look at Christ.¹¹

In a conversation where Luther had just mentioned his book, *De Servo Arbitrio (Bondage of the Will, 1525)*, Luther warned of attempts to investigate what is hidden. John Mathesius in 1540 records in *Table Talk* the Reformer comparing the mystery of election to that of the incarnation:

I was troubled by the thought of what God would do with me, but at length I repudiated such a thought and threw myself entirely on his revealed will. We can't do anything better than that. The hidden will of God can't be searched out by man. God hides it on account of that very clever spirit, the devil, in order that he may be deceived.... We have enough to learn about the humanity of Christ, in whom the Father revealed himself. But we are fools who neglect the revealed Word and the will of the Father in Christ and, instead, investigate mysteries which ought only be worshiped. As a result many break their necks.¹²

The same admonition appears in this citation from his comments on Genesis:

Accordingly, you who are listening to me now should remember that I have taught that one should not inquire into the predestination of the hidden God but should be satisfied with what is revealed through the calling and through the ministry of the Word. For then you can be sure about your faith and salvation and say, "I believe in the Son of God, who said (John 3:36): 'He who believes in the Son has eternal life.'" Hence no condemnation or wrath rests on him, but he enjoys the good pleasure of God the Father.¹³

Note also a gem from a sermon by Cyriacus Spangenberg, a former student of Luther at Wittenberg (1542) who served as pastor in Eisleben and Mansfeld. He preached a seven-part sermon series on predestination in 1565. He holds out solid comfort and certitude for believers as they ponder their election:

¹¹ For this citation, see W. Kreiss, "The Lutheran Theology of Certitude," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, vol. XX, no. 1 (March 1980), 58, [W² X, 1748 s.].

¹² *LW* 54:385.

¹³ *LW* 5:50.

God is reliable; he is neither vacillating nor capricious. What he has planned happens irrevocably. He has predestined us to be his children, apart from any human merit or worthiness, so nothing can prevent our salvation.... God has planned to save many thousands times thousands human creatures and to lift them out of the crushing condemnation in which they were struck by nature to eternal glory. Before the world began, he made his choice on the basis of pure mercy and sheer goodness.¹⁴

Hymnwriter Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676), a man who suffered many personal losses (at a young age four of his five children died, also his wife; his superiors at his church demanded he compromise his doctrine, which he did not), wrote this about his own election:

Thy love, O Lord, before my birth
 Thou didst elect to show me,
 And for my sake didst come to earth
 Before I e'er did know Thee.
 Yea, long before Thy gracious hand
 Created me, Thy grace had planned
 To make Thee mine forever. (ELH #129:2)

In relation to objective justification

Universal redemption¹⁵ and its corollary, objective justification,¹⁶ not only are essential in the proper understanding and presentation of elec-

¹⁴ Spangenburg captured well Luther's concept of the bondage of the will and its corollary doctrine of election, emphasizing both grace and certainty in the realm of the sinner's salvation. This citation is found in lectures given by Robert Kolb at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, MN, in 1993. We refer the reader to the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, March 1994, 44-45.

¹⁵ Universal redemption refers to how Christ was the full ransom or payment for all sin. This payment for sin was made to the heavenly Father, not to the devil. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1 Timothy 2:5, 6). "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). At the cross of Calvary the redemption was accomplished, the sacrifice completed for all people of all time.

¹⁶ The forensic/judicial aspect is emphasized with this term. On the basis of Christ's sacrifice and his perfect obedience of God's law in our place (Romans 5:18-19), God the Father, who is appeased and sees the world differently as a result, does not impute (count or reckon) sin but declares the whole world righteous or innocent (2 Corinthians 5:19, Romans 4:5, Romans 5:18, Romans 3:23-24). The resurrection of Christ serves as a powerful confirmation and declaration by God that sinners have been

tion; here any false assumptions are dispelled. This unfortunately was never grasped or embraced by John Calvin. Calvin saw as the center of theology God's *sovereignty* and not, as did Luther, God's work of *salvation* in Christ. The test of a true exegete and expositor of God's holy Word is that he accepts universal redemption/objective justification and simultaneously a particular election. For this reason, a faithful Lutheran instructor will not presume to present predestination¹⁷ without first laying the groundwork of the comforting assurance that comes through the universal effects of the atonement.¹⁸ That is offered freely to the individual in the holy means of grace.

In this regard, is there reason for concern in some Lutheran circles? Can it be said unmistakably today that all pastors and teachers from the former SC synods uphold and proclaim what was a hallmark doctrine of the former glory days for the old Conference (est. 1872¹⁹)? *Why* are

forgiven as a result of the redemptive work at Calvary; Romans 4:25. In the Greek of this verse the preposition is διὰ with the accusative: "...because of our justification."

¹⁷ Paul E. Kretzmann in his *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, vol. II (St. Louis: Concordia, 1923) gives this all-encompassing definition of election: "The eternal election of grace means that God has chosen each and every person of the elect, those that are now Christians and love God, and therefore us also, before the foundation of the world, unto Himself, for His own, and destined them for eternal glory; this decree being carried out in time, when God called these people and transmitted to them the full blessing of justification through the merits of Jesus. And this purpose of God will surely be carried out. Thus the election of God is the cause not only of our salvation, but also of our being called, converted, justified. Faith is the result of the election of God, and gives the believer the guarantee that he belongs to the elect and will finally obtain eternal glory" (p. 47).

¹⁸ For an in-depth study of Paul's paradigm in setting forth election, esp. in Romans 8 and 9, see the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, vol. 42, nos. 2 & 3.

¹⁹ The very first meeting of the Synodical Conference (July 1872) gave answer to questions pertinent to "universal absolution" or "objective justification." The main presenter on this is of special note: Fredrich A. Schmidt, who later would become the focal point in the Election Controversy. The SC Proceedings, translated from the German, include this clarification from a definitive essay delivered for the occasion: "This doctrine (of universal justification) is expressly stated in Rom. 5:18; and it is, therefore, not only a biblical doctrine, but also a biblical expression, that 'justification of life has come upon all men' (Luther's translation). Only a Calvinistic interpretation could explain the passage so as to make out that only the elect have been justified. Those who say that God has *made* the whole world righteous, but deny that he has *declared* the world righteous, deny thereby in reality the whole of justification; for this that the Father has declared the world righteous must not be separated from this that the Son made the world righteous, when the Father raised Christ from the dead" (cf. *ELS Synod Report 1954*, p. 40). This citation from 1872 was used for a critical review of the Declaration of 1938 and the Common Confession of 1950. The ALC persistently had maintained that one could not speak of justification as *pronounced* upon all men, or that in the resurrection of Jesus it could be said that God *proclaimed* all sinners justified in

rumblings raised in some corners to objective justification? Is there a fear universalism will preside? Is it merely a dispute over semantics? Is it a concern about careless speech²⁰ or is it deeper in nature, impinging on the validity, efficacy, and objective nature of the means of grace? What is truly offered in absolution and in the sacraments: a *potential* forgiveness or a *genuine* forgiveness? Does not faith itself need what is genuine? Is there not in the means of grace a real impartation of the remission of sins?

The doctrine of universal redemption states that on the cross Jesus Christ paid the full penalty for the sins of *everyone* in the world. Concerning the Messiah, Isaiah prophesied that “the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Therefore God has declared the *whole world* forgiven because of what Christ accomplished on the cross. The resurrection of the Savior is proof of this forensic/judicial act of God. This divine act is called justification (that is, to declare one not guilty) and is an objective, universal, true-for-all fact. God’s act of justification exists apart from faith. Paul wrote, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23–24). The personal faith needed to save an individual takes hold of this objective truth and this faith is frequently called *subjective* or *personal* justification. The apostle Paul shows the relationship between objective and subjective justification: “However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Romans 4:5). Although the whole world has been justified once for all through Christ’s atoning sacrifice, many do not come to faith and therefore will not enter heaven.

The use of the terms “objective” and “subjective” to describe justification is not found in Scripture or the Confessions. For this reason, some within Lutheranism contend we should speak only about *objective reconciliation and justification by faith*. But if one denies the Bible ever him. Specifically, the ALC never had denied that the redemption of Christ covers all people, but the denial was found in the discussion of what is justification.

Historian E. C. Frederich, referencing discussions on objective/universal justification in the first decade of the 20th century, makes an interesting observation: “How closely this was related to the sharp election-conversion debate is not easy to determine, but it is striking that the same theological camp that could not bear an election without faith at the same time raised objections to a justification without faith” (*The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992], 113).

²⁰ The “saints in hell” expression of Kokomo (Indiana) can scarcely be defended. “Saint” is a term reserved only for a believer.

speaks of the sins of the entire world being forgiven and holds only sins of believers are forgiven, this is not just quibbling about terms. It involves God's own doctrine as set forth in His holy Word. Objective justification is clearly taught in a key passage: "God was reconciling **the world** to himself in Christ, **not counting men's sins against them**" (2 Corinthians 5:19). While Paul uses the word "reconciling" (*καταλλάσσω*) here, he clearly means that forgiveness of sins is really imputed (*μὴ λογζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν*) to "the world." Elsewhere, Paul writes that Christ died for sinners (Romans 5:8) and that through Jesus' righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life (Romans 5:18).

Our Lutheran Confessions likewise say of Christ, "He was given for us to make satisfaction for the sins of the world and has been appointed as the mediator and propitiator" (Ap IV: 40). Referring to the work of the God-Man in effecting forgiveness, the Formula states: "[T]herefore it is a perfect satisfaction and reconciliation of the human race, since it satisfied the eternal and immutable righteousness of God revealed in the law. This obedience is our righteousness which avails before God and is revealed in the Gospel, upon which faith depends..." (FC SD III, 57). In the Epitome we read this affirmation: "But the Gospel, strictly speaking, is the kind of doctrine that teaches what a man who has not kept the law and is condemned by it should believe, namely, that Christ has satisfied and paid for all guilt..." (FC Ep V:4). In discussing the Fifth Petition, the Large Catechism comments: "Not that he does not forgive sin even without and before our prayer; and he gave us the Gospel, in which there is nothing but forgiveness, before we prayed or even thought of it" (LC Fifth Petition: 88).

Essentially the question is: What actually happened at the cross of Calvary? Did Christ accomplish in reality the forgiveness of sins for the whole world? Most assuredly He did! "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). It is this objective fact which is held out to the world. Our faith or unbelief does not change this objective fact. Of what else would faith take hold?

Dr. Luther wrote in his Galatians commentary: "...Christ has taken away not only the sins of some men but your sins and those of the whole world. The offering was for the sins of the whole world, even though the whole world does not believe."²¹ This quintessential teaching of Scripture comforts the believer. Since Jesus Christ paid for all sins and

²¹ LW 26:38.

God declares everyone's sins forgiven, the person who now hears the message and is moved by the Spirit's power to grab on to it can know Jesus has excluded no one from salvation and that God "wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). And if for *all*, this has to include *me!*

Again, we refer to a famous citation from Luther:

Even he who does not believe that he is free and his sins forgiven shall also learn, in due time, how assuredly his sins were forgiven, even though he did not believe it. St. Paul says in Rom. 3[:3]: "Their faithlessness [does not] nullify the faithfulness of God." We are not talking here either about people's belief or disbelief regarding the efficacy of the keys. We realize that few believe. We are speaking of what the keys accomplish and give. He who does not accept what the keys give receives, of course, nothing. But this is not the key's fault. Many do not believe the gospel, but this does not mean that the gospel is not true or effective. A king gives you a castle. If you do not accept it, then it is not the king's fault, nor is he guilty of a lie. But you have deceived yourself and the fault is yours. The king certainly gave it.²²

In 1533 Luther and Melanchthon were asked to weigh in on a controversy in Nürnberg. The question revolved around private confession and absolution. The city council was firm in maintaining that the clergy practice public confession and absolution. Osiander preached against the use of public confession and absolution. Luther and Melanchthon issued an opinion that *both* public and private confession and absolution should occur, since the preaching of the gospel is the same as proclaiming forgiveness of sin in any specific location. They said:

The preaching of the holy gospel itself is principally and actually an absolution in which forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in general and in public to many persons, or publicly or privately to one person alone. Therefore absolution may be used in public and in general, and in special cases also in private, just as the sermon may take place publicly or privately, and as one might comfort many people in public or someone individually in private. Even if not all believe [the word of absolution], that

²² LW 40:366, 367.

is no reason to reject [public] absolution, for each absolution, whether administered publicly or privately, has to be understood as demanding faith and as being an aid to those who believe in it, just as the gospel itself also proclaims forgiveness to all men in the whole world and exempts no one from this universal context. Nevertheless the gospel certainly demands our faith and does not aid those who do not believe it; and yet the universal context of the gospel has to remain [valid].²³

The trouble with *any* questioning of objective justification, according to Robert Preus, is the tragedy where “one begins to look for assurance of salvation and grace, not in the objective atonement and righteousness of Christ, but in the quality of strength of one’s faith, as if justifying faith is something other than pure trust and receptivity.... Walther points out that to make justification depend upon faith ultimately robs a poor sinner of comfort, for then his faith becomes, not a result of the Gospel’s powerful working, but a part of the Gospel itself.”²⁴

Preus gives a good illustration of how this plays out pastorally. Suppose you and a church friend had opportunity to share the gospel with an old unchurched man who, for all practical purposes, shows himself to be unconverted. Your friend tells him of the grace of God toward all sinners as it has been carried out in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Your friend lets him know that it is God’s grace that all sinners now have full forgiveness and that through the work of Jesus sinners are saved. Now, Preus proposes this for consideration:

The man responds with utter joy. “What a wonderful message,” he says, “what a wonderful, comforting message for a poor old sinner.” But you interject, “Wait a minute, sir, you have to believe this message! Everything my friend here has said is of no value to you unless you believe it.” How do you react to this little scenario? Do you think your interjection helped the old man? Is not what you did rather foolish and dangerous? It is like taking in a beautiful sunset on my front porch and being told that somehow my appreciation of this conditioned it.... But we Lutherans, following Apology IV, the most significant treatise ever written on the subject of justification by faith, are

²³ LW50:76–77.

²⁴ Robert Preus (“Perennial Problems in the Doctrine of Justification,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, July 1981, 163ff.) refers to chapter 25 in Walther’s *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*.

realists, and our faith rests on the realities of the Gospel of justification.²⁵

S.C. Ylvisaker, a former president of Bethany Lutheran College, once put it memorably: “The Bible doctrine is simply that when Christ died for our sins, God declared the whole world forgiven and now God wants us to believe this. Others say: ‘Believe, and thou shalt be justified.’ God says: ‘Believe that thou hast been justified.’ And the thing is as simple as that—but what a difference when death stares a person in the face.”²⁶

Grace In Time

As we think of God’s *grace before time* (his election decree), we must not assume, however, that loving warnings are not necessary as we now deal with his *grace in time*. While election is speaking to our dominant new man, we are aware that the old man still lurks around. The Christian in this life is still *simul iustus et peccator*.

For holy living

Election assurance, based for us now in time on objective justification as offered personally to our souls in Word and sacrament, does not mean adopting a careless attitude toward the gospel (e.g., what Bonhoeffer called “cheap grace”). False or carnal security cannot be associated with the biblical teaching of predestination. Lutheranism does not promote the “once saved always saved” pre-determinism of John Calvin. Just as we pray the petition our Lord taught us, “Lead us not into temptation,” so too we heed Peter’s reminder: “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). The *in time* usage of God’s Word and the wonderful meal of our Lord’s Table is essential. Peter goes on to say, “We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well [Greek says: you *are* doing well] to pay attention to it” (2 Peter 1:19). In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 we read, “God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.” The term “sanctifying” (ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος) here is used in a broad sense to encompass all that the Holy Spirit does in bringing us to faith and preserving us in that faith until life everlasting.

²⁵ Ibid., 179.

²⁶ *Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker 1884-1959*, ed. P. Harstad (Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN: 1984), 53.

A carpenter counts on his hammers, nails, and tools to bring about the building of a sturdy house. God uses spiritual tools too to bring about his spiritual house: the elect for eternity. God, of course, transcends any earthy builder. He would not need tools to do his work. Except, he said so (Romans 10:17). The plan of God in using his means of grace to bring people to faith *in time* and to preserve his elected remnant for everlasting bliss suffers sharp ridicule. That's expected. "If God wants people for heaven, can't he just zap them?—Why all the fuss about baptism and church?" Like Naaman the Syrian scoffing at Elisha's insistence he wash himself in the Jordan to remove his leprosy, people treat baptism as too simplistic and unimpressive. But here comes the resounding response: "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21), and "...baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21; KJV).

As crazy as it would be to suggest a builder bring about a house without lifting a tool, so it is a Scripture-revealed absurdity to suggest the house of God's elect be erected without any use of the very tools he has put into action. Therefore, since election to heaven includes faith in Christ as the Savior, and since this is worked only by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit, and since the Spirit uses only the tools of Word and Sacrament for this to happen; therefore, also a proper understanding of the means of grace is imperative for a proper view of predestination. So, we love to gather at the font,²⁷ at the Table, and around the pulpit.

The proper relationship between justification and sanctification (*nexus indivulsis*) always needs to be maintained. Pietists often complain of too much justification. They say it discourages the sanctified life. They express a similar fear about election, which is pure gospel. But, as H. Schmid states, "The doctrine of justification must always form the center of a sermon.... Christians must not begin to think that the doctrine of justification to which they cling is not enough, nor must they look at their faith to know whether they have the right claim to the comfort of the forgiveness of sins as their own and thus build their

²⁷ The certitude Dr. Luther attributes to baptism is an indication of how any questions of one's election should be directed to this powerful washing of water with the Word. Luther's statement in the Large Catechism is memorable: "To appreciate and use Baptism aright, we must draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and we must retort, 'But I am baptized! [*Ego tamen baptizatus sum!*]' And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body" (LC IV, 44; Tappert, 442).

confidence on their faith.”²⁸ The doctrine of sanctification, of course, needs presentation (Romans 6:19, 22; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–7), but never at the expense of the one motivating force: the *grace* of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:14–15). This grace includes election.

Grace For All Time

The heart of this paper is yet to come. If election is all grace, all Gospel, the church throughout the ages seeks to present it as such and fights every attempt to insert the poisonous infiltration of *aliquid in homine* (something in man, making him meritorious for God’s choosing). “When the Church, then, preaches that grace and that truth which are revealed in this Word of God, it may preach with all boldness and confidence, and sinners may place their trust on this message as on a rock that cannot be moved.”²⁹

For careful interpretation

Heresy in connection with the doctrine of election has by no means been limited to denominations with a bent toward Calvinism. We list some examples. It should not surprise us how the Roman Church forbids an individual from being certain he/she is numbered among the elect, for the papal system is predicated on doubt and work-righteousness.³⁰ Within the established church of Luther’s youth there appears to have been at least three views floating around: a) God elected those who would make right use of the free will; b) double predestination (probably carried over from Augustine, who at least *allowed* for it); and c) apparently, as evidenced by Staupitz, even a correct view in a rather rudimentary manner. Barthian neo-orthodoxy tried to stave off the charge of universalism, but has had a difficult time doing so, since—in the estimation of some—Karl Barth (1886–1968) “made absolutely clear that Jesus Christ is the only truly rejected person and that all humans are elect in him.”³¹ While at one time in our land among churches with

²⁸ Heinrich Schmid, *The History of Pietism*, trans. J. Langbartels (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2007), 310–311.

²⁹ *Grace for Grace*, ed. S. C. Ylvisaker (Mankato: Lutheran Synod Book Co., 1943), 3.

³⁰ The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent in January of 1547 declared: “No one...so long as he lives this mortal life, ought in regard to the sacred mystery of divine predestination, so far presume as to state with certainty that he is among the number of the predestined.... For except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God has chosen to Himself.” Sixth Session, Chapter XII; cf. H. Schroeder’s edition, 38.

³¹ S. Grenz and R. Olson, *20th Century Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 74. Grenz makes this observation in reference to Barth’s comment on God and

historical ties to the Reformed the supralapsarian view of Calvin held sway, most today are either infralapsarian³² or tend toward an Arminian view. For the most part, as you might expect, Arminian-based churches (Methodists, Pentecostals, etc.) teach an election always conditioned on man's faith (*intuitu fidei*).³³

What about Lutherans? Has there been consistency in interpretation, whether *pre-* or *post-* FC SD XI? Did Luther himself always profess the election doctrine in the way the orthodox Lutheran church presents it today? Reformed theologians like to cite Luther's 1525 *De Servo Arbitrio* (*Bondage of the Will*) as alleged evidence he was a supporter of Calvinism. Some contend Luther changed his mind in later years.³⁴ The eminence of this Luther writing (endorsed in FC XI, as well as in I and II), coupled with the lingering charge from the Reformed, compelled F. Bente to author a twenty-plus page defense of Luther and his *De Servo Arbitrio*. It is included in the *Triglotta* (intro., 209ff.). Bente's conclusion is that Luther was stressing the principle "we must neither deny nor investigate nor be concerned about the hidden God, but study as he has revealed himself in the Gospel and firmly rely on his gracious promises in the means of grace."³⁵ P. Althaus offers a helpful distinction:

In the final analysis, Luther does not establish a theoretical doctrine of double predestination as Calvin does. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, his theology is at this point

election in his *Church Dogmatics* II, 2, 319–320. Barth failed to identify the Bible as the Word of God, but said it is a witness to the same.

³² Supralapsarian refers to "before the fall" where God is purported to have made a double decree; i.e., to eternal life and to eternal fire. Infralapsarian refers to "after the fall or in the fall" where God is said to have decided simply to let some people lapse, i.e., not to try as hard for their conversion.

³³ These churches, as a result of adhering to some cooperative effort on the part of man in the way of conversion and faith preservation, teach that no one can be absolutely certain of his salvation or election. The official website for the Assemblies of God states: "The Assemblies of God leans toward Arminianism, though it accepts scriptural truth found in both positions. We agree with the Calvinist emphasis on God's sovereignty or supreme power and authority. But we also firmly believe the Arminian emphasis on mankind's free will and responsibility for his actions and choices. We believe the Bible teaches both truths." <http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/topics/gendoct_09_security.cfm>.

³⁴ F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (found in *Triglotta*) (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), 224.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 225. Bente (219) re-emphasizes this point: "Wherever Luther touches on predestination, both before and after 1525, essentially the same thoughts are found, though not developed as extensively as in *De Servo Arbitrio*. He consistently maintains that God's majesty must be neither denied nor searched, and that Christians should be admonished to look and rely solely upon the revealed universal promises of the Gospel."

completely pastoral. His idea of the hidden God finally tends only to purify the Christian's faith from all secret claims and all self-security by proclaiming the freedom of God's grace. In this he agrees with Paul in Romans 9–11. He has just as little independent interest in an eternal rejection as Paul does.³⁶

In relation to Ezekiel 18:23 and 32, Luther scorns any searching into the mind of God as to his pre-directing the damned. He remarks:

But why some are touched by the law and others are not, so that the former accept and the latter despise the offered grace, is another question and one not dealt with by Ezekiel in this passage. For he is here speaking of the preached and offered mercy of God, not of that hidden and awful [*metuenda*, fearful] will of God whereby he ordains by his own counsel which and what sort of persons he wills to be recipients and partakers of his preached and offered mercy. This will is not to be inquired into, but reverently adored, as by far the most awe-inspiring secret of the Divine Majesty, reserved for himself alone and forbidden to us much more religiously than any number of Corycian caverns.³⁷

One of the great and saddest ironies in the history of Lutheranism is how the author of half of our Confessions—including his quintessential explanation of the scriptural doctrine of justification in Ap. IV—was the very one who sowed the seeds for several controversies after Luther's departure. This is the case in connection with ensuing controversies on predestination. Melancthon opened the door. Although the initial paragraph of Formula XI mentions no major controversy³⁸ that triggered the inclusion of a special article on election, Bente insists on a keen sense for the obvious:

The framers of the Formula were well aware of the fact that the least error in the doctrine of free will and conversion was bound to manifest itself also in the doctrine of election, and

³⁶ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, tr. R. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 286.

³⁷ LW 33:138, 139. The cave that is referenced is Corycos, today known as Khorgos. Located in Cilicia, it had a lore about it as being one of the entrances leading to the underworld.

³⁸ A minor conflict occurred in 1561–63 in the city of Strassburg. John Marbach properly contended with Jerome Zanchi who was attempting to insert the Calvinistic “once saved always saved” into the local community.

that perhaps in a form much more difficult to detect. Hence Article XI was not only intended to be a bulwark against the assaults on the doctrine of grace coming from Calvinistic quarters, but also an additional reinforcement of the article of Free Will against the Synergists, in order to prevent a future recrudescence of their errors in the sphere of predestination.³⁹

In summary, we could say two things in particular prompted Andreas, Chemnitz, and crew to include Article XI in the Formula: Melanchthon's synergism was showing itself, and then there also was the long, drawn out controversy on the Lord's Supper. The latter is mentioned since Calvinism, unfortunately, had started penetrating Lutheranism. If the eyes of reason were not poked out on the clear teaching of the Real Presence, how could anyone expect less need for radical eye surgery in connection with election?

For proper presentation (conversion also⁴⁰)

Lutherans know that a faulty understanding of predestination consistently leads to an error regarding conversion and vice versa. Philip Melanchthon's *Loci* of 1543 (found even in the 1535 edition) blatantly and foolishly contains the damnable "three causes of conversion": the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the consenting will of man. His explanation to the three causes betrays how his synergism in point of conversion resulted naturally in a faulty understanding of predestination. When he began to speak of a cause of conversion in human beings, he could not avoid the matching implication for election. Melanchthon wrote, "Since the promise is universal and since in God there are not conflicting wills, it is necessary that there is some cause within us for the difference as to why Saul is rejected and David received, that is, there must be a different action on the part of the two men."⁴¹ So, there can be no question Melanchthon unwittingly contributed to a synergistic interpretation of predestination that would reveal itself primarily in the next century among such Lutheran pastors as Latermann, Dreier, and Hornejus.⁴² Imagine how this egregious departure from *sola gratia* by

³⁹ Bente, 204.

⁴⁰ The election controversy in America, several centuries after Melanchthon's time, had as much to do with conversion as predestination. The question is this: Does faith flow from election, or does election flow from faith? (Answer: the former.)

⁴¹ P. Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* (1543), tr. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 44.

⁴² F. Pieper, *Conversion and Election* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1913), 71.

Luther's right-hand scholar⁴³ fueled the cause of any who leaned toward an *intuitu fidei* presentation of election. The embers were ready to ignite.

Election Legacy: Lesson One—Grace preservation

Whether in election, in conversion, or in preservation of faith, if grace is not grace in *every* way, then it is grace in *no* way. “This blessed doctrine of God’s grace in Christ is the doctrine which alone fully meets the sinner’s need. Unless grace does all (*sola gratia*), the sinner is lost. And unless grace is for all (universal grace), the sinner must despair.”⁴⁴ Thanks be to God, his grace that saves is intended for all and offered to all: “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:19, 21). “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23–24). It is also revealed that even faith and all of the sinner’s salvation is by grace alone: “By grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Take a short detour for a moment. *Gratia universalis* has come under attack by Calvinists through a faulty rendering of Romans 9:22–23. These verses are touted as proof for a divided or double track in the mind of God in how grace is issued. The verses are translated in the NIV (1984) this way: “What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory...?” The NIV rendering does not distinguish between the different Greek verbs used in verses 22 and 23. Each is translated as “prepared.” But the words are different (*κατηρτισμένα*—v. 22, has the meaning of prepare in the sense of “make, create or form,” but not in the sense of “decide or determine beforehand;” *προητοίμασεν*—v. 23, has the meaning “to prepare beforehand”). Moreover, the first verb (NIV: “prepared” in v. 22) can rightly be taken as a middle form, which is a reflexive in the Greek language, and therefore be translated as *God’s*

⁴³ *Table-Talk* (LW 54:245) records that on August 1, 1537, Luther scribbled with chalk on the table: “Substance and words – Philip. Word without substance – Erasmus. Substance without words – Luther. Neither substance nor words – Karlstadt.”

⁴⁴ These words are from J. B. Unseth as found in a short essay produced in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, vol. 43, nos. 2 & 3: 251.

Word to the Nations (GWN) puts it: "...those who had prepared themselves for destruction...." Lutheran exegete, G. Stoeckhardt, provides an appropriate explanation for the two verses: "The context stated that God wanted to make use of the time of patience and longsuffering, granted the vessels of wrath, to gather a people from the Jews and Gentiles, who here see and experience his goodness and mercy and there should see his glory."⁴⁵

Since grace truly is grace in every aspect, not least of which is found in God's eternal election decree, there is certitude of salvation. Even a slight hint of the sinner's salvation resting on some alleged merit in man would necessarily mean an element of doubt. But because our election to eternal life is all found in God's gracious act of choosing and in connection only with the merits of Christ, the believer can exclaim, "I am certain! My life with God eternally is secure and nothing can remove that from me! Jesus' blood and righteousness avails for my sins, and God's election by grace has sealed the deal for me!" For each of us, grace preservation is colossal and personal.

U.V. Koren (1826–1910) wrote an excellent essay on this subject. In the middle of the controversies involving election and conversion, he penned a treatise called, "Can and Ought a Christian Be Certain of His Salvation?" This is regarded as one of the best works from the Norwegian pastor-theologian who founded and pastored a number of churches in the area of Decorah, Iowa, and led the Norwegian Synod as its president from 1894–1910.⁴⁶ We offer some excerpts below:

[W]e must maintain that there is no difference between being certain of one's salvation and being certain of one's election. It may well be that a believer has not heard anything about election, or has not understood any of this doctrine: but this does

⁴⁵ George Stoeckhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, tr. E. Koehlinger (St. Louis: Concordia Mimeo-graph, 1943), 123.

⁴⁶ Mark DeGarmeaux, professor at Bethany Lutheran College, recently finished translating Koren's *Collected Writings (Samlede Skrifter)* and is seeking publication soon. In his remarks to a group of Koren relatives visiting BLC from Norway on October 17, 2011, DeGarmeaux said, "Always when I read the *Collected Writings*, I see Vilhelm as a careful and precise theologian. He has the highest regard for the Word of God. He understands and appreciates the heritage of the Lutheran church. He cites Lutheran theologians to show that he teaches Biblical doctrine in the same way they did.... Most of all, I see his love and concern as a pastor and caretaker of souls. He wants the people to know their Savior Jesus Christ. He wants them to be sure and certain of their salvation, based on God alone. One of his most important writings indicates this: 'Can and Ought a Christian Be Certain of His Salvation?' His answer is a firm Yes, because he pointed them to God's promises in Christ Jesus."

not alter the case, however, for these two concepts, to be saved and to have been elected, nevertheless amount to the same thing in effect. Every single soul of the elect will be saved, and none except the elect (Matthew 24:24; Romans 8:30–33). To be one of the elect and to be saved are, accordingly, the same, and if one believes that he will be saved, it is the same as to believe that he is one of the elect. ...

But how can a Christian have certainty regarding his salvation, or, in other words, that he shall be kept in the true and living faith unto the end? He is to believe it. "The entire life which a truly believing Christian leads after Baptism is nothing else than an expectation of the revelation of the bliss which he already has. He certainly has it entirely, but nevertheless hid in faith" (Luther, *ibid.*, 137). He is to believe, that is, humbly and in a child-like manner rely upon the promises which God has given him precisely concerning this. These promises are more firm than heaven and earth and are given just for this purpose, that we are to believe them, have a firm conviction that He will fulfill them in spite of the devil, the world and our flesh." ...

Wherever in the Gospel it seems as though God demands something of us, so that our salvation is made to depend upon it, Scripture shows that God Himself will fulfill the condition for us; otherwise it would not be fulfilled, our salvation would not be of God, and the Gospel would not be the Gospel. Here the Augustinian saying applies, "*Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis*" [sic]—that is, "Give me what Thou commandest me, and command what Thou wilt." ...

Here the objection will be raised: I can understand that this doctrine would be comforting if just *one* thing were added: whether I am really one of those who are chosen. But where is that written? How may I know whether I am one of the elect? Answer: You are not to know or want to know in the ordinary sense. You are to believe it, and do so on the basis of the promises God has given you.... But if we give God all the glory and believe that He will do everything for us, we also believe that He has determined this from eternity and has thus chosen us unto eternal life. [Note: Here Koren adds a footnote from Luther: "From the Word of God, a Christian knows and acknowledges his own unworthiness and has a true fear of God, but he also comforts himself with the grace of God and believes

that in Christ, the Son of God, he has the forgiveness of sins and redemption, and that he is pleasing to God and chosen unto eternal life; that in every need, where he finds weakness and temptations, he can find refuge in God, call upon Him, expect His help and be certain that he will be heard," (Luther's *Sammtliche Schriften*, St. Louis-Walch edition, volume XI, 1860)].⁴⁷

For testing the mettle of confessional Lutheranism

Election Legacy: Lesson Two—Grace reexamination

The doctrine of election tests precisely whether or not one believes only what the Bible says and no more. As a dose of water in your gas tank is bound to create engine havoc down the road (especially in frigid Minnesota temps), so watering down the biblical doctrine of election—adding drops of reason from outside the revealed will of God—is bound to destroy the Manufacturer's engine of grace. Once human speculation is permitted entrance to the closed and perfect system designed by the holy Trinity it won't be satisfied till it runs its damaging course. No wonder the teaching on predestination has been described as the "shibboleth" of the Christian church.⁴⁸ F. Pieper remarks, "It has therefore been well said that in the doctrine of election a theologian takes his final examination. This Scripture doctrine sweeps the last remnants of Pelagianism and rationalism out of one's theology."⁴⁹

It's imperative that requirements for pastoral colloquies and for seminary graduation include a thorough review of the issues involved in the Melancthonian era election/conversion struggles and also those of nineteenth-century American Lutheranism. A portion of study for all ELS pastoral colloquents deals specifically with synod history, perusing T. Aaberg's *A City Set on a Hill* and the recently reprinted *Grace for Grace*. Both volumes thoroughly treat the election issue. More than acquainting the applicant with some unique synod customs (chanting

⁴⁷ H. Larson, trans., *Truth Unchanged, Unchanging: Selected Sermons, Addresses and Doctrinal Articles by Ulrik Vilhelm Koren* (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic Publishing, 1978), 174, 175, 186, and 197–198.

⁴⁸ This writer recalls a conversation in 1999 with Dr. Oliver Olsen, the former editor of the *Lutheran Quarterly*, stressing this very point.

⁴⁹ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. III (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953 ed.), 503.

and lutefisk suppers), the hope is to engender full appreciation for thorough hermeneutics and confessional conviction.

The roar of Opgjør

The 1880s election controversy in American Lutheranism, as we said, especially touched and affected the Norwegian Synod (est. 1853).⁵⁰ Weariness over contending for the truth, coupled with a feverish pitch for union at all costs, eventually and—in this case—unfortunately led to a sizable merger of Norwegian Lutheran bodies in 1917. But that same merger, tolerating a lack of dogmatic precision and confessional fortitude, served negatively as the catalyst for beginning what today is known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (est. 1918, “Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church”). To the confessional fathers of the ELS, a proposed compromise document (adopted 1912) intended for unity produced a discordant sound incapable of being ignored. Opgjør,⁵¹ in Norwegian “settlement,” was anything but “settling.” Yet, for so many, the sound emitted from Opgjør appeared calming and inviting: something probably akin to Muzak elevating the rise of a synodical super-structure! It is a sad and sorry tale, but one needing to be told lest we forget where the road of hermeneutical compromise always ends.

ELS history can be described as a *reorganization*. There is an unwavering connection to the pure theological moorings that characterize the early years of the Norwegian Synod. Here we think of leaders like H.A. Preus, J.A. Ottesen, and U.V. Koren. There is also deep respect for the bond of confessional unity that developed between the pioneers of the Norwegian Synod and other confessional Lutheran leaders in our land, such as C.F.W. Walther of the Missouri Synod and Adolf Hoenecke of the Wisconsin Synod. The Norwegian Synod in 1872 had joined in official doctrinal fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod via the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference, the “German—Norwegian—Slovak”⁵²

⁵⁰ Brenner (71-72fn3): “Missouri and Iowa were sparring over election and conversion as the Synodical Conference was being organized. It may seem somewhat surprising in the light of later developments that the theologians of the Ohio and Norwegian synods either took no note of the writings of the two sides or were not concerned about the doctrine of election as it was being presented in the pages of *Lebre und Webre*.” It was not until 1877 that lines began to be drawn in the newly-founded federation.

⁵¹ The document also was known as “The Madison Agreement” or “The Madison Theses.”

⁵² The Slovak Ev. Lutheran Church was formed in the United States in 1902.

confessional organization that helped solidify those of Norwegian Lutheran heritage contending for the truth in the 1880s and then again in 1917–18. Thank God, through encouragement from Missouri⁵³ and Wisconsin theologians, Bjug Harstad and others heeded the roar of Opgjør and took concrete steps to form the “little Norwegian Synod,” once called a plucked chicken. With the grateful support of the Synodical Conference fathers and under the guiding providence of God, the dubbed “plucked chicken” would in time regain its plumage.⁵⁴

Why many did not listen to the roar

Earlier mention was made of several seventeenth-century theologians who did not speak clearly on the doctrine of predestination. Whether intentional or not, errors crept into their dogmatic expositions, or at least into the summations by others of those expositions. Why did people not listen to men like Walther, Koren, and Hoenecke as they refuted these errors and upheld the scriptural position? The simple answer is that many evoked allegiance to the eminent theologians of earlier centuries. Pieper explains: “The American representatives of *intuitu fidei* claimed that they were proclaiming the ‘very same’ doctrine as the old dogmaticians; and this claim we contested. The discussions of this point were disagreeable, inasmuch as the general Lutheran public was hardly able to follow these historico-dogmatical disquisitions.”⁵⁵

Before proceeding, we want to acknowledge a key supporting role played by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Hoenecke’s role in backing Walther in the election struggle has been documented by Jon Schroeder, “The Contribution of Adolf Hoenecke to the Election Controversy of the Synodical Conference and an Appendix of

⁵³ Francis Pieper, *Conversion and Election: A Plea for a United Lutheranism in America* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1913, 26). Pieper’s little treatise (*Zur Einigung der americanisch-lutherischen Kirche in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadewahl*) gives a defense for the confessors of the Norwegian Synod who fought hard against the synergism of F. A. Schmidt. He includes a section entitled, “An Injustice Done the Norwegian Synod by the Madison Agreement.”

⁵⁴ The story is told that at the time of the historic Lime Creek meeting initiating the ELS, some man in a nearby northern Iowa town sarcastically remarked, “That little synod is nothing but a plucked chicken.” He obviously was a member of the merger church. Yet, a sensible down-to-earth Norwegian farmer is said to have replied, “Yes, but if the chicken is healthy the feathers will grow back.” (*Den Norske Synode er bare en ribbet bone. – Ja, men naar bone blir frisk og bra igjen saa skal fjaernerne vokse tilbake.*)—anecdote from former ELS Pres. George M. Orvick.

⁵⁵ Pieper, *Conversion and Election*, 53.

Translated Articles.”⁵⁶ In summary, through the efforts of Hoenecke, the Wisconsin Synod stood behind Missouri but fraternally encouraged Walther to make several clarifications in his presentation.⁵⁷ Also, it is fair to say, the men from Wisconsin were not as charitable as Walther in defending theologians (i.e., J. Gerhard) who maintained an orthodox explanation of what was labeled the “Second Form” of election.

From what we gather, Aegedius (Giles) Hunnius (1550–1603) first introduced the expression of an election “*intuitu fidei*.”⁵⁸ He and others like him who departed from *sola gratia* suggested that the verb *προέγνω* (foreknew) of Romans 8:29 contained the **reason** God chose some for eternity. Instead of reading verse 29, “For those God foreknew he also predestined...,” they interpreted the passage to say: “For those whose constant faith he foresaw he also predestined.”⁵⁹ We wonder how Hunnius could have overlooked the Formula’s clear denunciation of there existing “within us a cause of God’s election, on account of which he has elected us to eternal life” (FC Ep XI:20).

Johann Gerhard (1582–1637), generally recognized as the chief Lutheran theologian in the days post-Concord (1580), used the terminology of *intuitu fidei* (e.g., “...the consideration—*intuitus*—of faith must also be included in the decree of election”⁶⁰). His reason for doing so was to counteract any Calvinistic idea that (because of Calvinism’s double absolutism) made faith in the grand plan of salvation superfluous.⁶¹ Gerhard also said this about 2 Thessalonians 2:13: “So, in

⁵⁶ J. Schroeder’s article appears in the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, October 1999, 14–41. See also Brenner, fn3.

⁵⁷ Three such areas were cited for correction in 1881: that there are no conditions in God; that those who are lost perish because their perdition is foreseen by God; that the elect receive a richer grace. These emendations were received favorably. (J. Schroeder, 19). “Though, under Hoenecke, the Wisconsin Synod insisted on changes in phraseology, its support of Walther was never in question. Rather, Hoenecke and the synod served as a great encouragement to Walther in troubling times” (J. Schroeder, 18).

⁵⁸ R. Preus and W. Rosin, eds., *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), 275. See also R. Preus’ *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism, II* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), 98. Preus names Hunnius as the first to speak of *voluntas antecedens* and *voluntas consequens* in the context of the election doctrine.

⁵⁹ Preus and Rosin, 275.

⁶⁰ Theodore Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill* (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic, 1968), 17. Aaberg refers to the Gerhard citation as found in the *Loci Theologici*, IV, 200 ff. He defends Gerhard in his way of using the expression.

⁶¹ Gerhard used the terminology against the bare decrees of election found in Calvinism. One is not to look to a bare decree, but rather to the comfort of election found in the fact that God chose us from all eternity to be his own. He sent his Son to redeem all sinners. He sent his Holy Spirit to work faith in that redemption in our

2 Thessalonians 2:13, [Paul] says God chose us in faith because he is not able to elect in Christ except under the consideration of faith apprehending Christ (*nisi sub fidei Christum apprehendentis intuitu*).⁶² As a result of these unfortunate statements by Gerhard, who did not intend to detract from God's grace in Christ as the sole agent in election, some later theologians were even less careful. In fact, both the Romans 8:29 passage and the one from 2 Thessalonians 2:13 were referenced by advocates of the *intuitu fidei* error. Gerhard, Calov, and Quenstedt were cautious when faith was mentioned in connection with election; no one could doubt—by all else written—where they stood in relation to God's grace as juxtaposed with any human merit predestination and conversion.⁶³ Others were not so meticulous and left themselves open to synergistic suspicion (Latermann, Museus, Baier, etc.). But here, for the most part, is where a noticeable difference occurred between the language of a Gerhard and that of later American Lutherans preferring the *intuitu fidei* expression: "The latter refer salvation and perdition to a common source, the conduct of men. The former divide the question, and refer non-conversion and perdition solely and purely to man, and conversion and salvation to God alone."⁶⁴ Hindsight proves that any use of *intuitu fidei* was at best unfortunate and ill-advised, but at worst subtly and heretically repugnant.

Church controversies, insofar as they substantially divide denominations, often have benign origins. The election controversy in American Lutheranism is no different. Today we in hindsight may cite some shocking quips⁶⁵ to epitomize the erring side in the controversy. But do we realize historically how gradually the shift occurred in the way the election doctrine was articulated through the writings of some venerable names in preceding years? John Brenner recently traced this shift. hearts and preserves us in that faith until the end. This is why our salvation is fully certain.

⁶² This Gerhard reference appears in an article by J. Brenner, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Spring 2012, 87.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁴ F. Pieper, *Conversion and Election*, 62.

⁶⁵ F.A. Schmidt, for example, made a startling remark in 1884: "I believe and teach now as before, that it is not synergistic error, but a clear teaching of God's Word and our Lutheran Confession, that 'salvation in a certain sense does not depend on God alone.'" There is also this one by Schmidt in the same year: "If I should want to confess the doctrine that conversion and salvation in every respect depends on God alone and that man's conduct here is entirely an indifferent matter, I would much rather subscribe to a Reformed Confession than to this 'Redegjørelse' [Koren's "An Accounting"]. I reject it therefore with my whole heart as 'containing false doctrine.'" (These are documented in Aaberg's *A City Set on a Hill*, 36.)

He notes, for example, how Wilhelm Sihler, prominent in the early days of Missouri, once (1855) employed the *intuitu fidei* terminology. But in 1881, “as the Election Controversy was disrupting the Synodical Conference, Sihler publicly renounced his statements on election *intuitu fidei*.”⁶⁶ Otto Fuerbringer (1810-1892) apparently did the same. Among Scandinavians, Erik Pontoppidan, the Danish theologian known for his catechism (1737), could be cited—as we will examine further in a moment.

Election Legacy: Lesson Three—Theologians can fail; Scripture cannot

Theologians we fault for popularizing *intuitu fidei* sought solace for their position by appealing to passages that deal with justification *by faith*. Brenner records how several Lutheran fathers had twisted the eighth chapter of Romans: “Romans 8 says that God foreknew persons. It does not say that he foreknew faith. Those who teach election in view of faith are importing faith into this passage.... To prove that election is in view of faith one must not quote a passage that speaks about justification, but must find a passage that says that faith is the cause of one’s election. Scripture, however, speaks of faith as the effect of election, not the cause—*All who were ordained to eternal life believed* (Acts 13:48).”⁶⁷ Faith flows from election, not election from faith.⁶⁸

Another complicating factor for many early Lutheran leaders was their view of Formula of Concord, Article XI. Did the article speak pointedly to the matter at hand, i.e., to the use of *intuitu fidei*?⁶⁹ Not all were fully convinced.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ J. Brenner, “Walther and the Election Controversy,” *WLQ*, Spr. 2012, 89.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 117, 118.

⁶⁸ This saying is somewhat akin to the comparable quip, “Forgiveness first, then faith.”

⁶⁹ Those who followed F. A. Schmidt and the “intuituists” from Ohio made the claim that FC XI was to be viewed as addressing a *broader* concern than what Walther was postulating. A false assumption was made that the writers of the Formula implied a “dissimilar conduct” on the part of sinful man over toward the grace of God by way of explanation for what occurs in election/conversion. F. Pieper in his *Conversion and Election* (42) shows how paragraphs 57-64 of FC SD XI dispel any such assumption.

⁷⁰ An anecdote from court records in Worth County, Iowa, 1919, has made an impression on this writer as to the confessional integrity of his layman great-grandfather, Anders Moldstad. Anders was a general store owner in DeForest, WI, in the late 1800s. J. A. Moldstad (1874-1946), his son who was serving as the vice-president of the newly organized ELS, had been called to testify in a court case involving a property dispute known as the “Torgerson Case #3027” in April of 1919. Due to the church split (the ELS group away from the Norwegians entering the NLCA), each

Muddling the issue even more, early Norwegian Lutheranism in America did not consistently give allegiance to the Formula. This goes back to the motherland. Lutheranism spread to Norway via Denmark in the 1500s (Bugenhagen's influence from Wittenberg to Copenhagen). Later, seventeenth-century Lutheranism in Christiania (Oslo) underwent serious change because of inroads made by Pietism and Rationalism.⁷¹ Thankfully, certain Norwegian theologians like Gisle Johnson (1822–1894)⁷² and Paul Caspari (1814–1892) continued to present confessional Lutheranism. Their leadership in training theological students of theology H. A. Preus, J. A. Ottesen, and U. V. Koren made for a renewed focus on the entire Book of Concord. The Formula of Concord was not readily used in early days of Lutheranism in the countries of Denmark and Norway, primarily because of a political situation. This unfortunate development was used by some in Norway who

side in this Iowa community claimed the property. Both ELS leaders, Bjug Harstad (Tacoma, WA) and J. Moldstad (Chicago, IL), were asked to come and testify at the trial. Surprisingly the judge entertained much questioning and testimony involved in the doctrinal controversy on election (i.e., the old controversy revisited now because of the "Madison Settlement"). J. Moldstad gave a thorough explanation of what he and the Norwegian Lutherans who left the merger saw as a departure of biblical doctrine on predestination. (See **Appendix B** for a slice of the court testimony.) He then explained that, when a split occurred in the DeForest congregation in 1883, his father Anders—a deacon at the time—was at first on the opposite side of the dispute. But then he studied the matter carefully, going to the Scripture passages but also to the Formula of Concord, Article XI. From his attention to the Formula is how Anders switched his thinking and became a stalwart defender of H. A. Preus, his pastor who, however, was ousted physically from his pulpit on Good Friday of that year, 1883. (My grandfather, age 9, witnessed the stressful event.) So, even if the Formula may not have been so familiar to the Norwegian laity, some—including my great-grandfather—saw it as a defining resolution for the election debate.

⁷¹ W. Petersen in a 1993 ELS convention essay related how U. V. Koren indicated rationalism had such a grip on the church that at the time for Koren's catechization, the young confirmand was simply asked what kind of blood was to be found in a fish. "That it was 'red and cold' was to be considered a testimony to the wisdom of God. And then the next boy was called" (ELS *Synod Report*, 1993, 87).

⁷² Johnson had once studied in Germany, and while in Leipzig had formed a friendship with a young professor there, Carl Paul Caspari. "Johnson convinced him to apply for the position of lecturer in Old Testament at the University of Christiania and he was accepted. His rival for the position as new instructor was Grundtvig of Copenhagen, destined to become his most formidable theological opponent in future years. Johnson and Caspari became close friends and co-laborers whose gifts splendidly complemented one another.... Through Gisle Johnson and Paul Caspari, the young students who were to be leaders in the Norwegian-American churches fastened solidly upon their twin mottos: 'gegraptai' and 'verbum Dei manet in aeternum.'" (M. Langlais, "Gisle Johnson and the Johnsonian Awakening," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, June 1996, 13-14.)

leaned toward pietism, e.g., Nils Hauge and then also his disciple Elling Eilsen (came to America in 1839). They downplayed dogma (e.g., the distinctions in the Formula) for the pragmatics of revivalism. But Caspari, Johnson, Nils Laache (1831–1892)⁷³ and other faithful confessors in Norway would have argued that the writing of the Formula was simply a thorough explanation of what *already* was set forth in the Augsburg Confession.

How to listen to the fathers

In inter-church discussions today involving synods that hold in high esteem theologians of the past centuries, an important question to be raised is: To what extent do we make our appeal to “the fathers”? From one corner we hear, “Those guys seem like biblicists.” From another, “They first go to the dogmaticians.” One says, “Exegesis is what counts.” Another, “If we’re confessional Lutherans, why not cite the confessional writings?”

Let’s be clear: Confessional Lutherans accept Scripture to be the verbally inerrant and inspired Word of God. We also subscribe unconditionally (*quia*) to the entire Book of Concord as a true and pure statement and exposition of God’s Word. While we agree the Lutheran Confessions are to be read and studied in their proper historical context, this does not mean we believe the Confessions to be accurate only in dealing with specific problems the church had to counteract at the very time those writings were produced.⁷⁴ True Lutheran theologians of all times pledge themselves to the dogma of the Lutheran Confessions precisely *because* they have been convinced in the study of such that these writings convey the truth of Holy Writ. Therefore, when Lutherans are speaking with fellow Lutherans, it should be regarded as a *given* that appeal can be made to the Confessions.

The Confessions do not cover or exhaust every doctrine of God’s Word. What is covered, however, are teachings that came under scrutiny, not only in relation to Rome on the one hand and the Reformed on the other, but in relation to fellow Lutherans who were drifting

⁷³ Bishop Laache was known for his family altar, *Husandagtsbog*. The Norwegian devotional was so popular it went through eight different editions. The most recent English version of *Book of Family Prayer* (trans. DeGarmeaux) can be ordered from the BLC Bookstore (1-800-944-1722).

⁷⁴ Gospel reductionists in the 1970s, for example, argued that certain propositions in the Lutheran Confessions are historically conditioned and therefore cannot answer today’s biblical questions often posed by a more sophisticated culture (i.e., factual understanding of Genesis 1–11, etc.).

(crypto-Calvinists). FC SD XI is a good example of dealing with the latter. While the election article does not *per se* address **directly** the issue raised by Schmidt in the 1880s and/or the recurrence of Schmidt's error in 1917, the Formula—at least by *implication*—disallows anything at all in sinful man as influencing the mind of God in choosing sinners for heaven.

The writings of the fathers—including the 17th-century systematians—never were intended to have center stage as the foundation on which to build any theological tenet. Rather, their extensive expositions were to serve as a supporting role. We could liken it to external scaffolding erected around the perimeter for viewing the monumental, divine structure of the Word itself. Where else, when church controversy divides households and even threatens life, can one rest assured he has not been misled by extraneous influences⁷⁵? Luther said:

As for me, I pit against the dicta of the fathers, of men, of angels, of demons, not ancient usage, not the great mass of people, but solely the Word of eternal majesty, the Gospel. . . . Here I stand; here I sit; here I stay; here I glory; here I triumph; here I scorn papists, Thomists, Henricists, sophists, and all the gates of hell, to say nothing of the words of men, however holy, or of deceptive usage. God's Word is above all; the divine majesty is at my side. Therefore I am unconcerned even though

⁷⁵ It could also be mentioned that not only *extra*-biblical influences can affect the sure footing of scriptural doctrine. Within Scripture itself, it is vital that the confessional exegete compares “apples to apples” by a careful use of what is often called the “analogy of faith” hermeneutical principle. That is, **no explanation of Scripture is permissible which contradicts the sum total of all the clear passages of the Bible that set forth a given doctrine.** We can properly compare only those passages which deal with exactly the same doctrine, and here the more obscure passages must be explained by the clearer ones. If according to human opinion, there exists the difficulty that the *locus classicus* (*sedes doctrinae*) of one doctrine cannot be made to agree—according to our reason—with the *locus classicus* of another doctrine, then it is the duty of a faithful interpreter to acknowledge and declare this difficulty frankly. One dare not change the meaning of the concepts or give them a new form in order to force agreement with other doctrines. A case in point arose in the doctrine of election discussions in the early 1900s. At the first of five inter-synodical free conferences on election and conversion (held between 1903-1906), Dr. Franz Pieper was challenged by Ohio Synod and Iowa Synod theologians because their claim was Pieper and others were not allowing John 3:16 to influence how election should (from their perspective) be properly taught “in view of faith.” But “what Scripture teaches about election should be found in those passages that treat election specifically, Ephesians 1:4 as an example, but not John 3:16.” E. C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), 111.

a thousand Augustines, a thousand Cyprians, a thousand Henrician churches should stand against me. God cannot err and deceive.⁷⁶

The basis for settling doctrinal differences in inter-church relations continues to be what Lutherans have always espoused. “We believe, teach and confess that the prophetic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in Ps. 119:105, ‘Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.’”⁷⁷

LCMS President Harrison’s essay last year reminded us of the significance of the Augsburg Confession as a launch point for dialogue among early American Lutherans (i.e., Walther’s free conferences). The *Augustana* is the summary confession *par excellence* of true Lutheran doctrine to which a *quia* subscription must be given by any churches, representative groups or individuals coming to the table.⁷⁸ There are corridors of Scripture, however, that the AC does not explore, some for obvious reasons (e.g., doctrines not in dispute at the time). The Formula too leaves some areas untouched. Without a doubt, the Lutheran Symbols need to be explored and confessed. How else can common ground be found?⁷⁹ But if we propose to move ahead with any official doctrinal discussions between the LCMS, WELS, and ELS, the differentiating items from the historical split (altar, pulpit, prayer fellowship; hermeneutical principles), as well as those of more current years (role of women in the church, cooperation in externals, church and ministry, liturgical concerns, doctrinal discipline), demand a careful look at the pertinent Scripture passages themselves.

⁷⁶ Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959, Vol. III), 1368 (#4414). The reference to Henrician churches is in relation to King Henry VIII of England; cf. Luther’s 1522 *Contra Henricum Regum*, WA, 10, II, 214, 215.

⁷⁷ Epitome of the Formula of Concord, Part 1, par. 1; Tappert, 464.

⁷⁸ C. P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, reprint 1963), 204: “By a careful study of the symbolical books of our Church, commencing with the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, a more thorough understanding of the history, difficulties, true genius, and triumphs of the Reformation will be attained, than by reading everything that can be got, or that has ever been written *about* that memorable movement.”

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 265: “It is a great mistake to suppose that our Evangelical Protestant Church is bound by consistency to hold a view simply because Luther held it. Her faith is not to be brought to the touchstone of Luther’s private opinion, but his private opinion is to be tested by her confessed faith [i.e., the Augsburg Confession and the entire Book of Concord], when the question is, What is genuinely Lutheran?”

Using election as an example, we can see what Walther did. Prior to Schmidt's formal charges against him, Walther conceded how some under Calvin's influence supposed a divergence in the Formula of Concord. So, what did Walther do? He directed back to Scripture. He did so even when God's Word did not give an answer to an alleged dilemma. Case in point: Near the end of his presidency for Missouri (1877) he lectured on predestination and said:

More recent theologians assert that what the Formula of Concord has written about election by grace is worthy of note; by this the teaching is further unfolded and more clearly revealed. But it has proposed two ideas which cannot be reconciled [namely, God alone is the cause for election to eternal life; sinful man is the cause for his rejection and damnation]; hence it is the task of our time to reconcile these two contradictions. But they will not be able to harmonize whatever God has stricken from the bounds of reason.... [T]he charm of the Lutheran church consists in the fact that it accepts what is written in God's Word. And when there is an apparent contradiction in Holy Scripture, it will stand unresolved.⁸⁰

Why Opgjør was so unsettling

If Lutherans awarded trophies for oxymoronic titles, "Madison Settlement" would be near the front of the receiving line. From a scriptural perspective, the document did not *settle* the doctrinal dispute. It did, however, function as a compromise, agreeing to let disagreements stand with no fellowship repercussions. The old election error of the 1880s (championed by Schmidt, Allwardt, Stelhorn, et. al.) subtly resurfaced in this merger statement of 1912. It was billed as "faithfully preserving" the doctrinal position of the old Norwegian synod,⁸¹ but in actuality it was a sell-out to inevitable unionism at the price of truth: *God's* truth. Basically, Opgjør permitted either "Form One"—as it was known—(the election teaching of the Formula, expounded well by Walther and Koren) or "Form Two" (the teaching set forth in Pontoppidan's catechism) to have equal footing "without reservation."

Pontoppidan's *Truth Unto Godliness* (1737), familiar to each Norwegian Lutheran confirmand residing in America in the 1800s,

⁸⁰ C. F. W. Walther, *Essays for the Church*, II, collection from 1877-1886 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 147.

⁸¹ Aaberg, 52.

listed this answer to Question #548 as to what constitutes the teaching of predestination or election: “That God has appointed all those to eternal life whom he from eternity has seen would accept the grace proffered them, believe in Jesus and persevere in this faith unto the end. Rom. 8:28–30.” Koren stopped short of condemning Pontoppidan of false doctrine. But he did express reservations about his definition. He described it as a tolerable “incomplete concept,” as long as the doctrine of sin and grace would be kept pure.

There was more to *Opgjør* than simply caving-in to seeing no measurable distinction between Form One and Form Two. With what came next, Aaberg says, the enemy came in and plundered the city!⁸² —“The Joint Committee [of the merging synods] declared in paragraph four: ‘We have agreed to reject all errors which seek to explain away the mystery of election... either in a synergistic or a Calvinistic manner...every doctrine which...would deprive God of his glory as only Savior or...weaken man’s responsibility in relation to the acceptance or rejection of grace (Wolf, p. 234).’” Aaberg continues: “This paragraph ascribes to natural man a sense or feeling of responsibility regarding the acceptance of grace. Natural man, however, is ‘dead in trespasses and sins’ (Eph. 2:1). Scripture says: ‘Ye must be born again’ (John 3:7), and ascribes this work to the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel.” In essence, the third article of the Apostles’ Creed was at stake. For we find in Luther’s explanation a repudiation of man’s natural abilities and a complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit: “I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith...” (SC, Tappert, 345).

Background to Opgjør

Flash back to the 1800s for a moment. Prof. Friedrich August Schmidt (1837–1928), who in his youth had been confirmed by Walther, served as a Norwegian Synod professor⁸³ at Concordia Seminary from

⁸² Ibid., 50 (also: following citations from Aaberg are from same page).

⁸³ The very first Home Mission offering in the Norwegian Synod amounted to \$77.15 and was taken to pay the traveling expenses of Prof. F.A. Schmidt as he in 1864 would extend his summer vacation and serve a Norwegian congregation in a German church in New York City. Schmidt was quite adept in languages. He had taken classes in the seminary under Walther. The story is told that he was disappointed in being passed over to be selected as Concordia’s next president. (From a paper delivered by W.C. Gullixson to the Concordia Historical Institute, Nov. 4-6, 1987.)

1872–1876. He was a gifted individual (knew Norwegian fluently!) and formerly had been viewed as a potential Walther replacement in St. Louis.⁸⁴ In 1876 Schmidt was called as the first president of the newly-formed seminary for the Norwegians in Madison, Wisconsin. During this time, F.A. Schmidt began voicing disagreement with Walther's series of essays on election (completed in 1879). By the early 1880s, charges of false doctrine were flying. Schmidt even accused Walther of Calvinism.⁸⁵

Here was his convoluted logic: 1) F.A. said Walther disconnected God's election of sinners to eternal life from the faith in Christ necessary to obtain heaven. 2) He reasoned, just as Calvin's predestination doctrine made means of grace superfluous, so Walther was doing the same. 3) He also postulated Calvin's view of a limited grace was apparent, since "the Missouri system amounts to just this, that whom God wants to save, He saves; and as He wants to save only a few, only a few are saved."⁸⁶

Talk about being disingenuous, let alone unfair! Walther neither denied faith in Christ—worked through means—as necessary for salvation, nor that God truly desires all to have salvation in Christ (1 Timothy 2:3). It was a matter of staying on topic! **Election by grace**—grace in every way—was Walther's contention. A treatise on faith, on means of grace, on universal atonement and grace—this certainly flowed from Walther's pen elsewhere.

Schmidt's charges vs. Walther did not gain much traction among the clergy of Missouri or Wisconsin. Ohio was different; it already left the Synodical Conference in 1881. The Norwegian Synod, influenced by its Madisonian seminary president, would suffer a real battle in the coming years. With no desire to have an adverse affect on the Synodical

⁸⁴ A. Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference – Ecumenical Endeavor* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 93.

⁸⁵ To show how firm Schmidt was in bringing this charge, we draw attention to a letter addressed to Schmidt in 1913. It was written by J.N. Kildahl, president of St. Olaf College, and dated January 9. Kildahl, a Schmidt friend and sympathizer, wrote, "As I have said before, your battle against the false doctrine of the Missourians has not been in vain. It has led to victory among the Norwegians in this country.... And finally you can have the satisfaction that your struggle has borne fruit, and that you have saved the Norwegian people in America from Calvinism.... It is oft thus, that he who has taken the lead in a great cause, and has of necessity had to make many enemies, has not from his contemporaries always gotten the thanks due him; but history has rendered a more righteous judgment." (From ELS Archives, 6 Browns Ct., Mankato, MN.)

⁸⁶ This citation from an 1881 *Lutheran Standard* can be found in Schuetze, fn section, #26, 419.

Conference, the Norwegian Synod withdrew from such in 1883 (rejoining again when the ELS formed in 1918). Ulrik V. Koren, at the time a district president in Iowa (became Norwegian Synod president, 1894–1910), authored “An Accounting” (*En Redegjørelse*)⁸⁷ exposing Schmidt’s synergism with a thorough treatment of Scripture and the Confessions. One of his poignant remarks was this: “Since everything good in man is God’s free and undeserved gift of grace, there is nothing in man which could induce God to elect him. Man’s faith could not induce God to do this either, for faith is itself a free gift of grace from God....”⁸⁸

In 1887 close to one-third of the pastors and congregations left the Norwegian Synod. They and Schmidt formed the “Anti-Missourian Brotherhood” and soon also the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (1890). Here are the stats of the aftermath: “Whereas in 1886, the Norwegian Synod consisted of 193 pastors, 723 congregations, and 143,885 souls; three years later it numbered 138 pastors, 512 congregations, and 93,891 souls.”⁸⁹

The saga on the election controversy among Norwegian Lutherans does not end with the removal of the dissenters in the late 1880s. Eventually, the Schmidt group served as one of the founding bodies of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (NLCA, est. 1917), a large predecessor of today’s ELCA (1988).

At the turn of the 20th century, merger fever pressured the wounded but faithful Norwegian Synod. Should the synod heed the call for a new, large Norwegian body?—urged by the push for a common (Bugenhagen) hymnbook in the English language (1913); urged by a visit of dignitaries from Norway concerned for preservation of culture; urged by those stressing joint efforts in missions; urged by a demonstrable celebration of unity in connection with the approaching 400th anniversary of the Reformation? With sad irony, the Norwegian Synod, suffering a waning and physically ailing president in the scripturally-loyal Koren, soon found itself in union talks with the former Schmidt sympathizers. The new president for the Norwegians, H.G. Stub (1910),

⁸⁷ For access <<http://www.evangelicallutheransynod.org/beliefs/doctrinal-statements/an-accounting/>>. We include the concluding portion of “An Accounting” in **Appendix C**.

⁸⁸ “An Accounting” also is found in *Grace for Grace*, ed. S. Ylvisaker, 173–188 (original edition).

⁸⁹ *ELS Synod Report* 2003, 50; essay by Rev. C. Ferkenstad.

leaned at first somewhat cautiously but then enthusiastically toward agreement with church bodies judged previously as erring.⁹⁰

Opgjør became the “catalytic converter” for merging the Norwegian Synod with the United Norwegian Lutheran Church of 1890 and also with the Hauge Synod, the latter issuing the invitation for union. Though a significant number of pastors and laity in the Norwegian Synod objected to what they correctly perceived was doctrinal compromise, Stub defended and promoted *Opgjør*. A minority formed and issued reports against the acceptance of it. Finally, after considerable efforts, most on the minority side joined the majority, entering the 1917 merger with little substantive change to the document.

Austin, Minnesota, meeting

Here’s what happened. The two pastors who led the minority, C.K. Preus⁹¹ and I.B. Torrison, met with a newly-elected subcommittee for *Opgjør* in Austin, Minnesota, in December of 1916. The meeting was called for the intention of winning the support of Preus and Torrison and others for the “Madison Settlement.” The Joint Committee (working on *Opgjør*) provided assurance that some concessions had been granted to the minority group. However, as Aaberg reports, the following note

⁹⁰ The liberal element backed Stub. The cry was, “Let’s break the Decorah ring!” In 1910, with Koren about 84 years of age and close to death, Stub as vice president delivered Koren’s presidential address. Conveniently, Stub omitted part of the address from Koren that seemed—for Stub’s purposes—too strident. The paragraph omitted reads as follows: “The doctrinal discussions which have been carried on with other Norwegian Lutheran church bodies have not, it is my conviction, led to any reliable results. The disagreement which appeared in the discussion of the last point in which we follow the Book of Concord word for word surely rests on disagreement in the doctrine of conversion. That a series of theses on this doctrine is adopted does not prove that there is thorough agreement. This we have experienced before when all our positive theses were accepted while violent objections were made to the antitheses although these were only inevitable conclusions of the former. If only insignificant things were at stake, then it would not be right to separate; but when the question is raised whether God *alone* is our Savior, then we cannot be too careful. Perhaps the necessary antitheses may yet be submitted. If agreement concerning such things could be attained, then there would be real rejoicing” (*Grace for Grace*, 98–99).

⁹¹ Christian Keyser Preus (1852–1921), son of Herman Amberg Preus, was vice president of the Norwegian Synod in 1911. He became the second president of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa in 1902. C. K. was the grandfather of J.A.O. Preus and Robert Preus. C.K., along with his father H.A., was deposed as pastor of the Norway Grove congregation, DeForest, WI, on Good Friday, 1883. In the year of 1885, a number of other Norwegian Lutheran pastors were deposed of their positions, including another important forerunner of the synod, J. A. Ottesen, who was put out of churches at West Koshkonong and Liberty Prairie near Madison, Wisconsin.

added to the signing of the “Austin Settlement” of December 5–7, 1916, shows how the minority was hoodwinked: “It is self-evident that the above stated resolution must not be interpreted to mean that ‘Opgjør’ as the basis for union between the three contracting churches, is thereby abbreviated or changed.” Regrettably, Preus and Torrison encouraged the minority members to sign on to the document for the upcoming June convention in Minneapolis, but they attached a carefully-worded resolution of acceptance.

Lutheran historian C. Nelson contends that the Norwegian Synod ended up approving the merger document by hearing *again* and *again* the assurance that the Two Forms of presenting the doctrine of election did not “mask two different doctrines.” Nelson suggests the “Austin Settlement” allowed the minority “to fulfill its real desire for union without losing face.” But we have to agree with Aaberg’s assessment: “The ELS has not been so uncharitable as this in its judgment of the minority.”⁹²

A minority of the minority

The very day “merger mania” was celebrated in St. Paul, Minnesota, a small group of faithful pastors gathered nearby. The group gathered across the street from the huge convention at the St. Paul auditorium was a minority of a minority. The more sizable minority, originally opposed to the NLCA formation was “not willing to suffer the loss of the old familiar surroundings. They went along with the merger intent upon proclaiming the unconditioned gospel in a compromised situation.”⁹³ That’s the legacy of the Austin sessions. The little remnant of pastors and laity that would become the ELS gathered that day, June 8, 1917, at a conference room located in the St. Paul Aberdeen Hotel to initiate another church body. Insignificant in numbers, the group was resolute in its desire to preserve the precious heritage of salvation by grace alone through Christ alone.

Grace for Grace reports, “There was some difference of opinion in the beginning as to whether they ought to attempt to continue their work as an independent body or to make overtures to the Missouri Synod to be admitted as a special district of that body....” Most, however, believed that their “immediate duty was to preserve, so far as possible, the

⁹² Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill*, 68, cf. also for the Clifford Nelson reference.

⁹³ G. Orvick, unpublished essay from the 1970s: “A Brief History of the ELS, 1918–1925.”

principles and traditions of the Norwegian Synod and that this could best be done by working independently.”⁹⁴

The Aberdeen Hotel group agreed upon the following two points as impetus for organizing a new synod: “1) We cannot for good conscience’ sake join the new church body on the present basis. 2) We continue to stand on the old confession and organization, which we as Christians have the liberty to defend and under which we may work from now on as heretofore.”⁹⁵ Twenty-five years later, the *Lutheran Sentinel* carried an article describing the activities of the little group that very next Sunday. The words came from an original participant:

On Sunday forenoon, while the great union jubilee was being held in the St. Paul Auditorium, we gathered with the Fairview congregation in a small building in Minneapolis for services.... It was the First Sunday after Trinity (June 10, 1917), and the gospel text for the day was Luke 16:19–31. We were free, we were unafraid, and we were happy. We felt that the Lord was with us and that his grace was abundant. Our meeting was continued Monday forenoon and afternoon. Both doctrinal and practical questions were discussed. It was a small beginning and without temporal means, but God’s blessings have been showered upon us. One with God is always a majority. May we remain faithful stewards to the end of time! God help us for Jesus’ sake!⁹⁶

The *Luthersk Tidende*, April 1, 1918, contained a simple announcement: “Pastors and member congregations who desire to continue in the old doctrine and practice of the Norwegian Synod will, God willing, hold their annual meeting in the Lime Creek Congregation, Pastor Henry Ingebritson’s charge, June 14 and following days.”

New beginnings at Lime Creek

On June 14, 1918, thirteen pastors and a number of lay people⁹⁷ who could not in good conscience join the merger held the founding

⁹⁴ *Grace for Grace*, 117.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁹⁶ *Lutheran Sentinel*, April 27, 1943. The article was authored by this writer’s grandfather, J. Moldstad, who served as pastor of St. Mark’s in Chicago, Illinois, and was vice president when the new synod became organized. In the 1940s, at the time of the article, he served also as editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel*.

⁹⁷ The convention was attended by eleven pastors of the Norwegian Synod and 185 lay people, men and women. Four pastors from the Missouri Synod also were

convention of a new synod at Lime Creek Lutheran Church in northern Iowa. Due to wartime, the governor of Iowa had outlawed use of foreign languages in public gatherings. So—Norwegian ingenuity—the group held its Norwegian worship service in a cornfield just over the Minnesota state line, a mile or so from the Lime Creek church, north-east of Lake Mills. President Bjug Harstad spoke fitting words to the assembly, based on Jeremiah 6:16, “*This is what the Lord says: ‘Stand at the cross roads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’*” The official name of the newly organized church body was “Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church.” For a long time the synod affectionately was known as “Little Norwegian Synod,” until 1957 when the current name was adopted: Evangelical Lutheran Synod.⁹⁸

From the outset, the ELS fostered close ties with the Missouri Synod.⁹⁹ The old Norwegian Synod had sent its ministerial students to St. Louis for seminary training, and had supplied a professor there until it established its own seminary in 1876. Already in 1919 the ELS applied to the Missouri Synod for permission to set up a professorship at Concordia College in St. Paul, ensuring young men of the synod a higher education as they would head to St. Louis for seminary.¹⁰⁰ Later, a similar arrangement was made with the Wisconsin Synod.¹⁰¹ Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, was

present for this historic event.

⁹⁸ It is interesting to observe that in 1917 at the time of the NLCA merger the Norwegian Synod had 986 congregations with 150,550 souls, served by 351 pastors, but only supported 14 Christian day schools. When the ELS came about in 1918, the desire for maintaining parochial schools was apparent, in so far as three out of the fourteen churches with schools came with the new little synod.

⁹⁹ Justin Petersen in 1938 delivered an address to the ELS, “In Commemoration of the Saxon Immigration.” He included these remarks: “How great indeed is our debt to the Missouri brethren, not only with respect to the enlightenment and strengthening given us in the aforementioned doctrines [election, conversion, etc.], but also in other matters both of doctrine and practice, e.g., the proper distinction between Law and Gospel (with special reference to Walther’s classic book), separation between church and state, correct principles of church government, ... the importance and blessing of parochial schools.... How great is our accumulated debt, our debt as pastors, teachers, and lay-people, our debt as congregations, and as a synod to our dear brethren of the Missouri Synod!” (ELS *Synod Report*, 1938: 55).

¹⁰⁰ In 1946 the ELS opened its Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota, on the same campus as its Bethany Lutheran College. Today the seminary has its own facility on the campus, dedicated in 1996.

¹⁰¹ When the Synodical Conference dissolved (1963, ELS & WELS pulled out; 1967, the official dissolution, when the Slovak Synod became a district of the LCMS), the ELS and WELS looked for a way to strengthen ties with each other and to “give

used for the training of ELS Christian day school teachers.¹⁰² The ELS kept in contact with the Synodical Conference, even though the Norwegian Synod—as mentioned—pulled out of the SC in 1883. The reorganized synod rejoined the Synodical Conference officially in 1920. Around this time, Sigurd Ylvisaker,¹⁰³ who recently had resigned as a professor at Luther College, withdrew from the NLCA. He was called to fill the position of professorship at Concordia on behalf of the “ELS” at the 1920 convention in Minneapolis. After Bethany College was assumed under synod control in 1927, Ylvisaker became the first full-time¹⁰⁴ president of the school. At its third annual convention the ELS approved cooperation with Missouri on the foreign mission field. This meant the synod elected a member to serve on the Board for Foreign Missions of the Missouri Synod.

Why Opgjør stands as a cracked monument for compromise

Think of a tall bronze statue glistening so brightly in the sunlight that it hides fissures eroding its base. The Madison Settlement of 1912 is a stark example of how doctrinal compromise comes with the shiny appeal of promise but dulls and erodes even the best of consciences once centered in the Word.

How could many who were involved in the sizable minority, wanting nothing to do with any Schmidtianer-view of predestination, yield only a few decades later? Two points should be made: 1) H.G. Stub, himself a chameleon on the issue (in 1880–1890 he spoke strongly vs. the Schmidt position) played a huge role. If anyone could have called a halt to the compromise and union, it was he. Once he became president in 1910, his penchant for amalgamation grew and would result in himself presiding over it all, from 1917–1925. By the time of 1913, Stub forcefully appealed to the Norwegian Synod to assent to the majority

outward expression to the unity of spirit” (ELS *Synod Report* 1965: 45). This led to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum in 1967. This WELS/ELS forum was instrumental in forming the international confessing fellowship of Lutheran bodies known as the CELC (Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference) in 1993.

¹⁰² In the year 2003 the Elementary Education degree was approved as a major at Bethany Lutheran College.

¹⁰³ His father, Johannes Ylvisaker, author of *The Gospels*, died in the year of the merger: October 10, 1917. Johannes was one of the leaders who in 1887 helped form Our Savior Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin (today, ELS). That same year in nearby Stoughton, Wisconsin, the large split occurred in the Norwegian Synod which at one time had over 140,000 souls.

¹⁰⁴ Holden Olsen was interim president for two years beforehand, followed by W. Buszin for one more year.

report on the Settlement, saying, “Therefore, I urge you as strongly as possible. . . : do not vote for the minority report, but vote for the majority report! Nothing less is involved than the honor of the Norwegian Synod and the cause of union.”¹⁰⁵ 2) Through a series of meetings once stalwart confessors of the truth, who had commendable intentions entering the sessions, went away weakened in their confessional commitments.

Heading into the 1916 convention, here is how Aaberg describes the scene:

It should be noted that already in its initial request the Minority Committee made a significant concession in the conscience-bound demands presented by the Minority to the 1916 Synod convention. Regarding paragraph four, they then had insisted on the omission of the words “acceptance or” so that “The Settlement”¹⁰⁶ would speak only of man’s sense of responsibility in relation to the rejection of grace. In its communication to the Joint Committee the Minority Committee asked instead for the substitution of the word “duty” for “responsibility” as well as for other changes, so that “The Settlement” would read: “. . . or on the other hand weaken man’s feeling of duty over against the acceptance of grace or of guilt for the rejection of grace” (Thoen, p. 276). The synergism of paragraph four, however, did not lie in either “duty” or “responsibility” but in attributing to natural man, dead in trespasses and sin, a *sense* or *feeling* (*følelse*) of duty or responsibility in regard to the acceptance of grace.¹⁰⁷

Confessional Lutherans still need warning

The ELS in 1936 approved for publication a useful document known as “Triple-U” (Unity, Union, Unionism).¹⁰⁸ The series of six theses first appeared in 1935. The Triple-U sets a cautious path for official inter-church doctrinal discussions. Later that same year, essays by various pastors covered aspects of the theses. From those essays a revision was produced that went before the synod’s 1936 General Pastoral Conference. There was much concern at the time for the way Missouri was holding meetings with the ULCA and the ALC as these

¹⁰⁵ E. Clifford Nelson, *The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian-Americans*, vol. II (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1960), 195. Stub said “union.” We would call it “unionism.”

¹⁰⁶ See **Appendix D** for the full and final edition of “The Madison Agreement.”

¹⁰⁷ Aaberg, *A City Set on A Hill*, 63–64.

¹⁰⁸ See **Appendix E** for the six theses.

bodies desired closer relations. History had proven to the ELS a need for tightened parameters on inter-church dialogue. “That the members of the synod were quite wary of such committee negotiations is understandable in the light of the negotiations that resulted in the merger in 1917.”¹⁰⁹

By the way, the Synodical Conference officially approved the six theses at its 1938 sessions in Watertown, WI. Another printing of Triple-U came in 1967. For our purposes here, it is especially interesting to note that Milton Otto, then chair of the ELS Doctrine Committee, wrote in a brief preface for the reprint:

During the years since 1938 a number of events have taken place in the Lutheran Church to which the contents of this pamphlet are very apropos. It was just because such developments were foreseen, if men would not heed the admonitions of Scripture, that this pamphlet was issued in the first place. It is being reprinted, with just a few minor editorial changes which in no way affect the theses or the argumentation in support of them, as a demonstration of what happens when Scripture is set aside.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ J.H. Larson and J.B. Madson, *Built on the Rock* (Mankato, MN: ELS, 1992), 85. It could be noted that, while the ELS rejoined the Synodical Conference in 1920, it did not—because of previous experience—care to be involved with the so called “Intersynodical Movement,” i.e., the Chicago Theses of 1925. The Chicago Theses, which certain voices in the SC regarded as being doctrinally sound on predestination, were accepted by representatives from Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo. Yet, Ohio, et. al. were going into fellowship arrangements with the Norwegian Lutherans who had accepted the “Madison Settlement.” This shows how the wariness of the ELS toward official inter-synodical talks was not without warrant.

Brenner raises a strange twist, however: “Ironically it was also reported that the Norwegian Synod of the American Ev. Lutheran Church, which had broken with the merged Norwegian Church [sic] because the merger had been based on doctrinal compromise, was now requesting permission to send its theological candidates to Missouri’s seminary in St. Louis. The Norwegians would supply a professor of their own for the St. Louis institution” (J. Brenner’s dissertation, 201).

¹¹⁰ The ELS periodical *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* in its June/September 2003 issue contains the reprint. The entire statement also can be found on the ELS webpage <<http://www.evangelicallutheransynod.org/what-we-believe/doctrinal-statements/unity-union-and-unionism/>>.

Election Legacy: Lesson 4—Evidence of spirit unity needed for formal talks

Synodical/denominational official instruments (doctrinal statements, convention resolutions, commission reports,¹¹¹ presidential releases, church periodicals, etc.) need to be scrutinized when churches are entering into meaningful *formal talks toward fellowship*. “Triple U,” Thesis IV, speaks to this: “We hold that inter-synodical committees are useful in promoting Christian fellowship only when the various groups or synods have, through their public ministry of the Word, given each other evidence of an existing unity in spirit, and it remains merely to establish the fact of such unity and to arrange for some public recognition and confession of that fact; or where it is clear that those in error sincerely desire to know ‘the way of God more perfectly’ (Acts 18:26).” Whether the compromise of 1913–1917, the dangers of the LCMS–ALC talks in the 1930s, or the Synodical Conference fellowship issues of the 1950s and 60s, the voice of compromise has pressed to be heard. If initial joint committees give an itching ear to doctrinal compromise, one can expect in a similar way the entire theological ear of a denomination progressively turning deaf to the Word of God. Paul did *not* say in his letter to the Ephesians merely, “Make every effort toward unity,” but he stated, “Make every effort to keep **the unity of the Spirit**¹¹² in the bond of peace” (4:3).

In light of the above, something should be said for holding *informal* discussions and free conferences, such as here in Tacoma. When there are indications of confessional integrity, as we see with these three former SC bodies, it is beneficial for synodical leaders to gather and talk in order to dispel caricatures, to better understand one another in the struggles each church encounters, to stay abreast of current trends and challenges, and to determine if/when *formal* discussions (involving doctrinal commissions, use of documents—existing and new) should occur. We live in extremely secular times where scant attention is given to the Word of God, and where conversations on nuanced points of doctrine appear quite anachronistic. We owe it to our Lord, to the good of the Kingdom at large,¹¹³ and to confessional Lutheranism to make

¹¹¹ This writer more recently has learned that not all CTCR documents carry the weight of official doctrinal statements for the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

¹¹² This is not a “community spirit” that easily yields false concord. This is a unity (doctrine and life) *in* and *of* the Holy Spirit (τοῦ πνεύματος). See R.C.H. Lenski’s commentary on Ephesians, 510.

¹¹³ A carefully defined and practiced “cooperation in externals” permits—as WELS Pres. Schroeder stated in his 2011 Emmaus lecture—“outward cooperation

efforts to speak at least *unofficially* with each other, and to encourage toward reaffirming, embracing, and practicing the truth established in Holy Writ and as expounded accurately in the Book of Concord.

The ELS, when suspending fellowship with Missouri in 1955 (over the doctrine and practice of church fellowship), alluded in its carefully-worded resolution to a sincere desire to seek out those who demonstrate interest in the brand of Lutheranism characteristic of the old Synodical Conference. While it was evident the Synodical Conference needed to desist—as it ultimately did in 1967¹¹⁴—the synod pledged to work toward harmony among those searching to be truly confessional.

It is our firm conviction that we and those who stand with us represent the Scriptural principles and spirit of the Synodical Conference, and that it is the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod which has departed from them. Therefore we wish it to be clearly understood that we have no desire to suspend fraternal relations with those who agree with us in our stand and who testify with us against these present errors and unionistic practices. On the contrary, we wish to continue fraternal relations with them and to labor for realignment of Lutherans faithful to the Lutheran Confessions on more realistic lines than those which prevail under the present chaotic conditions in the Synodical Conference.¹¹⁵

Between the time of the 1930s and the dissolution of the SC, the Missouri Synod showed itself to be more and more open to official dialogue with those who had not agreed with the scriptural position on

among Christians in activities that are truly external to the mission of the church, the use of the Means of Grace, and the proclamation of the Gospel.... [J]oint activity among churches that do not share a common confession is not *ipso facto* a violation of the biblical principles of fellowship” (39). In fact, the litmus test for true “cooperation in externals” is whether or not such joint activities/work under discussion can truly be carried on with all manner of churches and religious or civic organizations. We think of the recent case where religious organizations of various stripes joined forces to oppose the Health and Human Services ruling as an infringement on religious freedom (the HHS has demanded religious institutions offer abortifacient health care coverage). LCMS Pres. Harrison’s testimony before a congressional committee in February of 2012 was commendable. We also could mention that the controversial—and eventually overturned—Bennett Law of 1889, which required use of English in all public and private schools in Wisconsin, serves as another suitable instance where diverse religious groups combined efforts to counteract governmental intrusion on religious freedom.

¹¹⁴ By 1963 both ELS and WELS were gone from the SC. The Slovak Synod in 1967 became a district of the LCMS.

¹¹⁵ *ELS Synod Report, 1955*, 41–46.

election. It was as if the election issue that had dominated so much of the theological time clock for the SC suddenly became a non-issue for Missouri. “The issue in the doctrine of election was not that Missouri had adopted election *intuitu fidei* but that the Missouri Synod was no longer concerned that such teaching must be clearly excluded by any confessional statement claiming to resolve past differences.”¹¹⁶

The *1928 Beretning* (report) for the ELS contains a series of papers prepared for that year’s convention. The briefs were intended to show how the synod was set on following in the steps of the pious fathers of the Norwegian Synod. Under a typically prolonged heading, “The Practical Problems Which Confront Us As the Logical Successors to the Old Norwegian Synod,” it is interesting to note the four topics covered by the assigned writers: 1. To stand firmly on the true Lutheran doctrine of the authority of Scripture. 2. To emphasize continually the fundamental Christian doctrine of justification by faith in opposition to all synergistic doctrines, which are sweeping over the church today. 3. To bear clear testimony against all alliances with the world and with the erring churches, which threaten to rob us of the saving truth. 4. To endeavor, as much as lies in us, to preserve the faith of our fathers to posterity by establishing and maintaining Christian schools.¹¹⁷

How the election controversy has shaped the future

The 1880s election/conversion controversy and its early 1900s reappearance were not about polity, personalities, or traditions. No one denies strong feelings between Schmidt and Walther¹¹⁸ played a role. No one denies Stub’s presidential succession of the aging Koren had some influence on the final outcome for the Norwegian Synod. But the crux of the matter was this: Is **grace** going to be **grace** in every sense of the term?

¹¹⁶ Brenner’s dissertation, 231.

¹¹⁷ *Beretning* of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (Mankato, MN: Bethany Lutheran College, 1928), 56.

¹¹⁸ J. Brenner, “Walther and the Election Controversy,” *WLQ*, Spring 2012: 119: “Although some have been critical of Walther for the way the controversy was carried out, in many ways he showed himself to be a model Christian theologian.... He was willing to depart from expressions long used by Lutheran theologians when he recognized that those expressions were open to misunderstanding at best and disguised false doctrine at worst. Yet he also showed the kind of Christian humility and faithfulness God expects of every Lutheran pastor and theologian when he publicly corrected statements of his own when others pointed out that those statements also were open to misunderstanding.”

“God’s undeserved love for sinners freely given” stands immovably in Scripture. This stands, no matter if discussed in connection with the means God uses to bring people to faith, or the Holy Spirit’s working, or objective justification, or the election to salvation in the mind of God from eternity. It is purely **grace before time, grace in time and grace for all time**, for the merits of Christ alone is the determinant in man’s salvation from beginning to end. We agree with Koren’s assessment: “According to Scripture it belongs to the essence of grace to be free; for if grace is not free, i.e., undeserved by any kind of merit whatsoever in the one who is favored with it, then ‘grace is no more grace’ (Rom. 11:6), and a man cannot trust in the grace of God alone, Rom. 3:23–24, 27–28; Eph. 2:8–10.”¹¹⁹

There is another related concern: Throughout the election debates—whether earlier or later era—a diminishing of **God’s glory** was at stake. Koren also addressed this:

Every correct teaching and presentation of the eternal and saving election of God’s elect children must “give to God his own glory entirely and fully, that in Christ he saves us out of pure mercy, without any merits or good works of ours, according to the purpose of his will, as it is written, Eph. 1:5: “Having predestinated us unto the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl. XI, 68). Every doctrine according to which our election and our salvation in any part and in any manner are ascribed to any other source than solely and alone exclusively God himself, robs God of his honor and depreciates the merit of our Savior.¹²⁰

The teaching of God’s **grace** and the deference to his **glory** are preserved for each of us today and for succeeding generations¹²¹ by adherence to his Word, not merely with lips of praise but with action. Who, back in 1880, could have imagined any Norwegian Synod leader capitulating one day to a group thirty years later that would place into a founding document for its organization’s premiere the synergistic phrase

¹¹⁹ U.V. Koren’s *An Accounting*, paragraph #21.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, paragraph #23.

¹²¹ “Earthly inheritances can be handed down from generation to generation more or less automatically, but not so the *great* heritage. Truth, as a body of doctrine, can indeed be set before a people by the preceding generation, but each succeeding generation must, through the Holy Spirit, make this truth its own as part of its very faith and life before it can actually be said to possess it.” T. Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill*, 265.

that **natural man has a sense or feeling of responsibility regarding the acceptance of grace**.¹²² Who in the early 1900s would have imagined a series of alliances resulting finally in a mega body (1988) that today has resolved to ordain homosexuals? There is, of course, a host of doctrinal slippages in the interval where one more domino toppled the next. Choose the illustration you want: a little leaven...sheep's clothing...a drop of poison in the well...a little crack in the egg...dominos tumbling; these all picture the downward trajectory once a church body acquiesces to false doctrine, regardless of the appeal or how slight the error. Wherever and whenever God's Word is not followed, consequences occur in the course of time—and they are never pretty!

A startling account in the Old Testament involves a “man of God” from Judah as related in 1 Kings 13. During the time when Jeroboam was king in Israel, a “man of God” prophesied against the idolatrous altar at Bethel. He had been ordered by the Lord to do so. Jeroboam tried to entice the man to change his message, urging him to come to his home for something to eat. The man refused. He had been commanded by the Lord on exactly what to say. He had been told not to eat or drink anything. Then, we are told, an old prophet living at Bethel heard what had occurred. He sent his sons to go after the man of God, and this prophet asked the man to come home with him and eat. When the man of God was reluctant, knowing what the Lord had said about his not eating, the old prophet explained he too had received a message from God. The message was: the man should now go to the prophet's home and eat. (We are told the old prophet was lying.) So the man of God went with him and ate. Then God spoke to the old prophet and let him know he was to inform the “man of God” that he had defied the word of the Lord and therefore would die. This happened shortly. A lion met

¹²² The ELS *Synod Report* of 1948 contains an interesting article by then-ELS pastor, J.A.O. Preus. Preus' article is entitled “What Stands Between?” He discusses point-by-point current (1946 ff.) errors in the ELC, the name adopted by the NLCA two years before Preus wrote the article. J.A.O. noted that, from his experience in the ELC, not only was the “intuitu fidei” view of election being taught at the ELC's seminary but, he said, “it is safe to say that fully 75% of the clergy of that body adhere to this view” (SR, 41). The same ELS convention report includes this note from Pres. A.M. Harstad on J.A.O. Preus: “Another new worker has been added in our midst in the person of Prof. J.A.O. Preus, Bethany College, Mankato, Minn. After he had resigned for conscience' reasons from the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Norwegian) and had signified his willingness to work in our midst, a colloquium was held with Prof. Preus by several members of the Board of Regents and the President of Bethany College. Having been found sound in doctrine, he was called to a professorship at Bethany College, which call he accepted. He was installed in office at the opening of the college for the fall term in 1947” (SR, 11).

him on the road and killed him. All of this did not change the message God had spoken against Bethel. The destruction occurred just as the Lord had said through the “man of God.” What a testimony this was for Judah and for people of all ages! God wants his Word followed exactly as he has stated. His doctrine is true, even when a sinner who fights with his own temptations conveys it.


The church fellowship doctrine and practice as presented in Scripture (Ephesians 4:3; Romans 16:17, etc.) is essential to any meaningful inter-church relations. Mutual commitment to the marks of the church—Word and Sacraments (AC VII, 2 and FC SD X, 31¹²³)—must be given high priority and acceptance as both separatism and unionism are rejected. “In order for a church body to remain confessional, and thus preserve its doctrinal heritage, it is important that it have a firm position on fellowship. A strong position on Scripture and church fellowship go hand in hand; they are interlocking.”¹²⁴

If unity is true, it will be blessed. More importantly, if God’s Word stands, then grace stands. If grace is true grace, it enables us to stand in the day of judgment before God’s throne of justice. For the grace we have received—*before* time and *in* time—is the grace of our dear Savior that can never fail to have us sinners prevail!

“I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10).

¹²³ Referencing these two familiar sections, Franz Pieper wrote, “Here our Church declares that by ‘correct unity’ it understands agreement ‘in the doctrine and all articles of the same,’ not merely in some of the same. At the conclusion of Article XI of the Formula of Concord, our Church asserts that it has a true desire and love for unity and strives for it, but it must be [real] unity: ‘We desire such harmony as will not violate God’s honor, that will not detract anything from the divine truth of the holy Gospel, that *will not give place to the smallest error*’ (FC SD XI:96). . . . Though the Lutheran Church grants that also among the heterodox there are still true Christians to be found, nevertheless it has always refused to practice churchly fellowship with those who are heterodox [Irrgläubigen], in order not to offer support for a false understanding of churchly unity, that is, the view that agreement in *all* parts [of Christian doctrine] was not necessary, or, in other words, as though it were not necessary to accept the entire Word of God” (“On Unity in the Faith,” by F. Pieper in 1888, tr. Matthew Harrison, *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, Lutheran Legacy: 2009, 574).

¹²⁴ W. Petersen, “Our Great Heritage,” *ELS Synod Report* 1993, 102.

God's Word is our great heritage
 And shall be ours for ever;
 To spread its light from age to age
 Shall be our chief endeavor;
 Through life it guides our way,
 In death it is our stay;
 Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
 We keep its teachings pure,
 Throughout all generations.¹²⁵ (ELH #583) 

Appendix A

We include here an excellent devotion by Johann Gerhard (1852–1637). The devotion appears in Gerhard's *Manual of Comfort* (1611), where the author typically begins each of his meditations with a statement by the afflicted (Law) followed by a statement from the comforter (Gospel). The English translation here is by John M. Drickamer, according to the German edition by Carl J. Boettcher.

Am I Written in the Book of Life?

The afflicted person says: Only they persevere who are written in the book of life. How can I know that I am written in it?

The comforter says: The book of life is Christ. It is called “the book of the Lamb” (Rev. 13:8; 21:27). Being written into this book is nothing other than the election of the believers to everlasting life, which takes place in Christ. For it is said of the believers that they have been chosen in Christ before the

¹²⁵ Wikipedia contains this interesting remark: “God’s Word Is Our Great Heritage was written in 1817 by Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, a Danish Lutheran Pastor. Grundtvig wrote the hymn as the 5th verse to Martin Luther’s Ein feste Burg [1]. The hymn was translated into English by Ole Gulbrand Belsheim in 1909. In 1916, Friedrich Otto Reuter, then a professor at Dr. Martin Luther College, put the hymn to a tune of his creation. Many hymnals use this arrangement, including *The Lutheran Hymnal*, *Lutheran Service Book* (LCMS) and *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (WELS), though the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (ELS) has retained the original melody to the hymn. The hymn is also the school hymn of Michigan Lutheran Seminary.”

foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4) and that their names were written in the book of life from the beginning of the world (Rev. 17:8).

As with election so with being written in the book of life; one may not judge in advance but only afterwards. As many as have been ordained to life, hear the Word of salvation, believe in Christ, show the fruit of the Spirit, and persevere in the faith. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness [of God] in himself" (1 John 5:10). The Holy Spirit bears witness in the hearts of believers that they are God's children (Romans 8:16) and are written in the book of life. Those whom God has chosen from eternity, whose names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20), he calls through the Word and justifies through faith in Christ (Rom. 8:29–30). Such faith is shown in calling on God, being patient under the cross, and desiring sanctification.

A wholesome consideration of election and the book of life must begin with the wounds of the Crucified. Whoever believes in him and perseveres in faith has been justified and is written in the book of the living (Rom. 10:9). Or have you not been accepted into God's grace through baptism? Have you not been cleansed from sins by the blood of Christ? Have you not been renewed by the Holy Spirit? Those are clear signs that you have been written in the book of life. Believers "are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26–27).

God has written not some tablets of fate but rather a book of life. He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Seek your election and your writing in the book of life in Christ alone. Amen.

Appendix B

In the District Court of Iowa, In and for Worth County.

April Term, 1919.

Case No. 3027

The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Association in Worth and Winnebago Counties, Iowa, and Southern Part of Freeborn County, Minnesota, Silver Lake N.E.L. Congregation, Concordia N.E.L. Congregation, Ole T. Haugo, Ole E. Ellingson and Ole Gunderson, Trustees of Silver Lake N.E.L. Congregation and Herman Storre and Gerhard C. Dahl, Trustees of Concordia N.E.L. Congregation.,

Plaintiffs.
 v.
 A.J. Torgerson, et. Al.,
 Defendants.

Consolidated With
 Case No. 3048

Same plaintiffs v. A.J. Torgerson, Defendant.
 In Equity.

Before Hon. C.H. Kelley, Judge.

Appearances for plaintiffs... T.A. Kingland and
 Senneff, Bliss, Witwer & Senneff.

Appearances for defendants... R.N. Nelson,
 M.H. Kepler,
 D.W. Telford and
 F.A. Ontjes.

Cause reported by George A. Blake,
 Charles City, Iowa.

[NOTE: Here only a portion of the testimony follows...]

John A. Moldstad,
 a witness produced, being first duly sworn and examined on behalf of the
 defendants, testified as follows in direct examination by Mr. Kepler:

Q (2:12) Your name?

A John A. Moldstad, M-o-l-d-s-t-a-d.

Q And how old are you?

A Forty five years old.

Q And what is your business or profession?

A I am a Lutheran minister.

Q And how long have you been such minister?

A Thirteen years.

Q To what church do you belong?

A Well I have always belonged to the Norwegian Synod.

Q And where did you get your education?

A I graduated from Luther College 25 years ago and from the University
 of Wisconsin and from Concordia Seminary at St. Louis.

Q And how many years did you spend at Luther College?

A I was there for six years.

Q That is at Decorah Iowa?

A That is at Decorah Iowa.

Q And how long did you spend at the University of Wisconsin?

A Two years.

Q And what branches were you taking there, what studies?

A Why United States history and political economy and some other branches.

Q And then what did you study at Concordia Seminary?

A Theology.

Q And how long were you there?

A Three years.

Q Three years. And when did you graduate from Concordia Seminary?

A 1906. I had been teaching and had been in business in the mean time. I used to teach up here at Albert Lea Minnesota at the academy 22 years ago.

Q And are you versed in the doctrine of the old Synod Church?

A Yes I think I know it quite well.

Q And do you... Are you familiar with the doctrine of the United Church before this new church was formed?

A Yes.

Q In your opinion was there any difference in the doctrine of those churches?

A I think there was.

Q Yes. And what was that difference?

MR. SENNEFF: Object to that as wholly immaterial as to what differences existed between them.

BY THE COURT: Well go ahead, he may answer.

A Well the main points at issue between us as has been brought out this morning was on the subject of election and the subject of conversion.

Q And are you familiar with the opgjor?

A Yes I happen to be.

Q Do you understand that was the basis of union between the three churches?

A Yes the opgjor is declared so in I think this pamphlet that was gotten out for the annual meeting or for the union meeting, the three annual meetings in 1917; it has been placed here; I noticed it here today and it is declared specially in the so called perquisites and articles of union which is also referred to in the question by counsel a little while ago, —the opgjor is absolutely referred to as one of the bases of the foundation for this new church body. The so called common reports and opgjor, which are an expression of the common understanding of the questions which have previously been in controversy between the various church bodies, and this opgjor as well as the so called common reports they make or constitute the perquisites for the union of these three bodies and are to be kept as such. That is a definite paragraph. It is paragraph 2 in the so called articles of union. It is so declared. And this opgjor was adopted at Madison Wisconsin in February 1912, I believe the final agreement was reached on the 22nd of February, It was published about a month later. Of course some of us had typewritten copies of that before that but before its publication it was preceded by a letter from Dr. Stub of our church in our church paper as well as by a letter from President Dahl in the church papers

of the United Church. Of course these letters paved the way for the coming of the *opgjø*r and prepared the people for the acceptance of it. I believe, to be absolutely exact, that the letter from President Dahl of the United Church was printed in the same number of their official organ as the *opgjø*r. So that it was published and it was discussed at several conferences that spring. We discussed it in Chicago and I know it was discussed at Minneapolis where Dr. Stub himself declared that it was a psychological impossibility to accept the first paragraph as it here stood. That is to accept both the first form of the doctrine and the second form of the doctrine of election. He declared that to be a psychological impossibility and the conference unanimously passed a motion asking Dr. Stub, —that is appointing him and asking him to have this first paragraph stricken out but he found that to be impossible.

MR. SENNEFF: Now just a moment; we move to strike the answer of the witness as to what Dr. Stub said as hearsay.

A Well it is a matter of record.

MR. SENNEFF: Just a moment; it is hearsay and it does not appear that the witness was present and if a matter of record it is secondary.

BY THE COURT: Ruling reserved.

Q Were you present?

A I was not at Minneapolis because the Minneapolis conference and the Chicago conference were both held at the same time. I got a telegram from the president of the Minneapolis conference telling me of this motion.

Q Did you see a published report of Dr. Stub's speech?

A Well I presume I did. It was... It has been written up a great deal; it has been mentioned often and I... It seems to me if I remember correctly that at Iola in June 1912 he also mentioned, —made use of this same sentence that it was a psychological impossibility to accept these two forms of doctrine.

Q Were you there?

A I was at Iola yes sir. I would not declare positively; I cannot quote his exact words there because of course there he had changed his opinion; he was advocating the acceptance of the *opgjø*r there. But now do you wish me to speak in general on the subject of these two forms of doctrine?

Q Yes. I want to ask you, —we'll ask you whether the first form of doctrine and the second form of doctrine as referred to in section one of this agreement are opposed or contrary or whether they can stand together?

MR. SENNEFF: Object to that as calling for witness' conclusion or opinion.

BY THE COURT: Well he can state his views in the matter.

A Well in my conviction these two doctrines... In my opinion they are not just sort of two forms of the same doctrine as has been claimed sometimes but they are two entirely different doctrines. It is not a very difficult matter to see that. The definition in paragraph three here is really very clear; there is really a double definition you might say of each one of them in paragraph three of *opgjø*r. In the first place they speak of these two forms of doctrine but now

with the doctrine of election at any rate it is not such that you can have the form that will stand alone without the doctrine and that the doctrine will stand alone without the form. I am convinced in my conscience and convicted by the Bible that here is at least one doctrine where form and doctrine absolutely cover one another and the moment you change the form you immediately also change the doctrine. Here are two distinct doctrines. One doctrine, –both refer to a doctrine the doctrine of election or refer to a decree. The doctrine of election is a decree just the same as a decree of court. It is a decree that has been decided by the Triune God in eternity. Now then the question is what was this decree. The first form, –the so called first form of the doctrine, which is the official Lutheran Church doctrine and always has been ever since 1580 and there is no other official Lutheran doctrine, –the other is the doctrine of private theologians, private teachers in the church. Now this official Lutheran doctrine which is put into the Formula of Concord or into the Book of Concord when that was completed in the year 1580, –this form of the doctrine embraces as paragraph three here very properly says the whole way of salvation, God's entire method of saving a sinner, from the calling to the glorification. You can divide that up into as many steps as you want to. Of course the easiest for the common man is to follow the three articles of Luther's little catechism. There in the third article of Luther's little catechism he says, "The Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me." And of course down at the bottom finally is the glorification and then in the middle there is a little two line paragraph which says that, "In this Christian Church God daily and regularly forgives me and all believers in Christ." Now you have these various points. That is the way of salvation according to the Bible and according to the Lutheran doctrine. Now the Formula of Concord and the official doctrine of the Lutheran Church is that God from eternity decided, decreed according to His own purpose and grace through Christ Jesus, –decided to just these things for each individual Christian that is finally saved. That is the first form of doctrine and that is the definition that is set forth here in paragraph three and when it says here that, "Some, with the Formula of Concord, make the doctrine of election to comprise the entire salvation of the elect from the calling to the glorification and teach the election to salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth," that is the first form of doctrine. Now of course that has been the teaching of the Lutheran Church since 1580. There have been men who have held other views of course. You cannot in a big church body like that make every one hold the whole doctrine every time. And this has been the doctrine of the Norwegian Synod all this time also in spite of the fact that there may have been here and there, especially some of the men who have been educated in Norway and most particularly in later years, –there were a few exceptions among the earlier ones too, –who have held the so called second doctrine, the second form of doctrine or the second doctrine. I think this word "form" is very misleading and I therefore dislike using it. Now what is the second form or the second doctrine of election? This doctrine was

formulated, –not to say invented, –by certain theologians in the Seventeenth Century. I do not know whether it is possible for anybody to exactly fix the date that this was first promulgated but even the theologians of the Seventeenth Century as far as I know did not all formulate it in the same way; they did not all express this second form of the doctrine in exactly the same words. There was a little variation there. It was not that they, –they all said as I read it... Well I believe they all said that they also accepted the Formula of Concord but for some reason or another they thought that this doctrine was a little handier to use, especially in combating the Calvinists and so they formulated this doctrine which of course really is a doctrine, a philosophical system or doctrine, that they made you might say out of their own heads. There is no scriptural form that I have ever been able to find at any rate, and I have the declaration of such learned men as Dr. Stub and others on election that they cannot find any scriptural passages, which teaches or upholds or defends the second form of election. It has been made clear here this morning so that I am not going to go into all the scriptural texts and everything that was mentioned here today but the second doctrine of election is also a doctrine, it is the doctrine of glorification, and the third paragraph gives a very good double characterization of it. In the first place it says, “while others, like Pontoppidan, in consonance...” that means together with, –“with John Gerhard, Scriver and other acknowledged doctrinal fathers, define election specifically as the decree of final glorification, with the Spirit’s work of faith and perseverance as its necessary postulate...” If I translated this I would say prerequisite or antecedent as Rev. Harstad did this morning. That is the first definition given here. Now I think they do Gerhard and Scriver and even Pontoppidan an injustice by saying that these men demand all this as a prerequisite; at least I have not been able to find in their writings those things; there might be of course; take a man like John Gerhard he has written a tremendous lot and when you write a great deal you may make a slip sometimes and he may have said something that somewhere can be construed in this way. But if you take John Gerhard as he has usually been used in the Norwegian Synod why I don’t think you can find anything like this stated being a prerequisite. Then that continues this definition of the second doctrine of election and they say, “and teach that God has ordained to eternal life all those whom from eternity He foresaw would accept the proffered grace, believe in Christ and remain steadfast unto the end;”. That is question 548 of Pontoppidan. That is the answer to question 548 of the Pontoppidan translation. Now you notice that Pontoppidan does not say anything about a prerequisite. Now I cannot go as far as Brother Harstad did. I cannot accept this answer to Pontoppidan. Well he didn’t accept it either but I cannot accept that as a definition of election. He asks the question, “What is election?” and then he gives this answer which does not fit his question and my chief reason for not accepting that is because unless a person has been trained to it I do not believe that it is possible for a person to use this second doctrine even in this mild form that it is set forth by Pontoppidan, –to use it without getting into a snare,

without getting into trouble. It has been my experience, –I have tested this out on a good many church people during these last years, –I have always found when I asked them, “Now read that and then tell me what it means,” and they will tell you that it means that God ordained to eternal life all those whom he from eternity foresaw would accept and so forth. That is He would, –He had ordained that, He had predestinated that, elected them because He saw or He foresaw these things. That is the danger. His foreseeing is made a cause of his election and that is all wrong. That is contrary to Scripture. There is the danger. There is more danger for the common church member in this passage than there could be if it was put in the old straight forward form, –that is by the dogmaticians. There is a danger. There is a practical danger for the church man. Now then it is just the same as if you say, “This is a hand; the hand consists of the palm and the thumb and four fingers.” And you say, “No, that is not a hand; the hand is the palm and the thumb.” Well you will see those are two entirely different definitions of a hand. To me this is just the way these two different doctrines of election look. The one is the whole hand; that is the first form; that is the official Lutheran teaching. The other is just the thumb and the palm of the hand; that is the second form or second doctrine or the teaching of a certain few teachers within the Lutheran church. Now I hope I have made this distinction between these two doctrines clear. That is the difference between these two doctrines that were in the church. Now this difference of course makes it psychologically impossible for anybody to know what the first paragraph of the Madison Opgjor says because you will notice it says there, “The Synod and the United Church committees on union acknowledge unanimously and without reservation the doctrine of predestination which is stated in the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord...” Now then you have to supply, “And the doctrine of predestination which is stated” “–in Pontoppidan’s Explanation, Question 548.” Now then you cannot accept or acknowledge or recognize both of these entirely different doctrines of election and recognize them without reservation and that is what we have never done in the Norwegian Synod, never; we have never recognized it without reservation. That is the point especially here that there is always, –wherever there has been even what you might call a recognition there has always been a reservation made. Now what has been the Synod’s position towards this second form of the doctrine? I said before that is the official doctrine of the Norwegian Synod, –the first form of the doctrine. As long as I have known the Norwegian Synod and I have been interested in this question well I suppose at least 35 possibly 36 years; I was a boy perhaps 9 or 10 years old when this controversy arose in our congregation. I happened to be a member of the first congregation that split or that deposed its pastor so I lived through it and I know what it costs in the matter of fanaticism and in the matter of being pretty short of change because my father was in business in that town and of course nearly the whole opposition to a man quit trading with him so that we were getting along with what we could get along with there for some time just simply because my father lost his business

through this controversy. Besides that we were put out of our church so that we had no place to meet and what was more we started to meet in the school houses and they happened to have the members of the school board and they locked the school houses on us and there was one hall in the town which was used Saturday evenings as a dance hall; we rented that but after we had had it once or maybe twice that was closed because the man who owned the hall belonged to the other side and we couldn't use that and we had to travel five miles out in the country to a school house in order to find a place where we could hold services because in that school house there was another church worshipping and they could not close it on us unless they closed it on everybody. Well probably that hasn't anything to do with this question that I am talking about exactly but it shows the effect it had on the people there, the fanaticism that arose as a result of this. This question was thrown into that congregation; it was unprepared to receive it; they didn't understand it; they didn't know what they were doing at all. One of the leaders of the opposition which deposed that minister told me a few years ago before he died, he was then quite an old man, he said, "We didn't know what we were doing, and if this same question were to arise now it would be lots worse now," he says, "because these young people don't know anything about the question at all and we knew nothing." That is the way he felt about it in his old age, this man who had been almost leading the opposition to Rev. H.A. Preus of the Synod and deposing him. Now the second form of the doctrine had really had no standing and had really been of no importance in the Norwegian Synod up to the controversy started by Dr. F.A. Schmidt; it had really been of no importance. It is true for a while they used that large Pontoppidan. You always have to bear in mind that there are two Pontoppidans; there is a large one which I suppose was authorized for use in Norway once upon a time. Whether it has ever been used very much I am unable to say and I don't think there is anybody that can say it. I doubt that there are any statistics on it. I have heard of one or two congregations over there where it was used but as a matter of fact as far back as when my mother went to school, and she is 76 years old, when she went to school back in Norway...

MR. SENNEFF: Just a moment; it seems to me, your honor, we are making quite a lot of record on hearsay testimony that is not going to help us when we get through.

MR. KEPLER: It is the history of the thing.

MR. SENNEFF: Well but what his mother told him is hearsay and immaterial and a man that died a couple of years ago; it is all immaterial. We object to it and also move to strike from the answer of the witness so far given the relation of what somebody told him about certain things and also object to this proposed answer for the same reason.

BY THE COURT: Ruling reserved; go ahead.

A Well the point that I was just going to make is this, that it is very questionable how generally this large book of Pontoppidan, -how general its

use as a text book for teaching children ever was because as long back as when my mother went to school she used the little epitome; she has it today and I have seen it of course from my childhood on and she never used anything else. And of course here in our country I have heard of one congregation down at Lisbon, Illinois, using the large book but otherwise the book that we always used to instruct the confirmation classes, previous to the time that we got out our own revised version which is still shorter, was the little epitome. Of course there this question 548 does not appear at all; it appears only in the large book. And my point is simply this, that that is practically an unknown subject to the lay people or to most of the lay people at any rate in our Norwegian Synod until it was thrown like a fire brand into our congregations by Dr. Schmidt in the early eighties. He started the controversy by writing in German against the Missouri Synod but then he couldn't get away with that and so he threw the controversy into the Norwegian Synod and right in among the lay people because he started a paper, a Norwegian paper; he was a German but he is very efficient in Norwegian and he began a Norwegian paper and that Norwegian paper was brought around and it had a tremendous circulation. I know we had it in our home and my father, –I remember this very keenly, –my father was inclined to side with Schmidt but finally he says one day he says, "I believe I had better see what the other side says." So he went to his book shelf and got down his Book of Concord which he happened to own and he read the Book of Concord and he said, "No, Schmidt is wrong and Preus is right." And so he quit siding with Schmidt on this. Now that was really the start you might say of this question. That was the start of this question in our synod, this throwing it in as a question at issue. Our minister was deposed on Good Friday and the church closed for Easter Sunday because he would not sign the papers that had been drawn up by Dr. F.A. Schmidt.

Q Well now what...about that controversy how long has that controversy lasted? Now has that controversy ever ceased?

A Of course it kind of died down you know. It started about the year 1880 and lasted until 1888 when I think it was 55 ministers and a great many more congregations seceded from the Norwegian Synod, maybe not all at once but little by little throughout that year, perhaps the next year; they seceded because the Norwegian Synod majority taught the first form of the doctrine and would not subscribe to the second form of the doctrine. Then the controversy had lasted some time and it had been very heated. Of course I was only a school boy then so I was not along in any of these controversies or conferences; I have most of the documents relative to them; I have the documents relative to the conferences and conference reports. It was in 1884 that all those ministers who stood with the Synod drew up and signed a document known as the "Redegjorlse." It was a document setting forth the position of the Norwegian Synod on the subject of election.

MR. NELSON: Was that ever adopted by the Synod?

A I don't think it was ever adopted and made official in that way but it has always been recognized or tacitly recognized or spoken of as the official expression of the Norwegian Synod on the subject of conversion and election. However, the same doctrine was embodied in a series of theses that were submitted in 1910. They were submitted to all the districts of the synod and as far as I know they were unanimously or nearly unanimously accepted at all the district synod meetings in 1910 where the doctrinal position of the Norwegian Synod with respect to the doctrine of election is clearly set forth. And now I said a while ago there might have been some men even from the earliest days who were inclined to hold this second form of doctrine and there may have been a few more in later years. It always was a very small minority after 1887. You see in 1887 the so called Anti-Missourians left us. There were if I am not badly mistaken 55 ministers and then quite a number of congregations. They went out; they seceded from the Norwegian Synod. For a while they stood alone as the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood and then in 1890 they united with the Norwegian Augustana Synod, –not to be confused with the Swedish Augustana Synod, –and the Norwegian-Danish Conference, to form the Lutheran, –the so called United Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. That was formed in 1890. Now of course after this secession there was peace, perhaps too much peace in the Norwegian Synod and the fighting was simply in the papers between the United Church on the one hand and us on the other. The controversy was kept alive in that way. There were some free conferences. There was one up at Willmar but these free conferences led to nothing and then finally I think in 1905 the Hauge Synod issued an invitation to the other two church bodies to elect committees to see if they could not come to an agreement on other doctrines and effect a union. And then that was done and from 1905 to 1910 these committees held meetings as you have already been told this morning. They seemed to come to an agreement on various questions, even on the most difficult and most vital question, namely, that of conversion. Even in 1908 in Chicago there were those who raised an objection and a very serious objection to the theses or sentences on conversion that were, –that had been agreed to because there were no antitheses; that is there were no sentences at the end setting forth the negative side and that was of course a very grave mistake because unless you have those you cannot be sure of an agreement, you cannot be sure that you understand the terms of the same. You are never sure that you agree to the doctrine of conversion without that. And then furthermore the real touch-stone after all of the doctrine of conversion in the Lutheran Church is the doctrine of election or predestination which is the same thing. That is the real touch-stone; that is the thing which finally decides whether you are, –whether you teach right about conversion or not because the second tropus, this second doctrine of election, which was formulated in the Seventeenth Century, that can be used as a cloak for a false doctrine on conversion. While if you have a man agreeing to the true doctrine of conversion and then he teaches right on election if he is an honest man and says what he means

then you have closed the back door on him and you know then that his doctrine on conversion is absolutely the same as yours if you agree finally on the doctrine of election. Now it might be well to ask what practical importance has this doctrine of election anyway. Rev. Harstad this morning briefly alluded to the practical use of the first doctrine of election. It is in the first place a doctrine of great comfort to the Christian; it is unintelligible to a person that is not a Christian; it really hasn't any use or any meaning to a person that is not a Christian but to a person that is a Christian and that needs comfort this doctrine of election is of the greatest comfort to him. And furthermore it is a doctrine which gives him strength for a progress in daily sanctification and daily Christian life. And then of course in theology it has this significance that I just mentioned, that it is the touch-stone, it is that which sort of clinches all our other doctrines really, at least the most important doctrines. But now what is its importance? What is the significance of this second form? What is the danger of the second form to the ordinary church member? I have already spoken of the danger even of Pontoppidan's mild form of the second form of the doctrine. Now what is so confusing, my friends, in this second doctrine is this, that there are certain Scripture truths which are used there but which when combined as they are in Potoppidan's question 548 makes a wrong doctrine. It is true of course that God knows everything and He knows the future as well as the past. It is true certainly that God knew who were going to endure in the faith to the end and who were going to be saved; certainly He knew all those things; there is no question about that. These individual truths here they are true, that He foresaw who would accept and He foresaw who would endure and He foresaw who would be saved. He knew all those things in eternity just as well as He knows it now. But when you put those things together and say that God has ordained has decided has ordained to eternal life all those whom He foresaw, —then the snare comes in for the person that is not on very good guard; there is the snare of being misled. That is one practical importance for the common man. Another practical importance for the common man is this, that it makes a great deal of difference to the common church member to the common man to the ordinary Christian what his pastor's teaching is in this respect on this subject. If the pastor teaches, —accepts all the doctrines on conversion and also accepts the Book of Concord's teaching on election then that man can feel quite safe that his pastor is going to teach right on all these important questions while if his pastor seems to teach right on these other questions and then teaches the wrong doctrine of election then that man had better look out because he can never be sure that his pastor is teaching right. That is a very serious and practical importance in this doctrine as I see it. I would not take any chances on belonging to a congregation of a man who taught the second form of the doctrine. I would have to be eternally on my guard; that is the way I would feel about it. Now that is the practical importance of these things and it has you see a direct and indirect importance. Now the Norwegian Synod's position I would like to make, —the old position, —clear.

The old position is of the great majority and that was quite plain in 1887 at Stoughton, Wisconsin, when the final split came, when the secession came. The majority of the ministers held to the first doctrine of the subject of election. The first doctrine of election the doctrine of election as taught in the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord that is and that was the position also afterwards. In the theses adopted in 1910 only 9 years ago in June the same position was reiterated. Now what was the Synod's position toward the second form of the doctrine? We often casually say that the Synod with limitations with reservations gave a certain recognition to the second form of this doctrine, of this second doctrine; that has often been said. Personally I always feel that that is a very inexact statement. The Synod in its relation to this second tropus this second doctrine of election really always dealt with the man or the individual himself instead of with the doctrine itself. In all these expressions, for instance in the expression or reservation that was made by four of our delegates to the synodical conference in Chicago in 1882 that started by making this reservation and then it was reiterated in the so called "Redegjorlse", an explanation setting forth our teaching that was published in 1884. The Synod always said that while it could not accept as a definition of election this question 548 of Pontoppidan's, —they could not accept that because it was incomplete, —nevertheless they would not break fellowship with this individual man who taught that doctrine provided they taught correctly about sin and grace, —that is about conversion and all the other important doctrines. That has been the position all along. In other words we have sometimes said they would not tolerate the second form of the doctrine or second doctrine. Well I don't think that that is true. I don't think it is true when put abstractly like that. I don't think that we have ever tolerated the abstract expression of the doctrine as expressed in this Seventeenth Century form but we have tolerated the fact that certain men who otherwise taught correctly, —that certain men held this doctrine; that we have tolerated; that we have agreed to and we have recognized them as brethren because we had reason to believe they were Christians and we accepted their profession of faith, they taught correctly about sin about fallen man and about the grace of God and then we tolerated this wrong teaching about the doctrine of election as a weakness of those brethren. That is the way I have always understood it. This question 548 has always been accepted in the sense of these Scripture facts that are set forth there but not as the doctrine of election. I am well aware of the fact that there was once one district which did pass some sort of a resolution which I have not here but it was in the minutes of the meetings, —passed a resolution to the effect that it recognized this answer of Pontoppidan but that was just one district and not the whole Synod. You see in the Synod the rule was that in order to have a resolution be binding on the Synod to make it a Synod resolution it had to be passed by all the districts. That was the former rule. Now I believe, —well at least it was 4 out of 5 but that is unimportant.

Q Well now is there anything further? I think you have covered the ground there. Is there anything further on the matter of conversion?

A Yes.

Q Any further distinction that that you wish to talk about?

A Yes I feel that it is necessary. I have spoken of paragraph one which is a psychological impossibility. We can accept the first part of it but not the last part because that is psychologically impossible. In paragraph three there seem to be some other things to object to besides just that reference to the Eleventh Article of the Book of Concord. There are some things that I think are untrue but the main part of paragraph three is after all the definition of the two doctrines of election and I don't personally, –I don't agree to the last part there but that is not, –that is to all of what is in the last part. But in question... That is in paragraph four of this Madison Opgjor it starts out fine, starts out very nicely as far as I can see. Of course I am not a great theologian or a great scholar, just a common ordinary Chicago preacher, but the first part looks good to me and if they had only stopped where they should have stopped why we would not have been able to find any fault with it. But in the last four lines there... Now personally I would be by nature a unionist. I like to be a great friend with everybody a hail fellow well met and all that and it would personally to me have been a very great triumph if I could for my conscience have gone into this new church body. It really would have been a very great triumph and it was a terrible shock to me when I first heard the opgjor read. I did not see it first, I heard it read; it was just like getting a bucket of cold ice water down your back; that is the way I felt because I immediately foresaw what was going to happen. I knew that it would be passed through and I told Dr. Stub in 1919....

Q Well now just tell the difference there is, –what difference in doctrine there is.

A Well now the last few lines there in other words we “reject every doctrine which either on the one hand would rob God of His honor as the only Savior or on the other would weaken man's sense of responsibility in respect of the acceptance or rejection of God's grace.” This word “sense” is used in the sense of feeling here; it is man's feeling and that last part, “We reject every doctrine which...” should have been left out; either reject every doctrine which would rob God of His honor as our only Savior, –that is very good of course but it really does not mean anything alone that way like the joke in the funny papers; it really does not mean anything standing as naked as it does; and then they go to work and append right to that “or on the other would weaken man's sense of responsibility, –feeling of responsibility, –in respect of the, –or over against as the literal translation would be, –acceptance or the rejection of grace.” Now it has already been pointed out here today that that is synergism. Synergism means that a man is helping God, that a man is converting himself by his own power to some extent at any rate. There are so many different shades of this meaning that it makes it very difficult.

Q Now just a moment in respect to that. Was this agreement written up in the, –is the original in the Norwegian language?

A The original opgjor?

Q Yes.

A Yes sir, the original opgjor is.

Q And this exhibit....

A That is exhibit "C".

Q Is?

A A translation into English.

Q Is the English translation?

A Yes; there have been several translations. This translation is very clear when you can hold it along side of the Norwegian but the word "feeling" would be the translation of the Norwegian word "følelse" but the word "sense" I believe if I am not very badly mistaken is also used in this same meaning. Now we are talking about weakening man's sense of responsibility his feeling of responsibility in respect of the acceptance of grace. That presupposes that man feels because here you are talking of that whole paragraph, you are talking about unregenerate man, you are not talking about a Christian, you are talking about a person that still is as Saint Paul says "dead in trespasses and sins." You are talking about the carnal mind, you are talking about the natural man who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness unto him the Bible says; that is what you are talking about here all the time. And I have never heard anybody claim that this had reference to man after conversion. You are talking here about an unconverted unregenerate man the natural sinful man dead in trespasses and sins and about that man who is a spiritual corpse. You are talking as though that spiritual corpse had a feeling of responsibility in respect of the acceptance of God's grace and a feeling of responsibility over against the rejection of God's grace and of course that is pure synergism in my conviction. Of course there you are up against the definitions too.

MR. KEPLER: Well you may take the witness.

CROSS EXAMINATION BY MR. SENNEFF:

Q(3:05) You read on farther in language as plain as the English language can make it that they reject the idea that the sinner has anything to do with his own conversion?

A I don't quite agree that it is as plain as the English language can make it but it is good, it is good.

Q Yes, plain enough so that any man can understand that what that committee said was that in their combined and unanimous judgment man had nothing to do with his own conversion don't it in section five and you agree with that don't you?

A Are you through?

Q Yes sir, I am through with that question

A Yes, as far as that is a question.

Q Well now just let us see if you and I cannot get along faster by my asking a question and you answering it.

MR. KEPLER: If he wants to make any explanation....

MR. SENNEFF: If he can't answer the question by yes or no.

A It is not fair to you.

Q Don't worry about that.

A Or to me as far as it goes.

Q Well here it is your idea is it not that man has nothing to do with his own conversion.

A Absolutely.

Q Yes.

A Absolutely.

Q So if the committee have in language that ordinary man can understand said that thing then you are in accord with them?

A Certainly.

Q Yes.

A But here they contradict in section five what they said in four.

MR. SENNEFF: I move to strike the last part of the answer following the word "certainly" as volunteered and not responsive.

BY THE COURT: Sustained.

Defendants except to the ruling of the court.

Q Not you say that in, -at the 1910 Synod meeting there was a clear presentation of the Synod's position or the Synod's attitude in the matter of the two forms?

A Yes sir.

Q Do you know who wrote that?

A Dr. St... Well they are usually spoken of as Dr. Stub's theses.

Q Yes. And the position of the Synod in regard to these two forms was made clear at that meeting wasn't it?

A Quite clear I think.

Q Yes. And is it not true that in that thesis of Dr. Stub he did recognize the two forms?

A No I don't think he did but he simply...

Q Well those are readily accessible; we can find them.

A Yes you have them there; I gave them to you this morning.

Q Finally the real difficulty or the danger as you put it is in the interpretation that might be placed upon Pontoppidan's Explanation?

A Well when you use Pontoppidan's form yes.

Q Yes.

A That is the words themselves are a misstatement.

Q Yes but the Pontoppidan explanation if followed as you construe Pontoppidan's Explanation, -that is not objectionable to the Synod?

A Well that depends on what you mean.

Q Well I mean just as I put it.

A Well it is objectionable as a definition of election; it would do it might do as a pretty fair description of the elect.

Q But here in this paper the settlement you would say that this was reasonably plain English: "Whereas the conferring church bodies acknowledge that Art. 11 of the Formula of Concord presents the pure and correct doctrine of God's Word and the Lutheran Church regarding the election of the children of God to salvation, it is deemed unnecessary to church union to construct new and more extensive theses concerning this article of faith".

A I hold that that is in contradiction to the last half of the first paragraph.

Q Well now just take this one at a time; this second paragraph you are in accord with that?

A That is with the doctrine expressed there yes; I would not agree with the preamble, that whereas.

Q Well that does not change the substance does it at all?

A Not the doctrine.

Q "Whereas the conferring church bodies acknowledge that Art. 11..." You claim article 11 of the Formula of Concord presents the pure and correct doctrine of God's Word and the Lutheran Church regarding the election of the children of God to salvation don't you?

A Absolutely.

Q Now if that is what they meant to say then you are in accord with their idea?

A Yes, sure.

Q Yes.

A That is correct.

Q And you believe that Pontoppidan's Explanation or second form if correctly interpreted does not contradict any doctrine revealed in the Word of God don't you?

A No sir I don't believe that; that is just what I do not believe.

Q No matter what interpretation you pass upon it?

A Take the words in that line.

Q I am not asking you about this book at all now.

A Well but I can't answer a question that is not put.

Q If you can't answer it just say so. I ask you this question now and if you can't answer it you say so: Do you say that no matter what interpretation you put on the Pontoppidan explanation of the second doctrine that it is contrary to the Word of God as revealed in the Bible?

A I couldn't say because I wouldn't know what I was talking about.

Q You know what Pontoppidan's Explanation is don't you?

A Yes, sure.

Q And you know how you interpret it?

A I have no way of interpreting that so as to make it fit the Word of God.

Q You have no way?

A No sir, I cannot interpret that so as to make it fit the Word of God. To me Pontoppidan's Explanation or rather his Question 548 is the most utter nonsense; that is the way it looks to me; that is my conviction.

Q I see. I see. You know that prior to 1880, –you were a pretty small boy but you have told us a good deal about that, –1880 and prior to that time the church did recognize Pontoppidan's Explanation of the second doctrine as being not heretic?

A No I don't know that because I don't think it was ever mentioned; I don't think so.

Q You don't believe that is true?

A I don't think so.

Q You were not here when Dr. Dau testified yesterday were you?

A No.

Q There is no way in your mind that no matter what explanation you placed upon it that second doctrine can be consistent with the first?

A No, they are opposites.

Q You are in disagreement then with both Mr. Harstad...

A No not...

Q And Dr. Dau?

A No; if I understand them I am in absolute agreement with them.

Q Well Dr. Dau testified yesterday that they did not call it heretical or objectionable...

A That is different.

Q Just a moment. –if they placed a construction upon the second doctrine in accordance with Pontoppidan's Explanation. Now do you agree with that?

A I didn't hear them say that you know. I couldn't.

Q Assuming that he said that do you agree with that?

A No, because that would be something opposite of what I said a little while ago.

Q All right. You are an officer of this new church that has just been organized are you?

A Well I am the temporary vice president of the Norwegian synod yes.

Q I see. You don't mean... That is the new synod that is being formed?

A Well it is the remnants that we are getting together.

Q I see.

A Of the old synod.

MR. SENNEFF: Yes. That is all.

MR. KEPLER: That is all.

BY THE COURT: Call your next.

Appendix C

[Only a portion of the concluding section to Koren's "An Accounting" is here included.]

8. Since God has promised His children that He will keep them in the faith unto the end, the believer trusts in this promise of God, which is unbreakable and sufficient; therefore, he has the certainty by faith that he will be kept in the faith until the end, that God will then "grant him and all believers in Christ eternal life," and that he thus actually will attain and share the (life of) glory with God. (Cf. Small Catechism, Art. III.) John 14:1-3; Is. 41:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; 2 Cor. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Phil. 1:6; 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 15:19, 49; Rom. 8:31-39; Col. 3:4.

We reject the papistic and synergistic doctrine of doubt that a believer neither can nor should have a certainty by faith regarding his preservation and final salvation. 1 John 5:10; Heb. 10:23; Jam. 1:6-7; Matt. 21:22.

9. This certainty of faith is not a more or less well-grounded assumption or a careless hope, but it is a faith, i.e., "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," a firm trust in the heart, because it is based on God's unbreakable promise. However, it is often "hidden under weakness and temptation." (Cf. Pontoppidan *Kort Begreb*, par. 35) Heb. 11:1; Rom. 8:38-39; 2 Cor. 5:1-2; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 5:24; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Cor. 10:13; Matt. 8:25-26; Mark 9:24.

The expression, "a conditioned certainty of salvation," is ambiguous. If thereby is meant that the certainty by faith of preservation and salvation is bound up with the order of salvation, so that only those who are in that order can have it, then the teaching is correct. Heb. 3:6-14; Rom. 11:22.

But that expression is often used by those who teach the false doctrine that a man's preservation and salvation has its cause more or less in his own works by which, accordingly, the certainty of salvation is conditioned. A "certainty" "conditioned" in this way becomes in reality an uncertainty or a groundless hope. For one can have no certainty by faith that a condition which a man must fulfill will really be fulfilled. Rom. 9:16.

10. No man who will not trust in God alone for salvation, but who thinks that he must himself be able to contribute something to it, can have any certainty by faith that he will be saved. Rom. 4:16; 9:16; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Chron. 13:18; Ps. 84:12.

11. The certainty by faith that salvation will actually be attained is not an absolute certainty, as if it were impossible for a man to hinder it; for preservation does not take place by compulsion, and the possibility of apostasy [sic] is, therefore, not removed. Nor are the promises of God to the believer a prophecy that he will be saved. Rom. 8:24-25; 1 Cor. 9:27; Rev. 2:10; Mark 4:17.

12. Recognition of the possibility of apostasy [sic], and the earnestness which results from it in working out one's own salvation with fear and trembling (filial fear) does not take away the believer's certainty of salvation, nor

does it limit it, but strengthens it; for that is one of the means whereby God preserves the believer. For it compels him continually to seek refuge in God's promise of help which strengthens and preserves him in the firm faith and hope that the possibility of apostacy [sic] shall by the grace of God not become a reality. That recognition, therefore, will always accompany the true certainty by faith of salvation. Where it is forgotten and a man falls into sinful security, there the grace of God and faith are lost. (Cf. Pontoppidan, *Sandb, til Gudfr.*, Q 86, 670, 514.) Tit. 2:11–13; Phil. 2:12–13; Mark 13:33–37; 1 Tim. 1:19; 6:10; Ps. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:4, 8, 17.

13. A man cannot arrive at certainty by faith concerning his salvation and election by brooding over election or by wanting to get that clear first, but alone by building on the universal grace and the call of God's love in Christ. But he who in this way has become a believer will have, especially in temptation, this comfort in the teaching of God's Word concerning election, that God who in the Gospel has promised him salvation, has ("since through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh it could easily be lost from our hands") "wished to secure my salvation so well and certainly that He ordained it in His eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and placed it for preservation in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can pluck us" (John 10:28). (Formula of Concord. Thor. Decl., XI, 37.) Luke 16:29; Rom. 11:34; John 1:12–13; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:6; Ps. 9:10; John 3:16.

[Note: In the above quotations from the Formula of Concord, we have used the English version of the *Concordia Triglotta*, (St. Louis, 1917) – S. Ylvisaker, ed.]

Appendix D

1912 Madison Agreement

1. The Union Committees of the Synod and the United Church, unanimously and without reservation, accept that doctrine of election which is set forth in Article XI of the Formula of Concord, the so-called First Form... and Pontoppidan's *Truth Unto Godliness*...the so-called Second Form of Doctrine....

2. Since both the conferring church bodies acknowledge that Article XI of the Formula of Concord presents the pure and correct doctrine of the election of the children of God unto salvation as taught by the Word of God and

the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, it is deemed unnecessary for church unity to set up new and more elaborate theses on this article of faith.

3. However, since it is well known that in presenting the doctrine of election two forms of doctrine have been used, both of which have won acceptance and recognition within the orthodox Lutheran Church;

Some, in accordance with the Formula of Concord, include under the doctrine of election the whole order of salvation of the elect from the call to the glorification...and teach an election “unto salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;”

While others, with Pontoppidan, in conformity with John Gerhard, Sriver, and other recognized teachers of the Church, define election more specifically as the decree concerning the final glorification, with faith and perseverance wrought by the Holy Spirit as its necessary presupposition, and teach that “God has appointed all those to eternal life who He from eternity has foreseen would accept the offered grace, believe in Christ and remain constant in this faith unto the end”; and since neither of these two forms of doctrine, thus presented, contradicts any doctrine revealed in the Word of God, but does full justice to the order of salvation as presented in the Word of God and the confession of the Church;

We find that this should not be cause for schism within the Church or disturb that unity of the spirit in the bond of peace which God wills should prevail among us.

4. Since, however, in the controversy over this question among us, there have appeared words and expressions—justly or unjustly attributed to the respective parties—which seemed to the opposite party to be a denial or to lead to a denial of the Confession;

We have agreed to reject all errors which seek to explain away the mystery of election...either in a synergizing or a Calvinizing manner...every doctrine which...would deprive God of His glory as only Savior or...weaken man’s sense of responsibility in relation to the acceptance or rejection of grace.

5. On the one hand we reject:

a) The doctrine that the cause of our election is not solely the mercy of God and the holy merit of Christ, but that there also in us is a cause on account of which God has elected us to eternal life;

b) The doctrine that in election God has been determined by, has taken into account, or has been influenced by man’s good attitude or anything which man is, does, or omits to do “as of himself and by his own natural powers”;

c) The doctrine that the faith in Christ which is inseparably connected with election is in whole or in part a product of, or depends upon, man’s own choice, power, or ability....

d) Or that this faith is the result of an ability and power imparted by the call of grace, which therefore now dwell within and belong to, the unregenerate heart, enabling it to make a decision for grace.

6. On the other hand we reject:

a) The doctrine that God in the election acts arbitrarily and unmotivated, so that He points out and counts a certain arbitrary number of any individuals whomsoever and appoints them to conversion and salvation while all others are excluded;

b) The doctrine that there are two kinds of saving will in God, one revealed in Scripture in the general order of salvation and one that is different from and unknown to us, which concerns only the elect and brings to them a more cordial love, a more powerful call from God and greater grace than to those who remain in their unbelief and lost condition;

c) The doctrine that when the resistance, which God in conversion removes from those who are saved, is not removed from those who are finally lost, the cause for this different result lies in God and a different will to save in His election;

d) The doctrine that the believer can and shall have an absolute assurance of his election and salvation, instead of an assurance of faith, drawn from the promises of God, connected with fear and trembling and with the possibility of falling away, which, however, he believes by the grace of God shall not be realized in his case;

e) In brief, all opinions and doctrines concerning election which directly or indirectly would conflict with the order of salvation, and would not give to all a full and equally great opportunity to be saved, or which in any way would do violence to the Word of God which says God “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth”—in which gracious and merciful will of God all election to eternal life has its source.

On the basis of the above agreement the committees on union recommend to their respective church-bodies the adoption of the following resolutions:

Whereas, our confessional writings establish that “to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments”; and

Whereas, our previous committees by the grace of God have attained unanimity with respect to the doctrines concerning the call, conversion and the order of salvation as a whole, and we all confess as our sincere faith that we are saved by grace alone without any cooperation on our part; and

Whereas, the deliberations of our new committees have led to a satisfactory agreement concerning the doctrine of election and to an unreserved and unanimous acceptance of that doctrine of election which is set forth in Article XI, Part II of the Formula of Concord and Question 548 in Pontoppidan’s *Truth Unto Godliness*...we therefore declare hereby, that the essential agreement concerning these doctrines which has been attained is sufficient for church union....

[Taken from F. C. Wolf’s *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1966), 232-235.]

Appendix E

The Six Theses of the Triple U¹²⁶

In view of the fact that continued efforts are being made to unite all Lutherans in one fellowship, we adopt the following theses as expressing the principles which must guide us in seeking to effect such fellowship.

- I. The spiritual unity of the Holy Christian Church, which is the body of Christ, is not dependent upon any such externals as a common organization or language, but alone upon the possession of the saving faith in Jesus Christ. True Christians will, however, “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), and will therefore also seek to establish and maintain church fellowship with all who are one with them in confessing the true faith.
- II. We acknowledge one, and only one, truly unifying influence and power in matters both of doctrine and of practice, namely the Word of God; and only one God-pleasing procedure in striving for unity: That “the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God lead holy lives according to it.”
- III. Through such teaching of the Word, unity and (when deemed desirable) union have been attained in the past. Examples: the early New Testament Church, the Lutheran Reformation, and the Synodical Conference.
- IV. We hold that inter-synodical committees are useful in promoting Christian fellowship only a) when the various groups or synods have, through their public ministry of the Word, given each other evidence of an existing unity in spirit, and it remains merely to establish the fact of such unity and to arrange for some public recognition and confession of that fact, or b) where it is clear that those in error sincerely desire to know “the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26).
- V. Where such evidence of unity is lacking, or where it is clear that those in error do not sincerely desire to know “the way of God more perfectly,” but such committees nevertheless are elected to confer with them with the view to church fellowship, there is grave danger that the work of these committees will result in indifferentism and in compromise of Scriptural doctrine and practice. (For examples of this, consider the mergers and unions of recent years among Lutherans.) The duty of testifying to the

¹²⁶ The entire document of “Unity, Union, and Unionism” (1936), including expansion of the six theses, can be found at <<http://www.evangelicallutheransynod.org/beliefs/doctrinal-statements/unity-union-and-unionism/>>.

truth of God's Word and thus promoting unity, rests at all times upon all Christians. Cf. I Peter 3:15.

- VI. Scripture warns us clearly and emphatically against entanglements with errorists (Romans 16:17, Titus 3:10, 1 Timothy 6:3–5). Any reluctance to heed these warnings and commands of Scripture is unionism already conceived in the heart, which if allowed to develop, will result in full-fledged unionism, as history also attests.

450th Anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism

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THE DATE JANUARY 19, 2013, marked the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism. As confessional Lutherans when we hear the word “catechism,” we generally think of Luther’s Small Catechism. However, at the time of the Reformation a number of catechisms were written. Even among Lutherans there were alternative catechisms, such as the catechism of Johannes Brenz used in southern Germany. The Heidelberg Catechism has its origin in the Palatinate and was intended to bring harmony among the various divisions in Protestantism at the time. While this was the intention of its writers, it is obvious to confessional Lutherans that the catechism embraces a mild form of Calvinism.¹ The Heidelberg Catechism today is a confession espoused by nearly all Calvinistic Reformed churches.

The Palatinate (*Rheinland-Pfalz* or *Kurpfalz*) and the Reformation

The Palatinate,² for which the Heidelberg Catechism was written, is located in the central-western part of Germany. This principality was ruled by the Wittelsbach family, the same noble family that ruled Bavaria. The Palatinate was the most progressive state in Germany at the

¹ German Calvinism is distinct from other forms of Calvinism because it was strongly influenced by Melancthonianism.

² The word *Pfalz* or Palatinate comes from the Latin *palatinum* for palace. This was one of the places where the Holy Roman Emperor had his residence. The Palatinate denoted at one time any territory ruled by a count palatine (*Pfalzgraf*), but today it refers to the province called “Rhineland-Palatinate.”

time. Its commerce and industry far exceeded that of the eastern states of the Holy Roman Empire, such as Brandenburg. Its capital, Heidelberg, with its university, was a center of German culture. The Palatinate had early connections to Lutheranism. Luther's famous disputation of 1518, where he defined the theology of the cross, occurred in Heidelberg. Also the Palatinate was the home province of Phillip Melanchthon.

The Lutheran Reformation penetrated the Rhenish Palatinate early, but the electors did not give official recognition to the Lutherans nor did they persecute them. In 1546, with the encouragement of the heir apparent Ottheinrich, Frederick II declared the Palatinate Lutheran. Already the year before, Frederick and his wife had celebrated Easter by receiving communion in both kinds which was a clear indicator that he was moving toward Lutheranism.³ When Ottheinrich became elector (r. 1556–1559), he called Tilemann Heshusius (1527–1588) as general ecclesiastical superintendent of his lands in 1558.⁴ Heshusius championed the Gnesio-Lutheran standpoint and was leading the Palatinate in that direction. However, Ottheinrich died in 1559, and Frederick III (r. 1559–1576), a distant Wittelsbach relative, became elector.

Frederick III and the Heidelberg Catechism

As Frederick III began his rule, there was a reaction against the Gnesio-Lutheran position of Heshusius especially in regard to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Frederick III was disturbed by the bitter controversy over the Lord's Supper in his lands. There was considerable controversy right in the center of Heidelberg, his capital. Here, at the Church of the Holy Spirit (*Heiliggeistkirche*), there was a virtual pulpit war between Heshusius and those who held a more Calvinistic view of the Lord's Supper. In reaction to Heshusius, Frederick III forbade the use of expressions such as "the Lord's body is in the bread" and "the Lord's body is under the bread" to confess Christ's presence in the Sacrament.⁵ He preferred the statement that the "bread is a communion of the body of Christ" (*koinonia*) based on 1 Corinthians 10:16. Heshusius was dismissed on September 16, 1559.

As Frederick III became more convinced of a Calvinist view of the Supper, he introduced the *fractio panis* (breaking of bread) in the Supper

³ Lyle D. Bierma, *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 27. See also LW 50:252–255.

⁴ Robert D. Preus, ed., *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 44.

⁵ Bierma, 38.

which was a definite confessional sign of Reformed doctrine.⁶ Hereafter he called Reformed professors to the University of Heidelberg. Hoping to find a middle ground between the doctrines that divided the Reformed and the Lutherans, he commissioned the production of a new catechism for his land. Two of his theologians, Caspar Olevianus (1536–1587) and Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583), a student of Melanchthon, drafted the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563 with Elector Frederick's active participation. This modified statement of Calvinist doctrines, in which the controversial issues concerning the Lord's Supper were avoided and the Calvinist view of predestination was stated in a milder form, became the doctrinal norm for the elector and his territory and for other Reformed churches in Germany.

The use of the Heidelberg Catechism put the Palatinate in a precarious situation. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 gave religious freedom only to the Roman Church and to those adhering to the Augsburg Confession. The peace excluded the Calvinists. If the Heidelberg Catechism was not in agreement with the Augsburg Confession, as Gnesio-Lutherans such as Heshusius maintained, Frederick III was not abiding by the stipulations of the peace and could be outlawed by the emperor. Therefore he and his theologians tried to show that the catechism was indeed in agreement with the Augsburg Confession and that they were the true heirs of Luther. Luther always feared that the Reformed would make such a claim. He assumed that the Reformed, who had tried to change his manuscripts to fit their theology during his lifetime, could easily circulate rumors that he changed his doctrines at the end of his life.⁷

⁶ Ernst Koch, *Das konfessionelle Zeitalter—Katholizismus, Luthertum, Calvinismus (1563–1675)* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 262.

⁷ What Luther had expected took place as he said. Nineteen years after his death and five years after Melanchthon's, that is, in the year 1565, several Heidelberg Reformed theologians, among whom were also the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, made public the following story:

A few days before Luther had journeyed to Eisleben for the last time, Ph. Melanchthon had approached the good doctor in the cloister and, after discussing all sorts of things, noticed that Luther was in a good and jovial mood, and so he began to discuss with him the subject of the Lord's Supper, and he stated that he quoted a few passages of the ancient teachers and one of the things he stated to him was: Dear good doctor! For several years now I have diligently searched the writings of the ancient Christian teachers in this matter and truly, the doctrine of the Lord's Supper from Zurich agrees more completely with theirs than our own. Whereupon Luther was silent for a few moments, but then he spoke these words: Dear Philip! What more can we say? I confess that too much has been made of the matter of the Sacrament. But as Philip replied to him: Dear good doctor! Then for the good of the Church and to bring the

A most significant event occurred at the imperial diet at Augsburg in 1566. The emperor read a decree charging that Elector Frederick III had introduced changes in the government and the worship of his church and a catechism dissenting from the Augsburg Confession. After a recess, the elector appeared, accompanied by his son, John Casimir, who was carrying a Bible and the Augsburg Confession,⁸ underscoring that the doctrine of the Heidelberg Catechism was in agreement with Holy Scripture and with the Augsburg Confession. Any confessional Lutheran would have a difficult time accepting this viewpoint.

This was one of the first examples of what is usually designated the Second Reformation. This term is used to describe a situation in which a state that is Lutheran in confession is slowly converted to Calvinism. It is also referred to as Calvinization. The implication is that the Lutheran Reformation did not go far enough and therefore the Second Reformation was required.⁹ The two outward signs of the Second Reformation were the rejection of exorcism in Baptism and the innovation of the *fractio panis*, the breaking of bread in the Lord's Supper.¹⁰

Thomas Erastus (1524–1583), the personal physician of the elector and professor of medicine at Heidelberg, had Reformed sympathies and supported the theological direction of Frederick III.¹¹ In addition, he was an outspoken opponent of the consistory form of church

truth into the light of day, let us publish some gentle compositions where we can clarify our thoughts to them. Dr. Luther went on to say: Dear Philip! I have also thought about doing that. But I might thus make the whole doctrine dubious. So I will commend the whole matter to God. But you also do something about it after my death.

This story is commonly called by Lutheran theologians the **Heidelberg State Lie**, since it comes from hearsay and there is not a trace of it to be found in Melancthon's writings. But since Melancthon has been very often accused after Luther's death of falsifying Luther's doctrine, it is purely unthinkable that he himself would not have publicly used the accounted situation, had it actually occurred, in his own defense (*Der Lutheraner* [Baseley Translation] 2:12 [February 1846]: 47–48).

⁸ Of course this was a *variata* form of the Augsburg Confession.

⁹ When the Second Reformation occurred in Brandenburg–Prussia, it was implied that another Reformation was needed to “sweep the leftover papal dung completely out of Christ's stable” (“...die noch hinterbliebene Unsauberkeit deß Bapstums aus dem Schaffstall Christi vollend aufzufegen”) (Derk Visser, ed., *Controversy and Conciliation: The Reformation and the Palatinate 1559–1583* [Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1986], 163; see also Bodo Nischan, *Prince, People, and Confession: The Second Reformation in Brandenburg* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994], 292).

¹⁰ This is the normal use of the term Second Reformation. However, it has also been used when a Lutheran or Calvinist state was converted to Catholicism and when a Reformed state was converted to Lutheranism.

¹¹ Bierma, 41.

government which was in vogue in Geneva. The Geneva consistory had virtually become a theocracy. Erastus preferred instead a strong secular government control of doctrines and discipline. This gave further support for Frederick III's right to manipulate the theology of his domain. In England and Scotland, this tendency toward a state church was called Erastian after him.

Ludwig VI and the Book of Concord

When Frederick III died in 1576, it appeared that his moderately reformed state would die with him. His son and successor, Ludwig VI (r. 1576–1583), reestablished Lutheranism in the Palatinate following the lead of his father's predecessor, Ottheinrich. One of the most important diplomatic efforts of the princes and theologians preparing the Formula of Concord was to win the new elector to their theological stand. In this they succeeded at least in part. Ludwig VI joined the two other secular electors, Elector August of Saxony and Elector John George of Brandenburg, in supporting the Formula and accepting the Book of Concord of which it became a part. Already in 1580, all the professors at the University of Heidelberg were to subscribe to the Book of Concord.

There was one caveat in Ludwig VI's subscription to the Book of Concord. The 1580 Book of Concord, produced in Dresden, included two appendages to Luther's Small Catechism. These appendages were a baptismal rite and a marriage rite. Several princes, including Ludwig VI, questioned these two rites. Ludwig VI especially had concerns regarding the baptismal rite with its exorcism. It had not been commonly used in the Palatinate, and he saw no reason to implement it. He did not want the baptismal rite to stand in the way of his reintroduction of Lutheranism.

However, several princes, including Ludwig VI of the Palatinate, and their theologians objected to Luther's baptismal service with its references to exorcism. As a result, despite pleas from Jakob Andreae, both appendices were removed from editions simultaneously produced elsewhere and from subsequent versions printed in Dresden. This excision was part of a lengthy dispute over the nature of baptism among Lutherans, especially led by those who, under the influence of some Reformed

theologians, worried that Lutherans might understand baptism as effective without faith by the mere performance of the act.¹²

When Ludwig VI became elector, Ursinus and other Calvinist theologians at the University of Heidelberg left the Palatinate and established an anti-school at Neustadt an der Hardt. Here they were under the protection of John Casimir who was the younger brother of Ludwig VI. Casimir was inclined toward Calvinism. From Neustadt, Casimir and his theologians launched criticisms of the Formula of Concord with particular emphasis on Christology and the Lord's Supper. He even called together an assembly of German Reformed theologians at Frankfurt am Main hoping to establish a united front against the Concordianist movement, but the plan failed.¹³ He was more successful in encouraging his theologians to produce an official critique of the Book of Concord. This critique, authored mainly by Ursinus in 1581, was entitled, "Christian Admonition on the Book of Concord" (*Neostadiensium Admonitio*). The critique was intended to refute mainly the Lutheran doctrines of Christology, the Lord's Supper, and election.

The Lutherans gathered at Erfurt to draw up a defense of the Book of Concord. "Martin Chemnitz was there at the request of the elector of Brandenburg; Nikolaus Selnecker represented Saxony and Timotheus Kirchner the government of Ludwig of the Palatinate."¹⁴ The Lutherans responded to the Neustadt Admonition with the Apology of the Book of Concord (*Apologia oder Verantwortung des Christlichen ConcordienBuchs*, 1583). It is also referred to as the Erfurt Book. This apology was a detailed defense of the Lutheran doctrine of Christology, the Lord's Supper, and election.

John Casimir and Another Second Reformation

When Ludwig VI died in 1583, his brother, John Casimir, became the guardian of his young son Frederick IV. Because of Casimir's inclination toward Reformed theology, the boy was raised as a Calvinist and the land again became Reformed and remained such. The Heidelberg Catechism was again introduced in the Palatinate and from there it

¹² Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 346–347. See also Irene Dingel, "The Preface of The Book of Concord as a Reflection of Sixteenth-Century Confessional Development," *Lutheran Quarterly* XV (2001): 373–395.

¹³ Charles P. Arand, Robert Kolb, and James A. Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology of The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 278.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 280.

spread to other Reformed states. From the Palatinate Calvinism spread into the lower Rhine Valley and East Friesland. The electors of the Palatinate were viewed as the defenders of the Reformed faith in the Holy Roman Empire. Frederick IV's son, Frederick V (1614–1632), also a staunch Calvinist, married Elisabeth, daughter of James I of England, and precipitated the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War by accepting the Bohemian crown in 1618, which the Catholic Habsburgs assumed belonged to them.

Brandenburg-Prussia—Second Reformation—Prussian Union

In the meantime, Palatinate Calvinists touched the Hohenzollern family, the rulers of Brandenburg in the east of Germany. John Sigismund (r. 1608–1619) of Brandenburg was educated at the University of Heidelberg where he was influenced by Reformed theology. When he became the elector of Brandenburg he converted to Calvinism in a Christmas Lord's Supper celebration in 1613. Part of the reason for his conversion was to obtain the land of Cleves in western Germany. In the Reformed churches that he established in Brandenburg, the Heidelberg Catechism was in common use. While he became Reformed, his wife, Anna, remained a staunch Lutheran, and the same was true of most of his people. In this way Prussia differed from the Palatinate where the people were forced to follow their leaders. This set the stage for the struggle in Brandenburg-Prussia between the Lutherans and Reformed, as is seen in the life of Paul Gerhardt, which climaxed in the Prussian Union in 1817. The union church subscribed to both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Augsburg Confession.

When the German people that were inclined toward the Prussian Union immigrated to America, they established the German Evangelical Synod of North America. In its confession it states

[It] acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the Word of God, the sole and infallible guide of faith and life, and accepts the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures as given in the symbolic books of the Lutheran and the Reformed Church, the most important being: The Augsburg Confession, Luther's and the Heidelberg Catechisms, in so far as they agree; but where they disagree the German Evangelical Synod of North America adheres strictly to the passages of

Holy Scriptures bearing on the subject, and avails itself of the liberty of conscience prevailing in the Evangelical Church.¹⁵

This church body eventually merged into the Evangelical and Reformed Church and finally into the United Church of Christ.

The Content of the Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism is divided into three main parts. *Part One: Man's Sin and Guilt—The Law of God* points out man's lost condition by nature and his rightful judgment under the law. *Part Two: Man's Redemption and Freedom—The Grace of God in Jesus Christ* centers in the doctrine of the Trinity, the person of Christ, and justification. It also includes the Sacraments and church discipline. *Part Three: Man's Gratitude and Obedience—New Life Through the Holy Spirit* directs one to the life of sanctification out of thanks for salvation. The questions in the catechism are divided into portions for each Lord's Day with portions for fifty-two Lord's Days.

The story is told concerning a German Lutheran who was asked to explain the difference between German Lutherans and German Reformed. The man stated that the Lutherans say "*Vater Unser*" (Father our) in praying the Lord's Prayer while the Reformed say "*Unser Vater*" (our Father). The Lutherans use unleavened bread for communion while the Reformed use leavened bread.¹⁶ In addition, the Reformed enumerate the Ten Commandments in a different way than Lutherans.¹⁷ As far as the man knew, that was about all the difference there was between Lutherans and Reformed. This man certainly missed something in confirmation class. There is a considerable difference between Lutheranism and the Reformed theology of the Heidelberg Catechism. For example, the Heidelberg Catechism places the Ten Commandments at the end of the catechism, emphasizing the third use of the Law. Luther's Small Catechism, on the other hand, places the Ten Commandments at the beginning of the catechism, before the Creed, showing that the second use of the Law must always remain predominant. The Reformed play down the means of grace in general

¹⁵ German Evangelical Synod of North America, *Evangelical Catechism*, revised edition (St. Louis, MO: Eden Publishing House, 1896), 68–69.

¹⁶ The unleavened host commonly used among Lutherans was considered to be too Roman by the German Reformed.

¹⁷ The Reformed designate the second commandment as "You shall not make any graven images, etc." and they unite the two commandments on coveting into the tenth commandment.

and the Sacraments in specific, as will be seen in the next section of the essay. Zwingli's statement that the Holy Spirit does not need a wagon still pervades Reformed theology.¹⁸

The Heidelberg Catechism and Baptism

For Lutherans the sections of the Heidelberg Catechism on Baptism and the Lord's Supper are most provocative. Question 69 in the Heidelberg Catechism asks,

How does holy Baptism remind and assure you that the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross avails for you?

In this way: Christ has instituted this external washing with water and by it has promised that I am as certainly washed with his blood and Spirit from the uncleanness of my soul and from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water which is used to remove the dirt from my body.¹⁹

The questions and answers in the catechism concerning the Sacraments tend to be rather vague. One could understand this statement in a Lutheran way: as one is washed with the baptismal waters, his sins are washed away. Baptism washes away our sins through the blood of Christ. More likely, however, the catechism teaches that as one is washed with water, he is reminded that he was washed with the blood of Christ when he was brought to faith in the Savior. There is no real connection between the baptismal water and the washing that saves.

Question 73: Then why does the Holy Spirit call baptism the water of rebirth and the washing away of sins?

God does not speak in this way except for a strong reason. Not only does he teach us by Baptism that just as the dirt of the body is taken away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Christ; but more important still, by the divine pledge and sign he wishes to assure us that we are

¹⁸ *Dux vel vehiculum Spiritui non est necessarium* (Zwingli, *Fidei Ratio* [ed. Niemeyer, p. 24] quoted in F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. III [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953], 146).

¹⁹ *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 400th anniversary edition 1563–1963 (New York: United Church Press, 1962), 68.

just as truly washed from our sins spiritually as our bodies are washed with water.²⁰

Here the catechism does not say that Baptism washes away sin, but it says that it is a sign or a pledge that assures us that we are washed from our sins. Again, there is no direct connection between the washing of Baptism and the washing away of sin. It should also be noted that the words “pledge” and “sign” are used in a different way by the Reformed than by Lutherans. For Lutherans, a pledge or a sign gives what it signifies. It is a sign that gives the reality to which it points. For the Reformed, there is no connection between the pledge and the reality. When a Lutheran says that Baptism is a pledge of the forgiveness of sins, he means that it gives the forgiveness of sins. When the Reformed say the same thing, they merely mean that it points to the forgiveness of sins.

While the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism used language that could be understood as in agreement with Luther and Scriptures, it is clear that they are really inclined to a view quite different. It appears that for the authors of the catechism, Baptism is not a powerful means of grace which washes away sin and gives rebirth causing one to trust in Christ as the only Savior from sin as Luther taught. Rather Baptism is merely a sign or a reminder that one is washed in the blood of the Lamb when he comes to trust in the Savior. The truth that Baptism is a powerful means of grace imparting rebirth and the forgiveness of sins, delivering from death and the devil, could be read into the catechism, but it is easier to view the document as teaching that Baptism is a mere sign of forgiveness and rebirth. This is the vagueness that the authors of the catechism intended.

The Heidelberg Catechism and Lord's Supper

The controversy concerning the Lord's Supper in the Palatinate precipitated the writing and printing of the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563. The doctrine concerning the Eucharist in the catechism presents the same ambiguity as the teaching concerning Baptism.

²⁰ Ibid., 71.

Question 75: How are you reminded and assured in the holy Supper that you participate in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross and in all his benefits?

In this way: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread, and to drink of this cup in remembrance of him. He has thereby promised that his body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and his blood was shed for me, as surely as I see with my eyes that the bread of the Lord is broken for me, and that the cup is shared with me. Also, he has promised that he himself as certainly feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life with his crucified body and shed blood as I receive from the hand of the minister and actually taste the bread and the cup of the Lord which are given to me as sure signs of the body and blood of Christ.²¹

Notice that the answer to question 75 refers to the broken bread which points to the *fractio panis* that the Reformed considered essential to the institution of the Supper. Lutherans have chosen not to use the *fractio panis* as a confessional stand against the Reformed symbolism in the Sacrament. Lutherans confess that they receive the true body and blood of Christ with the mouth, while the Reformed teach that they receive Christ's body spiritually with their heart through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that the catechism states, "Also, he has promised that he himself as certainly feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life with his crucified body and shed blood as I receive from the hand of the minister and actually taste the bread and the cup of the Lord which are given to me as sure signs of the body and blood of Christ." A Lutheran would understand this as saying that one receives the crucified body and shed blood of Christ with the elements distributed by the minister. On the other hand, the Reformed would understand this as saying while one merely receives bread and wine in the service, he is assured that Christ will feed him with Himself by faith.

²¹ Ibid., 73–74.

Question 76: What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his shed blood?

It is not only to embrace with a trusting heart the whole passion and death of Christ, and by it to receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In addition, it is to be so united more and more to his blessed body by the Holy Spirit dwelling both in Christ and in us that, although he is in heaven and we are on earth, we are nevertheless flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, always living and being governed by one Spirit, as the members of our bodies are governed by one soul.²²

In this answer, the connection between Christ's body and the communicant is the Holy Spirit. It does not say that the communicant is united with Christ by receiving His body with the mouth. Rather the connection is the Holy Spirit who either lifts the communicant in spirit up to Christ in heaven or gives Christ spiritually to the communicant by faith.

The Reformed teach that Christ's body after the ascension is in one location in heaven and therefore cannot be on many altars at once in the Supper. This teaching is confessed by saying "although he is in heaven and we are on earth."²³

Question 78: Do the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ?

No, for as the water in baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ, nor becomes the washing away of sins by itself, but is only a divine sign and confirmation of it, so also in the Lord's Supper the sacred bread does not become the body of Christ itself, although, in accordance with the nature and usage of sacraments, it is called the body of Christ.²⁴

The strongest statement of Reformed doctrine is evident in this question. First, the Roman transubstantiation is rejected by saying that the bread and wine are not changed into the very body and blood of Christ. Then it states that the Sacrament is only a divine sign or symbol

²² *Ibid.*, 74.

²³ See also Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 46–49.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

of Christ's body and blood. Remember for the Reformed a sign is always an empty sign, not a sign or pledge bringing what the sign signifies.

This answer probably also speaks against Lutheran theologians that spoke of a change in the Sacrament. For example, Martin Chemnitz, one of the formulators of the Formula of Concord, wrote concerning the Supper,

We grant, with Irenaeus, that after the blessing in the Eucharist the bread is no longer common bread but the Eucharist of the body of Christ, which now consists of two things—the earthly, that is, bread and wine, and the heavenly, that is, the body and blood of Christ. *This is certainly a great, miraculous, and truly divine change*, since before it was simply only ordinary bread and common wine. What now, after the blessing, is truly and substantially present, offered, and received is truly and substantially the body and blood of Christ. Therefore we grant that *a certain change takes place*, so that it can truly be said of the bread that it is the body of Christ. But we deny that it follows from this that we must therefore assert the kind of transubstantiation which the papalists teach.²⁵

Lutherans maintain the power of the consecration which Calvin considered to be pure medieval magic.²⁶ The Lutheran Confessions teach that the words of institution, by virtue of our Lord's original command, are the effecting cause of the Sacrament.²⁷ There is a change as a result of the consecration; the elements are not merely bread and wine, but the body and blood of the Lord are so intimately united with the bread and wine that it can be said of the bread, "This is the true body of Christ," and of the wine, "This is the true blood of Christ."²⁸

Question 79: Then why does Christ call the bread his body, and the cup his blood, or the New Covenant in his blood, and why

²⁵ Martin Chemnitz, *The Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part 2, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 2:257–258.

²⁶ John Calvin, *Calvin's Institutes*, 17:15 (Mac Dill AFB, FL: MacDonald Publishing Company), 731.

²⁷ FC SD VII, 75 (Triglotta, p. 999).

²⁸ Gaylin R. Schmeling, *Bread of Life From Heaven* (Mankato, MN: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Press, 2009), 127.

does the apostle Paul call the Supper “a means of sharing” in the body and blood of Christ?

Christ does not speak in this way except for a strong reason. He wishes to teach us by it that as bread and wine sustain this temporal life so his crucified body and shed blood are the true food and drink of our souls for eternal life. Even more, he wishes to assure us by this visible sign and pledge that we come to share in his true body and blood through the working of the Holy Spirit as surely as we receive with our mouth these holy tokens in remembrance of him, and that all his sufferings and his death are our own as certainly as if we had ourselves suffered and rendered satisfaction in our own persons.²⁹

This answer seems to say that we receive Christ’s true body and blood through the working of the Holy Spirit in the Supper, and this is how a Lutheran would like to understand the statement. Yet the statement seems to be an allusion to Calvin’s thought that the body of Christ is in heaven, and it is through the power and virtue of the Spirit that the believer is joined to that body and blood and receives its benefits.³⁰ This is usually called Calvin’s “virtualism.”³¹ The answer never states that there is a direct connection between the receiving of the bread and wine and receiving Christ’s true body and blood.

Because of the Calvinist idea that we eat Christ’s body spiritually by faith through the working of the Holy Spirit, Lutherans are very concrete in their explanation of the real presence. According to Lutheran theology, the one who subscribes to the scriptural doctrine of the real presence will confess that in the Supper: 1) He receives the very body, born of Mary, and the very blood which ran from His wounds. 2) He receives the Lord’s body and blood not only by faith but also with his mouth (*Manducatio oralis*). 3) The unbeliever also receives Christ’s body and blood, but to his harm (*Manducatio indignorum*).

Conclusion

The foreword of the 400th anniversary edition of the Heidelberg Catechism states, “After a quarrel between two representatives of

²⁹ *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 78.

³⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 17:10 (MacDonald edition, 728).

³¹ Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, volume III (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), 153–155.

the Lutheran and Reformed parties at the altar of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Heidelberg, Frederick [III] ordered a catechism to be written in an attempt to bring the people together.”³² The Heidelberg Catechism had its origin in the Palatinate and was intended to bring harmony among the various divisions in Protestantism at the time. Did the writers of the catechism accomplish their goals? Did they bring harmony? The Reformed would say that while unity between the Lutherans and Reformed was not accomplished, the Heidelberg Catechism was the best hope of the same. In fact, it became the most commonly used confession among the Reformed. Lutherans, on the other hand, would contend that while there are many ambiguous statements within the confession that could be understood to agree with Lutheran theology, in general the Heidelberg Catechism adheres to a mild form of Calvinism. Thus Protestantism remained divided in the Reformation Era and continues to be so today. [LSQ](#)

³² *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 5.

Centennial of the Death of George Stoeckhardt (1842–1913)

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THIS IS THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY of the death of Karl Georg Stöckhardt, usually referred to in America as George Stoeckhardt. He was a stalwart Lutheran confessor and one of the most important exegetes of the Synodical Conference.

Stoeckhardt's Years in Germany

George was born February 17, 1842, in Chemnitz, Saxony (for a short time known as Karl-Marx-Stadt). His parents were Julius Adolf Stoeckhardt and Rosalie née Liebster. In 1847, the Stoeckhardt family moved to Tharandt, near Dresden, where his father taught chemistry at the Royal Forest Academy.

Stoeckhardt descended from a long line of Lutheran pastors, going all the way back to the age of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Although his father was a chemist, George's grandfather, Christian Gottlob, was a pastor at Röhrsdorf and his uncle, his father's older brother, Karl Friederich Gottlob Stoeckhardt, succeeded him in this parish. Karl Friederich was involved in the Lutheran confessional renewal movement (*Erweckungsbewegung*) during his pastoral ministry. Around twenty pastors from the Stoeckhardt family served in Saxony during the nineteenth century.¹

¹ Gottfried Herrmann, *Lutherische Freikirche in Sachsen: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer lutherischen Bekenntniskirche* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1985), 208–209.

In 1873 Stoeckhardt married Anna Amalie Henriette König. Through this marriage he was a brother-in-law to August Pieper, who was a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (Wauwatosa, Wisconsin). After the death of Anna, he married Mary Kohne in 1901. She survived him and married Prof. Martin Sommer of Concordia Seminary (St. Louis, Missouri). George and Anna adopted two sons: Karl, who became a bank employee; and Ernst, who became a pastor.²

Stoeckhardt attended the Fürstenschule St. Afra in Meißen. He studied theology at Erlangen and Leipzig (1862–1866). Among his teachers in Leipzig were K.F.A. Kohnis, Franz Delitzsch, and C.E. Luthardt. In Erlangen he was a student of Gottfried Thomasius, Gerhard von Zezschwitz, and Johann von Hofmann. Hofmann imparted to him a deep interest in exegetical studies. He joined the Christian student association, *Wingolf*, where he became friends with Otto Willkomm, who was later a member of the Lutheran Free Church in Saxony (Lutherische Freikirche in Sachsen)³ and Carl Manthey-Zorn, who published many popular commentaries in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS).⁴ He also spent time in Berlin where he learned to value Hengstenberg's lectures on the Old Testament and enjoyed Leopold von Ranke, the great German historian; he visited August Vilmar's⁵ lectures in Marburg; and he travelled to Neuendettelsau, Bavaria where he met Wilhelm Loehe. Here he learned about the confessional Lutheran synods in America, including the LCMS.⁶

² Gottfried Herrmann, "Zum Lebensweg Georg Stöckhardts." *Theologische Handreichung und Information* 31:1 (February 2013): 2.

³ The part of this church in former West Germany eventually merged with other independent Lutheran groups in Germany to form the *Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche* (SELK) in 1972. The part of this church in former East Germany is known today as the *Evangelisch-Lutherische Freikirche* (ELFK). The ELFK is in fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) and was one of the founding members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). For a short history of the ELFK see Gaylin R. Schmeling, "A Brief History of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany Including Its Recent Ministry Discussion," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 42:4 (December 2002).

⁴ Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer, *Eighty Eventful Years* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), 102–104.

⁵ For more information concerning Vilmar, see August Friedrich Christian Vilmar, *The Theology of Facts Versus the Theology of Rhetoric: Confession and Defense*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Lutheran Legacy, 2008).

⁶ Joel L. Pless, "G. Stoeckhardt: The Exegetical Task," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (March 2007): 6.

After briefly considering service in India, as was the case with Carl Manthey-Zorn, he accepted a position at the German Lutheran Church in Paris. With the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), he left Paris and provided for the spiritual needs of wounded Germans in a hospital near Belgium and served as a camp pastor (*Feldprediger*). Stoeckhardt describes his ministry in Paris and his service in the military hospitals and on the Sedan battlefield in a booklet entitled, *Das Schlachtfeld von Sedan: Erinnerungen aus dem Kriegsjahr* (*The Battlefield of Sedan: Remembrances from the Year of War*).⁷

The year 1873 brought many changes in Stoeckhardt's life. That summer he was called as assistant pastor (*Diakonusstelle*) of the Saxon State Church congregation in Planitz, Saxony and, as noted above, this was the year that he married Anna. His years in the state church were difficult because of its laxity in doctrine and morals. After three years (1876), he left the state church and was called as the second pastor of the *St. Johanneskirche* in Zwickau-Planitz, which was not part of the state church. The other pastor in this congregation was Friedrich Ruhland.⁸ Together with Ruhland and the Zwickau printer Johann Herrmann,⁹ he published the first edition of *Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Freikirche*, which soon would become the official periodical of the Lutheran Free Church in Saxony. Here he made a strong stand against the liberalism of the state church. In August of 1876 Stoeckhardt was among the orthodox Lutheran pastors that formally organized the Lutheran Free Church in Saxony.¹⁰

⁷ Joel L. Pless, "In the Footsteps of Walther: The Doctrine of the Ministry in the Writings of George Stoeckhardt" (Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2008), 24.

⁸ There is an interesting connection between Ruhland and the ELS. Before he was called to the *St. Johanneskirche* in Zwickau-Planitz, Saxony, he served in the LCMS in America. While he was a pastor at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, he helped organize St. Martin Lutheran Church of Shawano in 1859, which today is a member of the ELS (St. Martin Lutheran Church Centennial Booklet, 6). Pastor Otto Willkomm, who was also president of the ELFK, later served the *St. Johanneskirche* in Zwickau-Planitz, Saxony.

⁹ Johannes Herrmann (1850–1904) was an important printer and editor of confessional Lutheran literature in the nineteenth century. His son Johannes Herrmann (1885–1965) was the head of the publishing house following his father. These faithful men were the great-grandfather and grandfather, respectively, of Gottfried Herrmann, the rector emeritus of *Lutherisches Theologisches Seminar* in Leipzig, Germany.

¹⁰ See footnote 3.

Stoeckhardt's Years in America

Partially as a result of continued conflict with the state church, in 1878 Stoeckhardt accepted a call to Holy Cross Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri, and began to teach exegesis at Concordia Seminary. He remained a professor of biblical exegesis at the seminary until his death in 1913.

Stoeckhardt and Walther

Both Stoeckhardt and Walther breathed the spirit of orthodox Lutheranism. Both desired to maintain the doctrines of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. While they were one in spirit, there were differences between the two men, and in many ways they complemented each other. Walther was first and foremost a dogmatician. He intended to produce his own dogmatics in America. While this did not come to fruition, he added a prolific number of German and Latin citations to Baier's Compendium. This is not to say that Walther was not interested in exegesis. His writings are rich in biblical knowledge. When Walther would present a biblical argument, he always started with Scriptures. Then he confirmed that this was the exegesis of the Scripture through the Confessions. Finally he included many quotes from the fathers to indicate that this had always been the teaching of the church.

Stoeckhardt was first and foremost an exegete. He had a deep interest in the biblical languages and mined Scripture for its treasures. The difference in method between Walther and Stoeckhardt has been explained in this way:

Walther produced chiefly the Lutheran doctrine and then proved it from the Scriptures; Stöckhardt produced the scriptural doctrine and then showed that it was also the doctrine of Luther and the Confessions. Thus naturally Walther's influence came down to chiefly making us orthodox and then biblical, while Stöckhardt's method was suitable for making us directly scriptural and thus at the same time Lutheran.¹¹

¹¹ J.P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller, *The Wauwatosa Theology*, Vol. 3, ed. Curtis A. Jahn (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 422–423.

Stoeckhardt, the Exegete

Stoeckhardt is known as the first exegete of the LCMS and probably the greatest exegete in American Lutheranism. He did not write a commentary of the entire New Testament as was the case with R.C.H. Lenski, but of the commentaries that he did write, there are none more profound and thoroughly orthodox. He was one of the few exegetes who was a master of both Old and New Testament studies. His commentaries and sermons based on the Old Testament demonstrate that Christ Jesus and Him crucified are the heart and center of the Old Testament and the foundation of the New Testament. Stoeckhardt was firmly committed to the inerrancy and infallibility of Holy Scripture. His hermeneutical principles were derived from the inerrant Word.

The exegetical method of Stoeckhardt was influenced by Johann von Hofmann. He indicated that he was not only a thorough student of Hofmann's *Commentary on the New Testament*, but also that he had to a certain extent learned from him his exegetical method.

Stoeckhardt himself wrote in the foreword to his 1907 Romans commentary that his exegetical method followed that of his teacher Hofmann: "The method used in the commentary before us, that is continuous, coherent exegesis and development, as it is found also in Hofmann, Godet, and essentially also in Philippi, appears the best to me to answer the just-mentioned purpose of exegesis."¹²

This method was typified by a strong emphasis on the grammar and syntax of the original languages of Scripture. The rules of grammar and syntax were carefully applied to the particular biblical passage providing an accurate rendering of the sacred text.

Stoeckhardt was influenced by Hofmann's exegetical method but not by all the tendencies of the Erlangen school. The Erlangen theologians endeavored to derive theology on the basis of three principles: the Scripture, the Confessions, and Christian experience. By adding Christian experience to the source of theology they were trying to give some credence to Schleiermacher and the influence of Romanticism.

¹² George Stoeckhardt, *Commentar über den Brief Pauli an die Römer* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1907), iii: "Die im vorliegenden Commentar befolgte Methode, fortlaufende, zusammenhängende Erklärung und Entwicklung, wie sie sich z. B. auch bei Hofmann, Godet und wesentlich auch bei Philippi findet, schien mir dem eben genannten Zweck der Auslegung am besten zu entsprechen." Quoted in Pless, "In the Footsteps of Walther," 18.

Franz Pieper referred to such an Erlangen theology as *Ichtheologie*.¹³ This emphasis on Christian experience is contrary to the orthodox Lutheran position which maintained only one source of theology: the Holy Scriptures.¹⁴ This position of orthodox Lutheranism and the Lutheran Confessions was the stand of Stoeckhardt. He was a repristination theologian as Walther was before him.

Hofmann's novel views of atonement and Christology also were not accepted by Stoeckhardt.

In Christology Hofmann adopted the modern kenotic theory. His view of Christ's work of reconciliation caused considerable resentment in the Lutheran church. He rejected the vicarious sacrifice of Christ and the thought of His suffering the wrath of God. He interpreted the work of Christ in the sense of Greek theology and Schelling's philosophy as a contest with the devil. Christ, the Holy One, suffered all the torments of evil but overcame it by preserving, in life and death, the purity desired by God in fulfilling His calling. In eschatology Hofmann maintained for the teaching of premillennianism a place in nineteenth century Lutheranism.¹⁵

Another Hofmann (Carl Gottlob, 1703–1774, professor at Wittenberg) had an important influence on Stoeckhardt. He authored a hermeneutics text in 1754, *Intitutiones Theologiae Exegeticae (Institutes of Exegetical Theology)*. Although this book was entirely in Latin, Stoeckhardt used Carl Hofmann's textbook on hermeneutics and exegesis in his seminary lectures.¹⁶

Stoeckhardt and Wauwatosa Theology

J. P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller are the names that are usually associated with Wauwatosa Theology. All three of them were professors at the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) seminary in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin at the turn of the century. These three men emphasized an exegetical study of Scripture. Koehler is usually spoken of as the "father of Wauwatosa Theology." However, both

¹³ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. I (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 6.

¹⁴ Lowell C. Green, *The Erlangen School of Theology: Its History, Teaching, and Practice* (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Lutheran Legacy, 2010), 46.

¹⁵ J.L. Neve, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. II (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania: The Muhlenberg Press, 1943), 135.

¹⁶ Pless, "In the Footsteps of Walther," 39.

Koehler and Pieper were students of Stoeckhardt at the St. Louis seminary and were thoroughly influenced by him. Therefore, Stoeckhardt is at least the grandfather of Wauwatosa Theology if not the father.

The main emphasis of Wauwatosa Theology was a greater stress on independent biblical exegesis and a lesser stress on what the fathers and the seventeenth-century dogmatists said on a particular subject. It was believed that there was a tendency among the older Lutheran theologians to go first to the Confessions and the fathers in a theological discussion and then to the Scriptures. The Wauwatosa theologians believed that one should make a careful exegesis of the text of Scripture first and then compare the results with the Confessions and the fathers.

It would be a caricature of Walther and the older Lutheran theologians to assume that they had very little concern for exegetical theology, that they simply answered every theological question from the Confessions and the seventeenth-century dogmatists (*Väter Theologie*). At the same time, it is a caricature of Wauwatosa Theology to imply that these theologians had no interest in the Lutheran Confessions and the Lutheran fathers.

A Proper Study of Scripture

Lutheran theologians will go first to the inerrant Scriptures which are the only source of doctrine. They will use the proper rules of hermeneutics derived from Scripture to reach a biblical conclusion. In theological controversy they first will study the Bible and prepare a careful exegesis of the pertinent texts. The orthodox Lutheran theologian will make his stand on the inerrant Scriptures.

Each new generation of theologians must study the Scriptures in order to make its teachings its own. They will carefully mine the Scriptures for its truths. When the doctrines of Scripture in this way become our own they will be much easier to defend and be more cherished in our midst than if they were simply handed down to us.

An orthodox theologian will make a careful exegesis of the text of Scripture. He will then compare his conclusions with that of the fathers. A twenty-first-century theologian knows that he is not the only one who ever had great exegetical expertise. He understands that he can be influenced by the worldviews around him. It is very difficult to do exegesis in a vacuum. He compares his conclusions with the generations of Christians that have gone before him. The forefathers of the Synodical Conference, Gerhard and the seventeenth-century dogmatists, Chemnitz, and Luther may not always be correct. However, one

should be very certain of his biblical stance when he says the fathers misunderstood Scripture or taught contrary to them.

The orthodox Lutheran exegete will make that same comparison with the Confessions. He will not go first to the Confessions but to the Scripture and make a proper study of the text. Then he will compare his conclusions with the Confessions. If his conclusions are contrary to the doctrine maintained in the Confessions, he knows that his conclusions are in error for the Confessions are the correct exposition of the Scriptures. A Lutheran theologian adheres to the Confessions because they present a proper understanding of the Scriptures, while we accept the teachings of the fathers as long as they are in agreement with the Scriptures and the Confessions.

Stoekhardt and the Election Controversy (Gnadenwahlstreit, Naadevalgstrid)

In the 1880s a controversy arose in the Synodical Conference concerning the doctrine of election. C.F.W. Walther wrote a paper on election in 1877 which was severely criticized by F.A. Schmidt, the president of Luther Seminary of the Norwegian Synod. Walther, in accord with Scripture, explained that God in His mercy chose people to salvation. This choosing took place in eternity on the basis of God's grace in Christ. The Father sent His only-begotten Son into the flesh as the one atoning sacrifice. In His resurrection the whole world was declared innocent. This verdict of not guilty is brought to the individual in the means of grace. Through the Word and the Sacraments, these individuals are brought to faith in Christ, justified, sanctified, and glorified. Salvation is not in any way a human activity, but entirely the work of God. The purpose of the doctrine of election is to give comfort to the Christian. Our salvation is absolutely certain; no one can pluck us out of the Father's hand (Romans 8:28–32; Ephesians 1:3–7; John 10:27–29).

Schmidt maintained that individuals are elected in view of faith (*intuitu fidei*). While this terminology had been used in a legitimate way in the past by Gerhard¹⁷ and others, Schmidt used the statement to imply that God elects man on the basis of his faith, his lack of resistance to the Holy Spirit, or something in man. He said, among other things, "We believe and teach now...that salvation in a certain sense does not

¹⁷ See Theodore A. Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill* (Mankato, Minnesota: Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1968), 17.

depend on God alone.”¹⁸ Therefore salvation would not be entirely the work of God but to some degree based on human effort.

This controversy occurred around the same time that Stoeckhardt arrived in America. He immediately saw that Walther was correct in this discussion and began to publish helpful articles in *Lehre und Wehre* on election, such as “Scriptural Proof for the Doctrine of Election.”¹⁹ As Walther, he maintained that God’s grace in election is the cause of one’s coming to faith and not that the faith of the individual is the cause of his election.

Stoeckhardt and the Doctrine of Church and Ministry

In the early 1900s questions began to arise in the Synodical Conference concerning the doctrine of the church and the doctrine of the public ministry. The questions centered on the following issues:

- a. Some restrict the concept of a divinely instituted church local (the Church of Christ as it appears on earth—*ἐκκλησία*, Matthew 18) to the local congregation and consider all gatherings of believers, groups of Christians beyond the local congregation, such as synods, conferences, etc., a purely human arrangement.
- b. Others find in the descriptive name of church (*ἐκκλησία*, they who are called out) a term which applies with equal propriety to the various groupings into which the Holy Spirit has gathered His believers, local congregations as well as larger groups.
- c. Some restrict the idea of a divinely instituted ministry to the pastorate of a local congregation and consider such offices as teachers, professors, synodical officials, etc., branches of this office without a specific command of God, established in Christian liberty.
- d. Others see in “ministry” a comprehensive term which covers the various special offices with which the ascended Lord has endowed His Church.²⁰

C.F.W. Walther, the father of confessional Lutheranism in America, is often cited as maintaining the view espoused in a and c, above. This,

¹⁸ Paul Ylvisaker, *A Blessing in the Midst of the Land* (np: 1953), 20.

¹⁹ “Schriftbeweis für die Lehre von der Gnadenwahl,” *Lehre und Wehre* 26 (1880): 176.

²⁰ *Proceedings of the Synodical Conference*, 1948: 141.

however, appears not to be the case.²¹ He spoke of gatherings around the means of grace, such as synod, as church and of offices in the church with a limited use of the keys as given by God.

Stoeckhardt taught much the same as Walther, although at times his terminology appears otherwise. In a *Lehre und Wehre* Stoeckhardt writes concerning female Lutheran elementary teachers, “Thus every female teacher truly teaches, and that is a public teaching. She teaches God’s Word on behalf of the congregation.”²²

Stoeckhardt as Author and Writer

During his years as professor, Stoeckhardt wrote a goodly number of commentaries; probably the best known of these are those on Romans, Ephesians, and 1 Peter. In addition, a number of commentaries have been produced based on Stoeckhardt’s class notes.²³ They cover many of the New Testament books and the Psalms. Many of these commentaries have been and are used in the exegetical courses at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. In addition, Stoeckhardt produced an outline of biblical history, translated into English as *Wisdom for Today*.

Stoeckhardt’s monogram, entitled *Lectures on the Three Letters of John*, gives an excellent defense for including the *Comma Johanneum* in the sacred text. The *Comma Johanneum* is a section of 1 John 5:7–8 not found in many of the ancient manuscripts or writings of the early church fathers but is a clear witness to the doctrine of the Trinity: “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.” His defense is found in the article entitled “Stoeckhardt and the *Comma Johanneum*” in this issue of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*.

Pastoral care and concern were a definite part of Stoeckhardt’s life and work. His preaching was remembered as clear, simple, and concise with a proper emphasis on Law and Gospel. He produced his own postille (*Gnade um Gnade*), a book of Advent sermons (*Adventspredigten*,

²¹ See C. Lawrenz, “An Evaluation of Walther’s Theses on the Church and its Ministry,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 85–139; and Gaylin R. Schmeling, *Bread of Life from Heaven* (Mankato, Minnesota: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Press, 2009), 243, 254–256.

²² G. Stöckhardt, “Von dem Beruf der Lehrerinnen an christlichen Gemeindeschulen,” *Lehre und Wehre* 43 (March 1897): 66.

²³ There were translations of class notes from a number of his former students. However, the individual responsible for the final editing of these translations and their publication was Hugo W. Degner of Fairmont, Minnesota.

Auslegung der vornehmsten Weissagungen des Alten Testaments), and a book of Lenten sermons (*Passionspredigten*).

In his book of Advent sermons, there is an insightful presentation of the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 11:1–10. He explains how the new creation pictures in this text do not refer to the millennium but to the peace between God and man restored through the work of the root of Jesse, Jesus Christ. In the Gospel we have a foretaste of Eden's peace which we will have in all its fullness in heaven.²⁴

Stoeckhardt's book of Lenten sermons begins with a sermon on the crossing of the Kidron, where he compares David and Jesus. In this sermon his use of typology is evident. As David crossed the Kidron in sorrow with his faithful followers fleeing his own son he discovered that even Ahithophel, his trusted advisor, had betrayed him. Likewise as Jesus crosses the Kidron with His faithful followers, He met His betrayer in the garden, one of His own trusted disciples (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18). He is indeed great David's Greater Son.²⁵

The journal for pastors in the early years of the LCMS was known as *Lehre und Wehre*, "Doctrine and Defense." The pages of this journal are filled with articles by Stoeckhardt. This journal was a precursor to the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, which later became known as the *Concordia Journal*. Stoeckhardt also wrote in *Der Lutheraner* and produced a considerable amount of sermon material in the LCMS homiletical journal, *Magazin für evangelisch-lutherische Homiletik*.

A special service of love to the church in America is evident in Stoeckhardt's initiative and encouragement of a new edition of *Luther's Works*. This edition was a revision of the Walch edition, dating from 1740–1753 and compiled by Johann Georg Walch. Here Luther's Latin works are translated into German. The edition appeared from 1880–1910, published by Concordia Publishing House in 23 volumes. F.A. Hoppe served as the editor. It is usually known as the St. Louis edition or Walch² (W²). It was reprinted in Germany in 1983 by Lutherische Buchhandlung Harms, Groß Oesingen.

Conclusion

George Stoeckhardt died suddenly of a massive stroke on January 9, 1913. Four days later his brother-in-law and pastor, C.C.

²⁴ A translation of this Advent sermon on Isaiah 11 may be found in *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (September 1984): 32–42.

²⁵ George Stöckhardt, *Passionspredigten* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1885), 1–13.

Schmidt, conducted his funeral at Holy Cross Lutheran Church where he had once been called as pastor. His burial took place at Concordia Cemetery near the grave of his dear friend C.F.W. Walther. His life spanned two continents and two centuries. He was a stalwart Lutheran confessor and one of the most important exegetes of the Synodical Conference. He had a profound influence on generations of LCMS pastors, he inspired the founders of Wauwatosa Theology in the WELS, and through his commentaries and sermon books, he was a great blessing to our synod. [LSQ](#)

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Stoeckhardt and the Comma Johanneum

George Stoeckhardt

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Editor's Note: *Reprinted from George Stoeckhardt. Lectures on the Three Letters of John. Translated by Hugo W. Degner. Aitkin, Minnesota: Hope Press, 1963, pp. 116–123. This section of Lectures on the Three Letters of John gives an excellent defense for including the Comma Johanneum in the sacred text.*

THIS IS HE THAT CAME by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth” ([1 John 5:6] KJV).

“This is He who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water alone, but with the water and the blood; and it is the Spirit who bears witness that the Spirit is the truth.” Jesus, the Son of God, had just been denoted as the object of faith. That faith which firmly believes that Jesus is the Son of God is the true faith and has a sure foundation.

Concerning this object of faith a further statement is made: “He has come through water and blood.” What is the meaning of these two terms, “water and blood”?

Most of the older interpreters take “water” to refer to the Baptism which Jesus received, and “blood” to the blood which He shed on the cross for our redemption. They think John would here offer a retrospective glance on Christ’s coming as our Redeemer. First He was baptized

with water, and at the end of His mission He shed His blood on the cross.

But what should we then make of “through” or “by” water and blood? The aforementioned interpreters answered that through His Baptism and through His blood shed on the cross He gave evidence that He was the Redeemer. Yet it does not state that here, but merely that He has “come.” Then, too, we must bear in mind, when the Scripture in other places speaks of Christ’s work of redemption, it never mentions the Baptism of Jesus in this connection. And never is His Baptism placed parallel to His death. We certainly would not want to say that Christ redeemed us through His Baptism and through His death.

Above all it should be noted that “water” and “blood” here are referred to as bearing witness. For in the words immediately following it is said, “And it is the Spirit who bears witness.” That implies that other witnesses must have been mentioned. And a little farther down it is asserted, “There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood.” So there can be no question but that water and blood here come into consideration as such that bear witness, and not as the means of our redemption.

Christ has come through water and blood and so has borne witness of Himself. This water and this blood point to a particular manner of Christ’s coming. It is not ordinary water that is meant here, but the water of Holy Baptism. And it is not ordinary blood, but the very blood of Christ, shed for our redemption to which John refers.

But this water and blood are yet present on earth. The blood of Christ was not destroyed from the earth by His death on the cross. These two terms, “water” and “blood,” refer to the two Sacraments which Christ instituted, the “water” to Baptism, and the “blood” to the Sacrament of the true body and blood of Christ. Both Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, bear witness of Christ.

This agrees well with the expression, “This is He who came” (ἦλθών). Christ came, appeared, through water and blood. One may translate (ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ... ἐν τῷ αἵματι) “with water and blood.” However, one must bear in mind that this does not refer to His coming into flesh, but rather to His spiritual coming.

Christ came by His Spirit to His Church to dwell among His own. And by these means, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, He still comes and is present with His congregation. Of such spiritual coming Scripture also speaks in other places, e.g., Ephesians 2:16, 17: “And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having

slain the enmity thereby: and *came and preached* peace to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh." Paul writes to the Ephesians who were once heathen. The Gospel was brought to them, and so, says Paul, Christ, the crucified and risen Savior, "came and preached peace." Christ comes to men by the Gospel.

All exegetes admit that Ephesians 2:17 speaks of a spiritual coming of Christ. But as Jesus comes by the Gospel and dwells among men, so He comes also by the Sacraments, the other means of grace, here referred to as water and blood. Where these are in use, there Christ is present, and the Sacraments bear witness of His presence.

These two witnesses are joined by a third. "And it is the Spirit that bears witness." The Spirit is put on the same level with Baptism and the Lord's Supper as witnesses. The Sacraments are sensuous, visible means by which witness is borne for Christ. The Spirit bears audible witness for Christ, which reaches men through their hearing. And how does the Spirit bear witness? It is through the Word of God. Christ repeatedly asserted that His words were Spirit and life.

And of this Word, of this embodiment of the Spirit, it is further asserted: "And the Spirit bears witness that the Spirit is truth." The Spirit gives testimony of Himself that He is the truth. It is the Spirit of God who is bearing witness to men. How could the Spirit of God speak anything but the truth? Hence, what the Spirit testifies needs no further proof: it is of itself (*eo ipso*) divine truth. The Word of God is the embodied Spirit of God. On the basis of this passage we teach that the Word of God needs no demonstration for its truthfulness. It is in itself divine truth. It bears witness of itself that it is the truth. We bow to the witness of the Word. In it God Himself speaks to us. We need no further witness to become convinced. Whoever has the testimony of the Word in his heart has the divine assurance and asks for no more proof. It is by the Word alone that we become certain of divine truth. The Word is its own proof because it is the Word of God.

Greater detail concerning the three witnesses is now offered, which we welcome.

The text here has a number of variants, and it is somewhat difficult to determine which is the correct reading. In some of the earlier and later Bible editions we find the following words inserted into the text: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three agree in one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ

οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ). These words are missing in all Greek codices except in those of the sixteenth century. They are found in some of the Latin editions, but not before the eighth century. From this all modern interpreters have reached the conclusion that these words are spurious and are to be considered as a later interpolation. We regard a certain reading doubtful already when it occurs only in one or the other codex, while the majority of the codices do not have it. But in this case not one of the extant original Greek codices contains this reading, and therefore it is without doubt not genuine. In addition, they point out that in the Arian controversy these words never were quoted by the orthodox proponents, when they would have proved a formidable defense against the heresy of Arius.

Now, what shall we say? If we had no other information from the ancient Church, we, too, would have to conclude that these words lack the earmarks of authenticity. However, we do have some remarks of the Old Latin church fathers which obviously made use of these very words. We refer to the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Phoebadius. Tertullian writes: *Contra Praxian*, c. 25, *Ita conexus patria in filio et filii in paraceto* (and so there is a connection of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Comforter). *Tres efficit coharrentis alterum ex alteris, qui tres unum sunt, non unus, quo modo dictum est.* (*Ante Nicene F.* Vol. 3, 621, 631)

We note here that Tertullian emphasizes the “*unum*” saying, “*unum, non unus.*” He obviously identifies the “*unum*” with the Word of Scripture.

Cyprian writes in his *De Unitate Ecclesiae* (*Ante Nicene F.* Vol. 5, 423 f.): *De patre et filio et spiritu sancto scriptum est et tres unum sunt.* This is an exact quotation. “*Scriptum est*” would point to a word of Scripture, which occurs only in [I] John, ep. 5:7.

Phoebadius, bishop of Agenne in Aquitania, in his writing, *Contra Ariano*, c. 45, also names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and makes the remark: “*Unus tamen Deus omnia, quia tres unum sunt.*” The meaning is: These three are one God, since it is certain that these three are one. The latter part of the statement proves the former.

Now the question arises, What do these passages that have been quoted conclusively prove? Very obviously this, that these church fathers must have had a codex in hand in which the words which they quoted did occur. And such a codex must have been at least as old as the oldest we know of today. It must have been a manuscript of the second century. We know very little of the older codices and manuscripts. Very

few of the older ones are extant. We will have to assume that in the second century every congregation had a manuscript of one or more of the Gospels. So there were once thousands of such sacred manuscripts, yet only ten of these have come down us. We must say that we lack an accurate knowledge of these older manuscripts. But so much appears certain that those words we are concerned with must have been found in the codices which were in the hands of those early North African Christians. Not only Tertullian, Cyprian, and Phoebadius knew of these words of Scripture, but also all their readers. The fathers quoted these for the purpose that their readers might reassure themselves by looking up and reading for themselves these Scripture references. Hence, the reading containing these words must have been common.

Moreover, one can easily explain how these words came to be omitted in later codices. The eye of a copyist slipped down from the first μαρτυροῦντες to the second line below, omitting then also the words between. This can, of course, not be used as a proof for our contention. It does, however, make it quite plausible how it could have happened that these important words came to be omitted. So much is certain, it is just as wrong to say these words are spurious, as to say these words are genuine. And when outward reasons do not sufficiently support a certain reading, we must all the more depend upon inner grounds. For the time being we shall consider these words as authentic.

“The Father, the Word, and the Spirit, these three are one.” These three bear witness also that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the only Savior of the world. And this testimony constitutes the very essence of the Christian faith. They bear witness in heaven, but evidently for the benefit of men on earth. We are to become certain of the contents of our faith. God’s heaven includes the earth. This witness bearing “in heaven” would characterize this witness as being super-mundane. It is a divine witness, higher than that of men. Of the Three that witness it is asserted that they are “one.” This would, then, also be a proof for the doctrine of the Trinity. And if these Three are one in Being, then they must also be one in work and purpose.

“And there are three that bear witness on earth.” These witnesses are of a sensuous nature, perceptible to our human senses. They have earlier been mentioned, as Spirit, water, and blood, which signifies, as we have seen, the Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. While it cannot be properly said of these three that they are one in essence, it can nevertheless be stated that they are one in purpose (οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι). And we are not to think of this dual witness, the one “in heaven,” the other “on

earth,” as being separate. No, rather the one blends and merges with the other. That which men hear and see of it is Spirit, water, and blood, or the Word and Sacraments. But in and through these means the Triune God Himself bears witness. So we see that our means of grace are endowed with divine authority and efficacy. God would not speak to men by calling to them out of heaven. Rather He has ordained certain means, adapted to our earthly existence, through which He would communicate to us His Word and will. So the three heavenly Witnesses bear witness through the witness of men. (The “ὅτι” has the purpose of explaining the term “μαρτυροῦντες,” which follows later. But in verse 7 the expression “μαρτυροῦντες” received no further explanation, and we would have none if the words in question would be omitted. There we read first “...and the three bear witness.”) That means that they explain the same by the same (*idem per idem*).

That there are three who bear witness was said earlier already. But then follows another important explanatory statement in verse 6, namely, that through these three human witnesses on earth the great Triune God Himself bears witness. And so then a person feels rather well justified to insist that the words in question should be retained for the sake of offering a much needed connection with the foregoing. LSQ

Book Review

LSQ Vol. 53, No. 4 (December 2013)

Book Review: The Gospel Preached Through Music: The Purpose and Practice of Lutheran Church Music

Daniel Zager. *The Gospel Preached Through Music: The Purpose and Practice of Lutheran Church Music*. Ft. Wayne: The Good Shepherd Institute, 2013. 87 pages. \$16.99.

Daniel Zager is certainly not the first to write about the subject of music in the Lutheran church or its role in worship. However his short volume on the subject does manage to explore new ground, as it seeks to focus especially on the purpose and practice of music in the Lutheran church.

Zager admits from the outset that “it is impossible to discuss church

music without referring to worship.”¹ However he does manage to keep his focus using a short outline on the purpose, practice, and choices of Lutheran church music. In the first two sections he reviews the works of Luther, Praetorius, Schütz, and Bach, examining both their writings on the subject and their compositions. The chapter examining the practice of church music is the heart of the book, where he takes some time to deal with the myth of the “neutrality” of music: that the music is only a vehicle for the text. He demonstrates that music always bears some meaning, even apart from a text. “[T]hink about how music is used in conjunction with television advertising... music has to be carefully chosen or composed in order to convey just the right meaning. The music used to market a delicate perfume will differ

¹ ix.

in its sounds from the music used to sell the newest brand of beer.”²

This chapter is at the same time the strongest and the weakest in the book. Its strength is in its examination of the musical work of Luther, Praetorius, Schütz, and Bach—as well as a number of contemporary Lutheran composers—and in the questions it asks about the musicality and use of “contemporary worship” such as, “What does it mean when the musicians for ‘traditional’ worship sing and play from a rear gallery, but the musicians of the ‘praise band’ and chorus are placed front and center, as on a stage, for all to observe?”³ The weakness is that in seeking to maintain its focus on musical aspects, it can get technical at times, and some of the points he makes will be lost on readers who do not have at least an elementary understanding of music

theory. It is also the weakest written chapter, and would have benefited from tighter editing.

The book concludes with a chapter on the choices in Lutheran church music, and how the hymns and music used in the service can greatly edify the theme of the day, or detract from it. There is also a nice practical section in here on the use of the choir, and how even a small choir singing brief pieces can enhance the service.

That final chapter begins with the question, “What music shall we sing and play in Lutheran worship?” Prof. Zager shows he is a teacher by not so much answering the question, but forcing the reader to deal with it by both giving information to consider and asking good Socratic questions to provoke thought on the topic.

— Alexander K. Ring

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² 35.

³ 37.

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