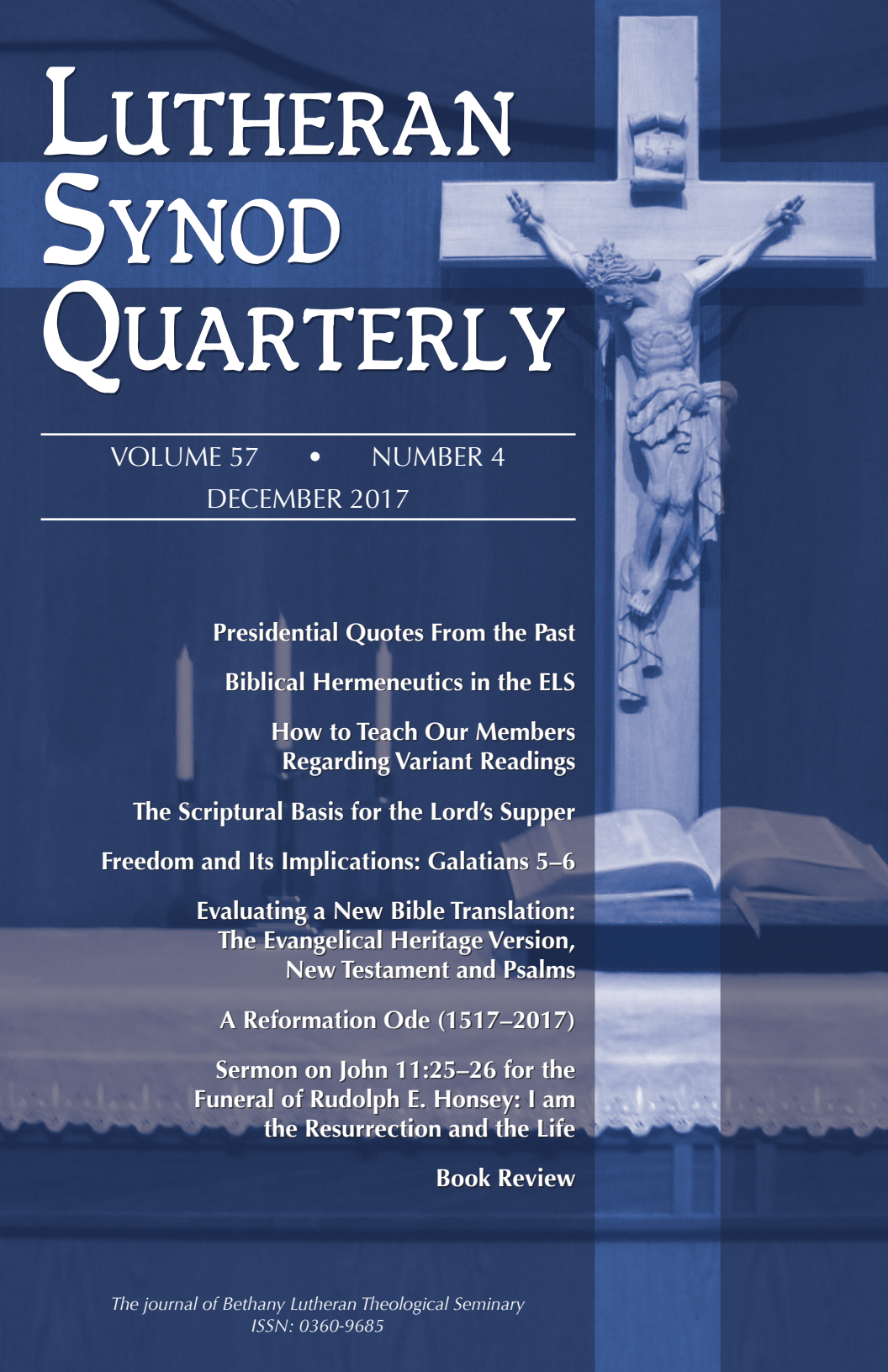


LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY



VOLUME 57 • NUMBER 4
DECEMBER 2017

Presidential Quotes From the Past

Biblical Hermeneutics in the ELS

**How to Teach Our Members
Regarding Variant Readings**

The Scriptural Basis for the Lord's Supper

Freedom and Its Implications: Galatians 5–6

**Evaluating a New Bible Translation:
The Evangelical Heritage Version,
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Book Review

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The journal of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF..... Gaylin R. Schmeling
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR..... Michael K. Smith
LAYOUT EDITOR..... Daniel J. Hartwig
PRINTER..... Books of the Way of the Lord

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Foreword

LSQ Vol. 57, No. 4 (December 2017)

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE *QUARTERLY* WE ARE continuing a series of quotations entitled “Presidential Quotes From the Past.” The series includes a number of relevant, Christ-centered quotes from the former presidents of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) as we look forward to the one-hundredth anniversary of the synod in 1918.

The Rev. John Moldstad, president of the ELS, has provided the *Quarterly* with an essay entitled, “Biblical Hermeneutics in the ELS.” Hermeneutics serves as the technical term for the study of the principles used by the interpreter of the written Word of God. Hermeneutics strives to uphold the axiom, “Scripture interprets Scripture.” This art of interpreting is done with prayerful guidance, seeking always the blessing of God the Holy Spirit. It includes first and foremost the deeply held belief that the preserved, transmitted text(s) before us is in its entirety the verbally inerrant and inspired Word of God.

The topic of variant readings is a complicated one. However this is not a good excuse to avoid discussing the topic. There are many voices out in the world today challenging the authority and authenticity of the Bible. We must equip our people with a basic knowledge of this subject. Most importantly, we must always stress that we have the inspired, inerrant word of God, and that none of its teachings are in question. This is the point of the essay, “How to Teach Our Members Regarding Variant

Readings,” by the Rev. Matthew Moldstad. The Rev. Moldstad is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, Minnesota.

The essay entitled, “The Scriptural Basis for the Lord’s Supper,” offers the main biblical texts concerning the Lord’s Supper. The doctrine of the Supper is explicated and the great comfort of this teaching is presented. The Holy Supper is indeed a treasure for Christians.

In preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, the ELS General Pastoral Conference received three essays summarizing Luther’s commentary on Galatians (LW 26). The third essay in this series, entitled “Freedom and Its Implications: Galatians 5–6,” was written by the Rev. Timothy J. Bartels, who is pastor of Saved By Grace Lutheran Church in Gresham, Oregon. In this, the last section of Galatians, Paul speaks of liberty. Jesus set us at liberty from the tyranny of the law. He broke its shackles for us. As Paul speaks of this liberty, he reviews grace alone, guards against abusing grace, instructs on pastoral theology and concludes his letter to the Galatians.

The essay entitled, “Evaluating a New Bible Translation: The EHV, New Testament and Psalms,” gives an overview of the new Bible translation, *Evangelical Heritage Version* (EHV). The present translation includes the New Testament and Psalms, while the Old Testament is forthcoming. The New Testament and Psalms were prepared this year as part of the commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. This translation was produced by pastors and professors of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the ELS. This essay was written by the Rev. Daniel Hartwig, who is pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Okauchee, Wisconsin.

Also included in this *Quarterly* is a sermon for the funeral of Rudolph Honsey, written by the Rev. John Petersen, pastor of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota; a Reformation Ode by the Rev. Paul Madson; and a book review by the Rev. Paul Lange, pastor of Abiding Word Lutheran Church in Bowling Green, Ohio.

– GRS

Presidential Quotes From the Past

LSQ Vol. 57, No. 4 (December 2017)

WITH A PURE AND UNSULLIED GOSPEL AS OUR possession we and our like-minded brethren in other synods should of all men be most zealous in exerting ourselves to the utmost to share this precious heritage with our fellowmen. Yes, our synod should not only be known as one which wants to be faithful to the Word, as Scripture requires, but also as one which is most zealous in teaching that Word to our fellowmen, as Scripture also requires.

In this connection it is not out of order to remind ourselves to be on guard against assuming a negative complex in which we emphasize everything we are against instead of letting the glorious comforting and soul-saving Gospel, which we have and are contending for, be the hallmark for which we wish to be known. No church can grow or expect to attract many people to its standard if it does not have something positive to offer men, something to give them which they, perhaps unknown to themselves, are longing for and which can make them happier and more blessed for this life, to say nothing of the life still to come. What better reputation could we have than to be known as a church which has an anxious passion and an earnest zeal for sharing the precious Gospel-heritage we have with everyone who is still without it? [LSQ](#)

Excerpt from M.H. Otto, "President's Message," *Synod Report*, 1957:9.

Biblical Hermeneutics in the ELS

John A. Moldstad
President, Evangelical Lutheran Synod

LSQ Vol. 57, No. 4 (December 2017)

CONFESSIONAL LUTHERANS AGREE ON THE proper approach to Holy Scripture. “We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and governing principle according to which all teachings and teachers are to be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone, as it is written, ‘Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path’ (Ps. 119[:105]). ... Holy Scripture alone remains the only judge, rule and guiding principle, according to which, as the only touchstone, all teachings should and must be recognized and judged, whether they are good or evil, correct or incorrect.”¹

Hermeneutics serves as the technical term for the study of the principles used by the interpreter of the written Word of God. For our purposes here, hermeneutics strives to uphold the axiom, “Scripture interprets Scripture.” This art of interpreting is done with prayerful guidance, seeking always the blessing of God the Holy Spirit. It includes first and foremost the deeply held belief that the preserved, transmitted text(s) before us is in its entirety the verbally inerrant and inspired Word of God. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; NIV84).

¹ Formula of Concord, Epitome 1 & 7 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 486–487.

We rejoice when we hear of church bodies searching and mining the truths of God's holy Word and then correspondingly committing themselves fully to the proclamation and defense of such. Sadly, though, the vast sea of Lutheranism today and of Christendom worldwide teems with murkiness, offering little clarity or hope by way of acceptable, God-pleasing hermeneutics.

Among conservative Lutherans two questions often rise when clarification or emphasis is necessary in the interpretation of a passage or tenet under discussion. For example, in the perennial debates on Church and Ministry one readily sees the importance of answering the following:

- 1) **To what degree should the writings of the Lutheran Confessions and the writings of the church fathers have a bearing on the meaning extracted from Holy Writ by a confessionally-bound exegete?** (Related to this is a proper and improper understanding of what is broadly categorized as “analogy of faith.”)
- 2) **How do we stand on the recognition of biblical doctrine by means of implication?** (We refer here to times when an explicit *sedes doctrinae* cannot be found to carry the weight. A dogmatic conclusion is inferred through a combination of verses. Care has to be taken, of course, in observing the necessary distinction between what is descriptive and prescriptive.)

Some may wonder if the Evangelical Lutheran Synod lists a set of principles for the interpretation of the Bible. We can provide a brief explanation of what is done at our Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in its standard curriculum.

Hermeneutics at BLTS

This writer was privileged to teach the hermeneutics course at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary from 1994–2001. No single textbook was used for the class. Lecture notes were drawn primarily from the following sources: W. M. H. Petersen's *Hermeneutics* (1899, Luther Seminary, Hamline, Minnesota), J. B. Madson's class notes (taught at BLTS, 1970–94), D. Kuske's notes from WLS, and the book by R. Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions* (Concordia Publishing House, 1968). From 2002–2005 Pres. Gaylin Schmeling taught the course, and at present, Prof. Michael Smith is the

instructor (2006–). The approach—to my knowledge—is still eclectic, sharing information from various sources.

During my teaching stint, at the outset of each first semester, the juniors would be provided with these definitions:

- **W. M. H. Petersen:** “Hermeneutics is the finding out and the communicating to others the mind of God as revealed in Scripture, and thus communicating the thoughts and the very words of God to others.”
- **D. Kuske:** “The application of everyday principles of interpreting written symbols to the written symbols of the Biblical languages.... [T]he purpose then is to reconstruct the meaning which the writer intended for the original readers; nothing more, nothing less.”
- **J. B. Madson:** “Hermeneutics is a term that designates the art or science of interpretation, while exegesis is the practice of the science or art of hermeneutics, that is, the actual interpretation of a concrete passage according to the principles of interpretation.”
- Also, this particular caveat from **F. Pieper** was mentioned:

“Let the exegete particularly study the words εἴ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια θεοῦ (1 Pet. 4:11). What he cannot speak as God’s Word, he should leave unuttered. If he is not certain that he is speaking God’s Word, he should say so and—following Luther’s advice—leave the passage unexplained. ... He must reject every interpretation which is based on something outside Scripture.”²

While no *official* list of hermeneutical principles was cast in stone, nine guideposts were shared with the students. These were adapted from J. B. Madson’s classes and expanded over time. The list is here presented in edited form:

A SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

1. Scripture is the Word of God and is understood in its own light. This is the principle, “Let Scripture interpret Scripture.” A person must prove the correctness of his teaching solely by and from Scripture. The Holy Spirit is the only safe and true interpreter of Scripture. The interpreter of Scripture is merely to set forth the meaning of the Holy Spirit.

² Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 365.

2. The central truth of Scripture is to present Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Included here is the centrality of justification by faith as the chief article, as well as the distinction between Law and Gospel. Without this distinction the central message of Scripture cannot be maintained.

3. Since the Bible comes to us in human speech, the laws of human speech (grammar, syntax) are to be observed.

4. All doctrines or teachings must be based on clear passages. The meaning of obscure or figurative or symbolic passages must be understood in the light of clear passages treating the same subject.

5. No explanation of Scripture is permissible which is contrary to the “analogy of faith.”³ The “analogy of faith” is the sum total of all the clear passages of Scripture which set forth a doctrine or doctrines. It refers to the plain passages of Scripture where the articles of faith are set forth in clear and precise terms.

6. No Bible passage is to be taken out of its context. The verses and chapters preceding and following a passage must be given careful consideration.

7. Each passage of Scripture has only one Spirit-intended meaning.

8. God is truth and therefore he cannot contradict himself. He will not say one thing in one place and the exact opposite in another.

9. We must take the words of the Bible literally—that is, in their clear and plain meaning, unless we are forced by Scripture itself to understand the passage/section figuratively.

Use of the Fathers

A fuzzy definition of *analogy of faith* has at times contributed to perceived tensions. Is *analogy of faith*—whether found in Romans 12:6 or not—used uniformly by Lutherans as an interpretive principle? What we commonly call *analogy of faith* often is equated with the synonymous

³ When we interpret *sedes doctrinae*, we must not deviate from the grammatical and historical sense of the words. If concepts occur here which seem according to reason to contradict other doctrines of Scripture, then one dare not change the meaning of these concepts or give them a new form in order to make them agree with other doctrines. It is self-evident that these concepts must be clearly and unmistakably expressed in the passage we are treating. We can properly compare only those passages that deal with exactly the same doctrine, and here the more obscure passages must be explained by the clearer passages. If, according to human opinion, there exists the difficulty that the *locus classicus* 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.

“rule of faith” (*regula fidei*). This may not be so helpful. Augustine is credited with establishing the *regula fidei*.⁴ Yet, his classification of such not only included clear passages from Scripture providing input on those less clear, it included the official and/or creedal writings of church fathers intended to hedge in the interpretation put forth on any difficult portion of Scripture. The correct view of *analogy of faith* is limited to **verses within Scripture directly pertaining to the subject at hand**. These applicable passages assist the interpreter in extracting meaning from a verse(s) less clear but addressing the same doctrine.⁵ Abraham Calov summed up the principle this way: “The analogy of faith is the consistency of the doctrine clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures.”⁶

In the old Election Controversy, red flags appropriately were raised when Ohio and Iowa theologians wanted to insert John 3:16 into passages pertinent to predestination.⁷ Their claim was that “faith in Christ” trumped all else; so it was deemed compulsory to inject “in view of faith” into the whole array of passages dealing with God’s gracious election. But the proverbial cart then pulls the horse. The Ohioans advocated an *erroneous* “analogy of faith” principle. Their approach effectually abrogated “letting Scripture interpret Scripture.”

Only the sum total of clear verses applicable to the same doctrinal subject can and should be brought to bear on the interpretation of an unclear verse. This provides protection against an atomization of Scripture and instead reinforces the unity principle. If a *proper analogy of faith* is not followed, nuanced interpretations inevitably will surface and militate against the body of Christian doctrine set forth in the *sedes*.

⁴ James Voelz in *What Does This Mean?* 2nd edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995) defines *regula fidei* as “early Christian statements of faith formulated in local contexts and drawn from the same apostolic source as the books of the NT, materially identical with later formal creeds” (366).

⁵ Augustine, by the way, also is cited as following this interpretive rule: when a passage of Scripture is either obscure or ambiguous, it is allowable to explain it in a different manner, provided that the analogy of faith is not violated.

⁶ H. Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 70. See also AC Ap XXVII 60: “... clear and certain passages of Scripture.”

⁷ At the first of five inter-synodical free conferences on election and conversion (held between 1903–1906), Dr. Francis 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).

Yet there is a caution. Even a single verse or word from Holy Writ, says our Lord, cannot be broken (John 10:35). There are times also when a paradox is presented. God's Word must stand despite human reason to the contrary. A correct *analogy of faith* principle respects its own governing parameters without coercing a given passage under interpretation to vitiate its Spirit-intended meaning.⁸

To what extent hermeneutically do we make an 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?" On the one hand, if exegesis is stressed nearly to exclusion of dogma, the question is raised as to how any pure exegesis can ever be done in a vacuum.⁹ On the other hand, if dogma is stressed at the expense of thorough exegesis, the charge of traditionalism can hardly be avoided. Balance is vital.

Use of the Confessions

As confessional Lutherans we accept Scripture to be the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God. We 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 time those writings were produced.¹⁰ 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

⁸ While it is true that an explanation of a passage of Scripture which is against the analogy of faith in no way can be true but must be false, nevertheless it is possible that a passage may be explained in accordance with the analogy of faith, and still the explanation not give the true sense of the passage (e.g., the eating described in John 6).

⁹ Theoretically, as confessional Lutherans, we *must* hold that one could arrive at the body of all orthodox Lutheran doctrine today if one only had Holy Scripture and no other confessional writings (Luther's doctrine is *God's* doctrine. Of this we are convinced!). Pragmatically, avoiding the confessions to enable pristine motives hermeneutically typically results in a skewed dogma to one degree or another. The world we live in is not free from false interpretations that can easily resonate with our sinful nature and its *opinio legis*.

¹⁰ Gospel reductionists in the 1970s, e.g., 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 (e.g., factual understanding of Genesis 1–11).

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. Doing so further highlights the crucial signposts of *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *sola Christus*.

Ralph Bohlmann's book, used in the Bethany curriculum, offers two telling remarks concerning a *Lutheran* exegete. We in the ELS see these comments as a way to ward off subjectively roaming interpretations. "[T]he guidance of the confessions in this or any other area will be ineffective unless the confessions are accepted as correct Biblical expositions." Then follows this conclusive one: "[S]ubscription to the Lutheran Confessions means that the contemporary Lutheran interpreter of the Scriptures accepts not only the conclusions of the Biblical exegesis that constitutes the doctrinal content of the confessions but also the hermeneutical principles employed by the confessions in reaching their conclusions. For, as we have seen, the confessional principles of Biblical interpretation are theologically grounded in the confessional doctrine of the Word."¹¹ One may wonder how the *norma normata* can legitimately be used to assist the interpretation of the *norma normans*. This can occur *only if and when* one is absolutely convinced from the study of Scripture that the Lutheran Confessions themselves are based only on Scripture and nothing else for the establishment of Christian doctrine.¹²

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 (e.g., crypto-Calvinists). FC Article XI is a good example of dealing with the latter. While the election article does not *per se* address **directly** the issue raised by F. A. Schmidt in the 1880s (i.e., *intuitu fidei*) 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. This demonstrates how the confessions, when methodically scrutinized individually and as a whole,

¹¹ Ralph Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 136.

¹² James Voelz of the LCMS uses the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle to show how—in a secondary and supportive manner—the Confessions play a role: "Like a jigsaw puzzle, the Scriptures contain many concepts and conceptual signifieds that need to be pieced together until they form a coherent picture with all the pieces accounted for. The Confessions (as well as the creeds, of course) assist in assembling the individual pieces in the same way that the picture on the cover of the puzzle box provides an aid in the assembly of the many puzzle pieces....It shows which pieces are placed into the center and those that go around it on the periphery" (*What Does This Mean?* 351).

provide proper safeguards for the exegete who professes the Lutheran faith.

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. Theologians can fail; Scripture cannot. The expositions from the orthodox fathers of any era can serve only in 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 influences? 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 a thousand Augustines, a thousand Cyprians, a thousand Henrician churches should stand against me. God cannot err and deceive.¹³

The basis for settling doctrinal differences in inter-church relations continues to be what Lutherans have always espoused. The Augsburg Confession, for example, 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. There are corridors of Scripture, however, that the AC does not explore, some for obvious reasons (doctrines undisputed at the time). The Formula of Concord too leaves some areas untouched. Without a doubt, all of the Lutheran Symbols need to be explored and confessed.

How else can common ground be found? If the ELS and the WELS were to propose perchance *official* doctrinal discussions with the LCMS,¹⁴ the differentiating items from the historical split (altar,

¹³ Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says*, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 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.

¹⁴ The current talks over the last number of years have been described as *informal*. No common doctrinal documents put together for unified proposal by the respective theological commissions has occurred. This would be a must were formal talks to begin.

pulpit, prayer fellowship; hermeneutical principles), as well as those of the recent years (role of women in the church, cooperation in externals, church and ministry, liturgical concerns, doctrinal discipline), would demand a careful look **at the pertinent scriptural passages themselves** and not simply each church's formal doctrinal assertions.

Inferential Doctrines

There also exists the establishment of doctrine by way of implication or inference. Rev. Paul Kolander authored *The Scriptures—How Shall I Read Them?* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1970). In this fine booklet, Kolander devoted attention to the interesting subject of valid conclusions in doctrine and practice resulting from scriptural inferences. He stated:

Only as we hold to the principle that the meaning of Scripture is derived from Scripture, are we able to draw valid conclusions in matters of doctrine and practice. There are doctrines, such as the Trinity and Infant Baptism, and practices of our church, such as our position on Lodgery and Close Communion, which are not stated in so many words in the Scriptures.... Yet we make definite statements and take definite positions on such matters. On what basis? On what may be called the "implied sense" of Scripture. When we draw conclusions from clear statements in the Holy Scriptures, the conclusions are valid even though they are not to be found as direct statements in the Bible.¹⁵

In the 2005 document of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *The Public Ministry of the Word*, doctrine through implication or inference is employed. In the second portion of our adopted statement, under what is labeled "both a narrower and wider sense," the document states:

The divine institution of this preaching and teaching office is not located in just one particular passage. Rather, throughout the New Testament, a divine ordering, establishment, and institution of the preaching and teaching office is indicated and presupposed (John 20:21–23, John 21:15ff, Matthew 28:18–20 [NKJV], Matthew 9:36–38, Ephesians 4:11–12, 1 Peter 5:1–4, Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 4:1; see also Treatise 10).

¹⁵ Kolander cited in the main text, 43–44.

We recognize that “doctrine by inference” may require more explanation for anyone who asks us to give answer for our confessional position (1 Peter 3:15). This, however, does not detract from the divine certainty of the position. Valid conclusions drawn from various passages in God’s Word, while not specific in terms of *sedes*, remain the truth and need to be defended in a similar manner as the teachings that have been delineated directly.

Our sister synod, the WELS, lists Ephesians 4 (1999 edition of *This We Believe*) as the reference for the public ministry being divinely instituted. Previous editions did not carry this statement nor any specific verse as proof for this teaching of Scripture. But the assumption was always still there that God indeed instituted the public ministry, even as also he instituted the universal priesthood. Some in the WELS may have preferred to speak of the divine authorization or institution of the public ministry as a doctrine derived from *inference*. LSQ

How to Teach Our Members Regarding Variant Readings

*Matthew J. Moldstad
Pastor, Peace Lutheran Church
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LSQ Vol. 57, No. 4 (December 2017)

I AM GRATEFUL TO THE ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE that they selected a nice easy topic for this my very first paper at our ELS General Pastoral Conference. Who knows, depending on how it goes, this may also be my last. I was reassured many times by Professor Smith that this is a practical paper, seeming to imply that it would be an easier paper. However, when it comes to discussing variant readings and the authority of Scripture, nothing is easy.

I am honored, but also intrigued that our assignment committee would give such a New Testament topic to a pastor more interested in Old Testament studies, because, as we all know, there aren't any variant readings in the Old Testament, at least few as interesting as those in the New.¹ I claim to be no expert on this topic, but a parish pastor, like you, desiring simple and understandable ways to present the truth to my parishioners.

Introduction

Over this past year I often mentioned to members of my parish that I was working on a “big” paper for our ELS General Pastoral Conference in the fall. Their usual response was, “Oh, yeah? What’s it about?” I would go on to tell them that it was on the topic of variant

¹ And yes, of course there are plenty of variant readings of the Old Testament text. They will be discussed briefly later in this paper.

readings. At this point they would look quite puzzled and respond, “Huh?”

If your parish is anything like mine, most of your members are rather uninformed on this subject. This could be because it is a topic which addresses not the contents of the Bible, as is our normal Bible study fashion, but the origin of the text itself. More likely, though, it is because, like me, you consider this topic too complex and yourselves unqualified to speak on the matter. You might wonder if you would be able to cover it rightly, or if you would leave your members more confused than before. You may fear that such a failed endeavor might even cast doubt in their minds concerning the canon, portions of Scripture, or all of God’s Word.

Despite your reservations or fears, the reality is that some of your members will come in contact with this topic whether they hear about it from you or not. They might discover textual variant issues within the footnotes of their modern Bibles. They might be influenced by sources of information on this subject that aren’t found in microscopic footnotes or stuffy theological books, but through the media, usually as a tool to instill doubt in people’s minds concerning the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.²

Without proper instruction, the devil might use these things to plant the seed of doubt in our people’s minds leading them to ask the question the serpent posed to Eve, “Did God actually say?” After all, if the existence of variant readings leads us (or our members) to believe that the text of Scripture is in question or that it is ever changing with the discovery of new texts and new scholarship, then nothing is really certain. We would be led to conclude that we have only our best guesses concerning what is and what is not God’s Word. When confronted by God’s law, we may try to wiggle out of it, arguing that we truly don’t know whether certain commands are really part of the Bible. When seized with despair, we may also wonder if God’s promises of forgiveness and eternal salvation are actually true.

This is a vital issue in which we, as pastors, should be well-versed. We must be prepared to combat error and attacks on the validity of Holy Scripture, as well as, be able to preach and teach confidently, not filled with doubt, saying, “God might have said this” but rather, “Thus, says the Lord.” To this end, this paper is broken up into two major parts. The

² Some examples of this: Bart Ehrman’s *Misquoting Jesus* and other New York Times best sellers by him, Dan Browne’s 2003 book and 2006 movie *The Divinci Code*, and perennial documentaries on the History Channel and other channels are dedicated to undermining people’s view of the text of Scripture and the Christian religion.

first covers the content which we want to relay to our parishioners. It is intended to provide a refresher for you as pastors concerning this topic and to serve as a simple explanation of variant readings for your parishioners. The second part addresses methods of preaching and teaching variant readings. This section is intended to give practical advice on how best to cover this topic in sermons and Bible study.

I. Explaining the Issue of Variant Readings

1. Variant Readings Exist

When made aware of this topic many Christians respond with surprise: “There are variant readings!?” This is usually followed with the question, “What is a variant reading?” In this section I will attempt to explain the existence and problem of variant readings in simple terms.

Conservative scholars estimate that the Bible is 3,400 to 3,500 years old. That means that some of the books of the Bible have been passed down from generation to generation for more than 34 centuries. How is that possible? The process of making a copy of a book is a simple one in our world today. Documents can easily be photocopied and entire books can be reprinted through publishers. Reproducing a book nowadays is so simple that one could even print off an entire book on his home printer if it were legal. Now rewind 20 or 30 centuries. How would you get another copy of a book? There were no copy machines or computers back then, or even printing presses. In order to duplicate a book, that book needed to be copied by hand. In fact this was a full time job for certain men, called scribes. Scribes were employed to carefully copy entire documents word for word, even letter for letter. What happens though when you hand copy a document with dozens of pages of text? There will be a few places where you misspelled a word, left a word out, rearranged a few words, or copied a word or a line twice. No matter how careful you are, it is bound to happen.

However, when it came to something like the Bible you would expect that scribes would want to be extra careful in copying it, and they were. But if you copy something by hand enough times, using thousands of copyists over the span of millennia, you are sure to have some copying mistakes. And what happens if a scribe accidentally misspelled a word in his copy back in the 3rd century and that copy was used by the another scribe the next century to make another copy of the text? Well, that mistake is likely to be copied into the new text. And with texts

continuing to be copied over thousands of years, the problem of copying mistakes is multiplied.

This is why variant readings (*variata*) exist. Variant readings refer to the differences in the handwritten copies of an ancient writing, which have been passed down from generation to generation. Simply put, they are the typos and attempted corrections among the copies of ancient writings.

A. New Testament variants

As you can imagine, the more handwritten copies of a document you have, the more variant readings will inevitably exist. Take an ancient popular work, such as the works of Plato. There are a handful or so of known ancient copies of Plato's works. With so few a number, those copies can easily be compared to determine where the copies disagree and they can be noted and evaluated. Even with a more copied work such as Homer's *Iliad*, which has some 600 known ancient copies, while much more tedious, the copies can be compared. As you would expect, because there are significantly more copies there will inevitably be more differences, and thus more variant readings.

Now take the New Testament. There over 24,000 ancient copies of this text (including well over 5,000 in Greek). Imagine the number of differences among those handwritten copies. Some have estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of variants among just the ancient Greek manuscripts. This high number of variants is a bit striking since there are only 130,000 or so words in the New Testament.

However, before we become too alarmed, it is good to note that a majority of the variants within the New Testament manuscripts are from spelling differences. A smaller number of them involve dropped words or lines, repeated words or lines, or changes in word order. There are still fewer which appear to have come from scribal notes that were subsumed into the text. Some of these errors were inadvertent, others were deliberate. Those done intentionally seem to be done to clear up the difficult wording of a passage, to avoid doctrinal error, or to bring similar accounts in the synoptic gospels into harmony with one another.³

Yet should these variants cause us to doubt the text we have? Dr. Henry Hamann writes,

³ Henry P. Hamann, *A Popular Guide to New Testament Criticism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), 12.

It can be said that a good 90 to 95 percent of the NT text is quite certain. In the case of the disputed readings very little real difference of meaning takes place in many instances, no matter which reading offered by the witnesses is chosen. No part of the faith is affected in any of these disputed passages.⁴

Professor David Kuske also writes,

[L]ess than one percent of the text of the New Testament requires any special study.... In the passages of the one percent of the text that require a study of variants, none of the passages are ones which affect any doctrine of Scripture. So no matter which wording in a variant retains the autograph, no doctrine of Scripture is changed or altered.⁵

B. Old Testament variants

Concerning the Old Testament texts, it is a bit of a different story. Even though the Old Testament is significantly older than the New Testament, there are comparatively much fewer ancient copies of the Old Testament in Hebrew. One reason for this has to do with the care and copying of these texts. Jewish scribes went to great lengths to ensure that their copies were accurate. They held the texts to be so sacred that if copies were found to have even the slightest copy error in them or became worn out on account of use, they were put in a *genizah*,⁶ not to be used in worship or copied. Ultimately, copies that did not agree perfectly with the source text were destroyed.

On account of this, there are few ancient copies of the Old Testament in Hebrew. Even including the recent discoveries at Qumran there are still only perhaps a few hundred or so ancient Hebrew copies

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵ David Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995), 48–49.

⁶ Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 130–131. Dr. Lightfoot writes, “What happened to the older manuscripts? The Jewish scribes looked upon their copies of the Scriptures with an almost superstitious respect. This led them to give ceremonial burial to any of their texts that were damaged or defective. Their motive was to prevent the improper use of the material on which the sacred name of God had been inscribed. Before burial, however, faulty manuscripts were hidden away in a ‘*genizah*’ (from Aramaic *genaz*, to hide), a kind of storeroom for manuscripts that were unusable. But however noble the intentions, the replacement of older copies with newer ones, and the burial of those discarded, have deprived us of early Hebrew manuscripts which we might otherwise have.”

of portions of the Old Testament older than the 11th century. In fact the oldest complete Hebrew copy of the Old Testament is the Leningrad Codex, dating back to around the 10th century. This is a copy of what is known as the Masoretic text, named for the group of meticulous scribes who took care to copy the Hebrew Scriptures for centuries during the Middle Ages.

In 1947, there was an incredible discovery. Approximately 220 scrolls of the Old Testament dating back to the first and second century B.C. were uncovered at Qumran near the Dead Sea in Israel. These manuscripts were some one thousand years older than the oldest known Hebrew copies of many of the books of the Old Testament. However when they compared the two texts there was relatively little difference, even though the modern version had gone through 1,000 additional years of copying. This stood as a testimony to the faithful approach of the Jewish scribes in transmitting the text.

Certainly a number of variants exist when comparing ancient copies of the Masoretic Text with the Dead Sea scrolls, but the greatest Old Testament variants exist between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint (LXX), an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. However, since textual critics give preference to ancient copies written in the original language of the text over those of a translation, the Masoretic text is considered more highly than the LXX. Many of the variants between the original Hebrew and the Greek translation can be chalked up to linguistic nuances lost in translation. Since there are few complete ancient copies in Hebrew, and on account of the general acceptance of the Leningrad Codex as the base text, there is relatively little discussion concerning Old Testament variants. Most biblical textual critics are concerned with New Testament variants, due to the vast number of ancient Greek manuscripts available and on account of debate over a proper base text.

With the existence of variants in both testaments, but especially the significant number in the New Testament, some might wish to throw their hands up to the sky and ask God, "Why did you permit there to be so many manuscripts? If we only had one copy, this discussion and the attacks from those who oppose the Bible as your inspired and inerrant Word would all go away." However, the fact that we have so many copies of the Scriptures is actually a great blessing. It enables us to compare the thousands of copies and be assured that what we have today are faithful replicas of the originals.

Even though this vast number of ancient copies brings with it a seemingly exponential number of variants, the overwhelming similarities of all of those texts stands as a testimony to the certainty of Scripture. As Dr. Hamaan writes, “The very quantity of evidence and variation is a check on the text and a guide to the true text.”⁷ The fact that so many ancient Greek manuscripts exist and can be compared gives us greater assurance that what we have in front of us is the true text of God’s Word as it was written through the apostles and prophets.

2. We Deal with Variants in a Systematic Way

Though it might be simpler if we had fewer copies of the New Testament, what we do have are thousands. We can’t just begin destroying some now, but rather we must study them carefully to try to determine where copyist mistakes were made.

A. Methodology

This work is often referred to as textual criticism or lower criticism. It is good to note that textual criticism is much different from higher criticism. David Kuske summarizes the differences simply in this way: “Textual criticism deals only with variants that came into the text by hand copying for over 15 centuries. Higher Criticism deals with how the text came into being and how it is interpreted.”⁸ While Higher Criticism seeks to demolish the verbal inspiration of Scripture, textual criticism uses human reason to evaluate the variant readings among the copies of Scripture to determine the precise wording of the autograph text, that is, what was penned by the original author under inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁹ To do this the textual critic makes use of both external and internal evidence.

⁷ Hamann, 13.

⁸ Kuske, 213.

⁹ Many modern New Testament critics are using the term “initial text” rather than the terms “original text” or “autograph text.” They have wondered whether or not setting out to discover the wording of the original or autograph text is even possible and instead speak of the “initial text,” that is the copy from which all other copies have their source. Dr. Jeffery Kloha explains, “The editors [of the NA28] are no longer proposing to produce the ‘original text’ of the New Testament. Rather, the editorial goal of the current edition is to produce what is labeled the *Ausgangstext*, or in English, the ‘Initial Text.’ This reconstructed text is not ‘what left the pen of the evangelist’ (even if that is actually what took place in the first century). Rather, the editors are producing the text from which all existing copies derive.” Jeffery Kloha, “Theological and Hermeneutical Reflections on the Ongoing Revisions of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*,” in *Listening*

1) External Evidence

External evidence are facts about the document itself and not its content. Writing style, age and type of material, and word usage are all factors considered as external evidence used to determine the age of the manuscript and its distribution at an early date. The textual critic studies this external evidence to determine “the genealogy of a text,” that is, to try to determine the source of a particular manuscript and its variants in order to discover which reading is supported by the oldest and most widespread manuscripts.

However using external evidence alone is impossible, as Dr. Haaman points out:

The application of this principle to the Greek NT, however, proved to be a failure. And the reasons for this are two. First, there are too many gaps in the transmission. There is no complete genealogy.... And secondly, there is too much mixture in the genealogy. Copies were made not only from one, but from more manuscripts; the lines of descent were not kept separate, but were often crossed with others.¹⁰

2) Internal Evidence

Internal evidence is concerned with the substance of the text. It involves evaluating the text’s meaning and literary content. In studying the internal evidence, a textual critic seeks “to find what is called the original reading, that is, he looks for the reading which explains all the variants but which is not in turn explained by them.”¹¹ Here are a few principles used to guide the investigation of internal evidence:

The more difficult reading is the original meaning.

The reading which is not a harmonizing reading is likely to be correct.

The more crude, less-polished reading is the right reading.

The proper reading is one which accords with the style of the writer.

The shorter reading is likely to be the right one.¹²

to God’s Word: Exegetical Approaches, ed. Achim Behrens and Jorg Christian Salzmann (Göttingen, Niedersachs: Edition Ruprecht, 2016), 177.

¹⁰ Hamann, 15.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 16–17.

However, the danger with using internal evidence is that it is to a large degree subjective. And while those principles above seem like good general rules they are inapplicable to many variants.¹³

An improper methodology would be to not take into consideration the external manuscript evidence or dating and text type, but rather base one's decision on a variant only on internal evidence. A decision concerning a text cannot be made solely on what the researcher believes the author meant to write or what the researcher believes is more consistent with the author's style. External evidence must also be used.

With that being said, in general the more ancient manuscripts, those written in Greek, those that are more complete, and those that are widespread are preferred by textual critics of the New Testament. For these reasons certain manuscripts are regarded more highly. These include: the Vaticanus manuscript (B), the Sinaiticus manuscript (Aleph), and the Alexandrinus manuscript (A). Each of these manuscripts date back to the fourth or fifth century AD and contain most of the Old and New Testaments. Not all agree that these manuscripts should be given special status, but it is nonetheless a reality that they are highly regarded among most textual critics.¹⁴

B. We Use Texts which Benefit from Systematic Research

In my limited experience, I have noted that the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) text of the Old Testament and the Nestle–Aland 27th edition (NA27) / United Bible Society 4th edition (UBS4) text of the New Testament are commonly used for study of the Bible in the original languages in our college, our seminary, and among our pastors.¹⁵ These texts are very different and not just because of their language.

¹³ For a more thorough list of principles for the use of proper textual criticism see Dr. Michael Smith's class notes for his New Testament Canon and Text class included in Appendix A.

¹⁴ Lightfoot, 36ff. Vaticanus is missing the New Testament text following Hebrews 9:14, both letters of Timothy, all of Titus, and all of Revelation. Sinaiticus is not missing any portions of the New Testament text. Alexandrinus is missing Matthew 1:1–25:6, John 6:50–8:52; 2 Corinthians 4:13–12:6. Though of a later date than the other two manuscripts, the Alexandrinus text is thought by some critics, including Bruce Metzger, to go back to an archetype text from the early second century.

¹⁵ The text of these editions are identical to the texts contained in the Nestle–Aland 26th edition (1979) and the United Bible Society 3rd edition (1975). The Nestle–Aland 28th edition was published in 2012 and the United Bible Society 5th edition was published in 2014. These parallel texts contain 34 changes in the Catholic Epistles. One would assume that over the next decade or so this will be considered our main New Testament text as it will likely begin to be used as a base text in many modern translations such as the ESV and NIV.

While there is one manuscript which stands as the basis of the Old Testament text we commonly use, namely the Leningrad codex (L), we do not have a similar basis for the New Testament. Our commonly used Greek New Testament text is not a copy of the Vaticanus or Sinaiticus manuscripts or some other manuscript; rather it is an eclectic or compiled text.¹⁶ That means it is an edited text, which has benefited from modern research of the many ancient manuscripts available today. Researchers who are doing the work of evaluating the variant readings are making slight updates to this text as more evidence becomes available; thus the Nestle-Aland text is in its 28th edition.

For some, using a compiled text has become a major issue, as the text is modified slightly with each new addition.¹⁷ However, consider the alternative. It would be much easier to simply use a copy of one text such as the Sinaiticus manuscript, one that is thought of highly in textual critic circles. But to accept this as our base text would be to ignore the numerous textual variants in other ancient New Testament texts, many of which present valid evidence that the Sinaiticus manuscript is not always accurate concerning a number of variants.¹⁸

The big difference for the approach to the Old Testament and New Testament texts is that we have only a small number of ancient Hebrew texts of the Old Testament, while we have well over 5,000 ancient Greek texts of the New Testament. Because of the plethora of New Testament texts, scholars have chosen to use an eclectic text for the New Testament. In doing so we acknowledge the great number of ancient texts, and we have the ability to use systematic research to make judgments concerning text selection.

For a reason unknown to us, God did not have the entirety of his Word chiseled in stone or inscribed on some indestructible metal for all time. He did have his Word passed down from generation to generation through the careful hand-copying of the inspired texts on perishable

¹⁶ The Nestle-Aland text uses the Tischendorf, Westcott/Hort (heavily dependent on Vaticanus, also Sinaiticus to a lesser degree) and Bernhard Weiss's 1894/1900 edition text as its base texts (Lightfoot, 111).

¹⁷ Kloha, 180–181.

¹⁸ What about the *Textus Receptus*? The *Textus Receptus* is itself a compilation text. It was an early print version of the New Testament based almost entirely on the first printed Greek text by Erasmus of Rotterdam in 1516. Erasmus' text was also a compilation text based on a few late Greek manuscripts, not more ancient ones, such as Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Even though the *Textus Receptus* has held a high place in many people's minds for centuries, being the basis of the King James Version, it is still a compilation text and does not completely agree with the most ancient and widespread New Testament manuscripts.

material. God preserved these copies for our use. He has also given us our reason, which can be rightly used to carefully study these copies and to decipher the precise content of the original manuscripts given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

3. *The Texts We Use Today Are the Word of God*

The apparent danger in recognizing an eclectic text as the basis of our studies and translations is that it would seem more difficult to declare of that text, “This is the Word of God.” This is so because slight modifications are made to the base text as new manuscripts are discovered and more research is carried out. Professor Jefferey Kloha of Concordia Seminary – St. Louis muses concerning the use of an eclectic text.

We now have a text of the New Testament that makes no claim to being fixed and stable, for it is subject to continuous improvement and change. This, however, is not an entirely new problem. For the text has always been subject to revision and change, even if we were not aware of it. Copies have been made for millennia, *and all different from each other*. In the modern age critical editions have reconstructed something conceived of as “the original text,” yet each successive edition changed its predecessor’s text. Most often the changes were minor, to be sure, but in some passages more significant changes were made. However, the publication of this new critical edition and the new methodologies it employs forces us, perhaps for the first time, to acknowledge that the biblical texts *we use* are, necessarily, alterable. We are confronted with the recognition that reconstructing the “original text” of the New Testament writings is a goal that may never be ultimately reached. This will inevitably have an impact on how we view that text. Should we, as teachers and preachers, simply accept what is printed in critical editions as authoritative?¹⁹

Conservative Lutherans acknowledge that the autograph manuscripts of the Bible are inspired and inerrant.²⁰ Certainly we confess this to be true. God inspired the prophets, apostles, and evangelists to pen

¹⁹ Kloha, 180–181.

²⁰ Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, “The Eternal Word” Article 1: Holy Scripture, adopted 1999, <http://www.celc.info/home/180010197/180010197/files/TheEternalWordArticleI.pdf>, 17, 25.

the very words he gave them to write. Kloha argues this strong stance becomes meaningless, though, when we are confronted with the reality that we do not have any of the autographs. We only have copies of copies whose sources were the autographs. Can we therefore honestly say of the Greek and Hebrew (and Aramaic) copies that these are the authoritative Word of God?²¹

In order to answer this question it is good for us to first consider what we are talking about. Most of the variants are minor (letters transposed, words transposed, misspellings, etc.). And of those which are more significant few pose a serious problem. In most cases, a textual critic is easily able to decipher the original from the variant. For example, a vast majority of texts might agree on a reading or word order, while a relatively few disagree. If those which disagree are late manuscripts the choice becomes more obvious.

Concerning the significance of the variants, WELS Professor Richard Balge writes,

It has been said that in 95% of the variants, the correct reading is easily established. Of the remaining 5%, 95% do not materially affect the sense. Professor John Schaller wrote in 1924 that there were about 150,000 variants and that of these about 50 in all were important. Then he wrote: "Not one article of faith and not one exhortation to godliness of life is changed or eliminated." There have been additional manuscript finds and the

"Copies and translations of the Scripture are not inspired. Only the original manuscripts were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God has chosen, for reasons known only to himself, to preserve his inspired word in copies made from the autographs instead of preserving the autographs themselves. This does not mean that we have any doubts about what the original documents of the Bible's books said. Variant readings in the copies do exist. There are spelling mistakes or slips or attempted corrections. But not a single Christian doctrine has been rendered doubtful in any point by all these variant readings. God has arranged the Bible so that one and the same doctrine is set down in more than one place" (17).

"The inerrancy of Scripture is indissolubly tied to the inspiration of Scripture. If every word in the Bible is God's own inspired Word, then the Bible must be inerrant. Even though God used fallible human beings as instruments in writing down his words, all these different people were inspired by the Holy Spirit when they wrote (2 Pe 1:21; 1 Co. 2:13). Therefore, every supposed mistake is excluded. The verbal inspiration of every word in the Bible guarantees its inerrancy" (25).

²¹ Kloha, 191.

number of variants has increased, but the judgment expressed by Professor Schaller in 1924 is still valid.²²

WELS theologian, Daniel Deutschlander, also writes,

The number of variata for the Bible is insignificant compared, for example, with the variata of manuscripts written by Homer or the other famous Greek and Latin authors who lived during Old or New Testament times. It is in fact impossible to put together an assured text of the works of Homer (d. ca. 850 B.C.). No such problem exists in constructing the texts of the Old Testament and the New Testament. In point of fact, if we were all very poor scholars of the manuscripts and were wrong on all of our choices for the correct reading of a text, not one single doctrine would be affected! That's how insignificant the variata are in number and kind.... Thus, the manuscripts we use in translating the Bible today are reliable to the very highest degree.²³

With the overwhelming number of ancient manuscripts which we are able to compare, we can be certain we have an assured text of the New Testament. We have an accurate copy of the autographs. Furthermore, no doctrine is affected by any of the variants. God's Word and his truth has been faithful preserved. Therefore, when speaking of the NA27/UBS4 text and even our English translations, we can say with confidence, "Thus says the Lord."

4. We Must Be Clear if a Variant Reading is in Question

As I mentioned earlier an overwhelming majority of the variants are minor. There are, however, some questions about larger sections of Scripture. These would be major variants where an entire passage or even multiple passages might be missing from some or even most

²² Richard D. Balge, "The Bible Through the Ages: II. The Text of Scripture," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 89, no.1 (Winter 1992): 58.

²³ Daniel Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 27. While what Professor Deutschlander says is true, one should still use his intellect rather than blindly choose which text to follow. Using our human reason we may determine through methodical textual criticism that a particular reading is rather spurious and should not be valued on the same plane with more certain texts. For instance, if you chose to go with the variant for Luke 1:46 found in a few obscure late Latin manuscripts, which indicate that Elizabeth and not Mary sang the Magnificat, you may find yourself at odds with a biblical truth contained in nearly every other manuscript of Luke.

manuscripts.²⁴ Perhaps the most prominent variants are Mark 16:9–20 and John 7:53–8:11. These two warrant more than just a footnote in our modern English Bibles, but rather have headers in the text declaring, “Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include....”²⁵

As with proper textual criticism, each variant should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Since these texts are most noticeable and would most likely be those of concern for many, it is good for us to discuss them for a moment now. Before we begin, it should be noted that these texts likely continue to be included in our English translations today on account of their inclusion in prominent English translations, such as the King James Version. However, a majority of textual critics agree that these texts were not originally a part of the autographs and they might just as well have regulated them to a footnote.²⁶

A. Major Variants

1) Concerning John 7:53–8:11

The account of the woman caught in adultery is beloved by many in Christendom. They are consoled by the kind and forgiving heart of the Savior, who with a word dismisses the adulteress’ accusers and reassures her, “Neither do I condemn you.” What comfort this brings to those caught up in crass outward sin! This text has also been a useful tool for pastors to express not only the forgiveness of God for flagrant sin, but also His directive to “Go and sin no more.”

That said, the textual evidence for these verses being included in Holy Scripture is rather tenuous. They are included in only one early manuscript, Codex Bezae (5th century). However, despite its age, this manuscript is known for other peculiar readings. This text does not appear in any other early manuscript until the 8th century, where some include notes concerning its questionable status, others append the text to the end of the gospel of John, and still others include it following Luke 21:38. Additionally, early scribes questioned this text’s placement in the Bible.²⁷ Due to this evidence it is unlikely that these verses were

²⁴ See Appendix B.

²⁵ Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed., *The Lutheran Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 1697, 1796.

²⁶ Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, and Kurt Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*: Post Eberhard Nestle Et Erwin Nestle, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 50*. The NIV2011 has further distinguished these texts from the rest of Scripture by placing them in italics.

²⁷ Lightfoot, 98–99.

part of the original text. As many have noted, this account might have actually occurred in the life of Christ, though the evidence suggests it was likely not part of the autograph of the Gospel of John.

2) Concerning Mark 16:9–20²⁸

When reading through a modern Bible one will also see that the final 12 verses of Mark are noted as not being including in “the earliest manuscripts.” It is interesting that these verses receive the same note as that concerning John 7:53–8:11, for the evidence is very different. Just like that text, these verses are not found in Vaticanus or Sinaiticus; however they are found in nearly every other manuscript containing the Gospel of Mark. Perhaps the reason that these verses are looked upon with skepticism is because of the great prominence given to Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. However, even in Vaticanus there is a column and a half left blank following Mark 16:8. Some argue that this was the scribe’s way of indicating that he was unsure of the inclusion of these verses or at least that he was aware of the existence of them. Others note that the column and a half would not be sufficient space for the scribe to have included these 12 verses.

Concerning the internal evidence, some argue that these last 12 verses are stylistically different from the rest of Mark’s gospel. They also argue that verse nine appears to reintroduce Mary Magdalene, something thought to be redundant if it had been originally part of the 16th chapter of Mark. Others argue that if the original gospel were to end at verse eight, it would be a rather abrupt ending, leaving the reader in suspense and leaving out so much detail concerning the highest point of our Savior’s work, namely his resurrection.

Another interesting fact is that a portion of these verses in question are included in the Historic pericope, while John 7:53–8:11 is not. Some have wondered, “If these verses were questioned by some in the early church, why would they have been included in the Historic pericope?” They further argue that their inclusion in the pericope indicates that a majority considered them to be part of the Gospel of Mark.

²⁸ For further reading concerning this text see Paul O. Wendland, “Translations and the Text of the Greek New Testament,” <http://www.wlsessays.net/handle/123456789/830>; John W. Burton, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to St Mark* (Ann Arbor: The Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1959); and Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 122–128.

B. Are Variant Readings the Word of God?

While there are interesting arguments concerning the inclusion or exclusion of these and other variant readings, the questions arise, “How should we regard variant readings? Are they God’s Word?” In his controversial essay from a few years ago, Dr. Kloha suggests that all unclear variant readings should be retained as Scripture, but regarded as antilegomena.²⁹ Just as we speak of the antilegomena books of the New Testament as Scripture while we do not use them for establishing doctrine, so also the variant readings. It is an interesting thought, one which would positively answer the question, “Can we speak of the text, even with all the variant readings, as God’s Word?”

However Dr. John Warwick Montgomery is opposed to this sort of thinking. He argues that we should not declare all unclear variants equally revelatory. Rather, when a variant reading cannot be regarded as better than another, “The proper approach is to suspend judgment until better information becomes available, not to declare both variants as somehow equally revelatory, or to believe that [sic] Holy Spirit, through the visible Church, will somehow reveal which variant we should follow.”³⁰ Dr. Montgomery is suggesting that we consider neither variant authoritative until we can clearly determine which was the original reading. However, questions might arise: “How do we practically deal with this? Should we quote a passage and yet point to one word, which is under question, and declare, ‘This passage is God’s Word, except for this one word. We’re not sure about that word.’” Furthermore, concerning either approach, the questions arise, “Who is the judge? Is it the editors and textual critics working for Nestle-Aland or the United Bible Society? Is it an individual judgment?”

Dr. Daniel Wallace stands opposed to Kloha’s suggestion to declare all unclear variants antilegomena when he argues, “Similarly, whether Paul says ‘we have peace’ or ‘let us have peace’ in Rom 5:1, both statements are true (though each in a different sense), though only one is

²⁹ Kloha, 198. Seven books of the New Testament (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation) are recognized as antilegomena books, that is books which were at one time questioned by some in the Christian Church whether or not they should be included in the canon of Holy Scripture. While we consider these books to be inspired and inerrant we are careful not to base doctrine solely on passages in these books because of this historic distinction.

³⁰ John Warwick Montgomery, “Beyond the ‘Plastic Text’: the Plot Thickens,” <http://www.globaljournalct.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Montgomery-Vol-12-No-3-Beyond-the-Plastic-Text-Rev.pdf>.

inspired.”³¹ Conflicting wording in different manuscripts can both be inerrant, but they cannot both be inspired, which they would be considered if we classify them as antilegomena. This could include even the most obscure of manuscripts, making a manuscript that might imply, for instance, that Elizabeth sang the Magnificat rather than Mary considered as inspired Scripture.³² Though Montgomery’s stance still leaves some practical questions, it is superior to the alternative as it does not declare all unclear variants to be inspired, something which is impossible.

Again we should remember that there are very few significant variants regarding which we are unclear whether or not they should be included in the text of the New Testament. However, when we do come across a significant variant reading it is wise for pastors to explain to their members that there is a question concerning the text. We must be up front when the evidence is unclear that we are not able to make a definite judgment concerning that text. Discussing the concerns over a particular text is being intellectually honest. Having the facts, we will be better prepared when confronted with Bible skeptics.

II. Methods in Teaching Variant Readings

A. *In sermons*

This essayist was tasked with addressing: “How to teach our members concerning variant readings with homiletical application.” The question of whether or not we should discuss variants within sermons is one which can be debated. Some might argue that we must keep our members well informed concerning this topic and mention it even in sermons; others may be concerned that there is not enough time to address the topic properly within a sermon and that we might do more harm than good by broaching it. Since this essayist was specifically asked to speak concerning homiletic application he will do so now, understanding that discussing variants in a sermon is debatable.

1. *Should we preach on variant texts or quote them?*

Taking a brief look into the Sermon Texts book used by many pastors in our synod, you will soon find that Mark 16:14–20 is the

³¹ Daniel B. Wallace, “The Gospel According to Bart: A Review Article of Misquoting Jesus by Bart Ehrman,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (June 2006): 334.

³² Kloha, 203.

Gospel lesson designated for Ascension Day in the Historic Pericope and John 8:1–11 is the gospel lesson designated for Trinity 2/Pentecost 3 in the Synodical Conference pericope.³³ Now I grant that likely few of our pastors are using the Synodical Conference pericope, but what if one of these texts or another text with a significant variant comes up in your pericope? Should you preach on the text or avoid it? Should you mention anything about the variant or just hope the members don't notice the note embedded in the text? Should we refer to verses and preach or teach on verses that are in question because of a variant? What about larger portions of Scripture like the sections of John 8 and Mark 16, which have been found by most textual critics not to be part of Scripture? Should we preach on them or quote them?

It is interesting to note that concerning the deuterocanonical books Luther wrote in his German Bible, “[They are] Apocrypha, that is, books which are not held equal to the sacred Scriptures, and nevertheless are useful and good to read.”³⁴ Now I am not calling the variant readings apocryphal. However, whatever status we place on them, whether considering them antilegomena, whether not coming into judgment on them, or whether going as far as to say they are apocryphal, or even *notha*, we still recognize them as useful. Even if we have a low view of these texts they still could be used for preaching. Luther himself even preached on apocryphal texts on occasion. However one might consider some advice when doing so.

I'd like to share with you now a few excerpts from one of Luther's sermons for St. John's Day based on Ecclesiasticus 15:1–8, entitled “Exhortation to Piety and Righteousness.” Luther introduces the text by saying,

1. This lesson, apparently, is not designed to teach. Rather, its purpose is to present the advantages of right conduct. It does not enumerate certain works and the manner in which they are to be performed, but holds up the benefit accruing from right living. Its object is to admonish us and incite us to perform the duties we already recognize. Paul (Romans 12:7–8) classifies all discourse under two heads, doctrine and exhortation. Doctrine presents things we do not already know or possess. Exhortation recites and impels us to obey doctrine, and encourages to

³³ E. H. Wendland, *Sermon Texts* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1984), 6, 32.

³⁴ Edward Engelbrecht, *The Apocrypha: The Lutheran Edition with Notes: English Standard Version* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), xviii.

patience and perseverance. While the latter feature of discourse is less difficult than the former, it is no less necessary and profitable.³⁵

Luther finds this apocryphal text to be useful as it provides exhortation to obey the teachings of Scripture.

In addition, Luther draws his sermon to a conclusion by saying, “I have gone over this subject hastily, giving it the briefest consideration. An extended sermon might have been preached on each point, if one wished to develop it with the aid of Scripture passages.”³⁶ It is unclear whether he speaks only concerning the apocryphal text or would say the same for a biblical text. Nonetheless, there is practical wisdom given that if one were to preach on an apocryphal text, one would be well advised to point to many passages of Scripture within his sermon which confirm what the text says, to bring the authority of the Word of God to bear on the subject.

2. *How might we preach on variant readings?*

a) Noting variants

Concerning variants and homiletics, it is beneficial for our pastors to be aware of where the key variants lie. This would inform the preacher’s study and help him to determine whether or not he should discuss a variant within his sermon. A good place to start might be to note the places where the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Society editors have not made a judgment, or concerning texts where a judgment has been made, but which are still included in our modern translations. Another simple way of being aware of key variants might be through studying the footnotes within our modern English text.³⁷

The Nestle-Aland text uses a few ways to indicate variants which are in question. The introduction to Nestle-Aland 27th edition (NA27) says,

Square brackets in the text ([]) indicate that textual critics today are not completely convinced of the authenticity of the enclosed words.... The reading given in the text shows the

³⁵ John Nicholas Lenker, ed. *Sermons by Martin Luther*, Vol. 6 for Advent and Christmas, http://www.martinluthersemons.com/Luther_Lenker_Vol_6.pdf, 175.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.

³⁷ Appendix B provides a list of the single and double-bracketed variants within the NA27 text as well as my own short list of notable variants seriously under question.

preference of the editors. Square brackets always reflect a great degree of difficulty in determining the text.³⁸

There are about 350 places in the NA27 text where the editors include either words or letters in single brackets. One thing striking to me was that skimming through the text to find all of the places where single brackets are used, I found relatively few places, perhaps a few dozen, where the variant was significant, that is, it involved more than a conjunction, definite article, or name. Single bracketed text of special note include: Matthew 12:47, 16:2–3, 21:44*; Mark 10:7*, 14:68; Luke 8:43, 11:33; Romans 16:25–27*; Colossians 3:6*; and Jude 5.³⁹ (The references with asterisks are contained in the Historic or ILCW pericopes.)

There are five places in the Nestle-Aland text where the editors chose to double bracket a section of the text rather than place the variant in the footnote. Concerning these sections the Nestle-Aland notes, “Double brackets in the text ([[]]) indicate that the enclosed words, generally of some length, are known not to be part of the original text. These texts derive from a very early stage of tradition, and have often played a significant role in the history of the church (cf. Jn 7,53–8,11).”⁴⁰

The sections double bracketed in the Nestle-Aland text include the two mentioned earlier, Mark 16:9–20* and John 7:53–8:11, as well as Mark 16:8b, Luke 22:43–44⁴¹ and Luke 23:34.⁴² (The reference with an asterisk is contained in the Historic pericope.) Of these Luke 23:34 is probably the most used by us in sermonizing as it comes up every year during Lent as one of Jesus’ seven words from the cross.

When preparing a sermon or a devotion based on a text containing single brackets in the Nestle-Aland text, it is good to study the variant and to see the reasons why it is bracketed. This is true even more so with double-bracketed sections, since they are not considered by most textual critics to be part of Scripture.

However it should be noted that just because a text is not single or double-bracketed does not mean the decision by the NA/UBS editors was unanimous. Perhaps one of the most valuable tools for our pastors

³⁸ Nestle-Aland, 49*–50*.

³⁹ A complete list may be found in Appendix B.

⁴⁰ Nestle-Aland, 50*.

⁴¹ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (ESV)

⁴² And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (ESV)

in this area is Bruce Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. In this volume, Metzger provides summary notes for about 2,000 variants from the editorial committee's discussion for the United Bible Society text. A letter grade is given to most of the variants to indicate the committee's degree of certainty in choosing which reading to use.⁴³

b) Text choice

It is likely that many of our pericopal readings contain variants to some degree. I am certain there are at least spelling variants involved with most texts. So avoiding all texts containing a variant reading would prove difficult, if not impossible.

The majority of Christendom has decided to make use of the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Society text as the standard Greek text.⁴⁴ It is good for us also to use this then as our standard Greek text and to regard the compilation of the text to be well intentioned and making use of proper principles of textual criticism. Again we remember that adage from Professor Deuchlander, "[Even] if we were all very poor scholars of the manuscripts and were wrong on all of our choices for the correct reading of a text, not one single doctrine would be affected!"⁴⁵

That said, we would also be wise to use the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Society text as it stands, rather than including our own variant of preference. It is interesting to note that the NA27 text includes John 7:53–8:11 and Mark 16:9–20, albeit in brackets. However, it does not include the variant portion of 1 John 5:7 or Acts 8:37 within the body of the text, only in footnotes. It is clear that a judgment has been made concerning these variants and we would be wise not to treat them as part of the text, though we certainly can make mention of them, however, as variant readings.⁴⁶

⁴³ Metzger, xviii. "The letter {A} signifies that the text is virtually certain, while {B} indicates that there is some degree of doubt concerning the reading selected for the text. The letter {C} means that there is a considerable degree of doubt whether the text or the apparatus contains the superior reading, while {D} shows that there is a very high degree of doubt concerning the reading selected for the text. In fact, among the {D} decisions sometimes none of the variant readings commended itself as original, and therefore the only recourse was to print the least unsatisfactory reading."

⁴⁴ The Nestle-Aland text is the base text of most modern translations, as well as the standard for Greek New Testament academic work.

⁴⁵ Deuchlander, 27.

⁴⁶ This brings up a major question for us to consider: Are we united in the use of a base text for the New Testament? In many ways I think we are. As I mentioned the use of the BHS and the NA27/UBS4. However what about those of us who are

c) Preaching a variant text

i. Preach from the Footnotes

When preaching on such a text, especially those in double-brackets, we should not overlook the elephant in the room, but discuss the variant. Now it may be a little easier for us in the Lutheran church than in other denominations because our members are not regularly opening their Bibles when we read the text in the divine service. However, if one were to open his Bible he would likely find a footnote on the variant, and in the case of John 7:53–8:11 and Mark 16:9–20, a large note within the text indicating that the earliest manuscripts do not contain these verses. Not addressing the footnote might lead a layman to question some, if not all, of what the preacher is saying.

Perhaps the simplest way for a pastor to address a variant is to have his members open up the Bibles in front of them and view the footnote for themselves. This can prove to be a good starting point to referencing a textual variant.

Michael Milton, president and professor of Practical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC, suggests that when preaching on John 7:53–8:11 or Mark 16:9–20 the preacher draw the congregation's attention to the footnote in his introduction. Then the pastor should briefly present both sides of the argument, but ultimately conclude that these sections are the inspired and inerrant word of God. Milton comes to this advice by arguing that, whether they actually were included in the autographs or not, their long-standing use in the church proves their canonicity.⁴⁷

Dr. Daniel Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary takes a different approach, indicating that pastors should take care to show their people that these variant readings are not part of Scripture. He fears that by treating these texts as Scripture they are like a “bomb ready to explode.”⁴⁸

using the KJV or NKJV or other translations based on the *Textus Receptus*? Whether one commonly uses a translation based on the *Textus Receptus* or the NA27/UBS4, it is good for us all to be aware to some extent where the major textual variants lie. However, some may argue that KJV and NKJV users should be especially cognizant that their translations contain many variants which have been identified by modern scholarship as inauthentic and therefore not included in the NA27/UBS4 text.

⁴⁷ Michael Milton, “Preaching from the Footnotes: The Challenge of Textual Criticism in Expository Preaching” (Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence, Rhode Island, November, 2008), 9.

⁴⁸ Wallace, 336–337: “Ehrman has followed in Gibbon's train by exposing the public to the inauthenticity of Mark 16:9–20 and John 7.53–8.11. The problem here,

When we reject all of the lower critical evidence which indicates that these portions should not be included in the Bible, but override them, we cast doubt in people's minds and open ourselves up for claims of hiding the truth. This opens the door for skeptics to say, "See your pastor doesn't know what he's talking about; that's not even in the Bible."

ii. Quoting variant readings

As mentioned earlier it would not be out of Lutheran character to quote from a variant reading, even one which has been dismissed by a majority of scholars. References are often made in our sermons to non-biblical literature, whether it is quoting a hymn, part of the Confessions, or the Catechism.

However I would advise using caution when quoting portions of variant readings (especially parts of John 7:53–8:11 and Mark 16:9–20) in a sermon. When quoting a passage in a sermon one is usually doing so to further explain or confirm the truthfulness of another passage of Scripture. Most often they are used in a proof passage sort of way. When quoting a passage within a sermon there likely is little time to explain the textual concerns with the passage.

Just as none of us, I believe, while sermonizing would quote the variant of 1 John 5:7 alone to prove beyond any doubt the teaching of

though, is a bit different. Strong emotional baggage is especially attached to the latter text. For years, it was my favorite passage that was not in the Bible. I would even preach on it as true historical narrative, even after I rejected its literary/canonical authenticity. And we all know of preachers who can't quite give it up, even though they, too, have doubts about it. But there are two problems with this approach. First, in terms of popularity between these two texts, John 8 is the overwhelming favorite, yet its external credentials are significantly worse than Mark 16's. The same preacher who declares the Markan passage to be inauthentic extols the virtues of John 8. This inconsistency is appalling. Something is amiss in our theological seminaries when one's feelings are allowed to be the arbiter of textual problems. Second, the pericope adulterae is most likely not even historically true. It was probably a story conflated from two different accounts. Thus, the excuse that one can proclaim it because the story really happened is apparently not valid.

"In retrospect, keeping these two pericopae in our Bibles rather than relegating them to the footnotes seems to have been a bomb just waiting to explode. All Ehrman did was to light the fuse. One lesson we must learn from *Misquoting Jesus* is that those in ministry need to close the gap between the church and the academy. We have to educate believers. Instead of trying to isolate laypeople from critical scholarship, we need to insulate them. They need to be ready for the barrage, because it is coming. The intentional dumbing down of the church for the sake of filling more pews will ultimately lead to defection from Christ. Ehrman is to be thanked for giving us a wake-up call."

the Trinity, neither should we quote Mark 16:16⁴⁹ alone as the central proof of the necessity of Baptism or John 8:11 alone as proof of the need to live one's repentance.

I think the danger in using these sections for proof passages is that they leave the door open for a layman who discovers the notes in his Bible to ask, "Is it truly God's Word? Should I really follow it as if it is from the mouth of the Lord?"

However, if a pastor does desire to quote from variant readings in a sermon, it would be wise to back up his point with passages that are not under question. Just as we do not base our doctrine on antilegomena books, so also concerning these texts we should be careful not to base a doctrinal point simply on these verses. Doing so may result in casting doubt on our message and the authority of the truths we preach.

iii. Sermon samples of introducing variant texts

Below are a few sample introductions on variant texts to give you an idea of how a pastor might discuss a variant text on which he is preaching.⁵⁰

Text: Mark 16:14–20 (Historic Pericope - Ascension day)

Introduction:

Today is a glorious day in which we remember our Savior's ascension into heaven, where he takes up again his position of authority and power ruling all things in heaven and on earth! Our text for this Ascension Day is recorded for us in Mark 16:14–20. Before we begin, however, I would like to do something a little different and I invite you to open up the Bibles in front of you to page 853. You'll note that toward the bottom right column it says, "Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9–20." With these words the textual critics would have us know that these verses, including our text for today, are in question. Some say they are rightfully to be included in the Bible, others say no, and still others say we are not sure.

Concerning this text we should note that it is actually only missing in two early copies of the Bible, but these two early copies are thought

⁴⁹ Obviously Luther quotes this passage in his Small Catechism under the question, "What does Baptism give or profit?" While I am suggesting shying away from using this passage frequently in sermons, I do think there is better opportunity in a catechism class setting to explain the variant reading concerns with this verse, as well as provide addition proof passages alongside it.

⁵⁰ Other sermon samples from Michael Milton, president and professor of Practical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC can be found in Appendix C.

to be some of the most important, if not the most important copies. This text is found in nearly every other copy of the Bible. Having studied the evidence to some degree it is this pastor's opinion that this text should rightfully be included in the Bible and is the inspired Word of God. However, wanting to be open and clear with you concerning this text, I would like you to be aware of these questions and that some doubt its validity as God's Word.

Since this text has been questioned by some, as we meditate upon its truths today I will also make you mindful of many passages of Scripture which affirm the truths contained in our text.

Text: John 7:53–8:11 (Synodical Conference Pericope - Trinity 2/ Pentecost 3)

Introduction:

Our text for this morning is a beloved story. Who does not cherish the story of the woman caught in adultery and our Savior's love and compassion? However before we begin it is good for us to discuss something concerning this account. I invite you to please take out the Bible in your pew and turn to page 894. You'll notice that at the top of the page it says "The earliest manuscripts do not include 7:53–8:11."

There are a few places in our Bibles where we find notes such as this. Modern textual scholars do not believe that this section was part of John's original work and with good reason. This text is found in only one early copy of the Bible from the 5th century, and it does not appear in any other early manuscript until the 8th century, where some include notes concerning its questionable status, other append the text to the end of the gospel of John, and still others include it following Luke 21:38. It is apparent that early scribes greatly questioned this text's placement in the Bible.⁵¹ On account of this evidence it is unlikely that this was included in the original text. As many have noted, it could have been a true story which occurred in in the life of Christ, though it is likely not part of the Gospel of John.

Because of the uncertainty of this text we cannot concretely say, "This is the Word of God." Nonetheless this is a useful text and good for us to consider this morning. Luther himself spoke highly of other ancient non-biblical texts, noting, "[They] are not held equal to the sacred Scriptures, and nevertheless are useful and good to read."⁵²

⁵¹ Lightfoot, 98–99.

⁵² Engelbrecht, *The Apocrypha*, xviii.

So too this lesson is useful and good to read. As we digest this story today, we will be considering a number of biblical passages which proclaim the same truth as this text, encouraging us in our faith and God's Word.

d) Preaching about variants.

The topic of textual variants is not just one to be reserved for a sermon based on a variant reading. It could also be addressed in a sermon which covers the topic of God's inspired and inerrant Word. Sermons on 1 Timothy 3:15–16, 2 Peter 1:21, 2 Timothy 3:16, John 17:17, John 10:35, 1 Corinthians 2:13, and other texts concerning the power and truthfulness of Scripture might prove to be good opportunities to discuss variant readings.

Perhaps in such a sermon a pastor might address such issues within the body of the sermon, rather than the introduction. The pastor might say something like this:

How did we get our Bibles we have today? How was God's Word passed down to us and how can we know it is truly his Word? As our text plainly tells us, "All Scripture is God-breathed." 2 Peter 1:21 further describes this inspiration, "Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." These passages are spoken especially concerning the Old Testament, but we hold them to be true concerning the New Testament books as well. Apostles and evangelists penned words such as this, "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37), testifying to the inspiration and inerrancy even of the New Testament books.

But again how did we receive them? These books given by inspiration of God were penned by his servants, apostles, prophets, and evangelists. The books were shared and copies were made of these to be used throughout Christendom and passed down from generation to generation. As you well know they didn't have copy machines or printing presses two or three thousand years ago, so these copies were made by hand. In fact, the New Testament and the good news of Jesus Christ as the Savior was so popular that we have well over 5,000 ancient Greek copies of the New Testament. While scribes who made these copies were meticulous, it was inevitable that minor

copying mistakes would be made. When these ancient documents are compared the first thing we note is their amazing unity. It is apparent that they are copies, carefully made from the same ancient original documents; however, minor differences are also revealed. Most of these differences amount to spelling mistakes and changes in word order, a few effect a verse or more, but they all are truly minor. It has been said of the significant differences or variants among the texts that they involve less than one percent of the New Testament text and none of them affect doctrine, so much so that we can be sure that the Hebrew and Greek texts we have before us today are precise copies of the originals which were inspired by God. And though we might not be certain that every single word is spelled exactly right, we can confidently say of these copies that they are the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

B. In Bible studies

Bible study is perhaps a better place to discuss variant readings with your members. This format allows you much more time to cover the topic, while also permitting your members to ask questions. The topic might be addressed either while studying a particular book of the Bible with a notable variant or as a stand-alone study on the transmission of the Scripture.

1. Studying books of the Bible

While studying books of the Bible, it is beneficial to make use of your NA and BHS text as well as the footnotes in your English translation. There are many variants of little significance, such as an uncertainty in the use of a definite article or of a conjunction or whether or not to use a fuller name for Christ. I would not mention such minor notes. A good place to address variants would be with a more significant section, such as the five double bracketed portions of text in the Nestle–Aland as well as the more significant single bracketed portions, and other variants of notable interest (see Appendix B). During Bible study the pastor can easily make mention of a footnote describing the variant, as well as explain to his members why variants exist.

2. A study on the topic of variant readings

While there are a number of published Bible studies which discuss the origin of the Bible, few seem to cover variant readings. Such Bible studies could be supplemented with material on variant readings. When creating your own Bible study or using someone else's material on this topic, try to include or look for studies which include sections on inerrancy and inspiration, textual transmission, discussion of types of variant readings, key variants, and the methodology of textual criticism. One useful tool might be to utilize part one of this paper for Bible study. I've included a study guide to go along with part one in Appendix D.

An additional Bible study resource that I would recommend for this topic is Neil Lightfoot's *How We Got the Bible*, specifically chapters eight, nine, and ten. This book covers the topic of variant readings in great detail, yet does so in simple language. The author also provides questions following each chapter to help spur group discussion.⁵³

Conclusion

The bottom line for us as pastors is not to be afraid to speak about variant readings, but freely to discuss this matter with our members. We also want to be honest. If we truly are unsure about a variant or a text we must say that the matter is in question. Nevertheless, we can reassure our people that the entire text is not in question or even a large minority, but that there continue to be a few variants in question, of which we are uncertain, but which do not affect the meaning of the text nor the doctrine of Scripture.

The topic of variant readings is a complicated one. However that's not a good excuse to avoid discussing it in sermons and Bible studies. There are many voices out in the world today challenging the authority and authenticity of the Bible. We must equip our people with a base knowledge of variant readings and be careful to address the more significant variants when they arise in our sermon texts and Bible studies. It is important that they be taught in a simple way that this truth be

⁵³ Bible study leaders should be aware however that Lightfoot defines "variant readings" in an erroneous way (Lightfoot, 95–96). The numbering of variants isn't based on the number of manuscripts that contain a variant, but strictly on the number of changes from a base text. In other words, if you had 100 manuscripts with variants at the same place, you would not count the number of variants as 100, but rather count only the unique variant spellings, word order, etc., contained within those manuscripts. Perhaps those 100 manuscripts only really contain 12 variants in that section, since a number of the manuscripts agree with each other, but not the base text. Again here the variant number would be calculated as 12, not 100, even if all disagree with the base text.

understood, leaving no room for doubt. Most of all we must always stress that we have the inspired, inerrant word of God, and that none of its teachings are in question. The devil seeks to attack the truth, but God's Word e'er remains. Proclaim that truth. LSQ

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Appendix A

A LIST OF PRINCIPLES FOR THE USE OF PROPER TEXTUAL CRITICISM*⁵⁴

1. Every variant reading may and ought to be referred to the uncontested portions of Scripture as a standard and be judged by them.
2. Readings supported by ancient witnesses, especially if the witnesses are from different groups, are preferable. (Grouping witnesses according to *geographical* "areas" is useful. Yet, the student must be aware that such geographical groupings are also hypothetical.)
3. That reading which was most widespread very likely ought to carry some weight in determining the original.
4. No conjecture is ever to be regarded as an immovable/unshakable part of the text. In other words, if a variant reading (after careful scrutiny) is not

⁵⁴ Dr. Michael Smith, class notes from New Testament Canon and Text, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2008.

- easily explained, honesty requires that it is best to be bracketed or foot-noted in that portion of the text.
5. The whole body of codices and papyri form the standard by which each variant is to be judged separately.
 6. The *quality* of the witnesses is more important than the *quantity* in determining a reading. (By “quality” we refer in a general way to age and not necessarily to text-types.) If a reading was not known to exist before a certain date, this must be taken into consideration.
 7. That reading is *likely* to be correct which cannot easily be traced back to the unintentional alteration of a copyist.
 8. *In general*, the more difficult reading is to be preferred.
 9. Where various readings are many, the middle reading *may* often be the best.
 10. *Generally* to be preferred: the less familiar word; the less refined grammatical form.
 11. *In general*, the shorter reading is to be preferred. (This *may* apply where there has been an obvious harmonization of similar passages, such as might easily occur in the Gospels. It is not a common assumption, however, that copyists tended to *add* rather than *omit*.)
 12. That reading is likely to be the correct one which best agrees with the style and diction and other characteristics of the author in question. (Caution: Authors may well have deviated from their normal style for a specific reason.)
 13. Any who declare simply that the Textus Receptus [TR], because of its rather lengthy tenure, is automatically to receive precedence in the handling of variants, and any who declare that, without such allegiance to the TR, all Scripture and religion itself are endangered, are themselves (although well-intentioned) “dangerous” thinkers and do not recognize the power of faith in a God of preservation *through the MSS of the ages past*. (J. Bengel, paraphrased)
 14. On the other hand, all who elevate **B** and **Aleph** to a position where these MSS virtually reign supreme in determining the weight of the variants, are open to the charge of *subjectivity* and *rationalistic presupposition*.
 15. **The reading is to be preferred which best explains the origin of all the other variants in a given passage and is not explained by them.**

*This list is a compilation of principles from the following sources: J. Bengel, W. Arndt, D. Kuske, and J. B. Madson.

Kuske: “Whenever one is forced to consider the possibilities of scribal error because the MSS evidence is indecisive, the textual decision ought not to be made without considering every possibility.”

Appendix B

Double brackets

Nestle-Aland notes, “Double brackets in the text ([[]) indicate that the enclosed words, generally of some length, are known not to be part of the original text. These texts derive from a very early stage of tradition, and have often played a significant role in the history of the church (cf. Jn 7,53–8,11).”⁵⁵ As is clearly indicated the textual critics employed by Nestle-Aland, after having done their work, have determined that these sections are clearly not part of the autographs of these gospels.

Mark 16:8b, 16:9–20

Luke 22:43–44, 23:34

John 7:53–8:11

Single brackets

Nestle-Aland 27ed. notes, “Square brackets in the text ([]) indicate that textual critics today are not completely convinced of the authenticity of the enclosed words.... The reading given in the text shows the preference of the editors.... Square brackets always reflect a great degree of difficulty in determining the text.”⁵⁶ We should take special note of these variants as they are still under question after proper methodical textual criticism has been done. I have placed an asterisk next to the more lengthy variants that remain under question, those that are more than an article, conjunction, proper name, or single word. The more lengthy variants are explained further below.

Matthew 3:2, 3:16, 4:24, 5:11, 5:39, 6:1, 6:25, 6:33, 9:14, 10:32, 12:15, 12:47*, 13:35, 14:10, 14:16, 14:27, 14:29, 14:30, 15:14, 15:15, 16:2–3*, 18:15, 18:19, 19:10, 19:21, 20:5, 20:10, 20:17, 20:23, 20:30, 21:44*, 22:32, 22:35, 23:4, 23:23, 24:31, 25:6, 25:41, 26:36, 27:16, 27:17, 28:15, 28:18

Mark 1:4, 2:17, 3:7, 3:14*, 3:16*, 5:42, 6:44, 7:4, 7:6, 7:37, 8:20, 9:42, 10:1, 10:7*, 10:21, 10:25, 11:31, 12:9, 12:26, 12:34, 12:37, 13:27, 14:33, 14:47, 14:68*, 15:12, 15:36

Luke 1:15, 5:18, 6:36, 8:43*, 9:2, 9:3, 9:28, 9:59, 9:62, 10:1, 10:17, 10:21, 10:27, 10:32, 11:10, 11:13, 11:14, 11:20, 11:33*, 11:44, 12:22, 12:42, 13:7, 13:27, 13:35, 14:1, 17:6, 17:23, 17:24, 18:22, 18:24, 18:30, 20:9, 20:27, 20:45, 22:7, 22:18, 23:11, 23:28, 24:32, 24:49, 24:50

John 1:19, 1:27, 1:46, 2:4, 2:12, 3:4, 3:28, 3:31*, 4:53, 4:54, 5:17, 6:7, 6:29, 6:36, 6:52, 6:66, 7:15, 7:34, 7:50, 8:28, 8:41, 8:52, 9:10, 9:16, 10:8, 10:34, 10:39, 12:4, 12:9, 12:13, 12:18, 13:12, 13:21, 13:26, 13:28, 13:36, 14:4, 14:6, 14:26, 16:18, 16:19, 16:27, 18:29, 19:24, 19:30, 19:38, 20:21, 20:30, 21:5, 21:17, 21:23

⁵⁵ Nestle-Aland, 50*

⁵⁶ Nestle-Aland, 49*–50*.

Acts 1:8, 1:11, 2:34, 2:38, 3:6, 3:13, 4:4, 4:28, 4:30, 7:3, 7:10, 7:13, 7:18, 7:19, 7:2, 7:43, 8:5, 8:33, 9:12, 9:37, 12:11, 12:17, 13:14, 13:33, 15:41, 16:9, 16:12, 16:27, 16:28, 16:29, 16:36, 17:3, 17:22, 18:26, 23:6, 23:23, 26:4, 26:21, 26:31, 27:23

Romans 3:25, 4:11, 5:2, 6:11, 8:34, 10:3, 11:21, 11:25, 11:31, 12:14, 13:12, 14:5, 14:12, 14:22, 15:14, 15:17, 15:19, 15:30, 16:1, 16:25–27*

1 Corinthians 1:8, 1:14, 2:4, 2:15, 3:13, 4:14, 4:17, 6:7, 6:16, 9:13, 11:15, 11:19, 11:31, 12:10, 13:4, 14:16, 15:10, 15:28, 15:31

2 Corinthians 1:10, 1:12, 1:14, 4:6, 7:8, 8:19, 12:6, 12:15

Galatians 1:6, 1:8, 1:15, 2:13, 2:16, 3:21, 5:7, 5:24

Ephesians 1:1, 3:1, 3:3, 4:9, 4:26, 4:28, 4:32, 5:28, 5:31, 6:1, 6:16

Philippians 1:23, 1:24, 3:7, 3:10, 3:12

Colossians 1:20, 3:6*, 3:11

1 Thessalonians 1:4, 1:5, 1:8, 1:10, 3:13, 4:8, 4:10, 4:11, 5:15, 15:25

2 Thessalonians 1:2, 2:8, 2:14, 2:16, 3:4, 3:6

1 Timothy 6:13

2 Timothy 2:18

Titus 1:10

Philemon 1:11

Hebrews 3:6, 4:3, 5:12, 6:18, 7:4, 7:22, 9:1, 9:19*, 9:26, 12:27, 13:6, 13:15, 13:21

James 4:12, 5:14

1 Peter 1:9, 1:12, 1:16 (removed in NA28), 1:22, 2:5 (removed in NA28), 3:1, 5:5, 5:8, 5:9 (removed in NA28), 5:10 (removed in NA28)

2 Peter 2:6 (removed in NA28), 2:20 (removed in NA28), 3:3, 3:11, 3:18 (removed in NA28)

1 John 2:6, 3:13, 3:21, 5:1, 5:5

Jude 5* (removed in NA28), 18 (removed in NA28)

Revelation 1:6, 2:15, 2:25, 3:20, 5:6, 6:8, 11:16, 12:12, 13:5, 13:15, 14:3, 14:18, 15:6, 16:6, 19:5, 19:6, 19:17, 20:6, 21:3, 21:4, 21:27

A Short List of Notable Variants Seriously Under Question:

Matthew 12:47, 16:2–3, 21:44

Mark 1:41

Luke 8:43, 24:12, 24:40, 24:51

John 12:8, 14:14

Acts 13:33

Romans 16:25–27

1 Corinthians 13:3

2 Corinthians 1:12

Colossians 3:6

Hebrews 11:37

1 Peter 3:18

2 Peter 3:10

Jude 1:5**Verses contained in the Textus Receptus, but not included as part of the NA27 text:****Matthew** 17:21, 18:11, 23:14**Mark** 7:16, 9:44, 9:46, 11:26, 15:28, 16:9–20**Luke** 17:36, 22:43–44, 23:17, 23:34**John** 5:4, 7:53–8:11**Acts** 8:37, 15:34, 24:7, 28:29**Romans** 16:24

Appendix C

Sermon samples from Michael Milton, president and professor of Practical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC from “Preaching from the Footnotes.”⁵⁷

1. “Preaching from the Footnotes in John 7.53–8.11”*A. Lengthy version*

In the last message, we saw how Jesus’ claims created division among the people (in John 7.40–52). And we saw that He still does. The growing tension in John concerning the antagonism of the chief priests and Pharisees and the adulation of the people over the ministry of Jesus forms a backdrop for what we will come to today. John often began new movements in his Gospel, or new chapters, as we now have them, with a story. In this chapter there is the story of the woman caught in adultery. This story of the darkness of both degrading sin as well as unmerciful and apparent hypocritical spirit leads to John’s announcement that Jesus is the Light of the World.

But there is something we must see before going into this portion of God’s Word. There is a footnote in most of your Bibles as we come to Chapter Eight of John. It must not be overlooked. Bible publishers have rightly included this footnote because, as it says in my own Bible, “The earliest manuscripts do not include John 7:53–8:11.” What does that mean? Well it means what it says in that six of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts do not contain this account. So the footnote is appropriate. But does it mean that this didn’t happen? No. In

⁵⁷ Milton, 7–10.

fact, the event goes back, according to church historian Eusebius, to one Papias, who died not long after 100 AD. He received the story through oral history from at least one of the apostles and said that he knew a story “of a woman who was accused of many sins before the Lord,” who received, by his own words, oral history from the apostles themselves. More evidence came in the Third Century, from a document called *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 2.24:

“And when the elders had set another woman which had sinned before Him, and had left the sentence to Him, and were gone out, our Lord, the Searcher of the hearts, inquiring of her whether the elders had condemned her, and being answered No, He said unto her: ‘Go thy way, therefore, for neither do I condemn thee.’”

Could it be that Augustine was right when he said that the account is true but was withheld because the Church feared that adulteress women could use it as a proof text to condone their infidelity? Entire books have been published with that one proposition.

Could it be another of the “Synoptic conflict stories” inserted into John to indeed provide more accordance with the other Gospel writers? Perhaps we are no better than the two scribes who approached this passage in a recently discovered manuscript in Albania:

“Albanian National Archive (ANA) 15, an 11th – 12th century minuscule manuscript...contains the four gospels...[and]...at John 7:52, the scribe simply continued on to write John 8:12. A later scribe, incensed at what he thought was an oversight, took a piece of paper and carelessly stitched it into the front of the next parchment leaf (using only five stitches!) and scribbled the [John 7.53–8.11] passage on it!”

James Montgomery Boice stands with Calvin in pointing out the textual variant and then advocating the preaching of it. Perhaps William Hendriksen puts it best:

“Our final conclusion then is this: though it cannot now be proved that the story formed an integral part of the Fourth Gospel, neither is it possible to establish the opposite with any degree of finality. We believe, moreover, that what is here recorded really took place, and contains nothing that is in conflict with the apostolic spirit. Hence, instead of removing this section from the Bible it should be retained and used for our benefit. Ministers should not be afraid to base sermons upon it! On the other hand all the facts concerning the textual evidence should be made known!”

So I have done due diligence to that footnote. For some this text is “an edifying extra-biblical story about Jesus.” But the grace and beauty and the

strength and power of Jesus and his grace in this text leave no doubt that this is God's Word to us this morning.

B. Shorter version

"We now come to John chapter 8, actually in the majority of manuscripts, chapter 7.53 –8.11. This portion of John is not in the earliest manuscripts though the story is documented in reliable early church literature. Whether it was originally in John's Gospel or not, many, including Calvin, have urged its authenticity and deserving to be included in the canon of Scripture. While there are those who do not think the textual evidence would support its inclusion, no evangelical or Catholic, for that matter, disputes the apostolic flavor of this passage and how God has used its beautiful object lesson in history to transform human lives.

And we would all do well to remember, when considering such major textual variants as this, the words of the noted New Testament professor, William Barclay, who said, "It is the simple truth to say that the New Testament books became canonical because no one could stop them doing so."

What was that lesson? That is the sermon today. As we read...."

2. "Preaching from the Footnotes in Mark 16.9–20"

A. Lengthy version

If the first case was difficult the second is more so. And so one might begin.

"This morning we conclude our messages from the Gospel of Mark. Mark, we have seen, moves like an impressionistic painter, making short strokes with his narrative brush loaded with vibrant colors of Gospel 'paint' onto the canvas of the Word. But how did he stop his masterpiece? Indeed, how did God choose to complete it?"

Mark 16.9–20 is one of the most disputed passages in the Scriptures. It is, as Maurice A. Robinson has written,

"a flash point in NT criticism. The pastor who prepares to preach from this section of the Bible is faced with textual criticism that is in majority agreement that the ending is not Markan in its origin. Beyond that rather common assertion there are great differences, which give the preacher pause. Did Mark end with 16.8? Is there a missing last page never found that accounted for a scribe in the third century patching up the remnant with his own ending (based on other inspired text, of course)? Was Mark simply cut off in his writing? Is there an alternative manuscript ending that exists to be received as the right one? There are certainly those out there, but are they original?"

And how about the majority text that do give credence to the ending? Dr. Bruce Metzger shows in his work, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* an overwhelming case for the ending of Mark to be a redactor (or redactors) who was, nevertheless, faithful to the Scriptures. But while Dr. Metzger maintains his firm opinion, based on the evidence before him, that 16.9–20 is not original to Mark, he writes this: “At the same time, however, out of deference to the evident antiquity of the longer ending and its importance in the textual tradition of the Gospel, the Committee decided to include verses 9–20 as part of the text....”

There have also been those who have argued for 16.9–20 as Markan though many consider that these voices are largely left behind in the nineteenth century now. But this we can say without reservation: the ending of Mark in no way contradicts the death, burial, resurrection, ascension and coronation of our Lord Jesus Christ. And His Church did go forth with unusual power and supernatural protection.

And perhaps we can sum up all of those verses, which find harmony in the rest of Scripture, with this studied opinion of the Westminster divines. They said of this and all of the other parts of Scripture that they were “...Immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them.”

Now, I have gone on quite a bit. But I want you to know that as I preach this morning, I will admit the questions about the text, but I will not refrain from introducing our reading this morning with these words, “This is the Word of the Lord....”

B. Shorter version

We come to one of the most debated texts in the entire Bible: Mark 16.9–20. Though an overwhelming majority of text keeps this ending intact, the oldest and some scholars say the more reliable do not. But no one, even the famous Dr. Bruce Metzger who studied so much on the subject and who was of the opinion that the ending was written by someone who followed Mark, nevertheless, did not believe that it should be removed. Mark 16.9–20 is preserved for us today because there is truth here that God wants us to hear.

Thus, a reading from the Gospel according to St. Mark, chapter sixteen, and beginning with verse 9 and reading through the end. Hear the Scriptures as they are read....

Appendix D

Bible Study Questions

Introduction:

1. Look up Mark 15:28 and Mark 16:8 and read the footnotes. What do these footnotes imply?
2. Do they make a difference?

Following Section 1: Variant Readings Exist

Study Questions:

3. What is a variant reading?
4. Why do variant readings exist?
5. Discuss why it might be disturbing to know there are variant readings of Scripture.
6. What about the number of ancient manuscripts might make someone skeptical that the Scripture we have today is accurate?
7. What is important to note about most of the variants in the New Testament?
8. Look back at the quotations from Dr. Hamann and Professor Kuske. What points bring us comfort if we are concerned whether or not we can be confident that the Bible is God's Word?
9. What did the discovery at Qumran prove? Why does this give us confidence concerning our Bibles we have today?
10. Discuss any interesting points concerning the history of the transmission of Old Testament texts.
11. What about the number of ancient manuscripts reassures us that what we have is accurate?
12. Read Isaiah 40:7–8 and Matthew 24:35. What comfort do these passages give us when considering the topic of variant readings?

Following Section 2: We Deal with Variants in a Systematic Way

Study Questions:

13. What is the difference between Textual Criticism and Higher Criticism?
14. What sort of evidence is considered when determining the original reading?
15. What sort of evidence is more objective, that is, not based on someone's opinion? Why?

16. *Why can't we use external evidence alone to determine which wording is closer to the original text?*
17. *Why are the Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrianus manuscripts held in such high regard?*
18. *What is an eclectic text?*
19. *What might make someone uncomfortable about using an eclectic text?*
20. *Why might we prefer an eclectic text to a single manuscript copy?*
21. *Why does it make sense to use a single manuscript copy for our Old Testament studies, while using an eclectic text for our New Testament studies?*

Following Section 3: The Texts We Use Today Are the Word of God

Study Questions:

22. *Why might someone claim the New Testament text to be an ever-changing text and therefore an uncertain and unreliable text?*
23. *Why is this not the case?*
24. *Can we be confident that the texts we use are faithful copies of the autographs? Why?*

Following Section 4: We Must Be Clear if a Variant Reading is in Question

Study Questions:

25. *Why should we be careful with what we say and how we use variant texts such as Mark 16:9–20 and John 7:53–8:11?*
26. *What should we say about them?*
27. *How should we use them? How should we not use them?*
28. *Why is it important to know the truth about variant readings?*

The Scriptural Basis for the Lord's Supper

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I. The Old Testament Foreshadowing of the Sacrament and Its Historical Setting

A. *The Passover and the Supper*

AS OUR LORD AND HIS DISCIPLES GATHERED that first Maundy Thursday evening, they came together to celebrate no ordinary meal. This was the Passover, the most solemn meal for God's Old Testament people. It was to remind Israel of how the Lord once saved their first-born in Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12). This meal, however, not only pointed back to God's deliverance in Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb, but it also pointed forward to the blood of the true Lamb of God who would redeem all men on the cross. As our Lord reclined at this meal for the last time, He was the fulfillment of the Passover ritual for all times. He is indeed our Passover Lamb, who was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Jesus used this setting to institute His New Testament meal of salvation.¹ In this meal where Old Testament believers ate the flesh of the Passover lamb, which was to picture for them the true Lamb of God

¹ For a complete discussion of the connection between the Lord's Supper and the Passover meal see J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1966), 15–88.

who would take away the sins of the world, Jesus, the very Lamb of God gave New Testament believers not only a picture of His flesh and blood with bread and wine, but He gave them His true body and blood where He bestowed upon them all the blessings of the cross.

Some have questioned this connection between the Last Supper and the Passover. They maintain that John's Gospel indicates that Jesus died on the Passover, the 14th day of Nisan, and not that the Last Supper occurred on that day. They assume that because John pictures Jesus as the true Passover Lamb, He died on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan when the lambs for the Passover meal were sacrificed in the temple. However, the Synoptics state expressly that it was on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that is, the 14th of Nisan, that Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7). There is no statement in John that specifically contradicts the Synoptics, but this statement could be understood that way: "Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover" (John 18:28). So they apparently had not yet eaten the Passover and the day was not the 15th but the 14th of Nisan. Still, this verse cannot refer to the paschal meal. The Jews were afraid of defilement; but such defilement automatically ceased at sundown and the Passover was eaten after sundown. The term "Passover" was probably used for all the festive meals which occurred during the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Also, John speaks of the day of our Lord's death as "the preparation day of the Passover" (John 19:14). This has been understood to mean the day to prepare for the Passover meal, that is, the 14th of Nisan. But the day of the preparation among the Jews was the technical term for Friday, the 6th day of the week.² Thus, John does not contradict the Synoptics. The Last Supper was a Passover meal occurring on Thursday the 14th of Nisan and our Lord died on Friday the 15th of Nisan.³

B. The Manna in the Wilderness and the Supper

In 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 the Apostle writes, "I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea ... all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual

² Josephus, *Antiquities*, in *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Lynn: Hendrickson Publishers, 1980), 16:6, 2; Mark 15:42.

³ See also Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 331–373.

drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them and that Rock was Christ."⁴ St. Paul here compares the Exodus event with the two Sacraments of the church. Like Israel in Egypt we, by nature, were hopelessly enslaved in sin. Satan, that cruel Pharaoh, so controlled us that we did his every bidding and even did it willingly. So terrible was that bondage that we even lusted to do those things which could only harm ourselves and those around us. Yet Jesus, the Valiant One, came to our defense. In the battle of the ages on the cross He suffered all that we deserved for sin so that He might crush the old evil foe, our cruel task master, and free us from his tyranny. Jesus is the new Moses, who led us out of bondage in a new Exodus.⁵

Now as Israel became God's people passing through the waters of the Red Sea, so we became a part of spiritual Israel, the Holy Christian Church, passing through the waters of Baptism. Here faith in the Redeemer was worked in our heart and we were liberated from the bondage of sin, death, and the devil. Having passed through the Red Sea of Baptism, the Christian is now in this present wilderness where we are fed with the heavenly manna,⁶ the Holy Supper, until we reach the heavenly Canaan beyond the Jordan of death. Augustine aptly summarizes this Exodus theme in one of his Easter sermons.

Regard yourselves as delivered out of Egypt from a harsh servitude, where iniquity ruled over you; and as having passed through the Red Sea by baptism, in which you received the seal of Christ's bloody cross. Prune yourselves therefore of past sins, those enemies of yours which pursued you from the rear. For as the Egyptians perished in the very waters traversed by the people of God, so your sins were blotted out in the waters in which you were baptized.

Seek now the heavenly kingdom, the land of promise to which you have been called, and be vigilant in resisting temptations throughout this earthly life, which is nothing else than a desert wherein you are sojourners. By partaking of the holy Altar, you receive your manna along with the drink that flows from the rock. All this the Apostle Paul has in mind and inculcates in his preaching when he says, "I would not have you

⁴ NKJV. All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from this version.

⁵ Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), 25, 45; see also Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 53–147.

⁶ Pitre, *Jesus and Jewish Roots*, 24.

ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud, and in the sea. And did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink; and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ.”⁷

The manna image of the Supper was influenced by Psalm 78: “Yet He had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven, had rained down **manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels’ food; He sent them food to the full**” (78:23–25; emphasis added). On the basis of these verses the Sacrament has at times been designated as the bread of heaven and the bread or food of the angels. For example, Thomas Aquinas writes:

The Bread of angels has
become the Bread of mankind;
This heavenly Bread puts an
end to all images;
O wonderful reality! The
poor, the slave, and the
humble eat the Lord.

*Panis angelicus fit panis hominum;
Dat panis caelicus figuris
terminum;
O res mirabilis; manducat
Dominum
Pauper, servus, et humilis.*

This same imagery can be found in the work of Danish Lutheran pastor and hymnwriter Thomas Kingo (1634–1703):

Eat, drink, and in thy heart be glad
For this is more than angel food;
And for the cup thy Lord now thank,
Which heaven’s angels never drank.
(ELH 324:5)

⁷ Augustine, *Sermon Mai* 89, trans. P. Weller, *Selected Easter Sermons of St. Augustine* (St. Louis: Herder, 1959), 124–125.

C. Other Old Testament Foreshadowings

Melchizedek giving bread and wine to Abraham, the father of the faithful, has often been used as a type of Christ, giving the faithful His body and blood under the form of bread and wine in the Supper (Genesis 14:18). The influence of this type of Christ on theology in general and the Sacrament in specific was immense in Africa, especially in Cyprian and Augustine. Melchizedek, who was without beginning and end (Hebrews 7:3) prefiguring Christ, confirms the truth that Christ's priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:17) and the New Testament Sacraments are superior to and the fulfillment of the whole Old Testament ritual and priesthood.⁸

There is a beautiful foreshadowing of the Lord's Supper in 1 Kings 19. Ahab, the king of Israel, and his wife Jezebel, enraged at the prophet Elijah, were seeking to take his life. Elijah fled southward to the Negev. Tired and despairing, he sat down beneath a broom tree and prayed, "It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life." This is the prayer of so many in every age who, having striven for the good and fought for the truth, find themselves standing alone without any apparent success in their efforts. But, God strengthened Elijah by sending an angel to provide the prophet with food, bread, and water. In the strength of that food he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There the Lord revealed Himself to him, assuring him that he was not alone for there was yet seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. This is a wonderful foreshadowing of the Sacrament that strengthens us on the way, the *viaticum*, our companion on the journey of life, the life-giving flesh and blood of Him who is the source of all life.

Psalms 34 has often been associated with the Lord's Supper. Verse 8 reads, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him." This reminds us of the great privilege we have in tasting all of the Lord's goodness in the Supper. Having tasted of the Lord in the Sacrament we can indeed say with the Psalmist, "I sought the Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed" (Psalm 34:4-5).

The Early Church fathers and the Lutheran fathers saw many pictures and types of the Lord's Supper in the Old Testament

⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 16, 22; See also *Sermon Denis 3*, Daniel Sheerin, *The Eucharist* (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1986), 102-103.

Scriptures. Gerhard enumerates a multitude of pictures of the Lord's Supper. Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine to Abraham, the father of believers, points to the meal of salvation of our great High Priest Jesus Christ. Pictures of the Supper are seen in the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, the Passover lamb, the manna in the wilderness, in David's invitation to Mephibosheth to eat at his table (2 Samuel 9:13), in Elijah's food (1 Kings 19:6–8), in Ahasuerus' feast (Esther 1:3), and in Isaiah's burning coal (Isaiah 6). Allusions to the Supper are found in the poor that eat and are satisfied (Psalm 22:26), in the Good Shepherd who prepares His table in the wilderness (Psalm 23; John 10), and in Psalm 111 where the Lord's wonderful works are remembered, His convent of redemption stands forever, and He gives food to those who fear Him.⁹

D. The Means of Grace Flow from the Cross of Christ

On that first Good Friday when the Roman soldiers came to break the legs of those crucified to hasten their death, they found that Jesus was already dead. Therefore they did not break His bones. "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:34). This statement indicates that Jesus truly died a natural human death, but the fathers found far more significance in this statement. They understood this passage in the light of the words of Zechariah, the Prophet, "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn (12:10). ... In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (13:1). The God-man Jesus Christ, the Almighty Himself, was pierced on the cross for our salvation. The blood and water from His wounded side has provided that wonderful cleansing fountain for sin and uncleanness of which Zechariah speaks. It can wash away each stain and mark, each spot and wrinkle. His holy precious blood is the source of redemption for the whole world (1 John 1:7, 2:2).

That fountain of salvation, opened just moments after His death where full redemption was accomplished, continues to flow for us

⁹ Johann Gerhard, *A Comprehensive Explanation of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (1610), trans. Elmer Hohle, ed. David Berger and James D. Heiser (Malone: Repristination Press, 2000), 212–218; *Loci Theologici* (Berlin: Gust. Schlawitz, 1863), Locus 21, Para. 11–12, Preus ed. 5:6–7.

today in the water of Baptism, the blood of the Lord's Supper, and in His Word which is spirit and life. Here the Lord comes to us with all His blessing as St. John indicates, "This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6). The means of grace indeed flow from the cross of Christ and make present for us all the benefits of Christ's redemptive sacrifice.¹⁰

II. The Words of Institution

A. *The Institution Narrative Concerning the Bread*

1. *Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Same Night in Which He Was Betrayed*

The institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–25, Luke 22:15–20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23–25. The historical setting of the Supper was the Passover. It was the 14th day of Nisan, corresponding roughly to one of the last days of March or the beginning of April. On this, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus functioned as the head of the household or family, sending Peter and John to make ready the Passover for the evening celebration (Mark 14:12–13; Matthew 26:17–19; Luke 22:7ff).

When evening came Jesus and His disciples arrived for the meal (Matthew 26:20). The celebration was formally opened when the head of the house spoke a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing upon the meal. The first cup of the feast was then passed around. It was at this point that Jesus declared to His disciples, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). Also at this time there arose a contention among the disciples concerning who was the greatest, (Luke 22:24) and as a result, Jesus gave them the lesson of foot washing. This was normally the work of a slave, but Jesus performed this service here as an example of the humble loving service that Christians are to show to one another.

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Weimar Ausgabe* Tr IV: 519–520, #4799.1–2 (hereafter *WA*); G. Stockhardt, *The Exegetical Lectures of Dr. George Stoeckhardt on the Three Letters of St. John*, trans. Hugo W. Degner (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1980), 116–118; Johannes Ylvisaker, *The Gospels: A Synoptic Presentation of the Text in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, with Explanatory Notes* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1932), 753–754; Carl Manthey Zorn, *Brosamlein: Kurze Andachten Für Alle Tage Des Jahres Dem Christenvolke Deutscher Zunge Dargeboten* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1909), 169–170.

Meanwhile, the meal was served. The bitter herbs were dipped in vinegar or salt water. The roasted lamb was brought in, together with the sauce known as charoseth, and loaves of unleavened bread. By the time of Christ it had become the custom to recline at the table as at a Hellenistic banquet. The guests on their couches faced a low central table where the food was placed, leaning on their left elbow, with the right hand free for eating. The head of the house had the place of honor, which was either at the center or at one end of the three-quarter circle of guests. The place at his right (since the person reclining there would be “close to his breast” [John 13:25; 21:20]) was the second place of honor. The head of the house could converse more easily with him than with the other guests. This was the position of John the beloved disciple at the Last Supper.¹¹

2. He Took Bread and When He Had Given Thanks, He Broke It

When the meal proper was served, the small assembly sang the first part of the Great *Hallel* (Psalms 114 and 115:1–8) and the second cup of wine was passed around. It was at this point that Jesus took bread (ἐλάβεν ἄρτον). This was likely a large flat loaf of unleavened bread, the matzah, for only unleavened bread was used in the Passover. He took the bread and gave thanks or blessed it (Matthew and Mark have εὐλόγησας; Luke and Paul have εὐχαριστήσας). Both the giving thanks and the blessing refer to the same act of our Lord. This is the same terminology used in the Passover meal to refer to the blessing or benediction (the Kiddush) spoken over the bread and the cup. This blessing, however, must have been quite different from the usual Passover benediction, for the Lord said concerning the blessed and offered bread, “This is My body.” The words of explanation accompanying Christ’s action are the key to understanding this thanksgiving and blessing. Chemnitz wrote concerning this blessing: “Mark uses the word ‘to bless’ (εὐλογεῖν) because it points to the special power of the divine Word, as in the account of the miracle of five loaves which were multiplied. ... Therefore, because the bread of the Supper received this designation from God by the divine power of the Word of Christ whereby it is the body of Christ and the wine is the blood of Christ. Mark uses the word ‘to bless’ in order to show that it is

¹¹ Johannes H. Emminghaus, *The Eucharist: Essence, Form, Celebration*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1978), 16.

the same power and has the same meaning in this passage as does the word 'to thank' (εὐχαριστέῖν)."¹²

After our Lord blessed the bread, He broke it (ἔκλασεν). This breaking was of practical necessity because of the size of the loaves. They had to be broken into fragments to be eaten, even as one would slice a loaf of bread today. Luther wrote, "We must not interpret or use the word 'break' according to our own fancies but according to scriptural usage. Now in Scripture the word 'breaking,' especially where it is used in reference to bread or eating, is the equivalent of 'dividing into pieces' or 'distributing.'"¹³ This breaking then is not an integral part of the institution. There is no need for a rite of fraction in order to have a valid Sacrament as Dom Gregory Dix implied. In fact, German Lutherans in general avoided the fraction because the Reformed emphasized the breaking in the interest of their symbolism.¹⁴

3. Take, Eat, This Is My Body Which Is Given for You

a. The Supper and the Real Presence

This blessed and broken bread Jesus gave to His disciples saying, "Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me" (τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν, Luke 22:19). Now whether Jesus distributed to each disciple individually or whether He simply passed it around cannot be ascertained. Nor is it important. But what is important is Jesus' word concerning what was distributed, "This is My body." Jesus did not say, "This is a picture of My body" nor did He say, "This only represents My body." Rather He said, "This *is* My body." It is the very body of Christ which was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died, and rose again for our salvation. This Greek verb ἐστιν can be understood in no other way than "is." This is the confession of our Lutheran fathers: "It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received."¹⁵

¹² Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 104 (hereafter LS).

¹³ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* 37:332 (hereafter LW); see also LS 123.

¹⁴ C.F.W. Walther, *Walther's Pastorate, that is, American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, trans. John M. Drickamer (New Haven: Lutheran News, 1995), 169.

¹⁵ AC X in Theodore G. Tappert, trans. and ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 34 (hereafter Tappert).

Concerning His true body Jesus said to the disciples, “This is given for you.” This very body which they received on their lips was the same body which was the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin on the cross. Having received Christ’s body in the Supper, the disciples received all the blessings of Christ’s redemptive work.

b. The Supper and the Consecration

These words, “Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you,” together with the words spoken over the cup, are the words Christ gave to the church so that in our Lord’s Supper celebration the Word may be joined to the elements, effecting the presence, as St. Augustine says, “If the Word be joined to the element, it becomes a Sacrament” (*Accedat verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*). The consecration does not rest on Christ’s thanksgiving in the original Supper, for these words were not recorded for us in Holy Scripture. Rather, the consecration is based on the words, “This is My body ...” added after Jesus had given thanks as he was about to distribute to His disciples. They are an integral part of the imperative “Do this” which Christ directs to His church.¹⁶ This is the exegesis of the Lutheran Confessions. The Lutheran Confessions declare that the Words of Institution cause the presence of Christ’s body and blood. “For where His institution is observed and His words are spoken over the bread and cup (wine), and the consecrated bread and cup (wine) are distributed, Christ Himself, through the spoken words, *is still efficacious by virtue of the first institution*, through His Word, which He wishes to be there repeated.”¹⁷

c. The Consecration and the Time of the Presence

The Words of Institution do not teach that Christ’s body and blood are present immediately after the consecration is spoken. The Words of Institution state that the Lord blessed the bread, broke it, and then gave it to the disciples saying, “Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you.” He did the same with the cup. These words show that the blessed bread and cup are Christ’s body and blood but they say nothing about the exact moment when the presence began. In fact, Jesus does not name the elements as His body and blood except in offering them.

¹⁶ LW 37:312ff; 37:190; 35:95.

¹⁷ FC SD VII:75 in F. Bente, W.H.T. Dau, and Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Mott Press, 1955), 999 (emphasis original; hereafter *Triglotta*).

St. Luke's account of the Supper (Luke 22:19–20) and St. Matthew's cup words (Matthew 26:27–28) indicate that the giving and speaking occurred at the same time in the original Supper. Here the present participle "saying" is used with the aorist main verb "He gave." Smyth, in his *Grammar*, writes concerning the participle, "The action set forth by the present participle is generally coincident (rarely antecedent or subsequent) to that of the leading verb."¹⁸ Since the speaking and giving were simultaneous in the first institution, they should be thought of theologically as if they occurred simultaneously now as well. The entire sacramental action must be seen as an indivisible unit. However, in our Supper the actions are not carried out simultaneously. In our Supper, the consecration occurs first and then the distribution and reception. When we say, "This is My body, this is My blood," the "This do" of Christ's command is not yet complete as it was when Jesus said these words in the original Supper. There has been no distribution or reception, apart from which there is no Sacrament, that is, there is no real presence. To demand that Christ's body and blood must be present as soon as the consecration is said pulls apart conceptually the action commanded by Christ. It emphasizes only one action of our Lord's command and not the rest of it. The efficacious power of the Words of Institution must be clearly taught, but not in a way that obscures the integrity of the whole *usus*. Forms of expression used by the church must not give the impression that elements over which the *Verba* have been spoken are the body and blood of Christ regardless of whether or not they are distributed to be eaten and drunk. Concerning the bread which He blessed, which He broke, which He distributed, concerning that bread He said, "This is My body."¹⁹ In the original Supper, Jesus speaks of the elements as His body and blood only in giving them to the disciples.

Our Confessions teach that in a valid Lord's Supper celebration the pastor stands in the place of Christ speaking Christ's words which are still efficacious today by virtue of the first institution.²⁰ On this basis it is argued that when the pastor in Christ's stead says, "This is My body," then immediately it is Christ's body. Note, however, there is a different sequence in the original Supper than in our Supper. In the original Supper "This is My body" was said at the distribution showing that it

¹⁸ Herbert Weir Smyth and Gordon M. Messing, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 419.

¹⁹ Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent (Examen Concilii Tridentini)*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 2, 248 (hereafter Ex.).

²⁰ FC SD VII:75 in *Triglotta*, 999.

refers to the whole action. In our Supper “This is My body” is said in the blessing or consecration, but it likewise refers to the whole action. This argument connects Christ’s words said at the distribution, which words refer to the entire action, only to the blessing, an argument which is improper. The sequence of events is not the same in our celebration as in the original Supper. One cannot make an exact comparison in reference to time between the two as this argument advocates. This argument, therefore, is not valid. Jesus blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to them saying, “This is My body.” He did not say when His body was united with the bread, but He did say that it had occurred for the distribution. Likewise, the pastor today, standing in the place of Christ, blesses the bread with Christ’s almighty Words of Institution, which effect the presence, and distributes Christ’s body to those about to receive declaring, “This is the true body of Christ.” While he cannot point out an exact moment of the presence, he declares as Jesus did that what is present in the Sacrament and is distributed to be received is the body and blood of the Lord.

Likewise, the assertion that one can be certain of the presence only in the eating and drinking cannot be proven on the basis of the Words of Institution. Christ did not say, “That which you now eat is My body, that which you now drink is My blood,” but, “that which *I give you* is My body and blood which you are to eat and drink.” Consequently, the elements are His body and blood so that they may be eaten and drunk. St. Luke’s account of the Supper (ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων ... ὡσαύτως μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνήσαι, λέγων ..., Luke 22:19–20) and St. Matthew’s cup words (ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων ..., Matthew 26:27–28) indicate that the giving and speaking occurred at the same time in the original Supper. Here the present participle λέγων, “saying,” is used with the aorist main verb ἔδωκεν, “He gave.” Smyth, in his *Grammar*, writes concerning the participle, “The action set forth by the present participle is generally coincident (rarely antecedent or subsequent) to that of the leading verb.”²¹ Therefore the present participle λέγων shows that the “saying” should be taken as occurring simultaneously with the action of the aorist main verb “He gave.” Because Jesus said that the bread and wine were His body and blood as He gave them or distributed them, His body and blood were indeed present to be received by the disciples.

The bread words of St. Matthew’s (Matthew 26:26) and St. Mark’s accounts of the Supper (Mark 14:22–24) are not to be taken as showing consecutive action (as though Jesus named the elements His body and

²¹ Smyth and Messing, *Greek Grammar*, 419.

blood only after they were received), but as indicating simultaneous action, as the account of St. Luke's and St. Matthew's cup words.

The grammar of these texts allows this interpretation.

- a. In St. Matthew's words concerning the bread (Matthew 26:26), $\delta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ does not have to be taken antecedent to the main verb "He said." It can also be taken coincident to the main verb and in this way it agrees with the other texts.²²
- b. In St. Mark's words concerning the cup and the bread (Mark 14:22–24), the giving and saying can also be understood as occurring at the same time. The aorist indicatives connected by $\kappa\alpha\iota$ can show simultaneous action.²³ There are times in Greek when the $\kappa\alpha\iota \dots \kappa\alpha\iota$ construction as found here is translated "as soon as He gave it to them He said."

If Jesus said "Take, eat, this is My body" only after the disciples ate and if Jesus said, "Take, drink, etc." only after they drank, then these words of Jesus make no sense. Jesus would have been telling them to eat and to drink when they had already eaten and drunk. Rather these two phrases show that Jesus said these words as He was offering the elements so that the disciples knew what they were being offered, namely, His body and blood and so that they knew what they were to do with His body and blood.

St. Mark writes, "And having taken the cup and having blessed it, He gave it to them, and they all drank out of it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the testament, that is being poured out for many" (Mark 14:23–24). Here St. Mark relates that all the disciples drank from the cup and he records what the cup contained, namely, Christ's true blood. If this text is understood as Jesus telling the disciples what they received from the cup only after they drank, would the disciples have known what they were receiving and would they not have received to their great spiritual harm? Also the $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ in the phrase, "This is My blood of the testament" refers to the cup. If Jesus said these words after the disciples received, then the cup contained His blood only after the Supper was ended.

To make these accounts contradict the Lukan text and St. Matthew's cup words by implying that Jesus said, "Take, eat, etc. Take, drink, etc." only after the disciples had eaten and drunk goes against the natural sense of these texts as is seen above. Rather these accounts also show that the giving and the speaking occurred at the same time. If Jesus said

²² Ibid., 420.

²³ Ibid., 651.

that the elements were His body and blood as He gave them, then they were indeed His body and blood as he offered them to the disciples to be eaten and drunk.

The two phrases “Take, eat, this is My body” and “Take, drink, this is the new testament in My blood” indicate that Jesus said these words as He was distributing the elements. When someone hands a glass of water and says to another, “Take and drink, this is good water,” is it not the meaning that there is water in the glass being handed over and the other person is to take that water and drink? Can it possibly mean that he has already drunk and afterwards is being commanded to drink or that there is not water in the glass until he drinks? Of course not. Likewise our Lord uses simple language in His institution which even a child can understand. The natural sense of these two phrases is that Christ is distributing His true body and blood which He wants them to eat and drink. To say “Take and eat this” or “Take and drink that” indicates that the thing to be eaten and drunk is already present so that it can be eaten and drunk. This interpretation concurs with Stöckhardt’s exegesis of the Words of Institution. He writes, “Thus what the Lord had in His hands and distributed and what the disciples received and ate, that bread was the Body of Christ which He gave into death allowing it to be broken and slaughtered on the cross.”²⁴

There is another reason why the phrase “Take, eat, this is My body” (Matthew 26:26) or the phrase, “Take, this is My body” (Mark 14:22) does not allow one to think that Jesus only handed His disciples bread. The *τοῦτο* in the phrase “Take, eat, this is My body” is a neuter demonstrative and therefore cannot grammatically refer to the bread (*ἄρτος*) which is masculine. It is in the neuter, the same gender as the phrase “My body” in Greek (*τὸ σῶμά μου*) which is a clear reference to the sacramental presence of Christ’s body in the bread. It indicates that as Jesus handed the element to the disciples and told them to take and to eat, the sacramental union had occurred. The “this” (*τοῦτο*) which He told them to take was His body.²⁵

St. Matthew’s account concerning the cup reads, “And He took the cup and gave thanks, and *gave it to them saying*, ‘All of you drink from it. For this is My blood of the new covenant’” (Matthew 26:27–28; emphasis added). As He was distributing to them, He said to them,

²⁴ *Also was der Herr in Händen hat und austheilt, was die Jünger nehmen und essen, das Brod, das ist der Leib Christi, den er in den Tod gibt, am Kreuz brechen and schlachten fässt.* G. Stöckhardt, *Die Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 266.

²⁵ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 1025–1026.

“Drink from it because this is my blood.” The “for” (γάρ) here has the force of “because.” They were to drink because it was His blood.²⁶ If Christ meant what He said, then He was indeed giving or distributing to the disciples His blood which they were to drink. They were to drink *because* it was His blood, not *so that* it would be His blood.

Since Jesus said that the elements were His body and blood as He gave them, we know that His body and blood are present as we give or distribute, for we are commanded to do what He did. He said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” One is to take bread and wine, bless them with Christ’s almighty words of consecration and distribute His true body and blood. Because of this consecration, Christ’s body and blood are truly present in the elements of bread and wine so that His body and blood may be distributed by the minister and received by the communicant,²⁷ the believer to salvation and the unbeliever to judgment.²⁸ The Scriptures and the Confessions teach that Christ’s body and blood are truly offered by the hand of the minister (*reichen, exhibeo*) and not that they can be present only when the eating is begun and as a result of the same.²⁹ Likewise, the Scripture and the Confessions do not teach that Christ’s body and blood must be present immediately after the Words of Institution are said.³⁰ “While one may hold a private opinion as to when the real presence begins, yet we reject the dogmatic assertion that in a valid celebration of the Lord’s Supper it must be maintained that the body and blood are immediately present after the Words of Institution have been spoken by the pastor or the dogmatic assertion that it must be maintained that the body and blood are present only in the reception.”³¹

4. In the Same Way Also, the Cup After the Supper

The Words of Institution continue: “In the same way also, the cup after supper” (ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνήσαι, 1 Corinthians 11:25). The phrase, “after supper” does not necessarily mean that the eating and drinking in the institution were separated

²⁶ LS 98–99.

²⁷ AC X in Tappert, 34; AC XXII in Tappert, 50; Ap X:1 in Tappert, 179; Ap XXIV:80 in Tappert, 264; FC SD VII:10–11 in Tappert, 571.

²⁸ FC SD VII:60–63 in Tappert, 580–581.

²⁹ Ex. 2, 248.

³⁰ Martin Luther, *St. Louis* edition, XX, 332–333 (hereafter *St. L.*); WA Br. IV; 366–388.

³¹ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *The Lord's Supper* (Mankato: Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1997), 9:g.

by time.³² Rather this phrase shows that the cup which Jesus used, the third cup of the Passover, the cup of redemption (the cup of blessing according to 1 Corinthians 10:16), was at the end of the Passover proper followed only by the second part of the great *Hallel* Psalms 115:9–18 to 118 and a final cup. From the institution, one cannot assert when the Lord gave His disciples His body. It may have been directly before the giving of the cup after the Supper. To this view, however, Jeremias would not agree.³³

The main course of the Passover meal having ended, Jesus put away the Old Testament meal having been fulfilled in Him, and substituted for it the corresponding Sacrament of the New Testament. The bread which He took was probably from *aphikomen* (Hebrew transliteration of the Greek derivative, *epikomios*, that which comes last, the hidden Passover bread eaten at the *seder*.) The bread was usually eaten right before the third cup of the Passover. The *aphikomen* was used to commemorate the Passover lamb. Some have seen great significance in the fact that Jesus probably used this bread for the Sacrament. Following the assumption that Jesus used the *aphikomen* which represented the Paschal lamb to make present His body, Ceil and Moishe Rosen write:

We see, then, in the three pieces of matzo on the Passover table, a truth that remains hidden from most of the Jewish community to this day. That truth of the unique unity of the eternal God is expressed in the *shemah*, the most widely spoken utterance of faith in all of Judaism, found in Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." In the original Hebrew, the word for "one" is *echad*, meaning a composite oneness, rather than the absolute number "one." This same word, *echad*, appears in Genesis 2:24 to signify that Adam and Eve became "one flesh." It appears again in Ezekiel 37:16–19 to describe the sign of the two sticks that became "one" in the prophet's hand. The three pieces of matzo, then, depict the eternal unity of God: the ineffable *Name*, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush; the *Messiah*, the Son of David, who became flesh to effect absolute redemption for the entire human race; and the *Holy Spirit*, who guides and directs and empowers the redeemed of the Lord.

³² LS 108–110.

³³ Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 87.

At the seder we single out the middle matzo, representing the Messiah, even as He was *foreordained* to die for the sins of the whole world. We break the middle matzo, signifying His *death*, for He was crucified, even as the psalmist and the prophets foretold in Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and Daniel 9. We hide the middle matzo, signifying *burial*. Just before the third cup of wine, perhaps symbolizing three days, we “resurrect” the middle matzo, just as Jesus the Messiah *rose from the grave* in fulfillment of Job 19:25 and Psalm 16:10.³⁴

How fitting if the *aphikomen* was indeed used for the institution of the Holy Supper. It was a piece broken from the second of the three pieces of the matzo which formed the unity in Trinity. It was “broken,” “buried,” and now “resurrected.” This One, Jesus Christ, we now receive under the form of bread in the Sacrament.³⁵

5. This Cup Is the New Testament in My Blood

a. The Earthly Elements in the Supper

This, the third cup of the Passover which Jesus took, was a cup of wine, for only wine was used in the Passover. St. Matthew speaks of the beverage which was blessed as “this fruit of the vine” (ἐκ τούτου τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου, Matthew 26:29). This is the liturgical term for wine in the Passover meal. This indicates that the Lord intended wine to be used in the Supper and not grape juice. He used this liturgical term to show that He wanted only grape wine employed in the Sacrament. Also, in April at the time of Christ such a thing as grape juice was an impossibility. There was no refrigeration in that warm climate. It could only be obtained when the grapes were freshly pressed before the juice naturally fermented.

The other physical element used in the Lord's Supper was bread (ἄρτος). Notice that this is the more general Greek term for bread or loaf which is made from grain. While we know that unleavened bread was used in the last Supper, since it was a Passover meal and only unleavened bread was used in the Passover, still Jesus did not employ the proper term for unleavened bread (τὰ ἄζυμα) in the institution indicating that

³⁴ Ceil Rosen and Moishe Rosen, *Christ in the Passover: Why Is This Night Different?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 91–92.

³⁵ See also, John Hainsworth, “The Force of Mystery: Anamnesis and Exegesis in Melito's *Peri Pascha*,” *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 46, no. 2–3 (2002): 107, noting especially pp. 137ff.

any bread made from grain may be used in the Supper. As a result of this, the Eastern Church has traditionally used leavened bread and the Western Church, unleavened bread. Jesus employed the liturgical term of the Passover for wine, fruit of the vine, to show that He wanted grape wine and only grape wine used in the Sacrament, but He did not use the proper term for unleavened bread as St. Paul does in 1 Corinthians 5:8, but the broader term for bread to indicate that any bread from grain may be used in the Supper. The earthly elements of the Sacrament, therefore, are wine from grapes and bread from grain.³⁶ Gerhard assumes that the elements of bread and wine are needed for a valid Lord's Supper celebration. Also he maintains that both elements must always be used.

8. Those who are unable to drink any wine, for since the wine is an essential element of the holy Supper—as was shown above in chapter 9—it is thus better that such persons completely refrain from the Lord's Supper, so that no action is taken contrary to Christ's institution. ...

8. That it would actually be better if one gave only the consecrated bread to the *abstemii* (the abstainers), who can drink no wine, instead of completely excluding them from the holy Supper. ANSWER: One actually finds few people who cannot ingest the (small) amount of (wine) required for us in the holy Supper. However, if they indeed cannot ingest even a tiny droplet of wine, then it is more advisable that they abstain from the holy Supper rather than have one undertake to do something contrary to Christ's institution. And, such persons are to be instructed (informed) that it is not the *deprivation* of the Sacrament because of a case of necessity, but rather the *despising* of the Supper which is damnable. Such persons are also to cling to this: that they all the more frequently and with intense devotion appear at the administration of the holy Supper and alongside the communicants lift up their sighs to God in order to share in the spiritual consumption of the body and blood of Christ.³⁷

³⁶ A.M. Harstad, "Is Grape Juice Permissible for Sacramental Purposes?", *Clergy Bulletin* 15, no. 4 (1955): 33–36; Gerhard Wilde, "Abendmahl mit Saft," *Theologische Handreichung und Informationen* 1984, no. 1: 11; John Ude, "'This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' Does Scripture demonstrate that the sacramental use of grape juice is valid?", *Journal of Theology* 49, no. 3 (September 2009): 41–52; "Opinion of the Department of Systematic Theology: The Fruit of the Vine in the Sacrament of the Altar," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45, no. 1–2 (January–April 1981): 77–80.

³⁷ Johann Gerhard, *Baptism and Lord's Supper*, 430, 434.

b. Allusions to Exodus 24

Jesus took this third cup of the Passover, He blessed it even as He had blessed the bread, and gave it to them saying, "This is the new testament (covenant) in My blood" (τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἔμφω αἵματι, 1 Corinthians 11:25). St. Matthew explains further, "which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins" (τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυνόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, Matthew 26:28). The cup did not contain mere wine, but through the power of Christ's Word it contained His blood, the very blood which would be shed on the cross as payment for the sins of the world.

The Marcan-Matthean form of the cup words, "This is My blood of the testament (covenant)," is an allusion to the Sinai covenant and its accompanying ceremonies in Exodus 24.

And [Moses] rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "*Behold, the blood of the covenant* which the Lord has made with you according to all these words." ... So they saw God, and they ate and drank. (Exodus 24:4-8, 11)

The Marcan-Matthean form of the cup words are reminiscent of the ratification of the first covenant in Exodus 24:8. In fact, virtually the same vocabulary is used in the Septuagint version of Exodus 24 as is used in the Words of Institution. As the old covenant was sealed by animal blood sprinkled on the people, picturing the blood of Christ, so the new covenant is sealed by the very blood of Christ through which we receive all the blessings of salvation. Real blood ratified the old covenant and the people were given that real blood in testimony of the fact that they received the blessing of the sacrifice. Likewise, real blood ratified the new covenant and God's people are still given that real blood of the true Lamb of God so that they are certain that the benefits of Christ's redemptive sacrifice apply to them.³⁸

³⁸ LS 100-102.

There is a parallelism between the old covenant and the new covenant mediated by Christ. Both the old and the new are concluded and sealed by the outpouring of blood: the old covenant by the blood of animals, the new by the blood of Christ Himself. Christ's mediatorship infinitely surpasses in effectiveness the mediation exercised in the old covenant, which is the great theme of the Letter to the Hebrews, "When Christ came as high priest ... He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (9:11–12).

It should be noted further that at the conclusion of the ratification of the first covenant there was a festive meal: "So they saw God and they ate and drank" (Exodus 24:11). Likewise, Christ instituted a festive meal where we receive all the benefits of His all-sufficient atonement sacrifice on the cross, which is the basis for the new testament. In this meal we indeed meet God face to face and eat and drink with Him, for Christ is both victim and host.³⁹

c. Allusions to Zechariah 9:9–11

There is a mention of the blood of the covenant in Zechariah 9:9–11. This is important in our present context, since all four Evangelists incorporate part of the Zechariah prophecy in the passion narrative. They point out that the words of Zechariah 9:9 are fulfilled on Palm Sunday: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt the foal of a donkey." Then, immediately after the promise of this king coming in humility, Zechariah has these words of consolation: "As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit" (9:11). The humble King, who on Palm Sunday rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, gave His life as the sacrifice for all sin and shed His own blood to establish the new testament or covenant. The blood of this covenant He gives us in the Blessed Sacrament so that we may be free from the waterless pit of destruction.

d. Allusions to Jeremiah 31:31–34

The Pauline-Lucan form of the cup words "This cup is the new testament (covenant) in My blood" is an allusion to Jeremiah 31:31–34.

³⁹ See Gaylin R. Schmeling, *From Wilderness to Promised Land* (Mankato: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Press, 2012), 64–67.

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them,” says the Lord. “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the Lord, I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” says the Lord. “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31–34)

God’s Old Testament people expected a new covenant which would be established by the Messiah. The Pauline-Lucan form of the cup words points out that this prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled in the blood atonement of Christ. In Christ, God is truly our God who dwelt among men and continues to do the same in a most special way in the Supper (Jeremiah 31:33). The One who became incarnate in the Virgin Mary’s womb for salvation is now incarnate in the Sacrament, offering the treasure of salvation to all. As a result of Christ’s redemptive work, there is forgiveness from sin and guilt in the means of grace, the life-giving Word and the Blessed Sacraments (Jeremiah 31:34).

e. Allusions to the Suffering Servant

The Prophet Isaiah describes the Suffering Servant as glorious yet called to suffer. His glory comes from the fact that the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him (Isaiah 42:1), that the Lord uses Him to proclaim the message of deliverance (Isaiah 61:1), that the Lord establishes in Him His covenant with all people (Isaiah 42:6, 49:8), and gives Him as a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6). At the same time, the Suffering Servant is destined to endure hardship (Isaiah 49:4), physical abuse (Isaiah 50:6), and finally death (Isaiah 53); but this is not His end. After He is cut off from the land of the living, He sees His seed and the Lord prolongs His days (Isaiah 53:10).

In the New Testament, Jesus is identified with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah by the voice of the Father at His Baptism: “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus was God’s servant, His

Elect in whom He delighted. On Him God placed His Spirit (Isaiah 42:1–2). These words of the Father indicate that Jesus was the Suffering Servant destined by God to fulfill the vicarious sin-bearing mission of Isaiah 53. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. By His stripes we are healed.

In Matthew 20:28 (Mark 10:45), Jesus Himself identified His work with that of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53): “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many in fulfillment of the prophecy (Isaiah 53:11). The preposition “for” in this context has the force of “as a substitute for” or “in behalf of.” In other words, One gave His life in the place of the many (“the many” is the normal Hebrew term for the whole multitude of mankind). This is Christ’s substitutionary satisfaction which He made for the whole world. Thus, He is the once and for all offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10; Hebrews 9:12). In His glorious resurrection, the benefit of that sacrifice was offered to the world and He sees many seed: those who are the sons of God by faith in Him (Isaiah 53:10). It is no wonder that Philip began at this Scripture, Isaiah 53, and preached Christ to the eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8:32).

St. Matthew’s cup words, “This is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28), makes a definite connection between the Supper and the sacrificial work of the Suffering Servant. The phrase “for many” is used here as in Matthew 20:28 (Isaiah 53:5, 11). Also, there is reference to the new testament (covenant) which is established in the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 42:6, 49:8). Jesus is the real sacrificial Victim in His body given for many and His blood poured out for many. Jesus is the expiatory Victim of the new covenant: “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The very body and blood which were the all-sufficient atonement sacrifice on the cross for the many are now present in the Holy Supper, conveying all the blessings of that sacrifice to the many. His blood poured out for many on Calvary to win salvation for all is now made present in the Sacrament so that all the benefits of the Calvary event may be applied to the church gathered as the body of Christ.

f. The Supper as Sacrifice

As was noted above (page 390), St. Matthew’s cup words make a definite connection between the Holy Supper and the sacrificial work

of the Suffering Servant. In what way, then, is the Sacrament a sacrifice? The Lord's Supper may be called a sacrifice because here Christ's body and blood, the propitiatory sacrifice of the cross, are present in the Supper so that the communicant may receive all the blessings of that sacrifice, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. This Sacrament is a presentation of Christ's sacrifice in the midst of His people where all the treasures of the cross are made present for His people through His body and blood as Martin Chemnitz points out:

The fathers call the body and blood of the Lord which are present in the Supper a saving sacrifice, a pure host, our ransom, the purchase price of our redemption, the ransom for the sins of the world, a propitiatory sacrifice and a propitiation, **not because the body and blood of Christ are offered in the Mass by the action of the priest in order that they may become the ransom and propitiation for the sins of the whole world, but because that sacrifice which was once offered on the cross for our redemption and for the sins of the whole world—the body and blood of the Lord—is present, is dispensed, offered, and taken in the Lord's Supper, so that the power and efficacy of this offering, once made on the cross, is applied and sealed individually to all who receive it in faith.** Thus Cyprian says of the Lord's Supper: "This life-giving bread and the cup of blessing, hallowed by the solemn benediction, benefits the life of the total man, being at the same time a medicine and an offering, to heal our infirmities and to purge our iniquities."⁴⁰

The Holy Supper is also spoken of as a thankoffering or Eucharist. Out of gratitude for salvation full and free imparted to the church in the Sacrament through Christ's body and blood, the church, His body, offers itself, all that it is and all that it has, as a thankoffering to God on the basis of Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice on the cross.⁴¹ Through Christ, Christians continually offer up sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father (Hebrews 13:15).

The Sacrament is a commemoration of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross where the blessings of that sacrifice are made present for the church. Here, however, there is no sacrifice or offering up of Christ's body and blood for the salvation of the world to appease the just anger of God. That was done once and for all on the cross. Christ's

⁴⁰ Ex. 2, 491.

⁴¹ Ap XXIV:16–65 in Tappert, 252–261; LW 35:99; Ex. 2, 486.

holy life for us and His death for sin on Calvary are the one all-sufficient sacrifice, as the writer to the Hebrews declares, “Unlike the other high priests, [Christ] does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.” (Hebrews 7:27, 9:12).⁴² If Christ is offered up continually to expiate sin, then Christ’s once-and-for-all atonement sacrifice was not perfect and complete. To be sure, Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us, but He does this on the basis of His sacrifice offered once, not on the basis of the Mass continually offered (Hebrews 7:25). Christ’s body and blood, the propitiatory sacrifice of the cross, are present in the Supper so that the communicant may receive the blessings of the cross, but they are not in any way offered to God in the Supper to appease His just anger over sin, because that was done once and for all on Calvary. In the Supper the propitiatory sacrifice is not offered to God, but God offers and gives the benefits of that sacrifice to His people. The sacrifice of the cross cannot be all-sufficient, offered once, and still need to be offered daily in the Mass.

The teaching that the sacrifice of the cross and the sacrifice of the Sacrament are identical, that is, **that the self-same offering sacrificed once on the cross is now continually offered in the Supper, is really a camouflage.** To say that the Supper is the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross, meaning that in the Sacrament Christ’s body and blood are offered up to appease God’s just anger over sin, impairs the oneness of the once-and-for-all sacrifice on the cross (Hebrews 7:26–27, 9:12). **The sacrifice of the cross cannot be all-sufficient, offered once, and still need to be continually offered in the Mass.** The only way that the Sacrament is the same as the sacrifice of the cross is that in the Supper that very body and blood, which once accomplished redemption for all, are now present in the Supper conveying the blessings of that redemption to the individual. The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions are extremely emphatic in their rejection of any form of eucharistic sacrifice which militates against the once-and-for-all sacrifice of the cross or makes the Sacrament a human work or sacrifice.

g. The Supper as Testament

The blessed cup in the Holy Supper is the new testament (covenant, διαθήκη) in Christ’s blood. Translators have wavered in using “testament” or “covenant” as a translation for *diatheke*. *Diatheke* was used in the sense of a “last will and testament” from the time of Democritus

⁴² See also Ex. 2, 457–460.

(c. 400 B.C.). It was used exclusively in this sense in Hellenistic literature.⁴³ This term was used by the translators of the *Septuagint* (LXX) to translate the Hebrew *berith* (בְּרִית, Exodus 24:8, Jeremiah 31:32). The Old Testament dealt with the promises God gave to His chosen people. He placed Himself into a covenant relationship with Israel. He promised Israel great blessings without any merit or worthiness on their part. Here He did all and Israel did nothing. The covenant was not bilateral but unilateral, totally one-sided. It was always God's covenant, not Israel's; *and it was never a mutual agreement*. This is the connection between the biblical understanding of God's covenant and testament. In both, one simply offers benefits and the other receives or inherits without any worthiness on his part.

In the *Vulgate*, Jerome used *testamentum* to translate *diatheke* throughout his New Testament rather than *pactum* or *foedus*, the regular Latin words for "covenant." Luther, like Jerome, used *Testament* to translate *diatheke* in the Words of Institution, while in the Old Testament he used *Bund* for *berith*. He used *Bund* whenever the context implied that the promise had not yet been fulfilled and *Testament* for the fulfillment of the promise, especially in terms of Jesus' death and His work as the God-Man. The *berith* of the Old Testament was the Gospel-promise of Jesus Christ, while the *diatheke* was the Gospel-promise completed in Christ.⁴⁴

At Luther's time, Nominalist theology viewed the Lord's Supper as a covenant or pact. If man did the best that was in him, God was covenantally bound to reward him with grace. Luther came to see that this covenant theology conflicted with the central article, justification by faith, and was thus moved to reject Nominalist sacramental theology.

[The Nominalists] hold that there is no power in the sacraments, but that grace is given by God alone, *who according to his covenant* is present in the sacraments which he has instituted. ... Such views, however, must be carefully avoided and shunned, *because they are godless and infidel, contrary to faith and inconsistent with the nature of the sacraments*.⁴⁵

⁴³ William F. Arndt, Fredrick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek – English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 182.

⁴⁴ LW 35:84; see also "Diatheke," in *The New Testament: God's Word to the Nations* (GWN) (Cleveland: Biblion Publishing, 1988), 533–534.

⁴⁵ LW 36:64–65.

This influenced Luther's use of *Testament* rather than *Bund* in the Words of Institution.

Ideas similar to those faced by Luther in Nominalist theology are found today in what is designated as "covenant theology." Here one finds a mixing of grace and works under the heading of covenant. In addition to this, the average English-speaking person who hears the word "covenant" usually thinks in terms of a contract between two parties, each of whom has obligations and contributes something. It is thought of in terms of a bilateral agreement as though it means "let's make a deal." Now, while covenant can be a proper translation for *diatheke* in the Words of Institution if it is understood unilaterally, there is always the danger that it will be taken bilaterally. Thus "testament" is the best translation for this word in the Institution narrative.

Most modern Greek lexicons and other studies think that *diatheke* should be translated as "covenant." This opinion arises because they deny that God can die in Christ.⁴⁶ To this study the words of Adolf Deissmann are very important:

Perhaps the most necessary investigation still waiting to be made is that relating to the word *diatheke*, which so many scholars translate unhesitatingly "covenant." ...To St. Paul the word [*diatheke*] meant what it meant in his Greek Old Testament, "a unilateral enactment," in particular "a will or testament." This one point concerns more than the merely superficial question whether we are to write "New Testament" or "New Covenant" on the title-page of the sacred volume; it becomes ultimately the great question of all religious history: a religion of grace, or a religion of works?⁴⁷

The fact that the Verba are Christ's last will and testament is of extreme importance because this indicates that these words must be interpreted literally.

When the last will and testament of a man has been executed, we are required under the law to observe the words with special care so that nothing be done which is either beside or contrary

⁴⁶ J. Behm, "*diatheke*" in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-), 2, 127-132.

⁴⁷ A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. Lionel R.M. Strachan (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), 337f.

to the final will of the testator. ... Now, because the Son of God in His last will and testament has not permitted His heirs the liberty of believing or doing whatever seems good to them, but has willed that we believe what He has spoken in His words of institution and do what He has commanded, therefore we should give very careful thought that we do not thrust anything upon these words of the last will and testament of the Son of God, lest we deprive ourselves of the benefit of eternal happiness conveyed to us by His will or our inheritance itself be taken from us as being unworthy because we have departed from the will of the Testator as it has been given to us in the words of His last testament.⁴⁸

If the words of a human will cannot be changed or modified, but must be taken literally, how much more shouldn't the last will and testament of God's Son be followed carefully and understood literally? On this basis we must oppose both the Reformed who refuse to take the Verba literally, saying that the bread and wine only represent the Lord's body and blood, and the Roman Church when it argues that Christ's body and blood are present apart from the divinely instituted use or action.

Because the Sacrament is the last will and testament of Christ, it is a gift or inheritance for God's people and not a sacrifice of Christ's body and blood offered in the Supper. The Sacrament contains all the elements of a last will and testament.

Since God in the Scriptures again and again calls his promise a testament he means to announce thereby that he will die; and again, in calling it a promise he means to announce that he will live. And thus, by that one word he wanted to make us understand that he would become man, die; and yet live eternally. ... A testament is nothing but the last will of one who is dying, telling how his heirs are to live with and dispose of his properties after his death. ... **Four things are necessary in a complete and proper testament:** the testator, the oral or written promise, the inheritance, and the heirs; and all of these are clearly visible to us in this testament. **The testator** is Christ, who is about to die. **The promise** is contained in the words with which the bread and wine are consecrated. **The inheritance** which Christ has bequeathed to us in his testament is the forgiveness of sins. **The heirs** are all the believers in Christ,

⁴⁸ LS 27.

namely, the holy elect children of God—wherefore Paul in Titus 1 [:1] calls the Christian faith the faith of the elect.⁴⁹

The Holy Supper is primarily a testament or a gift from God and not something we offer to God. “For just as one would act if ten thousand guildens were bequeathed to him by a good friend, so, and in even greater measure, we ought to conduct ourselves toward the Mass.”⁵⁰ Here is bequeathed to us the greatest treasure of all times, all the blessings of the cross.⁵¹

h. The Blessings of the Supper

The Words of Institution summarize the blessings of the Sacrament with the phrase “for the forgiveness of sins” which shows that the whole treasure of salvation is offered and given in this Supper. Luther aptly summarized the blessings of the Supper in the *Small Catechism*: “The benefit which we receive from such eating and drinking is shown us by these words: Given and shed for you for the remission of sins, namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”⁵² Forgiveness of sins is the chief blessing of the Sacrament as the Words of Institution declare, and from it flows all the other blessings of the Supper.

The Holy Sacrament assures each individual personally of the gospel declaration of forgiveness. In our weaknesses and failures we can often begin to wonder whether we are really forgiven. How can God forgive a wretch like me? Are my sins just too great to be pardoned? In this Supper the Lord Jesus removes our every doubt. As we come to the Lord’s Table we are in spirit at Golgotha kneeling before the cross embracing His dying body and drinking from His five bloody wounds. It is Jesus’ body hung on the cross and His shed blood which has paid for the sins of the world. As a kidnapped child is bought back by its parents with money, so Jesus bought us back not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. His body and blood are the ransom for sin. In the Supper we receive the very thing which paid for sins, the very thing which freed us

⁴⁹ LW 36:179–180.

⁵⁰ LW 35:86–87.

⁵¹ For a further discussion of “testament,” see *The New Testament: God’s Word to the Nations*, 531–540.

⁵² Martin Luther and Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism* (Mankato: Lutheran Synod Book Co., 1966), 24.

from hell's destruction. Then no matter how great and terrible our sins may be, no matter how heavily they burden our conscience, receiving this Sacrament we need never wonder whether our sins are forgiven, for within us we have the very ransom money which paid for our sins, namely, His true body and blood.⁵³

The Holy Supper confers life. This is not temporal life which we received through natural birth, but it is that new spiritual life which has been regenerated in us through the new birth in Holy Baptism. Since this life is still weak and imperfect, and constant growth is necessary, the Lord Jesus has instituted this Sacrament as a true spiritual nourishment. It is the strengthening and food for our faith-life, as Chemnitz writes, "It becomes a heavenly and spiritual nourishment for both body and soul of believers unto eternal life."⁵⁴

As the Christian travels in this life, he faces problems and troubles all the way. There are often financial difficulties in our home, bitterness in our family, conflicts with our friends, sickness, and even the death of those most near and dear. For this reason the German Lutheran fathers often speak of this life as the *Jammertal*, the "vale of tears." Yet in every difficulty and problem of life the Lord Jesus says, "Come to My Table, all you that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest." Through the Sacrament of His body and blood He gives us the strength to face all the problems and troubles of life and to do all things through Him, the power to overcome and obtain the victory. Here the Lord offers life-giving nourishment to resist all the attacks of the devil, the world, and our flesh, and the power to lead a more Christ-like life.⁵⁵

The Holy Supper confers salvation. Where there is forgiveness of sins there is also eternal salvation. In the Supper the believer receives the very ransom money that paid for his sins and freed him from destruction. This is what has thrown open the doors of heaven and broken every barrier down. As we receive His body and blood in the Supper we know that heaven is ours. "Thus the Sacrament is for us a food, a bridge, a door, a ship, and a stretcher, by which and in which we pass from this world into eternal life."⁵⁶

As Christ walked among men, people were healed and raised from the dead by His very touch. His flesh and blood are life-giving. Then as we receive His glorified and risen body and blood into this dying body, we are assured that, even though it returns to the dust from which it

⁵³ C.F.W. Walther, *Brosamen*, 108–117; LS 189; LW 36:174.

⁵⁴ LS 61; LC V:23–26, in Tappert, 449.

⁵⁵ Ex. 2:283; LS 191; LC V:66–70, in Tappert, 454.

⁵⁶ LW 35:66.

was formed, on the last day it will break forth from the grave glorified like unto Christ's glorified body, and so we will ever be with the Lord. Because of this, the Early Church fathers have often spoken of the Supper as the *viaticum*, "the food for the way," which is a food preparing us for eternal life. Luther clearly points to the Sacrament as a pledge and seal of the resurrection and eternal life: "Similarly, the mouth, the throat, the body, which eats Christ's body, will also have its benefit in that it will live forever and arise on the Last Day to eternal salvation. This is the secret power and benefit which flows from the body of Christ in the Supper into our body, for it must be useful, and cannot be present in vain. Therefore it must bestow life and salvation upon our bodies, as is its nature."⁵⁷

6. *This Do, as Often as You Drink it, in Remembrance of Me*

a. This Institution Is To Be Continued Unto the End of Time

Jesus concluded His institution with the command: "This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, ὡσάκις ἐὰν πίνητε, εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν, 1 Corinthians 11:25). J. Jeremias theorizes that these words mean: "Do this that God may remember Me" or "Do this that I may be remembered before God."⁵⁸ He holds that the formula of remembrance found here comes from the Passover (Exodus 12:14) and that the meaning of the Passover memorial is that God remembers Israel rather than that Israel remembers the Lord. However, this presupposition cannot be proven. The context both here and in the Exodus passage implies that God's people are to remember His mighty act of redemption.

Therefore, this phrase is best translated, "This do, as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me." The imperative is a durative present and denotes indefinite repetition: "This do again and again." It is to be repeated until Christ comes again in glory (1 Corinthians 11:26). The phrase "in my remembrance" is certainly an echo of the Passover rite: "So this day shall be to you a memorial" (לְזִכְרוֹן, Exodus 12:14). This phrase does not mean that this Sacrament is only a reminder of Christ or of His death. This is a remembrance in which the salvation event of the cross is made present for God's people. Each time Christians celebrate the Holy Supper they bring Christ's great sacrifice into remembrance

⁵⁷ LW 37: 134; see also 37:100, 132; Ex 2, 233–234.

⁵⁸ J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 237ff.

and receive the treasure of that sacrifice, the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

When Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," He commanded us to continue this institution. What is necessary for a valid Lord's Supper? Jesus said, "Do this," do what I have done. One is to take bread and wine, bless them with Christ's almighty words of consecration "This is My body, This is My blood" which effect the presence, and distribute His true body and blood. "If we are to do what He did, then indeed we must take the bread and bless it, and break and distribute it saying, 'This is My body.' For all this is included in the imperative word, 'Do this.'"⁵⁹

Our Lord gave us His body and blood in the Supper for a certain use, to be distributed and received for the forgiveness of sins. Christ did not merely say, "This is My body." Rather, He said, "**Take, eat**, this is My body." Therefore, while the Words of Institution, by virtue of Christ's original institution, effect the presence of Christ's body and blood, the whole sacramental action (*usus*: consecration, distribution, reception) must be kept as a unit.⁶⁰ When there is no distribution and reception there is no Sacrament, that is, no real presence. This the writers of the *Formula* assert in the *Nilil Rule* of the Confessions: nothing has the character of a Sacrament outside its intended use.⁶¹

b. The Supper and Eschatology

The phrase "Do this in remembrance of Me" has definite eschatological implications. This is confirmed by St. Paul's words at the end of his institution narrative, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). The Supper not only points us back to the cross, but also forward to our Lord's second coming in glory. The Ambrosian liturgy underwent this interesting expansion of the Pauline text:

As often as you do these things, you will do them in remembrance of me, you will preach my death, you will proclaim my resurrection, you will hope for my coming, until I come again to you from heaven [*adventum meum sperabitis, donec iterum de caelis veniam ad vos*].⁶²

⁵⁹ LW 37:187; see also FC SD VII:26 in Tappert, 573.

⁶⁰ Ex. 2, 248–249.

⁶¹ FC SD VII:85–86 in Tappert, 584–585.

⁶² G. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2003), 62.

This same eschatological emphasis is found in the words concerning the kingdom in the Last Supper account (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25). In the Lukan account Jesus says before the institution narrative, “I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:18). Then after the institution He states, “I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29–30). This conveys the idea that the Sacrament is the Messianic feast established by the Suffering Servant which fulfills the Passover and begins the celebration of the kingdom which will culminate in the feast of heaven (Revelation 19:9). Then as we eat and drink at His table in the Supper we have a foretaste of the eternal banquet, and we are assured that we will one day sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 8:11).⁶³

The Supper not only points us back to the sacrifice of the cross, but it at the same time points forward to the final consummation of our redemption on the last day (1 Corinthians 11:26). Each time we celebrate the Sacrament we do it eagerly awaiting the second coming, as the whole Ancient Church cried, *Maranatha*, “Lord come quickly.” The Father then gives us His Son under the form of bread and wine as a foretaste of the great wedding feast of the Lamb which will be ours at His second coming. In the Supper we for a moment step out of our mundane workaday existence where we carry one another to the grave, and we have a foretaste of heaven where the Lamb once slain Himself descends and angels prostrate fall. Here is heaven on earth as the fathers prayed, “Your Supper be my heaven on earth, till I enter heaven” (*Das dein Abendmahl mein Himmel auf Erden werde*). Then as we eat at His Table here, we have the certainty that we will be at His Table there where we will eat of the heavenly manna and drink of the river of His pleasure forevermore.⁶⁴

⁶³ See also Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 444–512.

⁶⁴ LS 157.

III. The Pauline Theology of the Lord's Supper

A. *The Lord's Supper and 1 Corinthians 10*

1. *The Sacrament and a Warning for the Christian Life (10:1–13)*

This chapter begins with a reference to the Exodus from Egypt. Here the Lord gave Israel two great blessings: deliverance through the Red Sea and miraculous food. The Red Sea and the cloud which protected Israel are understood by St. Paul as a type of Baptism (10:2). The miraculous food and drink which the Lord provided are seen as a type of the Lord's Supper (10:3–4; see also pages 370ff. above). The Lord gave Israel these great blessings but many of them did not appreciate His gracious dealing with them, and rather went their own perverse way. Thus, God was not pleased with them and as a result they died in the wilderness, never seeing the promised land.

What happened to Israel is a warning to Christians today. All Christians have been redeemed by Christ the crucified. In Holy Baptism, faith in the Savior was worked in their hearts and all their sins were washed away in the blood of the Lamb. Their baptismal faith-life is continually refreshed and strengthened with spiritual drink and heavenly manna in the life-giving Word and the Holy Supper of Christ's body and blood. But, sad to say, many Christians tire of these blessings, despise God's means of grace, and are finally lost. In this way the tragic example of Israel is a warning for all believing Christians today. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (10:12). This Scripture encourages all Christians to make a regular and consistent use of Holy Word and Blessed Sacraments. Through these means of grace our faithful God, who will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, makes a way to escape, that we are able to bear it (10:13).

2. *The Nature of the Sacrament*

Besides the Words of Institution, 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 is probably the most important portion of the Scripture in the study of the Holy Supper: "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a participation in the body of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a participation in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for all partake of the one bread" (Τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ; τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστὶν; ὅτι εἷς ἄρτος, ἐν σώμα οἱ πολλοί

ἐσμεν, οἱ γὰρ πάντες ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἄρτου μετέχομεν). St. Paul does not say that the cup and bread are only visual aids to help us understand Christ's redemptive work. No, he says that the cup and the bread are a participation (κοινωνία), a partaking of Christ's body and blood. The word κοινωνία with the genitive of object does not mean "fellowship in something" or "fellowship with someone." It means an actual and real participation in something. In this case, it refers to an actual and real partaking of the body and blood of the crucified and glorified Christ. It is the very same body that came forth from the Virgin's womb, died on the cross and rose again; it is the very same blood that flowed from His wounded side with which He washed away the sins of the world.

3. *The Sacrament and the Consecration*

St. Paul designates the cup "the cup of blessing" (τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας). This phrase is a rendering of *Kos Habb'rakah*, the third cup of the Passover, over which a special blessing was pronounced (See page 383 above). St. Paul says this cup is "the cup of blessing which we bless." This wording is more faithful to the original than the NIV which translates: "the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks." Εὐλογέω means "praise" when it is used with God as its object, and therefore, it very closely approaches the meaning of thanksgiving as in 1 Corinthians 14:16. But when it is used with a thing as its object, as is the case here, it usually denotes "to bless" or "to consecrate." Also, the NIV translates the parallel grammatical constructions in this text, the one which refers to the cup and the other which refers to the bread, in different ways, which is unwarranted.

In 1 Corinthians 10:16 the imperative "Do this" of the Words of Institution is particularly illuminated. Here "the cup of blessing which we bless" (τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν) is explained. Notice that it is a cup which the church is to bless. Then the "Do this" is not only a command to distribute and receive, but also to bless. One can distribute and receive forever, but without God's commanded blessing it is only bread and wine. It is God's blessing which causes Jesus' body and blood to be present. On the other hand, one can say God's blessing forever, but if there is no distribution and reception there is no Sacrament, for Christ's full institution has not been carried out.

Since the Lord has commanded that the bread and wine be blessed in order to have a valid Sacrament, what is the blessing that the Lord desired His church to use? Is it a eucharistic prayer complete with anamnesis and epiclesis? No, these prayers are based on tradition, not

on Scripture. God would not have commanded His church to bless and then left it in the lurch as to how to bless. Rather, in close proximity to this Scripture where St. Paul particularly asserts that Christ's followers bless, he also gives the church a Word of the Lord in liturgical form concerning the Lord's Supper, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed..." (1 Corinthians 11:23). These words which Christ gave to St. Paul He wanted delivered to the church for the celebration of the Supper. Then the blessing of the Lord which fulfills the "Do this" is none other than the Words of Institution as St. Paul recorded them in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. Our Lutheran fathers clearly express this understanding in the *Formula of Concord*: "... the cup of blessing which we bless, which happens precisely through the repetition and recitation of the Words of Institution."⁶⁵

4. *The Sacrament and the Moment of the Presence*

In 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, St. Paul writes, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a participation in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a participation in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." On the basis of this text it is argued that since St. Paul says that the cup of blessing which we bless is a participation in the body of Christ, therefore the presence begins as soon as the blessing is said. It is indeed true that St. Paul here tells the church to bless and that this blessing with the Words of Institution effects a participation in the body and blood of Christ, but he does not give an exact moment of the presence. This was not his purpose. He merely shows that a partaking in Christ's body and blood takes place in the Lord's Supper where there is the blessing, the distribution, and the reception.

Note that the Apostle makes mention of all three parts of the sacramental action: the blessing or consecration, verse 16a, the breaking or distribution, verse 16b, the partaking of the elements, verse 17. Paul is not pointing out an exact moment of the presence beginning at the blessing, for in the entire context the distribution and reception are automatically assumed as is indicated in verses 17 and 21. Rather, he shows that the entire action of the Sacrament must occur, otherwise there is no Sacrament, that is, there is no real presence. He does not intend to teach that the cup becomes a participation in the blood of Christ at the moment of the blessing or consecration any more than he intends to

⁶⁵ FC SD VII:82 in Tappert, 584.

teach that the bread becomes a participation in the body of Christ at the moment of its being broken. If one asserts that St. Paul is telling us that Christ's blood is present the moment the blessing is said when he writes, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a participation in the blood of Christ," then one could logically assume that the body of the Lord is only present in the distribution, for St. Paul also says, "Is not the bread which we break a participation in the body of Christ?" If St. Paul's purpose was to state that the Lord's blood was present as soon as the blessing was said, then he surely would have emphasized the same concerning the Lord's body rather than only speaking of it at the distribution. While the text speaks only of the blessing of the cup and only of the breaking and the partaking of the bread, it is evident that the cup must not only be blessed but also distributed and drunk and the bread not only broken and eaten but also blessed prior to the distribution. The whole sacramental action must take place in order to have a valid Sacrament.

St. Paul does not teach that Christ's body and blood are present immediately after the consecration is recited, nor does he make any precise statement concerning a moment of the presence. However, he does assert "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a participation in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a participation in the body of Christ?" Here the bread as broken for eating and the cup as blessed for drinking are named a participation in the Lord's body and blood prior to the reception by the communicants. Thus, the Lutheran Confessions do not teach that the presence occurs only at the reception. Rather they state, "It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received."⁶⁶

5. The Effects of the Sacrament

a. The Supper as Union with Christ

St. Paul maintains that Christ's true body and blood are distributed and received in the Supper under the forms of bread and wine. Since this is the case, the Sacrament unites the participant with Christ. It affords a participation in the crucified and risen Lord. Here the Lord is present for us with all His wonderful gifts and benefits. To participate in Christ is to receive all His blessings. It means that Christ dwells in us

⁶⁶ AC X in Tappert, 34.

and we in Him, ever undivided (John 15:5). This is our closest relationship with the Savior on this side of heaven.

There are many today who are seeking a closer walk with Jesus, a closer relationship with the Savior. There are times in every Christian's life when he feels very distant from the Divine Redeemer. At such times the Christian is not to attend some wild emotional revival to have an experience of Christ. He is not to try to wrestle with the Lord in prayer until he feels His presence. Rather, he is to go where the Lord has promised to be found, in the Word and Sacraments. In the Supper there is an intimate union with Christ, for here He comes into the believer with His body and blood and remains with him ever undivided, both here in time and forever in all eternity. Concerning this communion with Christ, Chemnitz writes, "Moreover, the Son of God testifies that in the true use of the Eucharist He grafts the believers into Himself as members that He may bear, sustain, guide, and quicken them, in order that they may be united with Him more and more and may be enabled to continue more firmly in Him and hold fast the benefits they have received."⁶⁷

b. The Supper and the Incarnation

By asserting that the God-man Jesus Christ is present in the flesh in the Sacrament, St. Paul is making a definite connection between the Lord's Supper and biblical incarnational theology. The Lord God in His blazing holiness and awesome wonder fills sinful man with horror. Before Him none may even dare to stand. The "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" of the Law must fill every one of us with dread and terror. When Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord God in the garden they were filled with fear and tried to hide themselves among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:8). Moses on Mt. Sinai had to hide himself in a crevice of a rock while the beneficent glory of the Lord passed, and only then did he have a glimpse of the Lord's hind parts, but God's face he could not see lest he be consumed (Exodus 33:12–33). In the Law, God hides Himself behind the fire, smoke, thunder, and lightening of Mt. Sinai so that sinful man does not dare to approach. We know that we have broken every commandment in the book and deserve nothing but punishment. There can be only dread and terror of the *deus absconditus*.

But in the miracle of the incarnation, the mystery of God made flesh (John 1:14), Jesus took our form to show us His love. The Almighty

⁶⁷ Ex 2, 239–240.

God who sits enthroned between the cherubim (Psalm 99:1), who rides the thunder clouds of heaven became flesh, our human brother, so that we could feel the loving countenance of His face. We can only know God and His love by beholding the Christ-Child as Luther taught. He said “he did not know or worship any God except him who was made man; nor did he want to have another God besides him. And besides him there was no other God who could save us.”⁶⁸ “Therefore, a Christian should know that he is to seek and find God nowhere else but on the Virgin’s lap and on the cross, or however and wherever Christ reveals Himself in the Word.”⁶⁹ Luther is saying, “I want to know no God or Son of God but the one of whom the Christian creed tells. If He is not man born of Mary, I want no part of Him.” To meet God outside of the flesh will utterly destroy us, but in the manger and at the cross He is made known to us. Thus, St. Paul writes, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).⁷⁰ The *deus incarnatus* is the *deus revelatus*. This is the great miracle of Christmas, incarnational theology.

Jesus became poor and lowly to raise us to His divine glory, eternal life in heaven (2 Corinthians 8:9). In the incarnation Christ took upon Himself our dying flesh so that, through unity with His divinity, He might conquer sin, death, and all our foes in that flesh and make us partakers in His divine nature as the sons of God with an eternal existence (Galatians 4:5; 2 Peter 1:4). All that the first Adam lost in the fall, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, restored for us in Himself—paradise regained and more, divine life in heaven (Romans 5:19). He partook in our suffering, death, and hell so that we may partake in His glory, life, and heaven—a wonderful exchange (*der fröhliche Wechsel*). Luther can even say, “Through faith we become gods and partake in the divine nature and name” (*Ja, durch den Glauben werden wir Götter, und theilhaftig göttlicher Natur und Namen*).⁷¹ Here Luther alludes to the *theosis* or deification theme of the Ancient Church. This is the great purpose of the Incarnation—He took our flesh so that we might share in His divine life.

The miracle of the incarnation, however, does not end here. It has continual significance for the Christian in the here and now. The all-powerful Word, who on the first Christmas came from heaven and became flesh in the Virgin Mary’s womb, is now incarnate for us in

⁶⁸ LW 38:46 (WA 30 III:132).

⁶⁹ LW 69:67 (WA 28:136). See also LW 16:55 (WA 25:107), LW 26:29.

⁷⁰ See also LW 31:53.

⁷¹ Erlangen 11:54.

Holy Word and Blessed Sacraments. Whenever the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments administered, the miracle of the incarnation, God-with-us, is present for us.

In Baptism He comes to us personally, causing us to participate in the divine. Christ was born of woman so that we could be reborn as the sons of God through water and the Spirit (John 3:5; Titus 3:5). He was born of His mother Mary as a son of man, so we might be reborn as the sons of God in the watery womb of mother church. We were brought into fellowship and communion with the triune God being incorporated into the body of Christ (Matthew 28:19). Here faith in the Savior was worked in our hearts and in Christ we are the sons of God (Galatians 3:26–27) who are partakers in the divine, prepared to live in the new heaven and the new earth. This baptismal life and union with Christ, which is daily renewed through true repentance and faith and nourished through the Word and the Blessed Supper, will reach its full consummation in the resurrection of the body on the last day.

The all-powerful Word, which once leaped from heaven and lay in swaddling clothes and a manger so that the Shepherds could approach, is present for us in the swaddling clothes⁷² and manger of His Word, the Scripture. Here He is present with His comfort, counsel, and aid (Psalm 19:8–10; Psalm 119:92). As we read, study, and meditate on the Word, He is present for us just as certainly as He was for the Shepherds.

The Word, who became flesh, is now present with that flesh in a most special way in the Holy Supper. Here the altar becomes His manger⁷³ and we receive His flesh permeated with divinity which transforms us into Itself and prepares us for eternity.⁷⁴ As a result of the communication of attributes in the person of Christ (*genus maiestaticum*), Christ's flesh is life-giving⁷⁵ or, as Luther says, filled with God or permeated with divinity (... *sondern es ist ein Leib und Blut, der voll Gottes ist, oder das durchgöttert ist*).⁷⁶ Because Christ's body and blood are permeated with divinity, they are certainly life-giving as they are received in the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord says, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him

⁷² LW 52:171.

⁷³ LS 153.

⁷⁴ LW 37:101.

⁷⁵ Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 474 (hereafter TNC).

⁷⁶ St. L. VII, 2353; LW 23:143.

... so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:54–57). While this passage does not specifically refer to the Lord’s Supper, its promise certainly applies to all places where He is present for us with His blessings and, therefore, applies to worthy participation in His body and blood in the Holy Sacrament. Thus, there is no end to the benefits which the Lutheran fathers ascribe to this vivifying flesh and blood. It is a heavenly and spiritual nourishment for both the body and soul of the believers unto eternal life.⁷⁷ It is “a medicine of immortality, an antidote, that we may not die but live in God through Jesus Christ, a cleansing remedy through warding off and driving out evils.”⁷⁸ With such an incarnational doctrine of the Supper, Chemnitz at times alludes to 2 Peter 1:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:16 expressing the benefits of the Supper with the *theosis* theme. Participation in Christ’s body and blood in the Supper results in communion and union with the deity itself.

Therefore, in order that we might be able to lay hold on Christ more intimately and retain Him more firmly, not only did He Himself assume our nature but He also restored it again for us by distributing His body and blood to us in the Supper, so that by this connection with His humanity, which has been assumed from us and is again communicated back to us, He might draw us into communion and union with the deity itself.⁷⁹

c. The Supper as Incorporation into the Body of Christ

The union in Christ which the Lord’s Supper grants constitutes at the same time a true communion among all members of His body. One cannot be united with Christ without also at the same time existing in communion with all the other members of this body. As He comes into us with His flesh and blood uniting us with Himself, so He comes into all the other communicants, drawing us together as His church. The Eucharist is both the supreme manifestation of the Church’s unity and a powerful means to effect that unity. The Eucharist effects the unity of the church. Thus it has an effect analogous to that of Holy Baptism (Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13). In Baptism we were united with Christ and His body, the church, so in the Supper we are strengthened and preserved in that unity by receiving His body and blood. St. Paul says, “Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we

⁷⁷ LS 61.

⁷⁸ Ex. 2, 234.

⁷⁹ LS 188; see also LS 143; TNC 55.

all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). Verse 17a indicates that there is one bread, one undivided Christ. Because we share in the one undivided Christ under the forms of bread and wine, we are incorporated into His body. Whoever partakes of the bread has a participation in the body of Christ, for the one bread is the body of Christ. Christ is so essentially in the elements that by receiving them we are united with Christ, and through Him with His church. As many kernels of wheat are ground together to form a loaf of bread and as many grapes are crushed to form one cup of wine, so in the Supper we become one body by partaking in His one body. Receiving His one body in the Sacrament, we become His one body, the church.⁸⁰ This is a wonderful fellowship where we will bear one another's burdens by showing love and compassion to each brother and sister in need. We will regard each other as members of Christ.⁸¹

For St. Paul, the church and the Holy Supper, as the other means of grace, stand in an intimate relationship with each other. Christians do not establish the unity of the church. It is not like joining a volunteer organization. The church is a creation of God through the means of grace. The means of grace are the marks of the church (*notae ecclesiae*) which show where the church exists.⁸² Both the church and the means of grace are dependent upon one another in a reciprocal relationship. The Supper assumes as a prerequisite the church, the body of Christ, gathered in His name where the minister, as the representative of Christ and as the representative of the church, speaks Christ's all-powerful words of consecration which effect the presence of Christ's body and blood. The church, on the other hand, is dependent upon the Lord's Supper as one of the means of grace by which the union of all her members with Christ and with one another is strengthened and intensified so that it is indeed the body of Christ.

6. The Sacrament and Church Fellowship

According to 1 Corinthians 10:17, "Since there is one bread we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." This text shows that the Lord's Supper draws us into Christ's one body, the church, one in faith, one in doctrine, one in love. The eating of the one and the same bread, the undivided Christ, unites us in His one body. All Christians, who in the Sacrament eat Christ's body and drink His

⁸⁰ LW 36:287; LS 143ff; LS 193.

⁸¹ LW 35:54.

⁸² Ap VII:5 in Tappert, 169.

blood, present themselves as one spiritual family. What they eat and drink together, Christ's body and blood, ties them together far more closely than any bands of blood. They are brothers and sisters in Christ. The unity that is effected in the Sacrament assumes a unity in doctrine and belief.⁸³

Because the Lord's Supper draws us into one body, we are to receive the Sacrament only with those who are one with us in Christ, those who teach His Word in its truth and purity (John 8:31). Partaking in the Supper is a confession of agreement in doctrine. To admit the heterodox to our altar and so to our church fellowship is a contradiction in itself. We come to the same altar professing to be one in doctrine and practice and we are drawn into one, while in reality we are not agreed with the heterodox and should be avoiding them because they are teaching doctrine contrary to that which we have learned from Holy Scripture (Ephesians 4:3; Romans 16:17). It would be hypocrisy on our part to allow someone to commune at the Lord's altar who does not accept the truths of Scripture or for us to commune at an altar where the truth of Scripture is not taught. Then we are really lying. We are publicly declaring that we are one when we are not one in Christ, that we are one body when we are not one body.

This principle of closed communion and church fellowship is applied in verses 18–33 of 1 Corinthians 10. The Corinthians, who knew that the Lord's Supper was a participation in the body and blood of the Lord, should also have realized that the heathen sacrificial meals involved association with devils and consequently should be avoided: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21). The Early Church and the Church of the Reformation unanimously practiced closed communion.⁸⁴

Church fellowship or confessional fellowship is a participation in sacred things (*communio in sacris*), the means of grace. This fellowship is created by those very means of grace and is evidenced in every expression and manifestation of a common faith. Christians practice church fellowship on the basis of the pure marks of the church. The marks of the church are to be pure, that is, there must be complete agreement in all the doctrines of Scripture in order to exercise fellowship. There are

⁸³ Ex. 2, 302.

⁸⁴ Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 115ff.; M. Wittenberg, "Church Fellowship and Altar Fellowship in the Light of Church History," *Logia* 1, no. 1 (October 1992): 23–64; St. L. XVII, 1180; St. L. XVII, 1346; FC SD VII:33 in Tappert, 575.

no degrees or levels in the practice of church fellowship and there are no expressions of a shared faith which are excluded from church fellowship. Church fellowship is a unit both in respect to the doctrine of Scripture, that is, there must be consensus in all the doctrines of the Word for fellowship, and in respect to the various expressions of a shared faith, that they all be considered a unit or an indivisible whole. There is either complete fellowship or none at all (Matthew 7:15–19; Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:8–9; Ephesians 4:3; 2 Timothy 2:16–19; 2 John 9–11).

B. The Lord's Supper and 1 Corinthians 11

1. Public Worship, the Public Ministry, and the Sacraments

The eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians gives guidelines for proper divine worship in the body of Christ, the church. In verses 1–17 St. Paul speaks of women's position in the church. These verses address the Corinthians' custom of veiling and wearing long hair, which in their society gave expression to the principle of the headship of the man. Paul shows the Corinthians that the latter is a principle established by God in the manner and purpose of the women's creation. She was formed from the rib of Adam to be a suitable helper for her husband. Since the custom gave expression to the biblical principle, to refuse to follow the custom would be understood to be a denial of the biblical principle. This passage does not establish the custom as a universal practice which must be observed, but it does establish that social customs which give expression to the biblical principle of the headship of man in the family and in the family of believers will be observed by Christians as a witness of their faith. The Scripture establishes the headship of man in the home and in the household of believers, the church, but it does not discuss the implications of the order of creation for the secular realm (Ephesians 5:21–25; 1 Corinthians 14:34–35; 1 Timothy 2:11–15). We must always carefully distinguish between that which occurs in the secular realm and that which takes place in the spiritual realm.

On the basis of this passage and passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15, it is evident that women are not to teach men or have authority over men in the church, and thus they are not to officiate at the public worship service of Word and Sacrament (the Divine Liturgy). In 1 Corinthians 14:34 St. Paul says, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says." This silence is not an absolute, for 1 Corinthians 11:5 presupposes that

women can pray and prophesy in the assembly. St. Paul explains further, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence” (1 Timothy 2:12). Women are not to teach men or so speak in the church as to have authority over men. Women are indeed a part of the universal priesthood and may function in some of the forms of the public ministry, but the focus of their call is limited by divine directives. They may function in those forms of the public ministry where they do not exercise authority over men, such as the office of Christian day school teacher, Christian high school teacher, and deaconess.

While women may function in some of the forms of the public ministry, they are not to be in what we today refer to as the pastoral office, because here they would be in a teaching position in which they exercise authority over men. Women will not officiate at the public worship service of Word and Sacrament because they would have authority over men and because St. Paul stipulates that the one who so functions, who in the Ancient Church was designated the bishop (*ἐπίσκοπος*), is to be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2). Women will not read the lessons in the liturgy, preach the sermon in worship services, nor distribute Communion, either publicly or privately, for these things are intimately related to the pastoral office (1 Corinthians 14:34–35; 1 Timothy 2:11–15; 1 Timothy 3:1–2).⁸⁵

These New Testament divine commands are based on divine order as it is manifested in the order of creation. The Divine Trinity is revealed in Holy Scripture as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father and the Son are referred to in masculine terms, not in neuter or feminine terms. The headship of God the Father in the Trinity is reflected in the headship of the father in the home and in the headship of the man in the household of believers. The Greek verb (*ὑποτάσσω*) used for the woman’s subordination to man in Ephesians 5:21–15 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is the same verb used for the Son’s subordination to the Father in 1 Corinthians 15:28. The scriptural concept of subordination does not imply superiority and inferiority or a lack of equality; rather it presents this headship as a divine structuring for orderliness and unity.

This same divine order manifested in the order of creation is to be reflected in the Office of the Public Ministry. The Blessed Trinity is revealed as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The second person, the Divine Logos, became flesh as a male, our human

⁸⁵ See also LW 40:390–391.

brother, for us men and our salvation. As our Lord placed male apostles into the office of preaching the Gospel (Matthew 10:1; Luke 6:13; 2 Timothy 1:11), even so the apostles placed other men into office (Acts 14:23; 2 Timothy 2:2, 15, 24, 4:5) and commissioned these in turn to install still other men in the preaching office (1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5).⁸⁶ These men who officiate at the public worship service of Word and Sacrament are not only to function in behalf of the church, but also in behalf of Christ. They are to be Christ's representatives in the midst of His body, the church. As the second person is revealed to us in Scripture in masculine terms, and as He assumes human flesh as a male, so the one who is to be His representative in the divine liturgy is referred to only in masculine terms in the Scripture (1 Timothy 3:2). Thus the scriptural directives that women are not to be in teaching positions over men and that the one officiating at the Word and Sacrament liturgy is to be the husband of one wife and therefore male, reflects the divine order in the incarnation, the creation, and in the interpersonal relationships of the Trinity. At the same time, women may be in offices of the Public Ministry where they do not teach men or have authority over men.

2. *The Nature of the Sacrament*

a. The Earthly and Heavenly Elements in the Supper

Beginning with verse 18 of 1 Corinthians 11, St. Paul speaks of the Lord's Supper celebration in particular. When the early Christians came together to have the Lord's Supper, they often had a common joint meal of which all the members partook called the agape meal or the love feast. It was similar to the potluck church suppers of our time. Before eating, the guests washed their hands, prayers were offered, and the Scripture was read. After the meal an offering was taken for the widows and orphans, the kiss of peace was given, and communications from other congregations were read.⁸⁷ Thereafter followed the Lord's Supper celebration proper.

Disruptions, however, were occurring in the Corinthian assemblies so that St. Paul had to say, "Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20; emphasis added). Because of these disruptions the Lord's Sacrament was desecrated in their midst. In the agape meal, which was to show brotherly

⁸⁶ See also *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 10, Triglotta, 507.

⁸⁷ Merrill Unger, *Bible Dictionary*, 26.

love and unity, there were divisions and factions. The rich gathered with the rich to feast together, while the poor had to sit and eat the little that was left over. One was hungry and the other was bloated and drunk (1 Corinthians 11:21). With such divisions in the congregation they were not receiving the Sacrament worthily. Some were so taken up with drinking and feasting that they did not distinguish the sacramental elements of the Supper from the ordinary bread and wine of the agape meal which occurred before the Sacrament (1 Corinthians 11:29). The Apostle then reiterates the liturgical form of the Words of Institution, which he received from the Lord and delivered to the Corinthians for the consecration of the Supper in their midst, to remind them of the proper reverence they were to have for the Sacrament (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). After this he gives them a stern warning concerning unworthy participation in the Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27–34).

In St. Paul's admonition concerning worthy participation in the Supper, he clarifies certain points concerning the nature of the Sacrament. He states, "Therefore whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27). In this statement St. Paul speaks of the consecrated elements as Christ's body and blood and as bread and the cup (wine). As in 1 Corinthians 10:16, St. Paul does not say that the bread and wine are changed into Christ's body and blood, but rather the bread and the wine are a communion or a participation in the body and blood of the Lord (*κοινωνία*). The change which is effected by the consecration is not an instantaneous replacing of one substance with another with only the accidents of bread and wine remaining. Thus Scripture does not teach the doctrine of transubstantiation as defined by Thomas Aquinas.⁸⁸ Rather, Christ so unites His body and blood with the bread and the wine that He can say that the bread and wine are His body and blood. It is not a change in substance, but a change created by union, the sacramental union of two substances.

As was stated above (pages 405ff.), there is a close connection between the incarnation and the Holy Supper. According to the hypostatic or personal union, the Divine Logos, who is the only-begotten of the Father, assumed into Himself a perfect human nature, which never subsisted in itself, so that the natures are so intimately united as to form one undivided person in Christ. The personal union is a union of the divine and human subsisting in the one *hypostasis* or person of

⁸⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Cura Fratrum eiusdem Ordinis* (Matriti, Spain: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1964), III, 75, 5–7.

the Son of God. The Lutheran fathers and the Ancient Church fathers⁸⁹ compare the union between the earthly and heavenly in the Sacrament with the personal union in Christ. In the personal union, the divine and the human natures form one undivided person in Christ. Similarly, in the Sacrament there is a union where the bread and the wine are united with the flesh and blood of the Divine Logos.

The particular character of this Sacrament requires that there be two distinct things or substances which, joined by sacramental union, make one complete Sacrament, even as in the one person of Christ there are two compete and distinct natures. For all antiquity uses this comparison. But Paul mentions bread and wine also after the blessing, 1 Co 10:16; 11:27. Likewise the fathers also taught the same. In order to testify that they do not approve the papalistic transubstantiation, they also usually used these terms, namely that in, with, and under the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ are present, offered, and received.⁹⁰

In the Supper there is both the earthly and the heavenly reality.⁹¹ One does not receive merely bread and wine as the Sacramentarians teach, nor does one receive only body and blood as Rome teaches. Rather, both the bread and wine and body and blood are received through the sacramental union. To put this in christological terms, Rome tends toward "Eutychianism" by saying the bread and wine are transformed into Christ's body and blood, while the Sacramentarians tend toward "Nestorianism" in that the body and blood are so separate from the bread and the wine that they are not received with the bread and the wine. The Lutheran doctrine is incarnational, a "Chalcedonian" approach to the Sacrament which distinguishes between the bread and wine and body and blood, but still holds them inseparably connected. It seems that both opponents of this view are not able to accept this intimate connection between the earthly and heavenly because they hold that the finite is not capable of containing the infinite (*Finitum non capax infinitum*).

⁸⁹ John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, in vol. 9, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) 4, 13.

⁹⁰ Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 120; also see LS 153–154; FC SD VII:37–38 in Tappert, 575–576.

⁹¹ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* IV, 18, 5, in vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 486; see also Ex. 2, 257–258; LS 46.

b. The Supper and the Moment of the Presence

When St. Paul gives this warning concerning worthy eating of the Sacrament, he also has something to say about the time of the presence. He writes, “Therefore whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord ... for he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Corinthians 11:27, 29 [emphasis added]—*διακρίτων*—“To differentiate, to distinguish from ordinary bread, to recognize, to discern”—Luther, *unterscheiden*). Some of the Corinthians were not differentiating between the common food of the agape meal and the Holy Supper of Christ’s body and blood which followed the agape meal. How were the Corinthians to distinguish the consecrated elements from mere bread and wine as St. Paul here urges if they were being offered only bread and wine? St. Paul’s admonition presupposes that the presence of Christ’s body and blood is an objective reality for the eating and drinking so that one can distinguish between Christ’s body and blood and mere bread and wine, so that one can indeed discern or recognize Christ’s body and blood, and not eat and drink judgment to himself. That bread and that wine which are blessed with Christ’s almighty Word of blessing and offered to be eaten and drunk are not mere bread and wine but Christ’s very body and blood.⁹²

3. *The Proper Preparation for the Supper*

In verse 27–34 of 1 Corinthians 11, St. Paul admonishes the Corinthians to receive the Holy Sacrament worthily.

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at

⁹² LS 133–134.

home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

Before going to the Lord's Supper every Christian should carefully examine himself. The Order of Confession in our church aids the individual Christian in such self-examination. However, Confession, whether public or private, would not take the place of personal examination. Each Christian before coming to the Sacrament should examine his life in accord with the Ten Commandments. When we look into the mirror of God's Law we see our endless failures and sins and our desperate need for the forgiveness and strengthening of the Supper. If we do not see our failures, then we need to take a better look at the Law and understand its real intent. If we see our sins and are not sorry for them, we should not attend the Supper because we will not be a worthy guest. The impenitent, that is, one who is not sorry for his sins, receives the Sacrament to his great harm, rather than to his blessing (1 Corinthians 11:30).

In order to obtain the benefits of the Holy Supper we need to be well prepared to receive it worthily, as St. Paul says (1 Corinthians 11:28–29). This, however, is not a worthiness brought about by the Law, but by the Gospel, and it does not consist of a perfect life and entire purity of the soul. Rather, to be worthy and well prepared means that we have a sincere sorrow over our sins, that we confess them, striving to do better, and earnestly long for the forgiveness of sins. At the same time this worthiness includes a confident faith in Jesus the Savior who paid for the sins of the whole world on the cross with His body and blood, and who gives us that very body and blood in the Supper for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Also, it should be noted that believers whose faith is weak are not to be numbered among the unworthy. Those who feel their spiritual weakness and failure to live the Christ-like life, who desire to become stronger, are indeed proper guests at the Lord's table. Such the Lord will not cast away, but much more invites them to come, for He instituted the Holy Supper as strengthening, nourishment, and medicine for the weak and infirm. He extends to all the gracious invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), and "Whoever comes to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

As a Christian prepares to receive the Blessed Sacrament, he will use questions such as these to examine himself.

- a. Am I truly sorry for all my sins in thought, word and deed?
- b. Do I believe that Jesus my Savior paid for all these sins on the cross?
- c. Do I believe that Jesus gives me in the Supper His body and blood for the forgiveness of my sins, life, and salvation?
- d. Do I sincerely desire with the aid of the Holy Spirit henceforth to amend my sinful life?

IV. Other New Testament References to the Lord's Supper

A. The Lord's Supper and John 6

In John 6, one of our Savior's longer recorded homilies is found. It was before the Passover, right after the feeding of the five thousand. Part of this homily is found below; notice how similar the Words of Institution of the Lord's Supper in the Synoptics are to verses 53–56 in John.

[Jesus said,] "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever" (John 6:48–58).

These verses in John 6 have been understood by some as referring directly to the institution of the Lord's Supper. John 6 is then held to be St. John's institution narrative of the Sacrament. However the eating and drinking in John 6 refer to the eating and drinking which a believer does by faith (**spiritual eating**) through the means of grace, receiving

all the blessings of Christ's body and blood offered up for salvation. Therefore the Lutheran fathers teach that John 6 does not specifically apply to the Lord's Supper because here the eating and drinking are figurative, while in the Words of Institution the eating and drinking are literal. **The second reason** that John 6 does not refer directly to the Supper is that the sermon recorded in John 6 occurred a year before the institution of the Supper. Therefore, the sermon in John 6 cannot apply to the dogma of the sacrament. **The third** and most important reason Lutherans reject this viewpoint is that the eating in John 6 always results in salvation (John 6:51), while in the Lord's Supper the participants may eat judgment to themselves.⁹³

At the same time, there is a definite connection between the Words of Institution and John 6. This text speaks of the spiritual eating that is necessary for worthy participation in the Holy Supper. All communicants, both the worthy and unworthy, eat sacramentally with the mouth the very body and blood of Christ born of the virgin, but only those who eat spiritually through true repentance and faith receive all the wonderful blessings offered through that body and blood. Thus, John 6 applies to worthy participation in the sacrament, and in this sense speaks to the Holy Supper as our Confessions state.

There is therefore a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ. The one is spiritual, of which Christ speaks chiefly in John 6:48–58. This occurs, in no other way than with the spirit and faith, in the preaching and contemplation of the Gospel as well as in the Lord's Supper. It is intrinsically useful, salutary, and necessary to salvation for all Christians at all times. Without this spiritual participation, even the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is not only not salutary but actually pernicious and damning.⁹⁴

The way that we eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood in the context of John 6 is by faith in the Savior (spiritual eating) through the Word and Sacraments. Through His Word, the Holy Scriptures, we come face to face with Him, the Bread of Heaven. Here He strengthens our faith in salvation centered in the bloody cross. When we read, study and meditate on the Word we receive the Bread from Heaven. In the Holy Supper we indeed eat His flesh and blood which is the true food

⁹³ Johann Gerhard, *Baptism and Lord's Supper*, 340ff., 454; Ex. 2, 326–328; LS 235–240; Pieper Vol. III, 328–329; Gaylin Schmeling, *The Lord's Supper in Augustine and Chemnitz* (Nashotah: Nashotah House, 1993), 46–48.

⁹⁴ FC SD VII:61, Tappert, 580–581.

and drink for our souls. This Bread of Heaven gives us the complete forgiveness of sins, for Jesus says, "I give my flesh for the Life of the World" (John 6:51). No matter how terrible our sins are and how many they may be, we are forgiven through Jesus flesh.

Here we are united into a wonderful relationship with the Savior. He says, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56). Through a regular use of Word and Sacrament, Jesus came to us and makes a dwelling place in us, never leaving nor forsaking us. His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink (John 6:51). In them is found the nourishment for our faith-life and the strengthening for our present pilgrimage. His flesh and blood empowers us to do all with a firm confidence in Him as the Savior.

Finally and most importantly as we are surrounded by death and dying on every side, today a friend, tomorrow it may be you; in this uncertainty Jesus says, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). Because we eat the flesh of the Lord and drink His blood, the death process in us is counteracted so that we will live again. Yes, this body is going to grow old and return to the dust of the ground but because we have received the Bread of Life at the final trumpet this very body will burst from the tomb glorified as our Lord's glorified body and will live forever with Him.

B. The Lord's Supper and the Acts of the Apostles

In the Acts of the Apostles "the breaking of bread" was the common term for the Lord's Supper. The term could refer to a common meal and does at times in the New Testament, but in the context of passages such as Acts 2:42 it has liturgical significance denoting the Supper. Here St. Luke gives a simple outline of worship in the New Testament church: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread (τῆ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου), and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). This summary statement concerning early Christian worship reminds us that the service centered in the apostles' doctrine, the teaching of the inspired, inerrant Scriptures. It included the fellowship which may be a term implying a general gathering of Christians or it may refer specifically to the agape meal. The breaking of bread, which is a Lukan term for the Lord's Supper, was a part of this Christian worship. In addition, prayer formed a part of early Christian worship. The prayers were either prayer in general, or the liturgical form of the service of the Word. Christians were to gather regularly around the means of grace

(Hebrews 10:25). The early Christians may have celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly (Acts 20:7) or at times daily, for Acts 2:46 says that they continued "daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart."

An interesting use of the Lukan term "breaking of bread" is found in the account of the Emmaus disciples in Luke 24:13–35. All the way to Emmaus Jesus enlightened these two disciples with His light-bearing Word, making clear to them from Moses and the prophets that the holy cross was the very heart of the Gospel. As they approached the village, Jesus acted as if He would have gone further, but they urged Him strongly, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent" (Luke 24:29).

Jesus then entered their home and stayed with them. While He was at the table with them, "He took bread, blessed, and broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him" (Luke 24:30–31). And later it was said of them, "The Lord was made known to them in the breaking of bread (τῆ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου)" (Luke 24:35). One cannot be absolutely certain whether the Emmaus meal was the Lord's Supper; however, it indicates what occurs in the Lord's Supper.⁹⁵ The Lord is made known to us through His body and blood. This mystery has been repeated, unfolded, enlarged, and sustained at every Christian altar since. The Christian experiences the presence of the risen Lord in the Holy Eucharist. Here He appears in a blaze of glory, the arisen Savior and King. As He made Himself known to the Emmaus disciples in the breaking of bread, so He manifests Himself to us in the breaking of bread. In the Holy Supper the Arisen One is present for us with all His Easter joy and blessings.

The risen Lord walked with the Emmaus disciples on the way, became a guest and then the host at their meal (Luke 24:13–35). He taught them His Word and revealed Himself to them in the breaking of bread. Now as the church gathers in Word and Sacrament worship, He is the host who gives Himself to us for food as the beginning of the messianic victory banquet, where all tears are wiped away and death is swallowed up forever, a foretaste of heaven.

⁹⁵ Our Confessions leave open the possibility that the Emmaus meal was the Supper. Ap XXII:7 in Tappert, 237.

C. *The Lord's Supper in Hebrews and Revelation*

In Hebrews 6, the holy writer appears to be alluding to both of the Sacraments. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4–6). The Early Church fathers often spoke of Baptism as illumination or enlightenment (φωτισμός).⁹⁶ Here those who are enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift and the Word of the Lord are most likely those who have been brought to faith in the Savior through Baptism and who have eaten the Lord's body and blood, which is the heavenly gift in the Lord's Supper. The holy writer gives a warning to these Christians and all of us. He warns, "If they commit the sin against the Holy Spirit by continually rejecting the Spirit's call to repentance, they end their time of grace."⁹⁷

In the book of Revelation, there are many allusions to the divine service and the worship life of the Early Church. The Revelation points to the wedding feast of the Lamb, of which the Lord's Supper is a foretaste (Rev 19:19). We eat at His Table here assured that we will eat with Him forever in paradise. In Revelation 3:20, the Lord invites, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." He certainly eats and dines with us in the Supper, where He is both victim and host.⁹⁸ In Revelation 2:17 we are told, "To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat." In the Supper, we eat of the heavenly manna and drink of the river of His pleasure forevermore.

Near the end of the book of Revelation, the Apostle John assures the elect, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19:9) The Lord's Supper begins the messianic wedding banquet, the victory banquet, which will reach its full consummation in heaven. The Supper is the messianic feast which will culminate in the feast of the Lamb, the Lamb's high feast. Then because we receive His glorified and risen body and blood in the Supper, which is the antidote for death, we know that this very body will one day break

⁹⁶ Justin Martyr, *The First Apology* I:61–65 in vol. 6, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 183–185 ff.

⁹⁷ Hebrews 13:10 may also allude to the Supper.

⁹⁸ Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 509.

forth from the grave, glorified like Christ's glorified body. Thus we will ever feast with the Lord in paradise above. L50

A Lord's Supper Prayer

O Lord Jesus, You who invite all that labor and are heavy laden in order to refresh them and to give rest to their souls, we pray You, let these guests experience Your love at the heavenly feast which You have prepared for Your children on earth. Keep them from impenitence and unbelief that no one may partake of this Holy Sacrament to his harm. Take off from them the spotted garment of their own righteousness and dress them with the garment of righteousness purchased with Your blood. Strengthen their faith, increase their love and hope, and after this life grant them a place at Your heavenly table, where they will eat of the eternal manna and drink of the river of Your pleasure forevermore. Hear us for Your name's sake.

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Freedom and Its Implications: Galatians 5-6

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IN JULY 2016, THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD Board for Home Outreach submitted an article for congregational use about true freedom. It began by drawing attention to the 240th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and its patriotic symbols such as the American flag, the Liberty Bell, and fireworks.

One of the most recognized symbols, the article pointed out, is the Statue of Liberty. She is etched in the minds of most United States citizens. She holds a book in her left hand, a torch extended to the sky in her right hand, and wears a spiked crown on her head.

The article went on to say, “But one of the most precious of the trademarks—but often overlooked—is the broken chain at Lady Liberty’s feet. The broken shackles symbolize the overthrow of tyranny. Looking at the huge links, one can almost physically feel the tremendous and heavy burden the chain of tyranny represents. But that chain is broken.”

In the third part of Galatians, Paul speaks of chains being broken, of liberty. Jesus set us at liberty from the tyranny of the law. He broke its shackles for us. As Paul speaks of this liberty, he reviews grace alone, guards against abusing grace, instructs on pastoral theology, and concludes his letter to the Galatians.

In this treatment of chapters 5-6, occasionally differing interpretations will be noted, followed by a summary of Luther, and finally

observations and application referred to as “connections.” The Galatians translation is that from the American Edition of Luther’s commentary.

Summary verse on Freedom

5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore; and, do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Summary

Think of the picture evoked by these words: that of a slave in chains and shackles. The iron shackles wear the skin raw. The heavy chains bind the slave. Bound and shackled, he is stuck. Stuck, he is a slave to his owner. Yet, in this verse, the *key point* is freedom. It is not freedom from a slave owner or from political tyranny. It is a *far greater* freedom: freedom from slavery to the law. The law’s heavy chain is *broken* in Christ.

This freedom is an easy thing to talk about. It is, but personally applying it is another matter. That is true, when the conscience feels that it cannot be forgiven, when the law keeps pointing its accusatory finger at it. Luther puts it like this: “The words freedom from the wrath of God ... are easy to say but to apply its results to oneself in a struggle, in the agony of conscience, and in practice—this is *more difficult* than anyone can say.”¹

Because it is a difficult art to apply, it is easy to lose this freedom. One can feel shackled by the law and fall back into the ditch of self-righteous pride; that is, to submit again to the yoke of slavery.

Connections

Here one sees Luther striking the theme of the proper distinction between law and gospel. He does because “in the agony of conscience” the distinction between the two gets confused. This confusion comes when the old Adam rears his ugly head. He argues, “I know that God forgives, but I have to show myself worthy. I have to make it up to God. I have to earn God’s favor.” That is to be bound by the shackles of the law again.

“American Christianity” leads to this very place. It does with its emphasis on man. Brian Wolfmueller comments:

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Lectures on Galatians*, Vol. 27, ed. and tr. Luther Poellet (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 5 (emphasis added). Hereafter cited as “Luther.”

American Christianity fails because its yoke is wearisome. Its burden is heavy. Having taken its eyes off Jesus ... (it) replaces the work of the Holy Spirit with the choice of the sinner ... the comfort of the Gospel with the doubt of our resolve ... the certainty of God's promise with the shakiness of our feelings. It puts burden and doubts where the Lord would give us freedom and faith.²

To return to the burden and yoke of the law, though, is *not* a good place to be. The word “yoke” is a good picture of that as Luther comments.³ Imagine two oxen yoked together. Yoked to an implement, the oxen suffer wear and tear on their bodies. Eventually, they are good for nothing but the slaughterhouse. That is what the prospect of being yoked under the law means. It wears the yoked one out. It takes the life out of him. It sends him to hell's slaughterhouse. No wonder Paul hammers away at his theme: “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand fast therefore.”

Freedom Defended

² Now I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no value to you. ³ I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole Law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the Law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love.

Summary

To view circumcision as a rite *necessary* for salvation is contrary to grace.⁴ That reflects a truth: the gospel *plus any work or rite* as necessary for salvation makes Christ null and void. That makes Christ nothing. A

² Bryan Wolfmüller, *Has American Christianity Failed?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 10.

³ Luther, 7.

⁴ Luther comments (15) that here is another way to look at this. To be circumcised means that one is obligated to keep the whole law, meaning all of the Old Testament ritual. That would be the same as to say that Christ has not come. To be sure, those Old Testament rituals were shadows of Christ. Now that he has come, they have served their purpose.

point of clarification is in order, though. The act of circumcision or other rites and works are not wrong in and of themselves. What is wrong is to *put trust in* the deed for salvation.

It is necessary to remember this when the conscience is troubled because works are lacking or because past sins are troubling:

Then you must say: "You are troubling me with the memory of past sins; in addition, you are telling me that I have not done anything good. This does not concern me. ...For if I trusted them, Christ would be no avail to me ... (but) I put both of them out of sight and depend only on the freedom for which Christ has set me free."⁵

This is an important art to learn. It is important to learn to distinguish Christ *from* works. Only when that is done can faith rest in Christ. At rest in Christ *there is* comfort for the troubled sinner.

That cannot be said of those who put confidence in works like circumcision, who try to find peace through the works of the law, *in addition to faith*. It cannot, because they are bound to go the *whole* way. Luther became aware of that impossibility in his own life. Though he himself tried to keep the law, he had no peace in his conscience: "The longer I tried to heal my uncertain conscience, the more uncertain, weak and troubled I made it. In this way, by observing human traditions, I transgressed them even more; and by following the righteousness of monastic order, I was never able to reach it."⁶

The conclusion Luther makes is this: The self-righteous are *further from* righteousness *than* public sinners. They are, because they delude themselves into thinking that they can contribute something to their salvation by keeping the law.

Luther realized he had fallen from grace, when he thought he could contribute to his salvation by keeping the law. Though he did, God, in his mercy, had rescued him from that false belief. That led Luther to describe the *crux* of the matter this way:

If you have done good works you are not justified on their account; and if you have done evil works you are not damned on their account. ... But I am saying that *in* the issue of justification

⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁶ Ibid., 13.

I must see how I am to *keep Christ*, lest he become useless to me if I wish to be justified by the law.⁷

This gives the penitent sinner comfort, and, with comfort, hope. Here Luther discusses the connections between faith and hope. He makes a few comparisons. In one case he says faith is a *theologian* and hope is a *captain*. In another case faith is *dialectic* and hope is *rhetoric*:

Faith is a theologian battling against the errors and heresies, and judging spirits and doctrines. Hope is a captain battling against feelings such as tribulation, the cross, impatience, sadness, faint-heartedness, despair and blasphemy.⁸

Faith is like dialectic which conceives the idea of all the things that are to be believed; and hope is like rhetoric, which develops urges, persuades, and exhorts to steadiness so that faith does not collapse in temptation but keeps the word.⁹

Thus, through the Spirit, *by faith*, we wait for *the hope of righteousness*. It is the righteousness that is given by Christ. It is a righteousness possessed by faith in this life, and will be one's own in the resurrection of the dead. Both are a gift from God in Christ.

It all goes to say that the Christian's confidence lies in Christ alone. Yet, Paul adds that this faith is never alone. It is "faith working through love." To be sure, the papists use this passage in support of their doctrine: Faith *formed by love* saves. However, Paul does not say faith formed by love saves. He says love is *born of* faith.

This happens because of lazy readers and those who *superimpose their own ideas* on the reading of Scripture. One is not to read Scripture by imposing his ideas on it. He is to come to it empty, to pay careful attention to the words and the context. In the present case, the context is *not* dealing with justification or faith. Paul has *already* done that. The point is that Paul is *summarizing* the life of the Christian. It is both *inward* and *outward*. Inwardly, it expresses itself in faith toward *God*. Outwardly, it expresses itself in love toward one's *neighbor*.

⁷ Ibid., 17 (emphasis added).

⁸ Ibid., 22

⁹ Ibid., 23.

Connections

Faith alone, of course, is a keynote of Luther's discovery. The Lutheran Confessions call justification by faith alone the "chief article in all Christian doctrine."¹⁰ They state, "We poor sinners are justified before God and saved alone through faith in Christ. Christ alone is our Righteousness."¹¹ The confessions then add that "good works that follow (justification), do not belong to the article of justification before God ... (but) Good works always follow justifying faith and are surely found with it, if it is a true and living faith. Faith is never alone."¹²

The true doctrine, then, is that faith *alone* saves—not faith plus love, faith plus works, faith plus obedience; nor faith plus choice, faith plus resolve, faith plus feeling as "American Christianity" would have it. No. Faith alone saves, *yet* faith is never alone.

The sinner who thinks faith plus something else saves is a *proud* sinner. Proud sinners have calloused themselves in self-righteousness. That calloused skin of self-righteousness is hard to penetrate. Bo Giertz picked up on that point in a devotion on the Merciful Father. He wrote about the older son:

(He) is a picture of the moralist who obeys God in an effort to stay out of trouble and is very conscience of the fact that he should be considered a man of higher rank in God's eyes. This is also a way of being lost, although it's a much more dangerous way and much harder to remedy.¹³

Luther's treatment of the relation of faith and hope is a particularly comforting one. His illustrations of teacher and captain—dialectic and rhetoric—are quite helpful. They are helpful in *applying* comfort.

That is to say, the apropos illustrations give insight into dealing with the afflicted. They demonstrate that faith and hope, to use another illustration, fit together like hand and glove. In winter a glove is needed to protect the hand from the cold. In trial and tribulation, hope is needed to protect faith from despair. That is, faith, like a hand, lays hold of the forgiveness of sins. It does and the sinner is saved. Then the cold wintry blasts of affliction come. The cold weakens faith's grip. So, hope, like a

¹⁰ *Concordia, A Reader's Edition*, ed. Paul Timothy McCain (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), FC SD III:6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, FC Ep III:1.

¹² *Ibid.*, III:11.

¹³ Bo Giertz, *To Live With Christ*, tr. Richard Wood with Bror Erickson (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 428.

glove, covers the hand of faith. It brings warmth. It says, “Hold on tight! Soon the cold wintry blast will be over.”

Finally, Luther touches on another keynote of the Reformation: Scripture alone. Scripture is to be approached *without* imposing one’s own interpretation on it. Careful attention is to be given to the words and context. In other words, Luther understood that reason must be captive to the Word of God. Heiko Oberman describes how Luther approached the Word already in his lectures on the Psalms from 1513-1515: “Luther probed one text after the other, hour after hour, trying to get through the words to the Word. . . . The objective scholarly interpreter must become an affected listener.”¹⁴

Taking Away Freedom Falls Under Judgment

⁷ You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion is not from Him who called you. ⁹ A little yeast leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence in you through the Lord that you will take no other view than mine; and, he who is troubling you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. ¹¹ But if I, brethren, still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the stumbling block of the cross has been removed. ¹² I wish those who unsettle you would mutilate themselves!

Summary

The 2016 Summer Olympics recently concluded. In them Usain Bolt was unbeatable on the track. He became known as the “World’s Fastest Man.” But what does *God* mean when He says, “You were running well?” Luther answers: It is teaching the word in its truth and purity, hearing and believing according to it. One is “hindered” in this race, when he falls away from the truth—from grace to merit, from faith to works. Such a fall is a demonic fall.

It is, because the devil is a “highly skilled persuader.” He turns us *from* Christ as Savior *to* Christ as Example. To be sure, the Scripture presents Christ *both* as Savior and Example. When Scripture gives him as Savior, *we lack nothing*. When Scripture presents him as Example, it shows us just *how much* we still lack.

¹⁴ Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, tr. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New York: Image Books, 1989), 162.

The Anabaptists emphasize Christ as Example. By doing that, they *fail to distinguish* when to preach both. Both have “their proper time.” Christ is to be preached as Example to those who are self-righteous—*not to encourage their self-righteousness—but to show that they lack righteousness.* Those, whose conscience is troubled by sin, however, *need to hear* Christ as Savior, not Christ as Example.¹⁵

When one contends for this distinction, it comes at a price. In Paul’s day, false apostles accused Paul of lacking love. In Luther’s day, the sectarians accused Luther and company of lovelessness by being quarrelsome over doctrine. In response, Luther submits a good analogy of tolerating error: a tiny error in philosophy is a great error in the end. So also in theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching. Another example: doctrine is like a golden circle. If a crack appears, the circle is no longer perfect.

The point of the analogies is this: the two, love and faith, need to be distinguished. Love yields, has confidence in man, and can be deceived. Faith stands firm, has confidence in God, and cannot be deceived. Or think of it this way: doctrine is heaven. Life is earth. In life there is sin and error. Because there is, love *tolerates* and endures. In doctrine there is no error. The slightest offense against it *cannot* be tolerated. So, while there is leniency toward life, error is not to be permitted in doctrine. For *if you deny one article of faith, then you have denied God in all.*

Paul, however, has confidence that the Galatians will remain in the true faith. His confidence is not so much in man as in God. He had this confidence even though there was trouble in the Galatian congregation. A false apostle curried the Jews’ favor in the Galatian community. He did by teaching circumcision. Paul, however, did not curry the Jews’ favor. As a result he bore the cross. The cross is a sure sign that doctrine is *pure*. When the cross is taken away it is a sure sign that doctrine has been *compromised*.

Luther cites Bernard: “The church is in the *best* position when it is under pressure on every side from the power and craft of Satan ... it is

¹⁵ “Therefore let every Christian shake off the false idea of Christ that Satan urges upon him in his terror and affliction, and to say: ‘Satan, why are you debating with me now about deeds? I am already frightened and troubled enough because of my deeds and my sins. Indeed since I am already troubled and burdened let me hear not you with your accusation and condemnation but Christ...who says that he came into the world to save sinners. ... This is the real Christ in the most precise sense of the word. I can find an example of a holy life in the saints. But they cannot forgive my sins. Only Christ is qualified to do these things’” (Luther, 35).

in the *worst* position when it is most at peace.”¹⁶ The world *thinks* that God is on the side of the church *when* there is peace and that God is not on the side of the church *when* it has trouble. “Thus God wears the mask of the devil and the devil wears the mask of God.”¹⁷

That mask is taken away *by* the preaching of the gospel. The gospel exposes the devil for who he is. Because it does, he is vexed; and, in his vexation the devil rages against the church. On account of it, “The cross immediately follows the teaching of the word.”¹⁸

Connections

Luther treats of the confusion of law and gospel when he speaks of the Anabaptists. The Anabaptists primarily made Jesus into an example. That has been repeated by the WWJD proponents. John Pless touches on that in his treatment of Walther’s *Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel*. There Walther writes that law and gospel are confused when “Christ is represented as a new Moses, or Lawgiver.”¹⁹ Pless comments:

What message do the popular “WWJD” bracelets convey? Do they not give the picture that the main thing about being a Christian is conforming oneself to the model of Jesus? Christ as example *still* leaves us under the law. Luther quips that if salvation were dependent upon following Jesus’ example, we would all be doomed from the start, for who us has been born of a virgin or walks on the water? There is no salvation in Christ as our example, for none of us can live the perfect and sinless life that He lived.²⁰

Of course, this message grates against human reason, and this offense is certainly felt in today’s world. Forde makes the following observation: “The theology of the cross is an offensive theology. The offense consists in the fact that, unlike other theologies, it attacks what we usually consider the best in our religion.”²¹

It is no wonder that the church of today suffers the cross. Culture’s creed, for example, has become one of tolerance. In the name of

¹⁶ Ibid., 43 (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John Pless, *Handling the Word of Truth* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 27.

²⁰ Ibid., 30 (emphasis added).

²¹ Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 2.

tolerance it has adopted a new morality. Yet the creed of tolerance is, at the same time, intolerant. It is *intolerant* of anyone who questions the new creed and its morality, intolerant of the theology of the cross. As a result Christians are increasingly suffering slurs, legal action, and job loss in today's world.

The relation of love and faith reminds this writer of the recently released apologetic movie, "Risen." In the movie, nowhere is the doctrine of justification articulated. Rather, at the end of the movie, the moviegoer is left with a message of works. Christians love. While it is true that a fruit of faith is love, without a clear articulation of the doctrine of justification, man's love becomes what Christianity is about. When many promote man's love as the message of Christianity, it is no wonder that Lutherans are often accused of lovelessness and of being arrogant. They are so accused *because* they confess a creed.

Luther's comparison of the unity of doctrine to a golden ring or a philosophical argument takes one back in Evangelical Lutheran Synod history. What led to the ELS, the reorganized Norwegian Synod, was the *Opjør* statement in which two different doctrinal positions on election were allowed to stand side by side. To many, the agreement to disagree seemed to be a minor matter.

But a crack in the golden ring had been made. Today, the devastating effects of tolerating doctrinal error are clearly evident. The crack has only widened and all but destroyed the ring. That is to say, the heirs of the *Opjør* supporters find themselves in a doctrinally vacuous body. Doctrinally vacuous bodies mean Jesus is out of focus.

Hence, Luther's illustrations serve the church well. The unity of doctrine must be preserved. It must, because Jesus is at the center of it all. Lose doctrine and you lose Jesus; lose Jesus and you lose life. No wonder Dr. Robert Preus said, "Doctrine is life."

A Transition

After having spent time teaching the faith, now Paul moves on to a new subject. The new subject has to do with morals. He does this to deal with an accusation. It is the accusation that the teaching of grace alone and faith alone undermine good morals.

Responsible Use of Freedom

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love

be servants of one another. ¹⁴ **For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** ¹⁵ **But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another.**

Summary

The fact of the matter is that Christ sets the sinner free from the tyranny of the law. Freed from the tyranny of the law, the sinner is saved. Christ is his life. The flesh, however, hears that and takes advantage of it. It abuses the freedom Christ won. It does by arguing that one is free to live *however* he wants: to live licentiously.

There are two dangers, then, for the Christian. On the one hand, there is danger when grace is not preached, but rather merit. On the other hand, there is danger when grace is preached and the flesh *abuses* this freedom. Rather than abuse this freedom, God calls us to “be servants of one another through love.” Therefore, a Christian is to keep two things in mind. First, he is free in his conscience. The law can no longer condemn him. Second, he is bound in the body. He is bound to be a servant to others.

In short, Paul has laid the foundation of grace alone. Upon this foundation, he builds good works. To be sure, law based religions—papal or sectarian—have a *show* of works. They are not born of faith, but work-righteousness. In churches where the proper foundation for works *has* been laid, however, there is often a *lack* of works. It is for this reason that the apostle urges genuine good works. Urging needs to be done because the remnants of sin hinder both faith and truly good works.

The good works commanded by God are those to be done *in vocation*. They seem to be insignificant: “teaching the erring, comforting the afflicted, encouraging the weak, putting up with annoyances; treating one’s parents with respect; being patient in the home with a cranky (spouse) and unmanageable family.”²² Though works like these *seem* insignificant, they *are* significant works of love. Luther sums up by saying:

It is as though (Paul) were saying: “Persevere in the doctrine of faith. ... Be devoted to one another through love” ... (This is) the *shortest* and *longest* kind of theology—the shortest as words

²² Luther, 56.

and sentences are concerned; but in practice and in fact it is wider, longer, deeper, and higher than the whole world.²³

When Christian vocation is correctly taught, there is unity of faith and support among fellow Christians. That is, there is support between a teacher and student, a parent and child, a master and servant. The outward inequality does not hinder the unity of faith. That is the way to avoid discord in the church. It is avoided when *each one* pays attention to *his own* vocation. Each one is to do the duty God has called him to do.

Connections

Luther's comments on verse fourteen—that the Christian is free in his conscience and, at the same time, bound in body to be a servant—reflect his paradoxical statement from an earlier work. That earlier work is “The Freedom of a Christian.” There he wrote, “A Christian is the most liberated master of everyone, subject to no one. A Christian is the most dutiful servant of everyone, subject to everyone.”²⁴

This paradoxical statement rightly distinguishes between faith and works. By doing so, it explains what the Christian life is. Paul Strawn comments about that earlier work:

Christian bookstores nowadays are full of books written about the Christian life. Such books try to explain how to “live like a Christian” ... (In this respect) the old nature of the Christian constantly tugs at the new and the result can frequently be nothing but *confusion*. What is to be done?

Luther sorts out this mess by taking two seemingly contradictory statements from the Apostle Paul and in the process of harmonizing them ... helps to explain the basic aspects of the Christian life.²⁵

Correctly distinguishing between faith and works leads into Christian vocation. Luther helps us to see that every Christian is called to various vocations. This applies equally to those in full-time church work and those who are not. In both cases, vocations are pleasing to God. This was an important issue in Luther's day when those who took monastic vows were considered to be *more holy*. So, Luther teaches that

²³ Ibid., 59 (emphasis added).

²⁴ Martin Luther, *How To Live A Christian Life, from Martin Luther's On Christian Freedom*, adap. Paul Strawn (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2006), 10.

²⁵ Ibid., 8 (emphasis added).

the works of the *ordinary* Christian, done in faith, are accepted by God rather than those self-chosen works of the monk or nun done to merit grace.

The same happens in our day, albeit in a more subtle form. It happens when Christians are led to believe that dedication to “church activities,” choosing a “ministry,” or going on a “mission” are more holy than other vocations. While the church does need volunteerism, consciences can legalistically be bound to neglect family and other vocations in the name of the church.

At the bottom of it all is a distinction between self-chosen works and genuine works. To be sure, self-chosen works *make* a good impression. Though they do, they have *no command* of God. Having no command of God, they spring forth from unbelief. They are just the sort of works that damn.²⁶ On the other hand, genuine works are those that *do have* God’s command. They are works each Christian does in his/her vocation. To be sure, they *appear* unimpressive. Though they do, they are works that spring forth from faith.

The Freedom Struggle I - Between the Spirit and the Flesh

¹⁶ But I say walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

A difference in interpretation

One interpretative difference in the following verses is an understanding of the word “spirit.” Some see it as spirit, others as Spirit, and still others as a combination of spirit and Spirit.²⁷ Luther consistently uses Spirit in his commentary and translation.

²⁶ My daughter had a coworker who felt he was damned because he did not go on a church mission. The Reformed church he attended told him that to be a good Christian, he needed to do so. He never did before he ended up on his deathbed. He was terrified of going to hell, but was rescued from that by being pointed to Christ for him in the words of the Agnus Dei. It had been engraved on his heart in his childhood Catholic liturgical church.

²⁷ Examples of Lutheran commentators who see “Spirit” as a combination or as anonymous: J.P. Koehler, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, tr. E.E. Sauer (Milwaukee:

Summary

There are two contrary guides in the Christian. There are the Spirit and the flesh.²⁸ Paul urges the Christian, freed by Christ from the bondage of the law, to follow the guidance of the Spirit, not the guidance of the flesh. The trouble is, the flesh still clings to us. It rears its ugly head. It does by fighting back against the Spirit.

This is the truth of the matter: as long as we remain in this world, we are “partly sinners and partly righteous.” Yet, our righteousness in Christ is more abundant than our sin. It is because it is Christ’s righteousness.

The conflict between the flesh and the Spirit should not be surprising, nor should it cause one to lose heart. That is seen from Luther’s own experience and comfort derived from this doctrine. During his days as a monk, he tried many methods to dominate the flesh. Try as he might, the desires of the flesh haunted him. Finally, he realized he would never be without sin as long as he was in the flesh. This conflict would stay with him. Therefore, he did *not need to despair* when he faced this conflict.²⁹

All saints experience this struggle. Yet, here is the comfort: God does not impute their sins to them. That does not mean that sin is to be minimized. The fact that God does not impute sin for Christ’s sake does not minimize sin. It *maximizes* it because it can only be taken away in Christ. In this struggle, then, the saints do not rely on their righteousness. “They gaze at Christ, who gave His life for their sins. If there is a remnant of sin in the flesh, they know it is not imputed to them.”³⁰

This is a truth: believers still need to have sin emphasized. God hates sin. All sin, as far as the deed goes, is *mortal*. For the believer, though, sin is not imputed. As a result, sin is rendered *venial* to the

Northwestern Publishing House, 1957); Armin Panning, *The People’s Bible, Galatians/Ephesians* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997 [revised edition, 2005]).

²⁸ Andrew Das sees the flesh not as the sinful nature, but as a quasi-personified power. His concern seems to be that the Christian not find his identity in the flesh or locate his struggle in himself, but in Christ. By externalizing the flesh as a quasi-personified power, the focus shifts away from self-absorption to “the decisive victory in Christ’s cross” (Andrew Das, *Galatians* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House 2014], 594. Luther understands the flesh as an internal enemy “I have not yet put off my flesh” (Luther, 73). “The saints have not yet completely shed their corrupt flesh” (Ibid., 96).

²⁹ Luther refers to Staupitz: “More than a thousand times I have vowed to God that I would improve, but I have never performed what I have vowed. Hereafter I shall not make such vows, because I know perfectly well that I shall not live up to them. Unless God is gracious and merciful to me for the sake of Christ ... I shall not be able to stand before Him with all my vows and good works” (Ibid., 74).

³⁰ Ibid.

believer. In short, one has to distinguish between *the sins*, which may be identical, and *the persons*, who are penitent or impenitent.³¹

While discussing the law, Paul keeps coming back to faith *so that* we do not revert to confidence in the law. In that respect, to be led by the Spirit is to *no longer* be under the law. Christ was under the Law *for us*. He has freed us from its legal hold. To be led by the Spirit, then, is to be *in* Christ. This is full of comfort when saints are afflicted by the desires of the flesh: “The Law cannot accuse and terrify them; and even if it tries to do so, it cannot bring them to the point of despair.”³²

Connections

Luther’s comment that we are “partly sinners and partly righteous” reflects the Latin phrase “simul justus et peccator.” Das observes that this phrase is often misapplied. Many preachers do by instilling a false sense of *identity* as “sinners.” That false identity can be used as an excuse to sin. However:

Just as the Gospel predominates over the Law, so also justified (*justus*) saint and sinner (*peccator*) are not equal for the Christian. A believer’s *identity* is not that of a “sinner” but of a “saint” whose sins have been forgiven and who is now *one* with Christ. The believer does not find his or her identity in sin but rather struggles daily and mightily against it.³³

This mighty struggle against sin will be with the Christian until the day he dies because he has the flesh with him during the entirety of this life and the flesh is incaltrant. About the flesh, someone said, “He can’t be reformed; he can’t be improved; he can’t be cured. No amount of prodding, no amount of encouragement, no amount of self-help techniques can get him to improve. It is not possible.”

The *only way* to deal with him is to *drown* him as the Small Catechism teaches under the Meaning of Baptism. “The old Adam in us, should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and a new man come forth who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” By returning to baptism, the believer is living his identity in Christ.

For the Christian this means that sins are no longer mortal. They become venial. Walther cautions, though, “You are not rightly

³¹ Ibid., 76.

³² Ibid., 79.

³³ Das, 588-589.

distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach about certain sins *as if* they were not damnable, but only venial.”³⁴

The concern expressed in the development of the thesis is that it can be tempting to minimize some sin. Minimizing sin is certainly reflective in today’s antinomian culture not only without but also within the church. By minimizing sin, the sinner is lead to think that he is safe to sin. If he is safe to sin, then he does not need Jesus to rescue him from his sin. In that state, the sinner is left in his sin, and all sin damns; all sin is mortal. In the last sentence of the lecture on the thesis Walther says, “Small sins become great when they are regarded as small.”³⁵ Only when sin is maximized is God’s grace magnified.

Freedom Struggle II—Works of the Flesh Contrasted With the Fruit of the Spirit

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are plain; immorality, impurity, licentiousness ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, party spirit, ²¹ drunkenness, carousing and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God; ²² but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, ²³ gentleness, self control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

A noted difference in approach

Most commentators analyze the list of works and fruit. They look for patterns, for groupings, etc.³⁶ In his commentary, Luther bypasses all of that. He keeps his focus on the doctrine of justification. He states that his *purpose* was to “set forth the doctrine of justification as clearly as possible.”³⁷ Because his focus is such, Luther’s treatment of the list is done with this in mind.

Summary

Luther returns to the themes of showy works, developing his thoughts. He begins by discussing the struggle with sin that goes on

³⁴ Walther, 363 (emphasis added).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 370.

³⁶ Examples of Lutheran commentaries that do such analysis are: Das, *Galatians*; Koehler, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*; and Panning, *Galatians/Ephesians*.

³⁷ Luther, 87.

within the Christian. It is a great *comfort* for a Christian to know that he is *not alone* in these temptations. He is in the company of all the saints.³⁸ All the saints struggle with the flesh. Because they do, they do not always look so saintly. The sophists, to the contrary, depicted the saints as those who lived an ascetic life, who were celibate, whose saintliness was seen.

Saints, however, are not the ascetic, but the baptized, cleansed by the blood of Christ. They are saints, not on the basis of their own works, but *on the basis of God's Word*. All believers in Christ are saints. Such saints do not withdraw from society, but remain in it. They are found in all vocations. They do their vocation on the basis of the Word of God.

In this respect, the Creed confesses that "We believe a holy church. Its holiness cannot be seen. Those who are ignorant of this are *offended* when they see the sins and weaknesses of the baptized."³⁹ They imagine that the church consists of those whose saintliness *can be seen*. That is to turn "I believe in the holy Christian Church," *upside down* because it *replaces* "I believe" with "I see."

After discussing the struggle that goes on within the Christian, Luther deals with the works of the flesh. The first group are sexual in nature. Luther does not dwell on them. He does not, because they do not fit his purpose. Idolatry does. Idolatry is worship of God that *does not have* God's Word and command. It leads us not to trust in Christ, but in works. Luther cites examples from the monastics. They imagined they were saved *not on the basis of faith* in Christ *but on the observance of* monastic rule.

It is important to understand that this is sin. To be sure, the "crass" works of the flesh—those of a sexual nature—are easy to identify. "Fine" works of the flesh are not so easy to identify. They have a way of impressing people so that they are deceived.

The truth is that such "smug" sinners, are *shut out of heaven*. "Those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." This threat is spoken not just of secure crass sinners, but *also of* proud refined sinners. *Both* do works of the flesh. Because the proud sinner supposes himself to be very spiritual, he needs to hear this dreadful sentence.

An important distinction is made in the transition from "works of the flesh" to "fruit of the Spirit." Paul does not write "*works of the Spirit*," but "*fruits of the Spirit*." The difference between works and fruits

³⁸ Luther cites examples: Mary felt great sorrow when her Son was lost; David complained that he was overwhelmed by sorrow; Paul complained that he felt fears within (Ibid., 81).

³⁹ Ibid., 84.

is this: the term “fruit” gives glory to God. That is, “fruit” is not a work the Christian does to earn God’s favor. Rather, it is what the Spirit produces by means of the gospel.

While Luther does not define all the words in the “works of the flesh” list, he does in the “fruit of the Spirit” list. They are fairly brief definitions. The *key* to these fruits of the Spirit is that they are not constrained by the law. They *spontaneously* sprout from those justified by faith. Springing forth from faith they are done freely, *without thought* to merit or reward. Since they are not done to earn God’s favor, not done to make oneself worthy of God’s grace. The law *cannot* accuse here.

Even though that is the case, the flesh still clings to the believer. It has to be dealt with. It is by “nailing its passions and desires to the cross.” That is to return to one’s baptism, referred to earlier in the Small Catechism. It is to drown the old Adam by “daily contrition and repentance (so that) the new man shall arise and live before God in righteousness and holiness.”

Connections

Luther stated, “We believe a holy church. Its holiness cannot be seen.” Though it cannot, human reason desperately wants to be able to see it. It wants to be able to see the church in the successful lives of its members or the local congregations. That success is measured by sanctification, so called “victorious living,” or a congregation’s numerical size.

To externalize the church, however, is to miss the *essence* of the church. The church is made up of believers. To be sure, there are marks of the church—Word and Sacrament—but in its essence it is an “*association of faith*.”⁴⁰ Seminary professor Bjarne Teigen used to say that it was “hidden under a mask.” Such an understanding of the church means that instruction, coupled with patience, is necessary with its members.

While patience is necessary, that does not condone secure and proud sinners. Secure sinners are those Luther calls “crass sinners.” Crass sinners are those who think they are safe to sin. They are the antinomians. Proud sinners are those Luther refers to as “refined sinners.” They are the self-righteous. Proud and secure sins are the *two ditches* into which sinners fall. *Both* types of sinners are what the catechism calls *impenitent* sinners. They fail to see their sin and, as a consequence, their need for Jesus.

⁴⁰ *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), Ap VIII:5 (emphasis added).

Only when the impenitent sinner—crass or refined—sees his sin and hungers for forgiveness in Christ Jesus does the impenitent sinner become the penitent sinner. That is where God, in his mercy, desires to bring each and every sinner.

When the penitent hears God's grace in Christ, *then* God brings forth the fruits of faith. Luther uses the word "spontaneous" to describe *how* they spring forth from faith. It is like listening to a comedian such as Jimmy Fallon. When the audience hears his humor, it doesn't say and ask, "Okay, that was funny. Was that was my cue to laugh?" No. It laughs spontaneously. Laughter springs forth from humor.

In such a way, fruits spring forth from faith. Luther captured the spirit of that spontaneity in his well-known words, "O, it is a living, busy, active mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but *before the question is asked*, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them."⁴¹

Freedom Applied I - Two Precepts

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another. ^{6:1} Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of meekness. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each man will have to bear his own load.

Luther's approach

Popular commentaries generally treat this paragraph as applying to the church.⁴² The church has a calling from God to restore the fallen. Luther, for the most part, treats them more specifically, as applying to the ministry. As such, his comments take on the tone of *pastoral* theology.

⁴¹ *Concordia, A Reader's Edition*, FC SD IV:10-11 (emphasis added).

⁴² Compare Das, *Galatians*; Koehler, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*; Panning, *The People's Bible, Galatians/Ephesians*.

In writing on pastoral theology Luther identifies two precepts. A footnote mentions, "From the lecture notes, it seems that the first moral was the denunciation of vainglory."⁴³ The second moral precept, then, is to restore a fallen brother.

Summary

Carnal provoking and envy are destructive in the church. At the bottom of this provoking and envy is "vainglory." It is a temptation to which men of genius are prone. While it is found throughout society, in the church it is a particularly dangerous vice. It causes inexpressible damage because some refuse to be thought of as inferior. They refuse to be thought as inferior to those who are properly called because they pride themselves in their genius. *Vainglory is the occasion for Paul's epistle.*

Examples are cited from Luther's day. False apostles continued to break into the church. They broke into the church without a call. They thrust themselves into the Ministry of the Word. They looked for fame by claiming to be the first to point out Rome's errors, but the gospel was not given to seek one's own fame. Whoever seeks his own fame in the gospel is vainglorious.

Speaking of vainglory, the Sacramentarians used the passage, "If a man is overtaken in any trespass ... restore him." They used it as a basis to restore Luther and his coworkers. They called on Luther and his coworkers to yield on doctrine in a spirit of love. They maintained that the issue regarding the Sacrament was not enough to break up Christian concord. They, Luther et. al., were splitting hairs over this doctrine.

Luther was grieved by the disagreement over the Sacrament. Though he was, he was *unmoved* from his confession. In fact, what he had taught about the Sacrament from the beginning only became more clear. Not only did it become more clear, it "deepened through study, practice, and experience, as well as through great and frequent temptations."⁴⁴ It led Luther to conclude: "If you lose this (the Sacrament) you lose Christ."⁴⁵

After having dealt with the sacramentarians, Luther addresses how this precept applies to the church. Paul is *not* speaking about stiff-necked sins of doctrine, *but* of sins of weakness; *not* about those who deny Christ and defend it, *but* about those who have fallen into sin against their will. He even removes the blame from man, as it were by

⁴³ Luther, 106.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 107.

the word “overtaken.” He is overtaken, that is, deceived by the devil, because the Christian lives in the flesh.

Those who take care of souls in the church are to take note here. They are not to do like the papists or the sects. The papists burden consciences with new traditions. They *invent* guilt where there is no guilt. Then, they excommunicate. The sects are *law-oriented* and *legalistic*. They want to hold everything to the strictest requirement. It is all because they think *too much* of their own sanctity. It is a false prop. In short, neither the sects nor the papists bear one another’s burdens.

The fact of the matter is that “bearing one another’s burdens” is not an enviable task because it requires broad shoulders. Those broad shoulders have to carry the weakness of the brethren. To put it another way, pastors see many faults and sins which they are obliged to bear. Yet, if they bear their own sins and overlook them, the same holds true toward those under them. They do that by not burdening guilty consciences, but comforting and then instructing the penitent.

A note of caution is in order. “Look to yourself, lest you, too, be tempted.” One such temptation is for a pastor to look for and boast in the praise of men. When the pastor looks for it, he cares what the world says of him. His boasting *depends* upon it. It is a boast in the flesh and its aim is self-glory. Rather, a pastor is to be *faithful* to the Word, and that can be a *lonely* way. That is, when there is little visible success, one can feel his work is in vain. It can be depressing, discouraging, and frustrating. At such times, the pastor is directed to find refuge in Christ and his wounds. This encouragement is necessary because of the offense of the cross.

In short, every preacher of the Gospel *tests* his work. That is, without concern for men’s praise, he seeks to carry out his office faithfully by teaching the gospel in its truth and purity and administering the sacraments correctly. Luther notes that justification is *not* being dealt with here. No work is able to grant the conscience peace before God. Yet, it is important to be able to say that the pastor has been *faithful* in vocation, that he has not corrupted the Word but taught it purely.

Connections

Luther speaks of those who break into the church without a proper call. They thrust themselves into the Ministry of the Word. What happened in Luther’s day continues to happen. As indicated earlier, self-chosen ministries are popular. The line between the public ministry and the universal priesthood is blurred. Lutheran catechetical material can

also be found speaking unclearly about the distinction.⁴⁶ When those lines are blurred, it opens the door to self-assertion. Such self-assertion disturbs the God-ordained order he prescribes for the church.

Chemnitz speaks to the order God has prescribed for his church. As he does, one can hear reflections of Augsburg XIV:

It is true that all Christians have a *general* call to proclaim the Gospel of God; to speak the Word of God among themselves; to admonish each other from the Word of God; to reprove and to comfort. ...But the public ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments in the church is not entrusted to all Christians in general. ...For a special or *particular* call is required to do this.⁴⁷

It is interesting to see how convicted Luther is regarding the Sacramentarians. He is willing to forgive them sins in the area of life. While he is, he is not willing to forgive sins in the matter of the Sacrament. For him it was a matter of keeping or losing Christ.

Oberman comments on Luther's refusal to yield on the doctrine of the Sacrament. In the Sacrament, the penitent is

led out of himself and directed toward Christ ... "Here you shall find Me." God is present everywhere, but there is a world of difference between "God being here" and "God being here *for you*." The whole Gospel is concentrated in that little word "here," without which one would have to search the whole of creation, looking here and there. But then no one would be sure he had found the eternal God in His multifarious creation for himself. ... God thus defines a "here" where he can be found with certainty so that he need not be "fanatically" sought "everywhere."⁴⁸

What is so crucial about the sacrament, then, is that it is *where* God locates himself for the penitent. The penitent need not look inside himself to find God. That is only filled with misgivings and doubt. No. The penitent is directed *outside* himself to the sacrament. There Christ puts his body and blood under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins. There the penitent is comforted by Christ *for him*.

⁴⁶ See *Applying Luther's Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 96-97. A subsequent edition, copyright 2012, is much more clear.

⁴⁷ Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word and Sacraments*, ed. and tr. Luther Poellet (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 29 (emphasis added).

⁴⁸ Oberman, 243.

That is what God calls the pastor to do. He is to take care of souls by giving them Christ by preaching and teaching repentance and faith. Luther's pastoral concern shines through here. He wants pastors to take care that they do not burden consciences, that they do not invent guilt where there is no guilt, and that they are not law-oriented or legalistic. Care must be taken not to drive the soul away from Christ.

It reminds this writer of his seminary days. Seminary professor Wilhelm Petersen would often say when dealing with members to "sin on the side of grace." That is good counsel for pastors to keep in mind especially when there are life situations over which hairs can be split, and where splitting hairs can do more damage than good. That does not mean to excuse and turn a blind eye to sin. It does mean that care is to be taken to put the troubled conscience into the arms of Jesus.

Luther develops thoughts on the cross borne as a result of faithfulness to the Word. It is what often is borne when a pastor fails to see success by worldly standards. When that happens, it can be depressing, frustrating, and discouraging. Who has not felt that when many church pews have been empty on a Sunday morning, when confirmands do not do their work, when appointments are not kept? Who has not felt that when accusations of arrogance are made, when the church is portrayed as stuck in the past, when the masses run after what is popular?

To be sure, at such times, it can be a lonely way. Yes, it can, and since it can, the faithful pastor is directed to the shoulders of Christ. He has broad shoulders. His shoulders bore the sins of the world on the cross. Because he bore this greatest of weights, Christ will bear the pastor in the crosses he suffers in his vocation.

Freedom Applied II - Reaping What Is Sown

⁶ Let him who is taught the Word share all good things with him who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. ⁸ For he who sows to the flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ So, then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Summary

Hearers are to provide for their pastors. Under the papacy, the clergy was well taken care of. In fact, the clergy took advantage of the people. They had become very rich. But now that the gospel is preached it is a different matter. When it is preached, support for the clergy wanes. Everyone takes advantage of it. That is the fate of the gospel.

This happens because the devil *cannot tolerate* the gospel, so he contends against it. He does in two ways: 1) by heretical doctrine, and 2) by depriving ministers of their livelihood. To exacerbate it, he uses wicked magistrates to seize possessions of the churches.

God is so serious about this provision for pastors that he adds a threat, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked." Concerning this threat, Luther addresses the situation in the church of his day. The nobles treated pastors as though they were slaves. "When pastors ask for pay or complain of suffering need, the nobles exclaim, 'Priests are greedy! ... If they were truly evangelical, they would have to give up all private property and follow Christ as paupers.'"⁴⁹

Luther admits that support for ministers is not a comfortable topic. It can give the appearance of greed if it is emphasized too much, yet the Scriptures teach the matter. They do so because being devoted to household duties day and night for one's support, and, at the same time, paying attention to the study of Scripture as the ministry requires is difficult to manage. Hence, pastors who received wages from what were previously papal properties were not to feel guilt.

Paul uses a metaphor of sowing and reaping to teach this biblical truth. The meaning of the metaphor is this: he who provides for preachers will reap eternal life. That is *not* to say anyone merits eternal life *by* providing for preachers. *Rather*, it is a fruit of faith because *when* preachers are taken care of, *then* faith is fed. That is what faith desires. It desires to be fed Christ. In order to be fed Christ, then, a fruit of faith is to provide for preachers.

The emphasis shifts from the particular, providing for pastors, to general good works. "The household of faith" is a phrase that designates those who belong to the fellowship of faith. It applies first to the ministers of the Word and then to other believers. The believer is not to grow weary in doing good to either. Doing good is a virtue to be cultivated. While doing good, the believer is to wait and watch for the harvest. At the harvest there is reaping.

⁴⁹ Luther, 125.

Connections

The challenges to supporting the Ministry of the Word are with the church today as in Luther's day. In Luther's day, "wicked magistrates attempted to seize possession of the churches." Today there are those in the public square that would like negatively to impact the church's finances and its religious institutions.

One recent example is in California. It is called the "Equity in Higher Education Act." The following is a critique of this act before it was amended:

The intent of this bill is transparent: to target Christian schools that maintain Biblical beliefs on marriage and sexuality, and to use the threat of losing government funds to force them to change those beliefs. It puts schools into a terrible predicament. If they maintain their beliefs, their prospective students will not be eligible for Cal Grants, and the schools will suffer significant financial loss. If they give in to this requirement, they compromise their core principles.⁵⁰

By the time the bill was adopted it was amended to provide exclusions for religious institutions⁵¹ because many expressed opposition to their state legislators. Even though it was amended, it serves to illustrate the move by many to "seize possession of the churches" in today's culture.

In Luther's day, ministers were also deprived of their livelihood by many in the churches. While circumstances today may not be similar, financial concerns do impact the livelihood of pastors. For one, the cost of health care has put a strain on church budgets. It only keeps rising. Many pastors' wives support the church by getting benefits from their own employment. For another, many of our congregations are small. Not only are they small, they are getting older. The older our congregations get, the more members' incomes are fixed.

⁵⁰ <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/436380/religious-liberty-threatened-california-new-law-gender-identity>.

⁵¹ "SB 1146 has been amended to address the significant concerns about its encroachment on religious liberty in California higher education. Though some concerns remain as to the legality of certain disclosure requirements in the updated bill, we are pleased that SB 1146 no longer removes the rights of faith-based institutions to freely exercise their religious mission as provided under current law. The new amendments also preserve Cal Grant access for students wishing to attend faith-based institutions" (<http://www.opposesb1146.com/>).

In spite of the challenges, the synod in convention does well to keep reminding congregations to meet their obligations to the pastors. Many have used the Board for Home Outreach salary scale as a guide in that discussion. Good as that may be, in some cases it is not realizable, even though many give generously from their means. Perhaps other possible ways to support pastors deserve a look by synods. In Luther's day, clergy got wages accrued from what previously were papal properties. In these times, are there similar synodical financial resources that could be used to supplement pastors' pay where needed?

Exhortation to Remain in Freedom

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the Law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. ¹⁴ But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. ¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Summary

After his personal touch, referring to his own handwriting, Paul gets to the conclusion. The false apostles *accommodated themselves* to the demand of the Jews. They did by *outwardly* observing the law in their ceremonies. Though they outwardly observed it, they *did not really* observe it. They did not because the law *cannot* be observed *without* the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is not received *without* Christ. That is the meaning of those who receive circumcision but do not keep the law. They are circumcised, but not in the heart.

The point is this: Whoever does works apart from Christ, does works in vain. "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."⁵² The result is that the false apostles were making hearers into self-righteous men. They outwardly observed ceremonies according to the law and

⁵² Romans 14:23.

the false apostles boasted in the Galatians' flesh, that is, they boasted in their followers.⁵³

It all made Paul indignant. The carnal boasting of the false apostles was loathsome. Paul's boasting, on the other hand, was confirmed by two facts: 1) he had the pure doctrine, and 2) he suffered for the sake of Christ.

These sufferings are the Christian's cross. It is what the church has suffered as the body of Christ. When a small part of the body suffers—a toe is stubbed—the head winces. So, also, when a part of *Christ's* body suffers, he is effected *as if it were* his own. It is helpful to know this in order not become overly sad. The church's sufferings say *she is a part of* Christ's body. She suffers the cross because Christ is preached purely.

The result is that the world and the church condemn each other. The church condemns the world on account of works righteousness. The world condemns the church as a subverter of religion and disturber of public peace. The correct judgment is on the side of the church and her members. It is, for the spiritual man judges all things.⁵⁴ He does by means of the Word.

As a case in point, Luther points out how the false apostles and the papists contended vigorously for their ritual and tradition. Tradition, ritual, circumcision, etc., do not count for righteousness. They are far too low. The Christian has something far more precious than the law or tradition. Nothing under the sun counts for righteousness except Christ. In Christ, one is a new creation.

To be sure, tradition and ritual are permissible. They are permissible as good and necessary in their proper place and time. Though they are, they have no place in the discussion of justification.

Connections

Luther speaks about the Christian cross, all the afflictions suffered on account of Christ. The cross is not self-chosen but comes to the Christian without him or her looking for it. The Large Catechism puts it so well: "If we would be Christians therefore, we must surely expect and count on having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies. They will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God's word is preached, accepted, or believed and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be missing."⁵⁵

⁵³ Their boasting is a graphic play on words: "I got so many foreskins like trophies."

⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:15.

⁵⁵ *Concordia*, LC 65.

The cross is what is suffered for the sake of the gospel. It is suffered by the Christian when accusations are made that he is arrogant, that he is close-minded, or that he is stuck in the past. It is suffered when those close to him turn on him, when troubles tempt him to doubt, and when anxieties bring him into depression. At such times, the Christian's comfort is in the wounds of Jesus, provided by the Sacrament. By means of the Sacrament, Christ tends to his hurting body with his body and blood, applies the soothing salve of the gospel, and binds up the afflicted.

The Sacrament and the Word are couched in liturgy and song. The liturgy and song of the Church have been handed down to the current generation. On the one hand, making use of the church's liturgy and song is not to be made into a law. That would revert to legalism. On the other hand, it is not to be treated with contempt. That would be to act in a loveless way. There needs to be a middle ground.⁵⁶

The church's confessions address this matter. On the one hand, they say, "The apostles free consciences from traditions once for all, especially if they are taught to merit justification."⁵⁷ On the other hand, they add, "Nothing in customary rites should be changed without a reasonable cause. So to nurture unity, old customs that can be kept without sin, should be kept."⁵⁸

Conclusion and Parting Words

¹⁶Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷Henceforth let no man trouble me. For I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

⁵⁶ Perhaps what a fellow pastor said about the church's liturgy and song can be helpful. These are the gifts that our mother, the Church, has handed down to us. It would be treating our mother with disrespect to throw away what she has gifted us. That doesn't mean, however, that we are to act in a rigid way with those gifts. It would not be good for children do that with the gifts handed down by their mothers. They use them, apply them, and tailor them to their individual situations. So also, when it comes to the church's traditions, we honor our mother by making use of the gifts she has given us. At the same time, we tailor them to them to the individual situations in which we find ourselves.

⁵⁷ *Concordia*, Ap XVIII:34.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Ap XVIII:51.

Interpretation differences

Commentators debate who the “Israel of God” is. Is it those biological descendants of Abraham, that is, Jews, or is it those who are spiritual descendants of Abraham, that is, the Church?⁵⁹ Luther defines the Israel of God as the Church.

Summary

When Paul speaks of those “who walk by this rule,” he is not speaking of the hypocritical self-made rules of man’s religion. They only make a *pretense* of holiness. To the contrary, Paul has been clear about the rule: grace alone. If others want some other rule, let them go. Paul has done what he was called to do.

Paul bears “the marks of Jesus” because he preached grace alone. He did not impose them on himself. They were given Paul against his will. These “marks” are *not only* physical, but they are *also* arrows of the devil and mental fears.

The preacher of the gospel bears the “marks of the Lord Jesus,” too. The world and false brothers persecute him and the devil afflicts him. These “marks” are not chosen because of some false devotion. They are inflicted on Christ’s servant *by* his enemies *against* his will *on account of* Christ.

This is Paul’s final farewell. It is an appropriate farewell. Our only hope, our only confidence before God, is his grace.

Conclusion

Full circle has been made. Paul ends as he began, with the gospel. That is, he ends with grace what he began with liberty. The article with which this paper began spoke of the liberty symbolized by Lady Liberty. It spoke of the broken chains at her feet that picture the overthrow of political tyranny.

That tyranny pictures for us all the attempts by the devil, the world and our sinful flesh to return to the law for our confidence. That is “vain-glory.” *Vainglory is the occasion for Galatians*, Luther wrote. Vainglory, putting some confidence in the flesh, is in the end only to return to the bondage of the law.

The article, then, went on to say, “There is another ‘statue of liberty’ that offers an even greater freedom, because it has broken the chain of sin that held all of mankind in bondage. ... This wooden symbol is the

⁵⁹ Compare Das, *Galatians*; Koehler, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*; Panning, *The People’s Bible, Galatians/Ephesians*.

Cross, where Jesus shed His blood, in payment for the sins of all people, of all time, so that all who believe in Him might be freed from sin's curse of death and everlasting punishment. Because Christ went to the Cross for our sake, we *really know* what freedom is."

Stand fast in that liberty. It frees from the chains of the law. It frees to live a spontaneous life of service. It puts confidence in Christ alone for salvation. LSQ

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Evaluating A New Bible Translation: The Evangelical Heritage Version, New Testament and Psalms

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CAN THE PERFECT HYMNAL EXIST? I JOKINGLY tell my congregation that the answer will be “No” until the day they grant me a sabbatical from my parish duties, lock me in my study, and tell me to produce one. Then, in my opinion, we will have the world’s first perfect hymnal. Obviously, this is a joke because even if I did produce a hymnal, only I personally would think it was “perfect,” and even then, after some usage I would probably find things I would do differently next time. This is the nature of producing resources for Lutheran congregations. Opinions are very fluid.

Greater than a congregation’s hymnal is a congregation’s Bible. This article, which will be more substantial than a standard book review because of the subject matter, will examine a new translation—the introductory edition of the *Evangelical Heritage Version* (EHV).¹ This edition, which contains only the New Testament and the Psalter, gives the reader a good feel for how the rest of the Bible will be translated. In general, the EHV is easy-to-read and highly accurate, and it shines especially in passages dealing with sacramental theology. It is fitting for aural delivery through weekly lections and for written delivery in printed bulletins and Bible studies.

¹ *Holy Bible: New Testament and Psalms, Evangelical Heritage Version* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2017). Note: Though this particular edition is *printed* by NPH, the text itself is copyrighted by the Wartburg Project, Inc., © 2017.

History and Philosophy

A group of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) pastors saw the need for a new English Bible when the revised *New International Version* (NIV)² was released in 2011. Because of some negative changes, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) Doctrine Committee officially recommended against the use of the revised NIV in its report to the ELS national convention in 2012. Thus, many pastors suddenly needed to look elsewhere for the Bible which would form the *lingua fide* of their congregations.

The *Wartburg Project* grew out of the desire for an English Bible that would not only be faithful to the original text but also would not change on the whim of a national publisher, as had the NIV. Thus, editors were selected³ and the translation work began after inviting more men including some ELS pastors and professors. Their translation style was carefully tracked so it would avoid the extremes. The resulting New Testament is neither too literal so as to make reading it stilted and awkward, nor too dynamic so as to make it interpretive rather than translative. The name given to the final translation is the *Evangelical Heritage Version*, chosen to stress the Gospel-centered nature of the translation and the fact that the translation itself is not meant to compete with established Christian tradition but to complement it.

Their translation philosophy is laid out in nice detail via the *Introduction* in the front matter. Two notes in this material which I found helpful, especially as a teacher of children and a father, were the following:

We seek to preserve heritage terms like “sanctify,” “justify,” “angels,” and “saints,” but not to the exclusion of more explanatory translations like “make holy” and “declare righteous.” We make an effort to retain familiar, treasured terms that are well established in the liturgy, hymns, creeds, and catechisms of the church.⁴

² *Holy Bible, New International Version* (Colorado Springs: Biblica—The International Bible Society, 2011).

³ General Editor and Old Testament Editor: Rev. Dr. John F. Brug, professor emeritus at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin; and New Testament Editor, Rev. Brian R. Keller, serving St. Stephen Lutheran Church and School (WELS) in Adrian, Michigan.

⁴ EHV, ix.

In texts that deal with sexual issues, we try to be euphemistic where the original is euphemistic and blunt or coarse where the language of the original text is blunt.⁵

As for the fears that this will become a special sectarian Bible and conceptually put the ELS/WELS into a cultish camp requiring our own special version, we must remember who we are in the context of broader Christendom in this day and age. First, we certainly do not *need* this particular translation to prove any of our doctrine, since we have already been using different translations for years. Second, we are a twenty-first century denomination which bars women from the pastoral ministry, condemns expressions of sexuality outside of an exclusively heterosexual married estate, and condemns abortion as murder. The broader spectrum of Christianity already views us as backwards simpletons. Whom are we trying to impress? The “sectarian Bible” argument really holds little water in view of our rigid counter-cultural doctrinal positions.

General Evaluation

We begin with some preliminary evaluations. First, the format of the EHV introductory edition is clean and readable, laid out in a single-column style. However, many will miss the standard two-column arrangement from other Bibles. For a book with so many thousands of words over so many hundreds of pages, the eye seems to be able to take in more of the text at once when the text is broken into shorter lengths. This is why a two-column format makes reading the Bible easier. However, one cannot be too critical of things like this because this is only an introductory edition. The final EHV may very well be laid out in a two-column format, and even if not, the present single-column format is clean and easy on its own. Time will tell.

Second, the headers and footnotes in the EHV are very good. In the New Testament, the headers clearly summarize the content of the paragraphs which follow. In the Gospels, the header of each account of Jesus’ ministry also contains the cross-references to the other synoptic and Johannine accounts. I think the headers are most excellent in the Psalter where the thought progression of each Psalm is outlined clearly, making them easy to follow and easy to understand. The footnotes are not overly technical and sometimes give important insight into why something is translated the way it is. They also contain excellent

⁵ EHV, xi.

cross-references for passages which are drawn from the Old Testament and other parts of the New.

Third, some will negatively react to the handling of the divine pronouns, which are all lowercase. Simply put, the translators did not want to slip too far into the interpretive side of things by capitalizing those pronouns referring to God. One can hardly blame them, especially when considering the number of typological texts in the Old Testament where there will be various opinions about which pronouns are God, which are angels, etc. Though many times it is clear, sometimes it is not. The editors leave it to the pastor and people to decide.

Fourth, I believe the name *Evangelical Heritage Version* brings with it some unnecessary practical problems. The acronym for this Bible is EHV. Another extremely prominent translation in broader Lutheran circles is the *English Standard Version* (ESV)⁶. Visually, these acronyms—EHV and ESV—are unnecessarily similar and could cause confusion when both versions are cited in bulletins or conference papers, etc. Since the ESV was produced in 2001, they have a clearly established lineage with that acronym. When the *Wartburg Project* editors had the option to coin virtually any imaginable name for their Bible, one wonders why they ended up with one that looks so similar to another. Any possible confusion could have been easily avoided by picking a different string of three words as the new Bible's official name, thus resulting in a genuinely unique and instantly recognizable acronym. This too is criticism of a relatively unimportant nature, since the text itself is the important feature of the Bible, not its name.

Noteworthy New Testament Passages

While the general style of translation is accurate and clear, there are a few places where the EHV makes distinctive translation choices which separate it from other Bibles. While some cases are relatively neutral, many make the EHV rise above the others regarding its accuracy and clarity in communicating the Word of God to modern readers. Here are a few samples:

John 21:15–17 • A Translation Made With “Love” and “Care”

The EHV is the first translation I have seen which goes out of its way to reflect a distinctive nuance of the Greek text of Jesus and Peter's post-resurrection conversation. Jesus asks, “ἀγαπᾶς με?”—“Do you *love* me?” Peter's answer is insufficient—“Ναί, Κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ

⁶ *Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001).

σε”—“Yes, Lord, You know that I *love* You.” Notice Jesus and Peter use two different Greek words for “love” here. Jesus asks about ἀγάπη—that unconditional, selfless love God has for mankind. Peter merely answers with φιλία—the affection between friends. While the overwhelming majority of English translations simply say “love” for both words in this text, the EHV distinguishes between the two. This results in a distinct translation which is not technically inaccurate even if one holds that ἀγάπη and φιλία are synonyms here, as do the majority of contemporary translations. Though there is certainly no scholarly consensus on the necessity of this distinction,⁷ the EHV text can be profitably used by any preacher.

John 21:15 EHV

When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love^a me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I care about^b you.” Jesus told him, “Feed my lambs.”

^a15 Greek *agapao*.

^b15 In verses 15–17, the uses of the Greek *phileo* are translated *care about* to distinguish from the uses of the Greek *agapao*, which are translated *love*.

John 5:24 • An “Amen” Moment

A particular phrase used by Jesus in the Gospels is the ubiquitous ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν. This was always a particularly soft spot in the 1984 NIV where they merely rendered it as “I tell you the truth,” losing the Hebraic thrust of this aural signpost to indicate Jesus was about to make an important point. The 2011 NIV actually improved this translation (“Very truly I tell you”), but it is still not as impactful as simply translating the words as they appear, as the ESV does so well: “Truly, truly I say to you.”

For this phrase, the EHV editors go one step further than the ESV’s literal rendering. They simply transliterate ἀμὴν. This can be viewed as a positive since it creates a teaching moment for a very familiar word with a very significant meaning.

⁷ For a nice summary of the argument in favor of treating ἀγάπη and φιλία as synonyms, see D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According To John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 676-678.

John 5:24 EHV

Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life....

Revelation 1:1 • Definitely Symbols, Not Literal Events

The opening chapter of St. John's Revelation is important to set the stage for the symbolic nature of the rest of the book. The EHV takes a very interpretive approach to the latter part of the first verse: καὶ ἐσήμανεν, ἀποστειλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ. Literally, this phrase is, "He signified it, having sent it through his angel." Most translations simply smooth out the word ἐσήμανεν to a simple communication of some sort, like the 2011 NIV's "He made it known by sending his angel." But the editors of the EHV want to reflect the picturesque nature of σημαίνω, since the "symbolic" concept is important for a proper understanding of the rest of the book. They say, "Christ expressed this revelation by means of symbols sent..." This seems justifiable because although the words "Christ" and "revelation" are absent from the Greek text, they are supplied here to make clear the antecedent material from verse one.

Revelation 1:1b EHV

Christ expressed this revelation by means of symbols sent^c through his angel to his servant John.

^c1 Or *Christ communicated these things by sending them*

Christological Passages

Overall, the EHV handles Christological passages very well. Unfortunately, there is one glaring exception to this: Philippians 2:6–7.

John 3:16 • Jesus is Only-Begotten of the Father

John 3:16, the Gospel-in-a-nutshell, was always a sticking point for me in the 1984 NIV. Its rendering of τὸν Υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ as "one and only Son," divorced the important passage from its biblical parallels in Psalm 2:7 and Hebrews 1:5, to say nothing of the significant usage of μονογενῆ in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 325, 381). The ESV's rendering is equally inadequate. The EHV, however, perfectly translates the theologically-weighted text using the term "only-begotten" for μονογενῆ. Though other translations have avoided this because of a desire to make the text innately understandable, this is

a part of our theological vocabulary which deserves to be retained and taught.

John 3:16 EHV

For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Psalm 2:7 • “I Have Begotten You”

Psalm 2:7, as mentioned in the comments for John 3:16, is rendered with the strong creedal language of “begotten” for **יְלִדְתִּי** instead of the utterly neutered translation of the NIV: “become your father.” Though the latter translation survives in a footnote, the main text retains the important verbal connection between Psalm 2:7, Hebrews 1:5, John 3:16, and the *μονογενῆ* (only-begotten) of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Psalm 2:7 EHV

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD.

He said to me:

“You are my Son.

Today I have begotten you.^a

^a7 Or *I have become your father*

Philippians 2:6 • Still “Nature,” Not “Form”

Unfortunately, not all the Christological passages from the EHV are excellent. Philippians 2:6, dealing with the form (*μορφή*) of Jesus, has been a problematic passage in our circles because of the 1984 NIV’s unfortunate rendering of *μορφή* as “nature” instead of “form.” This rendering is employed in the EHV.

For a proper understanding of the doctrine of Jesus’ exinanition—that Christ “refrained, during his earthly life, from the full use (*χρήσις*) of the divine glory communicated to His human nature”⁸—the “form of God” (*μορφή θεοῦ*) is a more literal, accurate rendering of the Greek. In a philosophical sense, *form* and *nature* or *essence* (*φύσις*) are different

⁸ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 281.

things.⁹ The essence or *nature* of something is the ethereal quality which makes it what it is existentially. What you discern with your eyes or other senses is merely its *form* or appearance.

Simply put, St. Paul here refers not to Jesus' divine *nature* in its truest technical sense. St. Paul is talking about how Jesus' two natures manifest themselves in His earthly life and appearance. Using the word *nature* here, when St. Paul is referring to *form*, could give the impression that Jesus' human nature itself was part and parcel of His humiliation, and that Jesus essentially became something less than God. But if this were true—if Jesus' human nature itself was synonymous with His humiliation—then after His resurrection He would have had to have abandoned His human nature to live in exaltation as God alone. This would contradict a real physical resurrection for Jesus, and make Philippians 3:21 a comfortless passage for us as well. Jesus' human nature is not part and parcel of His humiliation, because after His resurrection He remains true God and true man in one theanthropic union. His humiliation was merely His emptying (*ἐκένωσεν*) of Himself by refraining from the full use of His divine majesty according to His human nature. Though His incarnation and exinanition essentially happen concurrently, they are two different things—the former dealing with *nature* (*φύσις*) and the latter dealing with *form* (*μορφή*).

The simplest, literal rendering of “form of God” and “form of a servant” is probably the best rendering of this passage. An instructive footnote, of which this translation already has many, could further explain if the editors feel clarification is necessary. A cursory check of other popular Bibles shows that translating *μορφή* as “form” is the overwhelmingly preferred translation. Both the old and new NIV,¹⁰ along with the EHV, are the unfortunate minority.¹¹

Philippians 2:6–7 EHV

Though he was by nature God, he did not consider equality with God as a prize to be displayed,^b ⁷but he emptied himself

⁹ Richard A. Mueller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), 123.

¹⁰ Though, to be fair, the 2011 NIV at least acknowledges “form” is a possible translation via footnote.

¹¹ For more on the EHV's rationale for this translation, see Appendix A. For my response, see Appendix B.

by taking the nature of a servant. When he was born in human likeness, and his appearance was like that of any other man,^c ...

^b6 Or *something to be used for his own advantage, or something to cling to*

^c7 Literally *was found in appearance as a man*

Sacramental Passages

The EHV offers a number of excellent translations for passages dealing with the sacraments.

1 Peter 3:21 EHV

And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the body but the guarantee^a of a good conscience before God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

^a21 Or *legal claim, or assurance*.

Mark 14:24 EHV

“This is my blood of the new testament^b, which is poured out for many. Amen I tell you....”

^b24 As in *last will and testament*. See Galatians 3:15.

1 Corinthians 10:16–17 EHV

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a communion^c of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a communion^d of the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

^c16 Or *joint partaking*

^d16 Or *joint partaking*

1 Corinthians 11:27–29 EHV

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the Lord's body and blood. ²⁸Instead, let a person examine himself and after doing so, let him eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹For if anyone eats and drinks in an unworthy way^e because he does not recognize^f the Lord's body, he eats and drinks judgment on himself.

^e29 A few witnesses to the text omit *in an unworthy way*.

^f29 Or *discern*

Noteworthy Passages/Features from the Psalter

Helpful Headers

The Old Testament is absent from this EHV introductory edition with the exception of the Psalter. As previously mentioned, the immediately noticeable feature of the EHV's Psalms is the helpful headers which aid in understanding of the outline of each Psalm. Psalm 13 will serve as an example.

Psalm 13 EHV: How Long, O Lord?

Heading

For the choir director. A psalm by David

Anguished Questions

¹How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

²How long must I experience worries in my soul,
sorrow in my heart every day?

How long will my enemy tower over me?

An Urgent Prayer

³Look at me. Answer me, O LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes

so I do not sleep in death,

⁴ so my enemy does not say, "I have overcome him,"

so my foes do not rejoice when I fall.

A Solid Answer

⁵But I trust in your mercy.
 My heart rejoices in your salvation.
 I will sing to the LORD
 because he has accomplished his purpose for me.

Selah: A Musical Interlude

Some peculiarities of the EHV's Psalm rendering are footnoted in the first uses of particular phrases used in the Psalms. The word סֵלָה—selah—merely transliterated in many translations is rendered as “Interlude” in the EHV.

Psalm 3:2 EHV

²Many are saying about my life,
 “There is no salvation for him in God.”

Interlude^a

^{a2} The Hebrew term *selah* probably indicates a musical interlude for meditation, so *selah* is translated *interlude* throughout Psalms.

Hasid: the Faithful One

In Psalm 4, the Hebrew word חֲסִיד is used for the first time. The EHV handles this word very specifically, as indicated by the footnote this word carries.

Psalm 4:3 EHV

Know this: The LORD has set apart
 his favored one^b for himself.
 The LORD will hear when I call to him.

^{b3} The Hebrew word *hasid* refers to someone who receives and/or gives mercy. It is the most common title for a believer in the Psalms. Many translations use generic terms like *devout*, *godly*, or *faithful*. This translation uses *favored* when *hasid* refers primarily to a recipient of mercy and *merciful* when it refers primarily to a dispenser of mercy.

Liturgical Psalms

One difficulty with any new translation will be the handling of those passages which are intimately intertwined with the people's *lingua fide* via the liturgy. In some ways, the pattern of words we have inherited in the Anglicized liturgy, especially in verbiage from the *Book of Common Prayer* lifted for the "Common Service" (1888), have locked us in to some specific translations which may not always be the best rendering of God's Word. As *sola scriptura* Lutherans, our challenge is not to let our own liturgical bias trump biblical fidelity in matters of honest translation. Thus, though some of the familiar liturgical phrases of the EHV's Psalter are different from what is retained in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (1996),¹² that does not necessarily make them bad. The ultimate question is this: Do these words clearly and accurately reflect the Hebrew text?

One ethereal observation on the EHV Psalter is the sense that the Psalms were translated primarily with the printed and spoken word in mind without necessarily thinking of them in musical context. While I can imagine singing many of the EHV psalms to familiar Psalm tones, or composing new arrangements for them, there are others which strike me as being difficult to sing, e.g., Psalm 70:1, "Hurry, God! Rescue me! LORD, hurry to help me!"—a verse well known because of its use in the ELH's anglicized Matins and Vespers liturgies.¹³ Again, this may be my own handicap because of the strong musical connections I already have with many of these psalms through my own usage. On the other hand, there is no question that something may need to be translated differently if singing, rather than speaking, is the ultimate objective. While this may possibly be a weakness of the EHV, it may also be my own bias betraying itself in my reading. While I am not used to singing "Hurry, God! Rescue me!" in the liturgy, it does not change the fact that those words accurately and clearly reflect the meaning of the Hebrew text.

That said, the Psalter is accurately translated overall, as demonstrated by the following liturgically significant samples.

Psalm 32:5

I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover up my guilt.

¹² *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (St. Louis: MorningStar Music Publishers, 1996). Hereafter ELH.

¹³ ELH, pp. 109 ff. and 120 ff.

I said, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD,"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalm 51:10–12

Create in me a pure heart, O God.
Renew an unwavering spirit within me.
¹¹Do not cast me from your presence.
Do not take your Holy Spirit from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation.
Sustain me with a willing spirit.

Psalm 51:15

Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

Psalm 95

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD.
Let us give a loud shout to the Rock who saves us.
²Let us approach his presence with thanksgiving.
With music we will shout to him.
³For the LORD is the great God
and a great King above all gods.
⁴He holds the unexplored places of the earth in his hand,
and the peaks of the mountains belong to him.
⁵The sea belongs to him, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
⁶Come, let us bow down. Let us revere him.
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker,
⁷for he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture
and the flock of his hand.

Psalm 124:8

Our help is in the name of the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

Psalm 141:2

May my prayer linger before you like incense,
the lifting up of my hands like an evening offering.

Conclusion

In summary, the EHV is a very faithful translation which would fit very well in our parishes for standard usage. It handles the sacraments very well. It employs important creedal verbiage in many Christological passages. The difficulty of some less familiar Psalm translations for worship usage is one which would recede with time and usage. The most glaring negative of the translation—Philippians 2:6–7—is certainly unfortunate, but merely duplicates a mistake in the 1984 NIV. Therefore, unless the editors make a change before the publication of the forthcoming entire Bible, this problem can be handled the same way it has been handled for the past several decades: it can be carefully explained away in our teaching, or a different, clearer translation could be used for that specific passage.

All things considered, if the EHV truly provides Lutheran parishes like ours with a *stable text*—one that will not constantly change with the whims of society—such a stable text would make catechetical instruction much easier over the long haul and give the congregation a liturgical *lingua fide* which would be genuinely Lutheran and truly timeless. ^{LSQ}

Appendix A: Wartburg Q&A Answer

Posted on the Wartburg Project website is this Q&A explaining their translation of Philippians 2:6–7.

<http://wartburgproject.org/sp_faq/35-morphe-in-philippians-26/>. Accessed August 8, 2017.

35. Morphe in Philippians 2:6

August 2, 2017

Is there a reason why the Greek word morphe in Philippians 2:6 is not being translated “form” and instead is rendered “nature”?

Here is the EHV translation:

Let this attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. ⁶Though he was by nature God, he did not consider equality with God as a prize to be displayed, ⁷but he emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant. When he was born in human likeness, and his appearance was like that of any other man, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

In the study of Christian doctrine, Philippians 2 is one of the most challenging passages to teach, not only because the related topics of Christ's two natures and his two states of humiliation and exaltation are so challenging for our reason to grasp, but because, although ancient and Reformation-era church fathers agree on the doctrine of Christ's humiliation and exaltation, they do not agree on the handling of certain terms in Philippians 2.

They agree that when Christ was on earth all the fullness of the deity (the divine nature) dwelt in him, but Jesus did not hang on to living like God, but gave up the full and constant use of his divine attributes. (Jesus said that he, the omniscient God, did not know the day of judgment. He did not use his power to come down from the cross.) While he was on earth, Jesus took on the appearance of an ordinary, human man, and he lived like an ordinary man, not displaying his divine glory (except for rare exceptions like the Transfiguration). When he returned to heaven, he did not lay aside his human nature, but now that nature appears in the glorious form we see in Revelation 1.

Putting it another way, since the incarnation, Jesus has always possessed a complete human nature and the complete divine nature united in one person. He always possessed all the divine attributes, but he did not always use or display them. How this can be is a mystery.

Where there is a difference of exegetical opinion among various commentators on Philippians 2 is in the handling of the Greek word *morphe*. Should it be translated *form* or *nature*?

The best book on the person of Christ is *The Two Natures of Christ* by Martin Chemnitz. This is what he says about the term *morphe*.

Damascenus tells us that according to the usage of the ancient church, the terms essence or substance (Greek *ousia*), nature (*phusis*) and form (*morphe*) are synonyms and designate the same thing (*Two Natures*, p 29).

The well-known passage in Phil. 2:6–9 is also pertinent here. It deals with “the form of God,” “the form of a servant,” “the likeness of men,” and “the high exaltation of Christ.” The “form of God” by the unanimous testimony of the ancients is the divine nature or essence itself, according to which Christ by nature is equal with God, but not by

robbery, such as Satan and Adam attempted. Furthermore, the term “form” (*morphe*) is used to designate a nature or essence endowed with peculiar attributes and conditions, divine or human, which is covered and ornamented with them, so to speak, as Augustine says ... *ad Petrum*, “You must understand the ‘form of God’ as the natural fullness of God.” (*Two Natures*, p 326).

It seems wise to follow that opinion of Chemnitz, which is based on the consensus of the ancient fathers, even though Luther and others sometimes explain the term in a different way in some of their writings. When some Lutheran writers say that the *morphe* of God is not the divine nature, they are assuming that the *morphe* of God is the object of the verb “he emptied himself,” and they are correct to say that we cannot say that Jesus emptied himself of the divine nature. But in the Greek text the term the *morphe* of God is not the object of the verb “he emptied himself.” The text supplies no object for the verb, so we must deduce it from Scripture. What Jesus emptied himself of was not the divine nature, but the full and constant use of the attributes of that nature. Putting it another way, if the term the *morphe* of God was the object of the verb “emptied himself,” the *morphe* of God could not mean “the divine nature,” but this term is not the object of the verb “emptied himself,” so this objection to understanding the *morphe* of God as a reference to the divine nature, which was the unanimous opinion or the orthodox Greek fathers, is not necessary.

At the heart of the problem is that the Greek word *morphe* is often translated by the Latin word *forma*, and *forma* in turn is often translated or glossed by the English word *form*. The problem is that Latin *forma* and English *form* are false cognates. In dogmatics *forma* almost never means form. It usually means *essence*. The statement that “the *forma* of Scripture is the divinely intended meaning” cannot properly be translated “the *form* of Scripture is the divinely intended meaning.” It must be translated “the *essence* of Scripture is the divinely intended meaning.” *Form* and *essence* here are contrasted. In English, the “form” of Scripture refers to the outward form, the letters, the words, the sounds of the words. Even when the form (the Latin word is *materia* not *forma*) of Scripture (the sounds, the shape of the letters, even the language) changes, the essence (the divinely intended meaning) remains the same. That is why accurate translations convey the Word of God.

Since Latin *forma* and English *form* are false cognates, English readers are apt to read the word “form” as something less than the full divine nature. The term *nature* (or even *essence*) is better for conveying the meaning of the passage. Since the common English usage is to speak of the two natures of Christ, the term *nature* commends itself here, and it has no doctrinal downside as *form* does.

The problem word in this passage from a doctrinal point of view is the verb “emptied himself.” False teachers called the kenoticists (the emptiers) taught that Jesus emptied himself of some of the divine attributes. “Emptied himself” is indeed the expression in the original text, so we keep it. The fact

that some false teachers misuse the term does not lead us to remove the term from Scripture or from our translations. Instead, we retain the scriptural term, but we explain the correct scriptural sense and reject the false interpretation of the term by the heretics.

Appendix B: A Response to the Wartburg Q&A Answer

The two words in question are μορφή and ἐκένωσεν. The above line of thought does not consistently handle the translation of these words.

Summarizing the argument for μορφή as *nature* and not *form*, the Q&A writer takes two paths: one appealing to Chemnitz' authority, and another speaking about dogmatic Latin word usage. I will address the latter path first. The writer speaks about the usage of *forma* in post-Reformation Latin dogmatic writing, and how, because of post-Reformation usage, *form* could make the reader think that Jesus was less than divine. However, this is probably not germane to the translation question at hand, since Philippians has a clear patristic-era context. Changing the clear meaning of a patristic-era Greek word in view of its post-Reformation Latin usage seems unhelpful in a discussion of English translation.

The first path seems equally spurious as the writer seems to employ a logical fallacy, *argumentum ad verecundiam*—an appeal to authority. Chemnitz says *form* and *nature* are basically synonyms based on the “unanimous testimony of the ancients” (*Two Natures*, p. 326). However, even in the Chemnitz quote provided, Chemnitz does not necessarily say that *form* and *nature* are completely synonymous. To the contrary, he says that μορφή carries with it the philosophical nuance of the essential attributes being visibly displayed. He writes, “The term ‘form’ (*morphe*) is used to designate a nature or essence endowed with peculiar attributes and conditions, divine or human, which is covered and ornamented with them, so to speak.”¹⁴ Therefore, μορφή deals not with something's *nature* of itself, but with how its nature's attributes are manifest in its visible *form*. It should be noted that the Chemnitz quote is drawn from a section where he is writing about the *genus maiestaticum*, emphasizing how Jesus' divine attributes are communicated to his human nature. This more closely follows the Greek philosophical understanding of these terms in which Paul was doubtlessly schooled. In this patristic context, μορφή refers to *form* which is akin to

¹⁴ Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures of Christ*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 326 (emphasis added).

something's appearance. If Paul wanted this to refer to Jesus' *nature*, he would have probably used φύσις or οὐσία or some other word indicating it.

The reason that *argumentum ad verecundiam* is considered a logical fallacy is that an expert can certainly be cited for each position. The Chemnitz quote, as written, may *possibly* support the idea that *form* and *nature* can be synonyms for the sake of Christology, but Johann Gerhard, the arch-systematician of Lutheranism, can be just as easily cited to support the opposite view. In his *Theological Commonplaces*, Gerhard says, "To the *first part* pertains this predicate: he says that Christ 'was in the form of God (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ).' The Jesuits and Calvinists both explain this phrase thus: 'He is by nature God.'"¹⁵

This is why, when we examine the merits of this translation, logical fallacies have no place in the discussion. However, it should be noted that as Confessional Lutherans, there is one extra-Biblical authority to which we do have a *quia* subscription: *The Book of Concord*. Here Chemnitz and the Concordists use the word *form* to describe the Person of Christ in the *Formula of Concord, Epitome*, Article VIII, § 16: "Therefore, he did not reveal his majesty at all times but only when it pleased him, until he completely laid aside the form of a servant [Phil. 2:7] (but not his human nature) after his resurrection."¹⁶ With this reference in our Confessional documents, one could argue that, apart from the philosophical ramifications of this translation, the unity of our theological vocabulary is reason enough to translate μορφῇ as *form* in just the same way that John 3:16 translates μονογενῆ as *only-begotten* because it is very literal and thoroughly Confessional.

Strikingly contrasted against all this is the argument for ἐκένωσεν being translated as *emptied himself*. It is quite succinct and, I might add, excellent:

The fact that some false teachers misuse the term does not lead us to remove the term from Scripture or from our translations. Instead, we retain the scriptural term, but we explain the correct scriptural sense and reject the false interpretation of the term by the heretics.

To summarize: Because the clear translation for the Greek word ἐκένωσεν is *emptied himself*, they let Scripture speak for itself despite some potentially confusing baggage associated with the word. This is an excellent translation approach.

¹⁵ Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces, Exegesis IV: On The Person and Office of Christ*, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T.G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 300.

¹⁶ Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 511. See also *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 820–821. Note: the *Triglotta's* Latin text uses "*formam servi*" for "form of a servant," and "*naturam humanam*" for "human nature." The German text uses "*Knechtsgestalt*," for "form of a servant, and "*Natur*" for "nature." "*Gestalt*" refers to something's shape or appearance.

Obviously, the two words, μορφή and ἐκένωσεν, located in such close proximity to each other, are translated with two noticeably different philosophies. Μορφή is translated *nature* when it is clearly not *nature* in the Greek philosophical sense and certainly not in the biblical Christological sense. Ἐκένωσεν, on the other hand, simply says what it means: Jesus *emptied himself*. That is undeniably correct. This is his state of humiliation in which he certainly remained true God and true man in one theanthropic union. He did not set aside his *nature*, only his *form*. The very same verse emphasizes this by saying: “When he was born in human *likeness*, and his *appearance* was like that of any other man...” (Philippians 2:7, EHV).¹⁷ Thus, by simply changing two single words (really, one word twice), the translation which is unclear at the moment can easily become crystal clear. The editors simply need to use the ἐκένωσεν translation philosophy for μορφή.

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¹⁷ Emphasis added.

A Reformation Ode (1517–2017)

*Paul Gerhardt Madson
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The Miner's Son

God chose a man, a miner's son,
To save the Church for Christendom.
To mine the gold which in His Word
Had lain forgotten, shunned, and spurned.

Much taught by papal priests was dross,
Though they claimed 'legiance to the cross.
The gold they did not see nor find
While it lay hidden and unmined.

The mine, God's Word, held precious ore,
And at its heart a golden core,
But none, it seemed, could mine that gold,
To see therein God's grace unfold.

The papal doctrine did erase
That man is saved alone by grace.
The Truth lay hidden in that time
Like gold in an abandoned mine.

Meanwhile, God's Word had done its work
Within the heart of humble monk,
Whose troubled soul no comfort found
'Til he had mined God's holy ground.

'Twas there one day the Truth did shine
Like sunlight in a darkened mine,
That man himself can not make right
What drives the sinner from God's sight.

The "righteousness" which God demands
Was not supplied by human hands,
But rather by His Son was made –
For He alone our debt has paid.

A whole new world had thus begun
For him who was the miner's son,
From papal tyranny now freed
He mined God's Word with utmost speed.

He now would with St. Paul conclude:
Man's futile efforts do no good,
By faith we're saved, faith in God's Son,
By grace alone is heaven won.

Thanks be to God, thanks for the "gold"
That comes to those who mine His Word.
Thanks for the blessed work well done.
By lowly monk, the miner's son. LSQ

Sermon on John 11:25-26 for the Funeral of Rudolph E. Honsey: I am the Resurrection and the Life

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LSQ Vol. 57, No. 4 (December 2017)

Text: *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25–26)*

TODAY WE ARE GATHERED FOR THE CHRISTIAN funeral of your dear father and grandfather, our faithful church member and beloved professor, Rudolph Honsey. In thinking about Rudy and what he meant for all of us present today, I remembered a time some years back when he was a patient at the hospital here in Mankato. As I entered his room late one afternoon, the nurse who'd been caring for him that day was finishing her shift. In saying goodbye to Rudy she said, "You've made this a really good day." What a remarkable thing to say in such circumstances! More often it's the other way around, with the patient expressing thanks to the nurse. And I thought, "That's probably not the first time someone felt that way or even spoke those words to him." He had a love for others which was noticeable—to his family, to his colleagues and students, to those who knew him and helped him at Pathstone these past 16 years.

So we share something in common with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, who were mourning the death of their brother, Lazarus. Like them, we feel a sense of sorrow today. Though at age 98 his passing was not unexpected and though he had been in failing health and expressed a desire to be at home in heaven with the Lord, still we cannot avoid

the feeling of grief at his passing. The size of the congregation today is evidence of that love and affection many felt for him.

But that day which began in sadness for the sisters of Lazarus ended in astounding joy because of what Jesus said and because of what He did. In these words which Rudy himself suggested for our service this morning, our Lord Jesus proclaimed, "I am the resurrection and the life." Based on those words we say this: **Because Jesus is the resurrection, we shall rise. Because Jesus is the life, we shall live.**

The centerpiece of our Christian faith, the faith Rudy confessed and taught and preached and lived by, is that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. Scripture teaches that we who are joined to Jesus by faith will also rise from the dead by the summons of His voice on the last day. What a comforting thought, especially when we consider and admit that we have not earned such a blessing, and that on our own heaven is not something which would be in our future. That is so because we have not obeyed God as He commands. Jesus summarized God's holy law by saying, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). And, He said, "Love Your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). How much does He require? "Be perfect." "Be holy, as I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16). He says, "Do this and you shall live" (Luke 10:28).

Rudy confessed of himself, as we should confess, that we have not always given first place to God in our lives and that we haven't loved our neighbor so fervently as we love ourselves. The just result of our disobedience is death. The Bible says, "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20) and, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). This is the grim reality expressed in God's holy law.

Our joy now is based on another reality, a greater truth, and that is that Jesus, who bore all of our sins and died on the cross, has risen from the dead. After He was crucified on Good Friday, Jesus' lifeless body was removed from the cross. A host of certified witnesses verified that He was dead. Who could have survived such brutality? His body was claimed by two friends and placed in a tomb. God had exacted the just payment for our sins. Jesus had truly died.

Three days later, early in the morning, when other friends went to anoint His body, they discovered that the sealed, guarded tomb was wide open. "Do not be afraid!" a man in white told them, "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He has risen!" (Mark 16:6). With those words the angel declared the most amazing event in world

history. One who had been killed and buried had returned to life again and come forth from His grave, just as He said He would!

Though it happened many centuries ago in a place far from here, it means everything to us today. It means that when Jesus returns on the last day, all who believe in Him, including Rudy, will come out of our graves and will live, body and soul, in heaven. St. Paul wrote, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20–22).

A few moments ago we heard the familiar words from Job 19 and we sang the beautiful hymn based on those words, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” That’s surely appropriate for any Christian’s funeral. But that is especially true for us since Professor Honsey once wrote a very well-regarded commentary on the book of Job for the People’s Bible series. Taking up that section where Job announced, “I know that my Redeemer lives,” Professor Honsey presented a concise summary of the doctrine of the resurrection as described in the Old Testament, citing examples from the Patriarchs and Prophets. He concluded by writing, “Those words can also be the confession of every believer, including you and me as surely as we trust in Jesus for our salvation. These words of Job clearly profess his faith in the Redeemer who on the last day will raise him from the dead.”

“I am the life.” Jesus told Martha. Because He is life itself, we who are joined to Jesus by faith will live, even though we die. Again, this promise gives so much comfort because it is so unexpected and undeserved. Our sins, deserving death, would keep us permanently separated from Him, permanently outside of life. But today we find our strength and comfort in knowing that Jesus, who died and was buried, returned to life on the third day and lives evermore. On the cross He endured the horrible loneliness of being separated from God, the abandonment which we deserved because of our rebellion. But after dying, He was restored to life. He declared in Revelation, “I am the living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever” (Revelation 1:18).

Think of the various proofs which Jesus gave to many people after He arose. On the evening of the first Easter He appeared to them and said, “Look at My hands and feet. It is I Myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39). On at least four other occasions He came to His disciples and ate meals

with them. We know that Jesus appeared to as many as 500 followers at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

The fact that He is alive means that we who believe in Jesus Christ now possess life that prevails over death, life that will never end. He told Martha, "He who believes in Me, though He may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (11:25–26).

And then Jesus asked Martha the crucial question: "Do you believe this?" (11:26). Those who believe that Jesus died for their sins and rose again and lives will share in His resurrection and life everlasting. Furthermore, it is God's will that we should believe it. To bring it about, He gave us His word to hear and read, and the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. By these means of grace the Holy Spirit creates and preserves a saving faith in our hearts.

Rudy received baptism as an infant. Raised in a devout home, as a young man he was given instruction in the Lutheran Catechism and was confirmed.

As one who was gifted academically, Rudy had the privilege of studying in acclaimed colleges and universities where he earned some advanced degrees. In fact, he was acknowledged by his students to be one of the most learned men we have ever known, so that it is only right that a principal academic building on the Bethany campus bears his name. And yet despite all of that, he retained a humble, simple reliance on the truth of God's revealed Word. To the end, even on days he didn't feel well, he still got up to attend chapel services at Pathstone. He maintained the desire to hear the Word and to receive Christ's body and blood in the sacrament for the assurance of His forgiveness. During the years when he was still able to drive, he faithfully brought Betty to the services here at Mt Olive and at Peace.

By these means of grace he was led by the Holy Spirit to confess his faith in Jesus who died for his sins and rose again. Now we have the comfort in knowing that Rudy has taken up full possession of that life which Jesus promised to all who trust in Him, the glorious life which has no end. So Rudy could answer like Martha at the grave of her brother Lazarus: "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world" (11:27).

He not only confessed this truth with words, but also with his actions. He reflected the Savior's love through 62 years of married faithfulness as Betty's husband and as a loving father to their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. To those fortunate to sit in his classroom, that love was evident in his deep concern for every student

and his commitment to bring them the best instruction he could. Those of us who went through summer Hebrew can attest that during those laborious, exhausting six weeks, he was working harder than any of his students.

We know how the sad scene at the grave of Lazarus ended. It ended with Jesus standing before the grave and shouting, “Lazarus, come forth!” (11:43). And with that powerful word, one who had died was raised again to life. Today as we mark Rudy’s passing and lay his body to rest in the grave, we do so with the certain knowledge that his soul is right now alive with the Lord. At the Lord’s command Rudy will rise on the last day to live body and soul with Him in the bliss of heaven forever.

Because of Jesus, who said, “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25), we too look forward to that day when He will call us from our graves and grant to us and all believers eternal life with Him in our heavenly home, for His own sake. Amen. [LSQ](#)

Obituary of Rudolph Honsey

Rudolph Honsey, 98, of Mankato, died Thursday, May 11, 2017 at Pathstone Living in Mankato. Funeral services were 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 25, 2017 at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato with the Revs. John Petersen and Luke Ulrich officiating. Interment was at Woodland Hills Memorial Park. Visitation was 5–8 p.m. on Wednesday, May 24 in Honsey Hall at Bethany Lutheran College and on Thursday, one hour prior to the service, at church. In lieu of flowers, memorials were preferred to the Rudolph and Elizabeth Honsey Scholarship Fund at Bethany Lutheran College, Mount Olive Lutheran Church, or Ecumen Pathstone Living. Woodland Hills Funeral Home handled arrangements.

Rudolph Edgar Honsey was born on September 9, 1918 on a farm north of Lake Mills, IA to Oliver and Nelsine (Stene) Honsey. He was baptized in infancy in the Lutheran faith at Lime Creek Lutheran Church, where the Evangelical Lutheran Synod had been recently formed. He graduated from Lake Mills High School and attended

Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, MN. He received a Bachelor of Divinity degree in Old Testament from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO in 1945. He also attended several other universities, including the University of Minnesota, where he received an MA in Scandinavian Studies in 1955, and Brandeis University, where he received an MA in Mediterranean Studies in 1966.

Rudolph was a professor at Bethany Lutheran College from 1945 to 1962 and from 1966 to 1996. He taught a variety of classes during those years, including Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, Norwegian, and Religion. For approximately 20 years, he taught summer classes in Biblical Hebrew to prepare students for the seminary. He also taught Old Testament at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. He was known in the faculty lounge for his ability to give the batting average of any number of professional baseball players on any given day.

Professor Honsey loved his students. He injected humor, insight, and an occasional pun into the learning experience. In 2010, the academic center at Bethany Lutheran College was named in his honor. He felt humbled and grateful for that honor.

Book Review

LSQ Vol. 57, No. 4 (December 2017)

Book Review: Lives and Writings of the Great Fathers of the Lutheran Church

Lives and Writings of the Great Fathers of the Lutheran Church. Edited by Timothy R. Schmeling. Introduction by Robert Kolb. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016. Paperback. 262 pages. \$25.99.

Lives and Writings of the Great Fathers of the Lutheran Church introduces the reader to twenty-one major figures from the era of Lutheran Orthodoxy (1580–1700). Among them are exegetes, systematians, casuists, devotional writers, editors, catechists, hymnwriters, deacons, pastors, superintendents, and bishops from both the German and Scandinavian Lutheran traditions. Some of the names are easily

recognizable to Lutherans today. Others are less familiar.

Each chapter's author presents one of the Lutheran fathers of the era. A brief biography, a listing of works in the original languages, a listing of works translated into English (if any), and a first-time English translation excerpt are included for each. The biographies aid the reader in understanding not only the times in which these men lived, but also the challenges and issues each faced in their personal lives as well as their ministries. The excerpts provide a sampling of the style and content of their writings.

The following pastors and theologians, listed by chapter title, are included in *Lives and Writings of the Great Lutheran Fathers*:

“Aegidius Hunnius (1550–1603): Father of Wittenberg Lutheran Orthodoxy” by Roland Ziegler. Regarded highly by fellow Lutherans, it was said of Hunnius, “[He]

rightfully took by common consent the third place among theologians, after Luther and Martin Chemnitz" (28). A prolific author, Hunnius's works include theological, exegetical, and polemical writings.

"Philip Nicolai (1556–1608): Mystic-Orthodox Polemicist" by Jonathan Mumme. A pastor admired for his preaching—a "second Chrysostom" (40), Nicolai was also a polemicist, missiologist, and hymn-writer. His hymns include, "How Lovely Shines the Morning Star" and "Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying."

"Georg Dedekenn (1564–1628): Pastor and Editor" by Benjamin T. G. Mayes. Throughout his ministry, Dedekenn collected official doctrinal opinions and decisions of various authorities. He later compiled them into his *Treasury of Counsels and Decisions*, published in 1623. This three-volume set guided Lutheran pastors for generations in handling cases of casuistry.

"Leonard Hutter (1563–1616): *Redonatus Lutherus*" by William R. Wangelin. A staunch supporter of the Formula of Concord, Hutter was given the name *Redonatus Lutherus* (Luther Given Again). His *Compendium of Theology* replaced Melancthon's *Commonplaces and Body of Christian Doctrine* as the leading theological textbook.

"Valerius Herberger (1562–1627): Jesus Preacher" by Matthew Carver. A Hebrew scholar, Herberger saw Jesus as the center of all Scripture. Known for his homiletic and writing skills, his sermons were often published. Herberger wrote *The Great Works of God*, a series of meditations

on the Old Testament Scriptures through Ruth. He also penned the hymn, "Farewell I Gladly Bid Thee."

"Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627): Exegete and Casuist" by Benjamin T. G. Mayes. Balduin published commentaries on several books of the Bible. He emphasized not only what the text had to say, but also how it applied to the lives of Christians. His *Cases of Conscience* served as "an aid to pastoral care and the advising of consciences in difficult situations." (105) Balduin is also known for his teaching on the Christian's union with Christ through faith.

"Conrad Dieterich (1575–1639): Teaching the Christian Faith and Life" by Gerhard Bode. A Lutheran educator and pastor, Dieterich is best known for his catechetical writings. Ever the teacher, his sermons were often instructional in nature. Dieterich emphasized the primary role and responsibility parents have in the training of children in the Christian faith.

"Johann Heermann (1585–1647): "The Silesian Job" by Jon D. Vieker. A student of Valerius Herberger, Heermann was also influenced theologically by the writings of Johann Arndt and Martin Moller. His adult life was marked by tremendous sorrow, suffering, and sickness. A prolific hymnwriter with some four hundred hymns to his name, Heermann's hymn texts proclaim comfort and hope in Jesus.

"Johannes Rudbeckius (1581–1646): Swedish Educator and Bishop" by Otfried Czaika. An important Swedish theologian, Rudbeckius served as professor at

Uppsala University and bishop of the Västerås diocese. He was involved in efforts to free the churches and schools in Sweden from state control. His founding of the *Gymnasium* in Västerås was a result of these efforts. Rudbeckius was also committed to the catechetical education of the people.

“Jesper Rasmussen Brochmand (1585–1652): The Protector of Danish Lutheranism” by Jason D. Lane. Although it was never formally adopted by the Danish Church, Brochmand was a staunch defender of the *Book of Concord*. He is credited with aligning the church’s doctrine with orthodox Lutheranism. In addition to his dogmatics work, *Systema*, Brochmand is remembered for his popular sermon collections, which provided devotional material for Danish homes.

“Johann Gerhard (1582–1637): Morning Star and Arch-Theologian of Lutheranism” by Steven R. J. Parks. Gerhard is considered to be the most influential of the seventeenth-century theologians. “While there were many who excelled at one of the theological disciplines, Gerhard was highly regarded in every field as a man of unparalleled skill and erudition” (170). His writings include dogmatic works, exegetical works, and works of a more devotional nature.

“Salomon Glass (1593–1656): A Learned Philologist in the Episcopal Office” by Armin Wenz. Gifted in languages, Glass became a professor of Hebrew and Greek at the University of Jena. He succeeded his former teacher, Johann Gerhard, as professor of theology at Jena and

editor of the Weimar Electors’ Bible. Known for his theological hermeneutics, *Philologia Sacra*, his other writings focused on homiletical, catechetical, and pastoral aspects of theology.

“Balthasar Meisner (1587–1626): Blessed Are the Meek” by David R. Preus. Meisner’s life was one of privilege and interaction with influential people. He served as dean of the theological faculty in Wittenberg. For him, “All theology was *pastoral* theology, and the training of pastors took precedence over all other academic concerns” (195). Meisner was respected for his “extreme moderation in controversy” (196) and known for his “outstanding industry” (197).

“Johann Conrad Dannhauer (1603–66): Proclamation, Polemics, and the Christian Life” by Timothy Dost. While professor at the University of Strassburg, Dannhauer taught classes on dogmatics and ethics. He embraced the role of polemicist against the Papacy, Calvinism, and syncretism. A talented preacher, Dannhauer sought to instill in his hearers a sincere devotion toward God and neighbor.

“Johann Rist (1607–67): The Sweet Cross Has Squeezed Many Hymns Out of Me” by Jon D. Vieker. During his lifetime, Rist experienced firsthand the ravages of war. Despite this, he was a popular and prolific author of both secular and sacred works. Today, he is known for his more than 650 religious poems and hymn texts. Five of Rist’s hymns are included in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*.

“Paul Gerhardt (1607–76): A Theologian Sifted in Satan’s Sieve” by Gerald S. Krispin. Gerhardt is regarded as one of Lutheranism’s finest hymnwriters. His hymns reflect both his faith and pure doctrine. Through his hymns, Gerhardt sought to provide comfort for those devastated by the Thirty Years’ War. Ordained at age forty-four, his unwillingness to compromise his Lutheran convictions eventually resulted in the loss of his pastoral position in Berlin.

“Abraham Calov (1612–86): The Prussian on the *Cathedra Lutheri*” by Timothy R. Schmeling. Calov was a strong defender of orthodox Lutheranism in the war against those—inside and outside of Lutheranism—seeking to unite Christians on the basis of doctrinal compromise (syncretism). A prolific writer, his works include: *System of Theological Commonplaces*, a twelve-volume reference work of dogmatics; *The Holy Bible*, a study Bible compiled from Luther’s writings; and his *Elucidated Bible*, a four-volume commentary on the Bible.

“Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617–1688): The Consensus Builder” by Timothy R. Schmeling. Following the death of his uncle, Johann Gerhard, Quenstedt enrolled at the University of Helmstedt where he was influenced by unorthodox Lutheran professors, including George Calixt. He later enrolled at the University of Wittenberg and was won over to orthodox Lutheranism. He sought to formulate consensus in Lutheran Orthodoxy against syncretism.

“Sebastian Schmidt (1617–96): Seventeenth-Century ‘Jerome’” by Joshua J. Hayes. Schmidt served as pastor and professor in Strassburg. An exegete, his commentaries are thoroughly researched and Christ-centered. His translation of the entire Bible into Latin took him forty years to complete. His *Collegium Biblicum* is both a biblical commentary and a dogmatics book. His *Compendium Theologiae*, a summary of Lutheran dogmatics, is described as “an abridged Gerhard” (285).

“Christian Scriver (1629–93): On the Institution, Nature, and Singing of Hymns” by Jon D. Vieker. The author of several devotional works and hymns, Scriver pioneered the genre of daily devotional collections. In addition to the crosses he bore in his own life, the writings of Johann Arndt also influenced his writing. His five-volume *Seelen-Schatzes* (Soul Treasures), a reworking of seventy of his sermons, is considered his greatest work.

“Heinrich Müller (1631–75): The Devotional Writer for Lutheran Renewal” by Gaylin R. Schmeling. Following the Thirty Years’ War, Müller sensed a need for spiritual renewal. He sought to achieve this renewal through the instilling of a heartfelt devotional life in the people. A prolific writer of devotional literature, Müller incorporated themes such as union with God, marriage between Christ and the soul, partaking in the divine, and the benefits of the cross.

For those looking to learn more about the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy, it is easy to recommend *Lives and Writings of the Great Fathers*

of the Lutheran Church. The reader will be encouraged by the example set by these men in their faithfulness to God's Word and the Confessions, despite the opposition they often faced. The book itself is simple and straightforward. Necessary background information for understanding the time period is provided by Robert Kolb in his introduction.

Scholarly writers have carefully researched the life and work of each of the fathers. The book achieves its purpose as stated in the introduction: "This volume is offered as a means for familiarizing readers with a too-often neglected, if not maligned, period in the history of God's people."

— Paul E. Lange

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