Lutheran Synod Quarterly

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Wordy Dogmaticians and Endless Distinctions: Early Modern Lutheran Christology

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The journal of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
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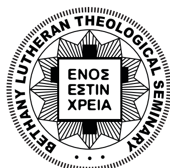

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Foreword

LSQ Vol. 62, No. 1 (March 2022)

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE LSQ, WE ARE PLEASED TO share with our readers the annual Bjarne Wollan Teigen Reformation Lectures delivered October 28–29, 2021, in Mankato, Minnesota. These lectures are sponsored jointly by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. This was the fifty-third in the series of annual Reformation Lectures which began in 1967. The format of the Reformation Lectures has always been that of a free conference and thus participation in these lectures is outside the framework of fellowship.

This year there were three presenters. The first presenter was Dr. Joel Elowsky of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He is an ordained Lutheran pastor who currently serves as Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and Dean of Advanced Studies. Among his previous positions, he served as the Research Director and Operations Manager at Drew University for the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (InterVarsity Press) as well as Associate Professor of Theology at Concordia University Wisconsin. He has written or edited over a dozen books and authored numerous articles on early Christianity and History of Exegesis. He began his ministry as a mission developer outside of Atlantic City where he spent 9 years planting a church. For the last fifteen years, Dr. Elowsky has been traveling to Africa lecturing on the early African

contribution to Christianity. He is married to Joy, a church musician, and has two sons, Christian and Luke.

The second presenter was Dr. Carl Beckwith of Beeson Divinity School, Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. His research focuses on patristic Trinitarian and Christological thought and its reception by the medieval schoolmen and Lutheran reformers. He is the editor of *Martin Luther's Basic Exegetical Writings* (CPH) and author of "Martin Luther's Christological Sources in the Church Fathers" in *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Martin Luther*. His other books include *The Holy Trinity* in the Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics series (Luther Academy), Johann Gerhard's *Handbook of Consolations* (Wipf and Stock), *Ezekiel and Daniel* in the Reformation Commentary on Scripture series (IVP), and *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity* (Oxford). He has published articles in the *Journal of Early Christian Studies, Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Journal of Theological Studies*, and *Concordia Theological Quarterly*. He also serves as associate pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Hanceville, Alabama.

Our third presenter was Dr. Jack Kilcrease of the Lutheran Institute of Theology in Brookings, South Dakota. He is a lay representative to the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod's Committee for Theology and Church Relations. He grew up in Oregon and attended Luther College in Iowa (B.A. History and Religion) and Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota (M.A. Doctrine and Theology). He graduated in 2009 from Marquette University with a Ph.D in systematic theology. He has published articles in the journals: *Concordia Theological Quarterly, Pro Ecclesia, Lutheran Quarterly, LOGIA, The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Testamentum Imperium, The Journal of Markets and Morality*, and *Theofilos*. He has contributed essays and articles to: *The Dictionary of Luther and Lutheran Tradition, The Encyclopedia of Luther and the Reformation, How to Understand the Sacred Scriptures*, and *Aquinas Among the Protestants*. He is also the author of four books: *The Self-Donation of God: A Contemporary Lutheran Approach to Christ and His Benefits, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics Series: Locus on Holy Scripture* (forthcoming), *The Doctrine of Atonement: From Luther to Forde*, and *Martin Luther in His Own Words*. At present, he is completing the books: *Justification by the Word: The Sacramentality of the Gospel and the Salvation of the Ungodly* and *Lutheran Dogmatics: The Evangelical-Catholic Faith for an Age of Contested Truth*, both for Lexham Press.

The theme of this year's Reformation Lectures was "We Confess Jesus Christ." These lectures emphasized the centrality of the person and

sole-sufficient salvific work of Jesus Christ in all Lutheran preaching and teaching. This Christological focus is by no means reductionistic. Christ himself claims these are "the Scriptures" that "testify of me" (John 5:39), or as Martin Luther so aptly put it: The Scriptures are *was Christum treibet*, i.e., "what bears, promotes, or drives home Christ." The first lecture, given by Dr. Joel Elowsky, was entitled, "Who for Us and for Our Salvation: The Doctrine of our 'One Lord Jesus Christ' in the Early Church." It not only provided an overview of patristic Christology, but it also spelled out its importance for a Biblical proclamation of salvation and what it really means to be human in God's creation. The second lecture, presented by Dr. Carl Beckwith, was entitled, "Wordy Dogmaticians and Endless Distinctions: Early Modern Lutheran Christology." In contrast to the other theological traditions of the Early Modern Era, this lecture showed how Lutherans were unique in fully preserving the Christology of the ecumenical councils. The third lecture, given by Dr. Jack Kilcrease, was entitled, "Trends in Modern Lutheran Christology." By examining the Post-Kantian philosophical pitfalls that many modern Lutheran articulations of Christology have fallen into, this lecture helps Confessional Lutherans faithfully express the person and work of Christ in the twenty-first century.

The Passover is intimately connected to our Lord's great passion. The Lord's Supper was instituted at a Passover meal. In some church bodies and cultures, Pascha (Passover) is the name for Easter. It has become common to give a presentation concerning the Passover during Holy Week. The Rev. Joshua Mayer, in the essay "Purging the Leaven: The Search for the Authentic Passover," gives an evaluation of this practice and outlines the Passover Seder. The Rev. Mayer is pastor of Redeeming Grace Lutheran Church in Rogers, Minnesota.

The exordium is a long-standing component of festival preaching in Norwegian Lutheranism. It is a brief message of festive joy lasting three to five minutes followed by the singing of the single stanza exordium hymn in our ELH: #142 (Christmas); #348 (Easter); and #399 (Pentecost). The exordium does not serve as an introduction to the sermon itself, but as a festive declaration which leads the congregation to arise and sing for joy prior to hearing the text of the sermon. An excellent essay on exordiums, written by Pres. Glenn Obenberger, has been printed in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* (54, no. 4: 371–408). The present article includes two Easter exordiums written by the Rev.

Samuel Gullixson, who is pastor of Parkland Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington.

Also included in this issue are a sermon and two book reviews.

– GRS

Who for Us and for Our Salvation: The Doctrine of our "One Lord Jesus Christ" in the Early Church

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LSQ Vol. 62, No. 1 (March 2022)

LUTHER AND THE OTHER REFORMERS OF HIS DAY were well acquainted with the early church. He is often painted as discarding tradition in favor of "sola scriptura." The truth is, Luther held to sola scriptura even as he often appealed to tradition and the early church, sometimes to critique, but many times to find support for the idea that what the Lutherans were proposing with their Reformation was nothing new.

The title I have chosen for this paper about Christology in the early church is taken from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. It includes phrases that I believe capture the early church's key concern in spending so much time talking about Christ. After the creed rehearses in almost painstaking detail the deity and equality of Christ with the Father as "God of God," "begotten, not made," and "homoousios"—it tells us that this is the One Lord Jesus Christ "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man." If I had to boil down what the ancient church had to say about Christology this would be it. The one and only Son of God who is fully God came down, he condescended to become one of us, his creatures, in order that He might save those creatures—you and me.

The subject of Christology gets to the heart of Jesus' question to Peter: Who do you say that I am?[1] Every age has had to answer

[1] Mt 16:15; Mk 8:29; Lk 9:18–20.

this question because it hits at the heart and core of our existence as human beings and our relationship with God. Jesus teaches us who God is because he himself is God. He also teaches us what it means to be human, because he himself was fully human, but without sin, as Adam was before the Fall. My purpose in this paper is to learn from the early church how they answered Jesus' question and why they gave the answers they did.

I am going to present this paper in two parts. The first part provides a necessarily cursory history of the disputes concerning the person of Christ. These disputes form the basis for what I would call the classic Lutheran approach to Christology in the early church. We find this approach in our Lutheran tradition in the catalog of Testimonies appended to the Book of Concord, and Martin Chemnitz's *Two Natures of Christ*. In this approach, we look at how the early church talked about the person of Christ in opposition to the heresies of the day.[2] This discussion will be foundational for the second part of the paper which looks at what this Christology meant for the life of the church and her doctrine of salvation—the work of Christ. We will conclude with some observations for the church today.

Part I – The Person of Christ in the Early Church: "And in One Lord Jesus Christ"

The First Three Centuries

Already in the New Testament the Apostles had to deal with wrong understandings of Christ. There were those who thought of him as a

[2] For further research, the reader may want to consult the following sample bibliography, in addition to the works I cite below in the paper: J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines,* rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Richard A. Norris, *The Christological Controversy,* Sources of Early Christian Thought, ed. William Rusch (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980); Brian Daley, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Thomas G Weinandy, *Jesus: Essays in Christology* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2014); Edward T. Oakes, *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011); John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 2004); Frederick G. McCleod, *The Roles of Christ's Humanity in Salvation: Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2005); John McGuckin, *We Believe in One Lord Jesus Christ,* Ancient Christian Doctrine Series (ACD), Vol. 2, gen. ed. Thomas Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009); Mark Edwards, *We Believe in the Crucified and Risen Lord,* ACD, Vol. 3, gen. ed. Thomas Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009); Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church,* trans. Matthias Westerhoff, ed. Andrew Louth (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

mere man such as the Ebionites who denied his divinity and the virgin birth but did believe he was adopted at his Baptism by the Father who took note of his virtuous life. There were the Elkasites who thought of Jesus as a higher spiritual being or angel. They were akin to the early Gnostics such as Cerinthus and Simon Magus as well as later Gnostics such as Basilides and Valentinus who had variations on a theme about Christ as a spiritual messenger who came from God to bring saving knowledge about how to get back to God. In these scenarios, Christ was a spiritual being who only appeared to be human, what we would call "Docetism" from the Greek word δοκεω meaning "to seem." The other main heretical group of this early period were the Monarchians who emphasized the monarchy, i.e., the single rule of God the Father. There were two types of Monarchians: (1) The modalistic monarchians who spoke about God existing in three modes of being, sometimes as Father, sometimes as Son and other times as Holy Spirit. The chief proponent of this heresy was Sabellius whose teaching became known as Sabellianism. If you were called a Sabellianist, it was not a compliment. (2) The other type of Monarchians were known as the Dynamic Monarchians—and not because they were dynamic, interesting individuals. They were basically a variation on Adoptionism. They said that at Christ's baptism he received the Logos of God as a *dynamis* or power from the mind of the Father which progressively possessed him until it divinized him. Paul of Samosata was a chief proponent. He was condemned at the Synod of Antioch in 260 and excommunicated around 268/269.

What all these heresies had in common was that they had a difficult time reconciling the existence of Christ as the Son of God with the confession that God is One. To their ears, when you confessed the Son as God, you were confessing two Gods/gods.

The Apologists, or defenders, of the faith who came at the end of the second century and beginning of the third endeavored to demonstrate how the church could confess both the Father and the Son as God, without opposing the confession that God is one. Tertullian of Carthage in North Africa already spoke of two distinct natures (he uses the term "substances") in the one person of Christ, without mixture or change between the two, in his *Against Praxeas* (ca. 208).[3] Novatian

[3] Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 27. He speaks of the fact that the combination of the human and divine in Christ cannot be a mixture whereby the Word is changed into something else, but must rather remain what it is, i.e. God: "For if the Word was made flesh as the result of a transformation or mutation of substance, Jesus will then be one substance <composed> of two, flesh and spirit, and kind of mixture, as electrum is <composed> of gold and silver: and he begins to be neither gold (that is, spirit) nor

(b. ca 190–210), although considered a schismatic in Rome, had one of the earliest and clearest confessions of the whole Trinity, as well as of the humanity and divinity of Christ in his treatise *The Trinity.* He not only refuted the various heresies of the day we just spoke about above;[4] he also demonstrated that he understood exactly what was at stake with the heretical formulations about Christ, even at this early stage:

> Well then, say the heretics, if Christ is not only Man but also God, and Scripture says that Christ died for us, and rose again, surely Scripture is teaching us to believe that God died. If God cannot die and Christ is said to have died, Christ cannot be God because God cannot be understood to have died. If they ever could understand or had ever understood what they read, they would undoubtedly have never expressed themselves in such a hazardous manner.… If Scripture had declared that Christ was only God and there was no association of human frailty traceable in Him, then their twisted syllogism would have had some force here: "If Christ is God, and Christ died, then God died." Since Scripture holds Him up to be not only God but also Man, as we have frequently made clear, it follows that what is immortal must be held to have remained uncorrupted. For who does not perceive that in Christ there is a permixtion [commingling] and association of that which is God and of that which is Man—for "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"[5]—who cannot discern by himself, without a teacher or interpreter, that what is God in Christ did not die, but what is Man in Him did die.[6]

He goes on to note that our human composition teaches us this as well. While our flesh dies, our soul continues on and "is not liable to the laws of dissolution and death," remaining uncorrupted.[7] In the same way, Christ's flesh dies while his divinity remains immortal. While

silver (that is flesh), seeing that the one thing is changed by the other and a third thing is brought into being. In that case Jesus will not be God, for he has ceased to be the Word, since it has become flesh: neither will his manhood be flesh, for it is not properly flesh seeing it has been the Word." *Tertullian's Treatise Against Praxeas,* ed. trans. Ernest Evans (London: SPCK, 1948), 173. See J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines,* rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 150.

[4] Novatian, *The Trinity* 30.4–5.

[5] Jn 1:14.

[6] Novatian, *The Trinity* 25.1–5; *Novatian: The Writings,* trans. Russell DeSimone, The Fathers of the Church (FC), Vol. 67 (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. Press, 1972), 88–89.

[7] Novatian, *The Trinity* 25.7; FC 67:89.

Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria will further refine this idea, the core understanding of the relation of the two natures is already there. In fact, the Trinitarian and Christological language established in the West will remain largely intact through subsequent centuries. As we will see in what follows, the vocabulary in the Eastern church was not quite as stable.

The Fourth Century

At the beginning of the fourth century, the Church of Alexandria was in turmoil due to a senior presbyter in the suburban church of Baucalis named Arius (ca. 250–336). You may remember that Arius was willing to call Christ "divine," and even a god, but not God in his essence, which he felt would parcel out the divine essence in a material way, and thus divide the unity of God in his essence. His classic phrase "there was when he was not," implied that since the Son was begotten, he had a beginning and therefore could not be considered on the same level as the Father who had no beginning or origin. This is why Arius rejected the term "homoousios," which means "of the same essence." He would even ask parents in the market place: Were you a mom or dad before you had children? The answer, of course, was "yes." Well then, he would say, doesn't it make sense that God the Father existed before his Son, just like you existed before you had children? And people would say, "Well … I hadn't thought of that." The future bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius (ca. 296–373), had. But he also had a more important question to ask: "Can you be a Father without having a Son?" The answer, of course, is "no." And if the Son is begotten of the Father, then he must be begotten in a different way than we are in so far as the Father is God and has been so from eternity. Therefore, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father as God and homoousios with him, i.e. they share the same being or essence. And so, if the one is God, then the other must be God as well. Thus, the person of Christ is equal to the Father because he is of the same substance or essence as the Father and is begotten from him by nature.

The Council of Constantinople in 381 further solidified this equation after fifty years of the Arians having gained the upper hand both politically and ecclesiastically. Some of the Arians who had taken up the mantle from Arius went even further in not only rejecting the "homoousios" but said the Son was "unlike" the Father in every way, having nothing in common with him. They did this to emphasize the distinction of the Son from the Father so that they could preserve their confession

that God is one. The Son and Holy Spirit were divine, but in no way to be considered God as supreme being. These radical Arians were known as Anomoions (which comes from the Greek (α +ʿ όμοιον = unlike). They were also known as Eunomians because their leader was Eunomius of Cyzicus (335–393). Their confession against the Trinity can be seen, for instance, when they baptized someone. They only immersed the person once instead of three times, in order to emphasize the singularity of the godhead in the Father.

The Cappadocians—Basil of Caesarea (330–379), Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335–ca. 395) and Gregory of Nazianzus (329–390)—insisted on the oneness of God as well, but also provided language that safeguarded the distinction between the persons while also confessing their unity and equality. The distinction between the persons, or hypostases, was confessed in the unique properties or attributes of each person, using as much as possible the language of Scripture in speaking of the relations between the three: the Father is *unbegotten*, the Son is *begotten* (Jn 1:18; 3:16), and the Spirit *proceeds* (Jn 15:26). The unity was expressed in the term "ousia"—not as though there were three *ousias*, but one *ousia* that they had in common. The terms "ousia," "hypostasis," and "physis" had been in flux in the East for some time. The Trinitarian controversy helped resolve the terminological turmoil that had embroiled the East during the Arian controversy and would set the vocabulary—for the most part—going forward. As Epiphanius said, "When you pronounce the *homoousion,* you assert nothing other than that the Son is God of God, and that the Holy Spirit is God of the same Godhead, not three Gods."[8] The son's relationship with the Father (as well as the Spirit's) had been cemented firmly, but the Son's relation to us concerning his human nature (*physis*) would still need to be worked out.

The challenge came from a well-meaning bishop named Apollinaris of Laodicea (ca. 310–382). Human beings, he said, have one nature made up of body and soul—a physical and a spiritual element. Therefore, he said, as a human being had one nature made up of both a physical and a spiritual element, so did Christ: "It is not the case that the body is its own nature, and the Deity as incarnate is its own nature; but just as man is one nature, so also is Christ, who came to be in the likeness of men."[9] And just as a human being is not complete without both elements, he reasoned, neither is Christ complete unless he has both elements,

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[8] Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 6.6 (TLG 2021.001, 6.6.1).

[9] Apollinaris, *Ad Dionys* 1.2 in Richard Norris, *Manhood and Christ: A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 95.

i.e. flesh and spirit. Since Christ was a unique being, the one spiritual element he just happened to have was the Logos which replaced the spiritual element in humanity. The Logos, as a spiritual being, united himself to "a human, fleshly nature to form a substantial unity" which for him constituted a complete human being, albeit one constituted of body and spirit, with the "divine *pneuma* and earthly *sarx*"[10] coming together to form one person, but also one nature, that has the divine *pneuma*, the Logos, as its subject which has joined itself to human flesh, or *sarx*. Thus, you have the Logos providing the consciousness, personality—the soul, if you will—for the union of the human and divine in the person of Christ. The Greek phrase he used was: Μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη. One nature of God the Word incarnate. This phrase had the advantage of having only a single subject, the one nature of God the Word that had become incarnate for us and for our salvation.

The Cappadocian fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa recognized there was, however, a fatal flaw in this argument: "That which is not assumed is not healed," insisted Gregory of Nazianzus.[11] If there was some aspect or part of humanity that Christ did not assume but instead replaced, then he did not heal or save that part of humanity. If the Logos did not assume a human intellect and will, the place where most sins have their start, then those aspects of human nature could not be healed by his incarnation, suffering and death on the cross. And so, when defining who and what Christ is, the Cappadocians realized that Christ must be fully human, not two thirds human, and he must have a "reasonable soul" as Chalcedon would later state.

The Fifth Century

Further opposition to Apollinaris came from the See of Antioch. The church there also wanted to ensure that Christ was a whole human being and fully God without any contamination from his creation to keep the divine nature intact. In order to cement the distinction between God and his creation in the person of Christ, bishops such as Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428) and his pupil Nestorius (386–451) posited that Christ was made up of two persons, 2 *prosopoi,* who are both in evidence in the Gospels. In Jesus' day, in other words, sometimes

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[10] Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol. 1: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon* (451), trans. John Bowden, 2nd rev. ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 331.

[11] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Letter* 101, *To Cledonius*; https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/gregoryofnaz_critique_of_apolliniarianism.htm. alt.

people saw the human Christ who had been assumed by the Logos of John 1, other times they witnessed the divine Christ, the Logos, the Son of God and second person of the Trinity. These two persons, or personalities, could be found together in the one person of Christ. They used the Greek word πρόσωπον (*prosopon*) for person because it conveyed the idea of what people saw since it carries the meaning of a mask. It was if Christ wore two masks: one for his divine nature and another for his human nature, and sometimes he wore both together. The other Greek word he used to describe the union of these two *prosopoi* was the Greek word συνάφεια (*synapheia*) etymologically "to touch together," or combine.

I often refer to this as the Jimmy Johns theology, or PBJ, where the human nature or person, and the divine nature, or person, are joined together like two sides of a sandwich to form a single sandwich. You have two pieces of bread which you see in the sandwich, but only one sandwich. You have two persons united in Christ, but they result in only one person that we observe. And if you are having trouble with this, don't be surprised, because the early church did too. In the life of the church, this schema became an issue when Nestorius as patriarch of Constantinople would not call Mary the Mother of God. He would call her the mother of Christ, or mother of the assumed man. But he would not call her the Mother of God because Mary was a human being and the Son of God was God. How can a human being be the mother of her Maker, her God, he reasoned? It was the same with Jesus: "Never will I worship a three-year-old infant" he is quoted as saying. He also taught that it was the assumed man who died on the cross, not God, except in so far as the Son of God was united with this assumed man in this union of "good pleasure" (*eudokia/εὐδοκία*).

In this way Nestorius could protect the divinity from any contamination, so to speak, with his creation, and avoid the seemingly illogical possibility of speaking of God dying, similar to Arius' concern, and the heretics of Novatians' day. Nestorius also was able to keep a fully intact human being, without any Logos replacing anything. His opponent, Cyril of Alexandria, realized that if we cannot speak of God dying for us, but instead speak of a man dying for us in whom God dwelt—that if it was anyone less than God in charge of our salvation, even if it was a human being who was intimately united with God in the type of union Nestorius espoused—our salvation was in jeopardy. Only God could save us. But everyone knows that the immortal God cannot die—by definition. Our human flesh, on the other hand, is mortal. It can die.

Therefore, both Athanasius and Cyril understood that when John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh, it meant that he took on our mortal flesh *and made it his own.* So when that mortal flesh was nailed to the cross and died there, it was not just human flesh that died but it was God's flesh that died, and therefore God himself who died. It was the single subject, the God-man, who died for us and for our salvation, not just the man part of him because God was united to that flesh.

The church agreed with Cyril and decided at the Council of Ephesus in 431 that there is one single subject, one person, who came to save us—the one who is both God and man. It was this person, both God and man, who died on the cross to save us from our sins. In confessing the *genus idiomaticum,*[12] Cyril recognized that this single person received the attributes of humanity, including mortality, from his humanity or human nature (the latter was a term he was willing to use later in his ministry) so that he could die. This single person, the Logos, also received the divine attributes from his divinity, or divine nature, which made that death salvific so that he could save not only himself but the whole world (Jn 3:16). The relationship between the human and divine, or what came to be known as the two natures,[13] in and of the person of Christ was then solidified at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 after the challenge of Eutyches who continued with Apollinaris' idea of one nature, but went even further in saying the divine nature so overwhelmed the humanity of Christ that Christ's humanity was like a drop of oil in the ocean of his divinity.[14] Chalcedon rejected this idea and provided a summary statement of faith that addressed the concerns and controversies of the previous controversies and councils, especially Ephesus, although not to everyone's satisfaction:[15]

[12] The attributes of each nature are communicated or given to the person of the Logos (Word).

[13] Sometimes church fathers such as Cyril avoided the use of the term nature because it connoted a *concrete* existent, as opposed to the abstract terms "divinity" and "humanity." They would speak of the communication of attributes "in abstracto", i.e. in the abstract, which allowed them to hold to a single subject Christology, rather than to a dual subject Christology such as Antiochene theologians held.

[14] Some scholars debate whether Eutyches, or anyone else for that matter, actually held to this view, or if it was more of a pejorative comment leveled against one's opponent whereby their argument was taken to its logical extreme.

[15] See Brian Daley, *God Visible,* 200–80. Daley sees Chalcedon's Definition of the Faith as not the final definitive solution of the early Church's questions and controversies about Christ, but more "as a mid-fifth-century way station, a brilliant but largely unsuccessful attempt to reconcile competing traditions of language and thinking about the person of Christ, than as a final resolution of difficulties, or a foundation for lasting ecumenical agreement" (p. 200).

> Wherefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin; Begotten of the Father before the ages as touching the godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as touching the manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation (εν δύο φύσεσιν ασυγχύτως ατρέπτως αδιαιρέτως αχωρίστως). The distinction of natures being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and concurring into one Person and one subsistence, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and the only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; even as the Prophets from the beginning spoke concerning him, and our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us, and the Creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.[16]

This statement of faith was not a new creed but was rather meant to be the definitive statement of the implications of the Nicene Creed in light of the fourth and early fifth century controversies about Christ. Unfortunately, it was neither the unifying creed nor the definitive statement the council had hoped for.

Post-Chalcedonian Churches

The churches in Egypt and some of their compatriots in the Syrian church, thought that the Council of Chalcedon's statement of faith still had a two subject Christology because of the language of "two natures,"[17] and so they refused to sign on. The emperor Justinian, who called the fifth ecumenical council of Constantinople in 553, tried to take their interests into account, but still favored the Chalcedonian definition of two natures and tried unsuccessfully to use force to unite the different strains of Christological confession of the Egyptians and others. We refer to these churches still today as non-Chalcedonian churches

[16] Definition of the Faith of the Council of Chalcedon; *Nicene Post-Nicene Fathers* (NPNF), *Series* 2, Vol. 14 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1994), 262, alt.

[17] For them, the term "nature" still implied a concrete existent, in other words, two individuals or persons rather than one subject.

because of this. Subsequent ecumenical councils went into even finer detail in defining whether Christ had one or two wills associated with those natures (Constantinople III, 680). The last ecumenical council, Nicaea II (787) asked the question whether or not Christ as God could be depicted in icons, murals, mosaics, on liturgical vessels, etc. In summary, the councils decided: 1) that he does indeed have two natures (553); 2) he does have two wills (680) and it is admissible and an act of reverence to offer depictions of Christ who himself is the image of the Father (787).

The two natures decision carried on the theology of Chalcedon that understood "natures" in an abstract way tied to the concrete reality of the person of Christ. The two wills decision recognized that you cannot be fully human if you do not have a human will and you cannot be fully God if you do not have a divine will. The decision about depicting God decided in favor of allowing depictions because (a) it was not against the Scriptural prohibition against graven images since the council concluded that these images were not being worshiped, but rather helped direct the worshiper to the One being worshiped. John of Damascus made the distinction that images could be venerated (τιμή), i.e., honored, but not worshiped (λατρεία), since worship was only worthy of God—which is the distinction the Orthodox church still makes regarding icons;[18] (b) Christ himself was the icon, the image, of the Father and so had made God visible; (c) Islam and other religions which did not allow for the depiction of God or of the prophet Mohammad also refused to take into account that Christ had indeed been born, became incarnate and yet was at the same time fully God.[19]

I have just provided you with the 30,000-foot view of the main arguments associated with Christology and the person of Christ as classically understood in the early church from the point of view of the main Christological controversies. There are obvious questions and further details to each of those facets of Christology that we can perhaps address during the question and answer period. I would like to use the remainder of my time to show how the early church utilized their teaching about the person of Christ in order to speak of his work "for us and for our salvation."

[18] John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images* 1.14.

[19] John of Damascus speaks more directly about Christology and the two natures in the one person of Christ in book 3 of his *On the Orthodox Faith*.

Part II – The Work of Christ: "Who For Us and For our Salvation"

What does all this mean? A very Lutheran question to ask. What did it mean that Christ was both human and divine in one person? What is the significance of the incarnation "for us and for our salvation"? This question was at the heart and core of Christology in the early church just as much as Christ's identity with the Father was. This question is also tied up with the person and work of Christ. As Cyril noted in the previous section of our paper, if our Savior is anyone less than God, then our salvation is in jeopardy. This is why Athanasius and others fought so hard against Arius and his idea that the Son of God was divine, but not God. Also, if he is anyone less than a full human being with an identifiable human body and rational soul, that is also a problem, as the Cappadocians fully understood. With our remaining time, I would like to explore the various narratives they used to present these truths. I have chosen narratives of Christ's work for us and for our salvation with which I am familiar, but also that I believe are representative of the early church tradition.

Perceptions of Christ in Early Christianity

One of the earliest accounts of Christ's work comes from the second century apologetic work entitled *The Epistle to Diognetus*. In this letter written perhaps to a government official, we have the earliest account outside of the New Testament of what we refer to as the glorious exchange:

> As a king sends his son, who is also a king, this is how He sent Him; as God He sent Him; as to men He sent Him; as a Savior He sent Him, and as seeking to persuade, not to compel us; for violence has no place in the character of God.… He Himself took on Him the burden of our iniquities, He gave His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy One for transgressors, the blameless One for the wicked, the righteous One for the unrighteous, the incorruptible One for the corruptible, the immortal One for those who are mortal. For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified than by the only Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! That the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors! Having therefore convinced us in the former

> time that our nature was unable to attain to life, and having now revealed the Savior who is able to save even those things which it was [formerly] impossible to save—by both these facts He desired to lead us to trust in His kindness, to esteem Him our Nourisher, Father, Teacher, Counsellor, Healer, our Wisdom, Light, Honor, Glory, Power, and Life, so that we should not be anxious concerning clothing and food.[20]

Notice that in this quote we see a Christology focused on soteriology and the glorious exchange without exploring how this can be, how God can be man. It is an "unsearchable operation … surpassing all expectation!" But the theology is there which early theologians such as Tertullian and Novatian made explicit.

Irenaeus

Sometime not long after the *Epistle to Diognetus,* Irenaeus of Lyon (ca. 130–ca. 202) wrote a treatise only more recently discovered in 1904 called *A Discourse in Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching,* or the *Epideixis.* Due to the Gnostic spiritualizing of the Gospel and their denigration of the flesh and the material world, Irenaeus sought to redeem the physical, fleshly world and also to write about what it truly means to be human and made in the image of God. This was important for the Christology of his era (and ours) because if our Lord's incarnation meant that he became human, like one of us, it also meant that he would teach us, and show us, and live for us what it means to be truly human and created in the image of God.

As with most heresies, the Gnostics which Irenaeus opposed constructed a gulf in the cosmology between God and the created world because they did not want to associate God with the evil of creation. So the creator god of the Old Testament, according to the Gnostics, had to be different than the redeeming God of the New Testament. Irenaeus, however, did not believe God was distant from his creation, nor would he accept the idea of two gods. He spoke of God in terms of his "oikonomia" or his work and interaction with the world that we experience. He referred to the Son and the Holy Spirit as "the two hands of God" which accomplish his work in the world, even to the point of forming Adam from the "virgin soil" just as Christ took his flesh from the virgin womb. Irenaeus explores these parallels and contrasts between the first

[20] *Epistle to Diognetus* 7, 9; *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ANF), Vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1994), 310, 312–13.

and second Adams further. The Fall of Adam took place through the disobedience of a woman (Eve), whereas the obedience of another woman (Mary) brings about restoration. Adam was tempted in Paradise, Jesus was tempted in the desert; through a tree death entered the world (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil); by a tree (the cross) the world is made alive.[21]

In Adam, humanity made itself subject to the Devil; Christ's recapitulation involves a victory over Satan and liberation for humanity from Satan's grip. In Adam, Satan alienates humanity from the image of God; in Christ that very image is united to humanity and so the Devil's purpose is thwarted. And so, the *initial* victory of Christ takes place not on the cross nor at the resurrection but at his incarnation. This first victory then leads to the other victories over Satan Christ accomplishes during his life, and also with his death on the cross:

> 34. And the trespass which came by the tree was undone by the tree of obedience, when the Son of man obeyed God and was nailed to the tree; thereby putting away the knowledge of evil and bringing in and establishing the knowledge of good: now evil is to disobey God, even as obeying God is good. … He put away the old disobedience which was occasioned by the tree. We see himself as the Word of God Almighty, who extends himself unseen throughout all the world, and encompasses its length and breadth and height and depth (cf. Eph 3:18)—for by the Word of God the whole universe is ordered and disposed. In this same [fourfold universe] the Son of God was crucified, inscribed crosswise upon it all. For it is right that He being made visible, should set upon all things visible the sharing of His cross, that He might show His operation on visible things through a visible form. For He it is who illuminates the height, that is the heavens; and encompasses the deep which is beneath the earth; and stretches and spreads out the length from east to west; and steers across the breadth of north and south; summoning all that are scattered in every quarter to the knowledge of the Father.…
>
> 37. Thus then He gloriously achieved our redemption, and fulfilled the promise of the fathers, and abolished the old disobedience. The Son of God became Son of David and Son of Abraham, perfecting and summing up this in Himself so that He might make us to possess life. The Word of God was made flesh by the

[21] Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching* 33.

> dispensation of the Virgin, to abolish death and make man live. For we were imprisoned by sin, being born in sinfulness and living under death.[22]

Humanity was created to enjoy union with the divine and to grow into the image of Christ. This was Irenaeus' view of salvation. In Christ and his incarnation, that union achieves its highest goal. The spiritual Christ of the Gnostics leaves behind and disdains the physicality of what it means to be human. The incarnate Christ almost seems to revel in it in Irenaeus, with the freedom from sin and death that Christ brings through the cross that has been inscribed on the world. Irenaeus is able to accomplish this line of thinking, all while keeping the creator-creature distinction that the Gnostics blur with their graduated Pleroma populated by spiritual beings of various rank. The cross is key for Irenaeus' Christology because it is there that Christ abolishes the imprisoning sin and corruption of death in order to free our human nature so that we could be what we were always meant to be: sons and daughters of God.

Athanasius – On the Incarnation

Athanasius expands on this idea in one of his earliest treatises, the second part of a two-part work entitled *On the Incarnation*. Here, just as in Irenaeus, Athanasius speaks about the divine dilemma that confronted God when his creation went awry, specifically when the crown of his creation, human beings, rebelled against him. With the Fall into sin humanity lost its knowledge of God and also became subject to corruption and death. The image of God was lost? What was God to do?

> For as when a figure painted on wood has been soiled by dirt from outside, it is necessary for him whose figure it is to come again, so that the image can be renewed on the same material—because of his portrait even the material on which it is painted is not cast aside, but the portrait is reinscribed on it. In the same way the all-holy Son of the Father, being the Image of the Father, came to our place to renew the human being made according to himself, and to find him, as one lost, through the forgiveness of sins, as he himself says

[22] Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching* 34, 37; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/demonstrationapostolic.html; alt.

> in the Gospels, "I came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10).[23]

He talks about the possibility of human beings learning about God from creation, but Adam and Eve already had creation as their teacher and failed miserably, having their eyes directed downwards towards their own flesh rather than upwards towards their Creator. "So rightly wishing to help human beings, he sojourned as a human being, taking to himself a body like theirs and from below—I mean through the works of the body—that those not wishing to know him from his providence and governance of the universe, from the works done through the body might know the Word of God in the body, and through him the Father."[24] The Word was acting just like a good teacher, Athanasius says, "who cares for his students, always condescend[ing] to teach by simpler means those who are not able to benefit from more advanced things."[25] But he did even more.

Because of Adam and Eve's inviting of corruption and death into the human race through the Fall, "death was interwoven with the body, and dominated it as if united to it." And so, Athanasius says:

> … it was necessary for life to be interwoven with the body, so that the body putting on life should cast off corruption.… For this reason, the Savior rightly put on a body, in order that the body being interwoven with immortality, henceforth it might when arising, remain immortal. For, once it had put on corruption, it would not have risen unless it had put on life. And, moreover, death does not appear by itself, but in the body; therefore, he put on the body, that finding death in the body he might effect it. For how at all would the Lord have been shown to be Life, if not by giving life to the mortal?[26]

The cross, then, was his way of putting to death "death" itself by having that mortal body die on the cross, but then raising that body up as his own and injecting it, if you will, with his own life so that it might be immortal and, by extension, we might be immortal. He bestowed "the fruit of his own cross on all," and by the fruits of the cross, Athanasius

[23] *On the Incarnation* 14. *St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria: On the Incarnation*, trans. and ed. John Behr, Popular Patristic Series 44A (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 79–81.

[24] *On the Incarnation* 14; PPS 44A:81.

[25] *On the Incarnation* 15; PPS 44A:83.

[26] *On the Incarnation* 44; PPS 44A: 147.

says, he means "resurrection and incorruptibility."[27] "For he was made man so that we might be made god; and he manifested himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father; and he endured the insults of human beings, that we might inherit incorruptibility. He himself was harmed in no way, being impassible and incorruptible and the very Word and God; but he held and preserved in his own impassibility the suffering human beings, on whose account he endured these things."[28] The result is that we become children of God by grace and adoption, while he is the Son of God by nature as the Only-begotten One (Jn 1:18; Jn 3:16). This is why Arius' semi-deity just did not cut it.

Cyril of Alexandria – The Seal of the Fathers

In the first part of this paper I talked about Cyril of Alexandria's opposition to Nestorius who said that Mary should not be called the Mother of God. This controversy is what Cyril is known for in those circles that know Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril wrote a treatise entitled, *On the Unity of Christ* that details his stance on the union of the human and divine in Christ. That union forms a single entity, a single person, who is both fully human and fully divine, similar to how human beings are made up of both body and soul, a physical fleshly reality, but also a spiritual, noumenal reality. In fact, he will often talk in terms of Christ being both flesh and spirit, not in the same way that we are flesh and spirit, since the "spiritual" in Christ refers to his divinity. But he also sees Christ as the first born of what we were meant to be as sons of God by grace, although not by nature, since he is the only-begotten Son. We are sons by adoption.[29]

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[27] *On the Incarnation* 56; PPS 44A: 171.

[28] *On the Incarnation* 54; PPS 44A: 167.

[29] Cyril works much of this out not only in his dogmatic works, but also in his exegetical commentaries in which he does what he calls "dogmatic exegesis" in his *Commentary on John*. He provides a close reading of the text that also works out the implications of his theology in some very pastoral exegesis. My colleague David Maxwell has been translating the commentaries of Cyril of Alexandria and I have been editing these translations for the *Ancient Christian Texts Series* (ACT) with IVP. We have come to realize that Cyril has some rather profound things to say about Christology in relation to soteriology, and that he does a lot of this in his commentary on John, as well as in the commentary fragments we have from his Romans commentary. *Commentaries on Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, and Hebrews,* trans. David Maxwell, ed. Joel Elowsky (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, forthcoming), expected publication date at end of 2021.

Genesis 2:7, where God breathes the breath of life into Adam and he becomes a living being, is an important passage for Cyril. With this breath of life Adam receives the image and likeness of God as God imparts his Spirit to him.[30] As David Maxwell notes in the introduction to his forthcoming translation of more of Cyril's New Testament commentaries, "Because creation has no life on its own but is alive only by participation in God,[31] the gift of life elevates Adam beyond his nature and in a sense divinizes him."[32] The third chapter of Genesis, however, is where things go wrong. Adam and Eve disobey God's command and God pronounces a curse against the human race when he tells them, "You are earth, and to earth you shall return." There is a juridical as well as an ontological component to this curse. The juridical component, as Cyril says, refers to God's accusations or verdict against Adam and Eve in the curse he pronounces,[33] which he calls the "ancient charges," charges that Christ needs to answer for us when he comes to save us.[34] The ontological component comes with the death sentence that is imposed, which while juridical also brings about a change in human beings since Cyril understood Adam and Eve to have been created immortal, not mortal as the Antiochene theologians had taught. Adam and Eve lost not only the divine image, but also the Holy Spirit and participation in the divine life they had as sons and daughters of God.[35] As Maxwell notes, Cyril says, "We possess calamity from Adam's transgression in that we bear the *curse* and *death*."[36] Therefore, when Christ goes to the cross and suffers death on our behalf, he not only defeats death, but his sacrifice addresses the curse that had been placed on humanity for our sins. God drops the ancient charges of Gen. 3:19 that had been levied against us[37] and we are declared innocent of all

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[30] *Commentary on John* 1:32–33; see *Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on John*, trans. David R. Maxwell, ed. Joel C Elowsky, 2 Vols., Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013–2015), Vol. 1:81; see also Cyril on John 7:39 (Vol.1:311).

[31] *Commentary on John* 1:4 (Vol. 1:33).

[32] *Commentary on John* 14:20 (Vol. 2:186, see especially n. 267). Quoted from the introduction to *Commentaries on Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, and Hebrews,* trans. David Maxwell, ed. Joel Elowsky (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, forthcoming).

[33] *Commentary on John* 1:29 (Vol. 1:76), Jn. 8:28 (Vol. 1:342), Jn. 13:29 (Vol. 2:132), Jn. 17:18–19 (Vol. 2:299), Jn. 20:15 (Vol. 2:359).

[34] *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 15:17, *Commentary on Romans* 4:2.

[35] Introduction, *Commentary on Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Hebrews* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021 [forthcoming]).

[36] Ibid; Cyril, *Commentary on Hebrews* 1:1.

[37] *Commentary on Romans* 4:2. Maxwell directs us to Cyril's *Commentary on John* 13:29 (Vol. 2:132), where justification is explicitly connect with the dissolution of the human being in Gen 3:19.

charges. In other words, Cyril sees our salvation accomplished by Christ very much in juridical, justification, terms, even as he also speaks simultaneously of the ontological restoration of humanity into participation with God and his nature (2 Pet. 1:4) which Adam and Eve had before the Fall.

Cyril understood Paul's words in 2 Cor. 5:17 referring to our redemption as a recreation and return to that original image and likeness that Adam had before he fell into sin. Cyril follows in the train of Irenaeus and Athanasius in seeing Christ as the second Adam who is the new head of the human race, taking over from the first Adam. In Genesis 6 he notes how bad the situation had gotten between God and the crown of his creation, as the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men. God says, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3). God withdraws his Spirit from human beings and their life expectancy plummets dramatically, from 900 plus years to one hundred twenty.

Christ's incarnation overcomes the curse, reuniting human nature with God the Word[38] and purifying that human nature so that the Holy Spirit once again becomes accustomed to residing there, as the Spirit does not just rest on him but, Cyril says, *remains on him* at his baptism in the Jordan as John records in John 1:32–33.[39] The fissure between humanity and God, between our flesh and His Spirit, has been restored in Christ—a true flesh and spirit restoration in Christ. Christ takes our human nature in his body and makes it his own so that we, as Luther said, "may be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness."

Conclusion

One can rejoice in the glorious exchange that the *Epistle to Diognetus* confessed where Christ took on everything of ours in order to give us everything of his, "for us and for our salvation." One can also see why Irenaeus was not willing to let the Gnostics get away with their spiritualizing of Christ "for us and for our salvation." It also becomes clear why Athanasius would not let Arius demote Christ down to the level of just a divine being and not God. It would have a direct impact on "us and our salvation." Cyril too was willing to go to the mat against Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius in speaking of the union of the

[38] *Commentary on John* 1:14 (Vol. 1:63).

[39] *Commentary on John* 1:32–33 (Vol. 1:81–82).

human and divine in Christ, rather than simply a very close relationship between the two natures as though they existed as two persons side by side. We would otherwise have to ask: Which one of them died "for us and for our salvation"? The assumed man, or God the Word?

Each of these pastors of the early church had a concern "for us and for our salvation." If Christ is simply a spiritual guru, as the Gnostics said, who brings us knowledge about God then the material world that God created, and said was "good," including our own flesh and blood, is nothing more than a detour and a hindrance to a hollow salvation that saves the spiritual half of our being while discarding the other fleshly half like a useless, coarse rind from some fruit that has no enduring significance apart from the fact that it keeps things fresh and from rotting for a time. If, as Arius taught, the Son of God is a divine being—however exalted—but not fully God then the best the Son can do is show us the way to the Father, rather than *be* the Way, the Truth and the Life that he says He is (Jn 14:6) with the life that he gives to our mortal bodies. If, as Nestorius taught, Christ is a bifurcated being where the human and divine are as far apart as heaven and earth, even though they are right next to each other, then the flesh and blood, the body and blood of Christ are that of a mere mortal, rather than the life-giving flesh Cyril knew them to be.[40]

All of these pastors had as their primary concern us and our salvation. That still remains the central message of the church today, which is why Christology is still important. Christology also might inform our understanding on how to answer some of the challenges facing the 21st century church today. For instance, during the pandemic there has been talk of offering a virtual Eucharist over the internet where the pastor says the words of institution over Zoom and then each household partakes of their own bread and wine. This would be fine for a Gnostic, an Arian, and even a Nestorian. But it cannot be sufficient for those of us who say we believe in the real presence. A virtual Eucharist celebrates the real absence of a spiritual Christ who is divorced from the material world. Virtual presence does not equal real presence. I think we know this intuitively, but the history of the church makes this explicit. They confessed a bodily Christ, fully human in body and soul who, when he instituted the supper, said, "This is my body, given for you." This body of Christ is also the body of the Son of God, just as the church fathers, in

[40] See the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession,* Art. 10 where Cyril's Commentary on John 15 is quoted concerning the Christ being offered bodily to us in the Supper from whom we derive life as branches connected to the vine.

fact, felt free to refer to Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist as "the medicine of immortality." They knew, as Cyril would say, that they were receiving the life-giving flesh of the Son of God who brought creation itself into being.

Related to this is another lesson early Christology also teaches our 21st century Gnostic culture with its gender confusion and denial of bodily sexual identity. As Athanasius teaches us, the body matters. The Son of God took to himself a body that he made his own. It was not something he considered separate from himself once he assumed it. After his ascension, He remains fully human as well as fully divine, now and throughout eternity. This alone should tell us how much our Lord values the body, his physical and yet spiritual body, and "he has given us our bodies and souls and still preserves them," as Luther said in his explanation to the First Article. The challenge of our present age is what I refer to as "a flight from the body." If you don't like the body you're born with, escape it, change it, deny it, transcend it. Upload your consciousness to a machine so you can thwart the limitations of your body. You are what you identify yourself to be—not what you were created to be. That seems to be the message of our world today. According to a recent Opinion editorial by Nicole Ault in the *Wall Street Journal,* there are people today, right now, "who identify as not human. Is *person* an insensitive term?" [41] she asks. Early church Christology teaches us that the body matters. Matter matters. God not only pronounced it "good" at creation. He took his own creation, a body made up of matter, and made it part of who He is: the Son of God and the Son of Man. He redeemed his creation, including our bodies. The fathers would tell us to resist this Gnostic nonsense that is captivating 21st century Western culture.

New situations make us think anew about the significance of Christ for our world and our lives. I give the benefit of the doubt to those pastors who were and are trying to do the best they can in a difficult situation. There is not always time to think through things like we should. But we have resources at our disposal to help us in answering these challenges, knowing "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). LSQ

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[41] Nicole Ault, "The ACLU Decides 'Woman' Is a Bad Word," *Wall Street Journal,* Oct. 4, 2021.

Wordy Dogmaticians and Endless Distinctions:
Early Modern Lutheran Christology

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IT WAS FASHIONABLE IN FRANCIS PIEPER'S DAY TO criticize the Lutheran dogmaticians, the Formula of Concord, and even our dear Martin Luther himself, for writing and saying too much about the two natures of Christ, the personal union, the communication of attributes, and so on. Not only did they say too much but they offered too many subtle distinctions. Pieper regards this criticism as misguided and thinks it better directed at the false teachers confronted by our Lutheran fathers. And yet even he admits that some of our Lutheran fathers "may have occasionally used more words than were needed.… "[1] We rarely hear such criticism of the dogmaticians today because few people read or talk about them. While we can certainly excuse non-Lutherans from reading the dogmaticians, should we do the same for Lutherans, especially those preparing for ministry or serving in ministry? Should we still read those wordy dogmaticians who talked too much about Jesus? I think we should and the reason we should is the very reason they were criticized. Their wordiness teaches us the importance of words, especially when talking about Jesus.

[1] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, three volumes (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 2:56. The criticism reported by Pieper is not just that the dogmaticians used too many words to discuss the doctrine of Christ but that they said more about the doctrine than needed. Pieper's response to this is fair. The clarification and defense of scripture by the dogmaticians against their opponents required them to say more about these issues than they would have apart from controversy. The doctrinal debates throughout the history of the church show this to always be the case.

Words matter. We need words and often many words to confess, clarify, and defend the scriptures in our preaching and teaching. When I think of early modern Lutheran Christology, I think of brilliant and faithful pastors and professors who used lots of words to explain scripture, distinguishing those words, when necessary, from their common or philosophical use, and offering along the way numerous theological distinctions, often subtle, sometimes obscure, but always for the purpose of faithfully confessing, clarifying, and defending the testimonies of scripture.[2]

Words facilitate knowledge and enable confession and conversation. Misunderstanding arises when others assign the wrong meaning to the words we use. For example, what does the word "bark" mean? Some of you may be thinking of the sound a dog makes; others may be thinking of that which covers the outside of a tree. Lovers of the TLH are thinking of Paul Gerhardt's words from *A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth*: "Thou art my Anchor when by woe / my bark is driven to and fro / on trouble's surging billows" (TLH 142:5). The word "bark" refers to three different things and only context determines that meaning for us. The stakes are considerably higher, of course, when talking about the doctrine of Christ. What does it mean to say that Jesus is true God and true man? Can we really say, as scripture does, that they crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor 2:8)? What does it mean to say that God purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28) or that the blood of the Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7)? Scripture says the Word became flesh (John 1:14). Scripture also says that Christ became a

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[2] The church fathers and our Lutheran reformers recognized that exhortation and refutation required different words. Scriptural words suffice when teaching or proclaiming the faith in peace; non-scriptural words are necessary when defending the faith and exposing the errors of false teachers. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *On the Faith*, trans. Jacob N. Van Sickle in *St. Basil the Great: On Christian Ethics* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2014), 73–75: "the one who exhorts in sound doctrine and the one who refutes those who speak against it do not say the same things. There is one form of discourse for refutation and another for exhortation. The simplicity of those who confess piety in peace is one thing; the struggles of those who stand against 'the oppositions of knowledge falsely so called' are another. And so in this way, apportioning our words with discretion, we ought everywhere to employ them fittingly for defending or for building up the faith, at one time resisting more contentiously those who diabolically try to undo it and, at another, explaining it more simply and more properly to those who wish to be edified in it, all the while doing nothing else but what was said by the Apostle: 'To know how you must answer each one' (Col 4:6)." A little earlier in this treatise, Basil explains that the use of non-scriptural words to explain scriptural mysteries follows the lead of Paul himself who sometimes made use of "pagan expressions" to make his point (71; cf. Acts 17:28).

curse for us (Gal 3:13). Does "becoming flesh" mean the same thing as "becoming a curse" or is there a distinction between the two?

These are hard questions, but we can ask even harder ones. Christ cries out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" What does it mean for Christ, for the very Son of God, to be forsaken or abandoned by God? How do we confess the indivisible unity and inseparability of Father and Son and the forsakenness of the Son on the cross? Those are really hard questions but there are yet harder ones. Jesus promises the disciples and by extension you and me that "he," Jesus, will be with us always to the end of the age (Matt 28:20). He also tells the disciples that he, the Son of Man, will be seated at the right hand of God (Matt 26:64). St. Paul emphasizes this point: Christ Jesus, the one who died and rose again, he is at the right hand of God interceding for us (Rom 8:34). If the right hand of God is both everywhere and nowhere, which is to say omnipresent, can we say the same about Jesus, the Son of Man? Can we say that Jesus is omnipresent? What would those words even mean?

These questions, raised by scripture, contested throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and indeed still today, require words, lots of words, and careful and subtle theological distinctions to clarify and defend the teaching of scripture. If you care about scripture and faithfully teaching it, then you care about words and the right use of those words to confess who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he continues to do for you and for me. And if you care about these things, I have good news for you, our fathers in the faith, those wordy dogmaticians, have lots of helpful things to say on these very topics. In what follows, I will focus on the hard questions above, on Christ's cry of dereliction and the omnipresence of Christ's human nature, to show this.

The dogmaticians addressed these hard questions by carefully considering the words of scripture and by showing the necessity of theological distinctions to clarify and guard the witness of scripture. These theological distinctions, admittedly subtle at times, derive from the faithful patterns of speech used by the church fathers and medieval schoolmen. Our Lutheran fathers never read scripture apart from the history of the church but always as a part of that history.[3] They not only made use of the church's theological grammar of faith—the church's

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[3] See my, "*Sola Scriptura*, the Fathers, and the Church: Arguments from the Lutheran Reformers," *Criswell Theological Review* 16.2 (2019): 49–66. Available online at https://www.beesondivinity.com/directory/Beckwith-Carl.

particular way of speaking, we might say—to teach and to defend the clear and certain testimonies of scripture but also insisted upon it. Philip Melanchthon, as he begins his locus on Christology, rehearsing what we may say and may not say about Christ, writes, "Care behooves the pious, for the sake of harmony, to speak in line with the church. And it was not without good reasons that the ancient church approved some ways of speaking and rejected others. Let us then avoid zeal for caviling and retain the forms received with weighty and true authority."[4] And so we will.

Christ's Cry of Dereliction

In the passion narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark, Christ cries out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:46; Mk 15:34)? Jesus, the very Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, attributes God-forsakenness and abandonment to himself. What does it mean for God to abandon God? How may we affirm the indivisible unity of the Trinity and say that the Son and Father, in some sense, are divided from one another at the cross? How can we insist that the two natures of Christ remain inseparably united even here?

Our Lutheran fathers explained these difficult questions by using the insights and patterns of speech passed down by the church fathers and the medieval schoolmen. Cyril of Alexandria, much like our dear Martin Luther, revels in the provocative language of scripture that ascribes divine attributes to the man Jesus and human attributes to the divine Son. When considering all that scripture says about the Incarnate Son of God—that he becomes flesh, that he suffers and dies, that he fears, that he becomes sin and a curse for us—the reader of scripture, insists Cyril, must distinguish between what the Son becomes to *transform* and *heal* and what he becomes to *destroy* and *overcome*. The Son becomes flesh to transform it, to heal it, to render it imperishable and incorruptible; the Son becomes sin and curse to destroy it, to overcome it, to defeat that which separates us from God.[5] Christ truly assumed human nature and became flesh. Christ also truly became sin and a curse for us. He did not, however, become sin in the same way he

[4] Cf. Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci Communes*, trans. J. A. O. Preus, 2d ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 28. Melanchthon also writes, "We shall omit all arguments about words and simply retain the meaning of the church and use those words which have been already used and accepted in the church without any ambiguity" (p. 16).

[5] Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, trans. John Anthony McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 56–57, 115.

became flesh. Cyril uses this insight to explain Christ's cry of dereliction. The consequence of sin is separation from God and the cry of dereliction shows that Christ bears the full weight of this sin for us. Cyril's point is this. Christ becomes sin and curse to undo and overcome our sin and the curse of the law. Similarly, Christ takes upon himself our abandonment and overcomes it by his obedience and complete submission for us.[6] He utters these words from the cross "as one of us and on behalf of all our nature."[7] All of this indicates the Son's true humanity and true saving work for us. The faithful find comfort in Christ's cry of dereliction because it shows us that our sin, our abandonment of God, rests upon him, and because we also hear, "It is finished," our warfare is ended, our iniquity pardoned (Isa 40:2).

Although many modern theologians find Cyril's exegesis unsatisfying, it represents a broad patristic insight on the cry of dereliction. Cyril's argument appears already in Gregory of Nazianzus and passes to the Latin west by way of John of Damascus.[8] John distinguishes Cyril's point grammatically. The Son becomes flesh *essentially* but sin and curse *relatively*. John explains:

> [T]here are two appropriations: one that is natural and essential, and one that is personal and relative. The natural and essential one is that by which our Lord in His love for man took on Himself our nature and all our natural attributes, becoming in nature and truth man, and making trial of that which is natural: but the personal and relative appropriation is when any one assumes the person of another relatively, for instance, out of pity or love, and in his place utters words concerning him that have no connection with himself. And it was in this way that our Lord appropriated both our curse

[6] Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 105. See also Bruce Marshall, "The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, eds. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 246–98, particularly 255–56.

[7] Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 105.

[8] See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 30.5–6, trans. Lionel Wickham (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 96–97. John's epitome of patristic theology, *On the Orthodox Faith* (*De orthodoxa fide*), served as the principal resource for Greek patristic trinitarian and Christological thought for the medieval schoolmen and the Protestant Reformers. John's influential work was translated into Latin during the 12th century and again at the beginning of the 16th century. Peter Lombard incorporated several quotes from John of Damascus into his discussion of the Trinity and Christology in the *Sentences*. See Irena Backus, "John of Damascus, De Fide Orthodoxa: Translations by Burgundio (1153/54), Grosseteste (1235/40) and Lefèvre d'Etaples (1507)," *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986): 211–217.

> and our desertion, and such other things as are not natural: not that He Himself was or became such, but that He took upon Himself our "person" and ranked Himself as one of us.[9]

For John, Christ's cry of dereliction, like becoming sin and curse, belongs to him relatively and shows the truth of the incarnation and his saving work for us.

Although some Lutherans quickly move from John of Damascus to Martin Luther, from the end of the patristic period to the Reformation, ignoring all together the medieval schoolmen, such a move is unwise. You cannot fully appreciate Martin Luther, the Book of Concord, or our dogmaticians if you do this. As I have shown elsewhere, Luther and the dogmaticians inhabited the intellectual world of medieval scholasticism.[10] They eagerly read the schoolmen, most of the time appreciatively but sometimes critically; they knew the patterns of speech and theological distinctions used by them and incorporated them into their classroom teaching. This is especially true for the Trinity but also for Christology and Christ's cry of dereliction.

Thomas Aquinas incorporates the insights and distinctions made by Cyril and John into his consideration of the cross. Thomas emphasizes that Jesus speaks for us and in our person from the cross but further insists that Christ speaks for himself. It is this latter point that will be especially important to our Lutheran fathers. For Thomas, Christ "truly bears our griefs" (Isa 53:4) and endures on the cross a sorrow and suffering unlike any other.[11] When scripture says that Jesus is made a curse for us (Gal 3:13), it means that Christ, the very Son of God, redeemed us from the curse of *guilt* and the curse of *punishment*. He did this by enduring on the cross the punishment and death which came upon us from the curse of sin, making himself an offering for us.[12]

Does Christ's cry of dereliction mean the Father abandoned the Son or that the two natures of Christ are separated in any way? Thomas says no. He writes, "Such forsaking is not to be referred to the dissolving

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[9] John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 3.25. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, ST III.15.1 ad 1 and 2.

[10] Carl L. Beckwith, *The Holy Trinity*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics series, vol. 3 (Fort Wayne, IN: Luther Academy, 2016), 289–309. See also my introduction to *Martin Luther's Basic Exegetical Writings*, ed. Carl L. Beckwith (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), vii–xv.

[11] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III.46.6c and ad 4.

[12] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Galatians*, 148–149 (Gal 3:13–14), trans. F. R. Larcher and M. L. Lamb (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 71–72.

of the personal union, but to this, that God the Father gave Him up to the Passion: hence 'to forsake' means simply not to protect from persecutors."[13] Thomas' comment brings together two further commitments from Cyril and John that our dogmaticians will repeat. The cry of dereliction does not dissolve the personal union or divide the Father and the Son but rather indicates a "divine permission" that allows and sustains Jesus to bear the sorrow and suffering of the cross.[14]

Martin Luther discusses what it means to say that Christ is a curse and sin for us in his classroom lectures on Galatians in 1531—arguably one of Luther's greatest works.[15] He does so with language indebted to the tradition of the church and reminiscent of both Cyril and John.[16] What does it mean for Paul to say that Christ became a curse for us? Luther writes:

> Paul guarded his words carefully and spoke precisely. And here again a distinction must be made; Paul's words clearly show this. For he does not say that Christ became a curse on His own account, but that He became a curse "for us." Thus the whole emphasis is on the phrase "for us." For Christ is innocent so far as His own Person is concerned; therefore He should not have been hanged from the tree. But because, according to the Law, every thief should have been hanged, therefore, according to the Law of Moses, Christ Himself should have been hanged; for He bore the person of a sinner and a thief—and not of one but of all sinners and thieves….[17]

[13] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III.50.2 ad 1, trans. Laurence Shapcote (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 537.

[14] Cf. Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, 106: "B: Do you mean it would be foolish and in complete disagreement with the sacred scriptures to think or to say that the assumed man used these human expressions as one who was abandoned by the Word who had been conjoined to him? A: My friend, this would be blasphemy, and a proof of complete madness, but doubtless it would evidently suit those who do not know how to conceive of the matter properly."

[15] For a brief introduction on the significance of these lectures, see *Martin Luther's Basic Exegetical Writings*, 198–99, cf. 147–48

[16] On Luther's use of Cyril and John, see Carl L. Beckwith, "Martin Luther's Christological Sources in the Church Fathers," *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Martin Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). For a partial list of the library holdings at the University of Wittenberg during Luther's lifetime, see Sachiko Kusukawa, *A Wittenberg University Library Catalogue of 1536* (Binghampton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995).

[17] *Martin Luther's Basic Exegetical Writings*, 245.

Luther's language closely follows Cyril and John. Christ becomes curse and sin for us, not on his own account, but in our person. Luther continues by emphasizing these two points:

> [A]ll the prophets saw this, that Christ was to become the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been anywhere in the world. He is not acting in His own Person now. Now He is not the Son of God, born of the Virgin. But He is a sinner, who has and bears the sin of Paul, the former blasphemer, persecutor, and assaulter; of Peter, who denied Christ; of David, who was an adulterer and a murderer, and who caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord (Rom. 2:24). In short, He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body—not in the sense that He has committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon His own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood.[18]

No sooner does Luther say this than he anticipates objections. Some think it absurd to call the Son of God a sinner and a curse. For Luther it is no less absurd to say that the Son of God suffered, was crucified, and died for us. More to the point, this absurdity is our highest comfort. Luther continues:

> John the Baptist called Christ "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). He is, of course, innocent, because He is the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. But because He bears the sins of the world, His innocence is pressed down with the sins and the guilt of the entire world. Whatever sins I, you, and all of us have committed or may commit in the future, they are as much Christ's own as if He Himself had committed them. …And this is our highest comfort, to clothe and wrap Christ this way in my sins, your sins, and the sins of the entire world, and in this way to behold Him bearing all our sins.[19]

Luther distinguishes between Christ as sinner and curse *essentially* and *relatively*. In his own person, he is not a sinner but in his office as savior he has taken upon himself our sin. As Luther puts it, he bore "the person of all sinners and therefore was made guilty of the sins of the entire world."[20]

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[18] *Martin Luther's Basic Exegetical Writings*, 246.

[19] *Martin Luther's Basic Exegetical Writings*, 247.

[20] *Martin Luther's Basic Exegetical Writings*, 247.

What about the Son's cry of dereliction and the forsakenness of the cross? Luther handles this text more literally than either Cyril or John. Luther, like Thomas Aquinas, wants to affirm the genuineness of this cry from the Son. Luther construes Christ's cry from the cross with Isaiah 54:7–8: "'For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger, for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,' says the Lord, your Redeemer." Luther first reflects on these texts in his early lectures on Hebrews during the 1517–1518 academic year. He understands the cry of dereliction as the temporary withdrawal of the Son's divinity from his humanity. Luther does not explain this; he simply states it and sees the agony and suffering of Jesus in bearing our sins in this moment.[21] Twenty years later, he returns to these texts in a sermon. What Luther taught in the classroom he now preaches to the faithful in Wittenberg. Luther declares:

> There is no doubt that in the spirit David is here looking at Christ as He struggles with death in the garden and cries out on the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46.) For that is His real, sublime, spiritual suffering, which no man can imagine or understand. In the garden He Himself says, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death" (Matt. 26:38). This is what He wants to say: "I have such sorrow and anguish that I could die of sorrow and anguish." He withdraws from His disciples about a stone's throw (Luke 22:41), kneels down, and prays. In the prayer He begins to struggle with death, and He prays more fervently. His sweat becomes like drops of blood that fall on the ground. David is talking here about this sublime, spiritual suffering, when Christ fought with death and felt nothing in His heart but that He was forsaken of God. And in fact, He was forsaken by God. This does not mean that the deity was separated from the humanity—for in this person who is Christ, the Son of God and of Mary, deity and humanity are so united that they can never be separated or divided—but that the deity withdrew and hid so that it seemed, and anyone who saw it might say, "This is not God, but a mere man, and a troubled and desperate man at that." The humanity was left alone, the devil had free access to Christ, and the deity withdrew its power and let the humanity fight alone.[22]

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[21] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Hebrews*, 1517–18 (LW 29:127–28).
[22] Martin Luther, *Psalm 8*, 1537 (LW 12:126–27).

Luther's language struggles to convey the mystery of the Son's sorrow and anguish, his abandonment and forsakenness. Here faith speaks. Something profound, something sublime, occurs. Luther affirms the reality of what he knows—the true union of two natures in the person of the Son, the true struggle and abandonment of Christ for you and for me.

Melanchthon and the dogmaticians bring together Luther's insights and the broader tradition of the church. Melanchthon glosses "forsakenness" as divine permission and appeals to Irenaeus' language of the Logos "resting", which is to say, not exerting the divine power to reject the suffering and death.[23] Martin Chemnitz and John Gerhard repeat these explanations from Luther and Melanchthon and show at length how this is the teaching of the Fathers, citing especially texts from Cyril and John.[24] The dogmaticians use the language of "resting" and divine permission to explain the cry of dereliction but also to emphasize the unity of Christ's natures in the work of the cross. Martin Chemnitz explains this at length. Both the divine and human natures were active and at work, so to say, for us on the cross. Chemnitz writes:

> It is one thing to speak of the suffering and death of Christ as a property of the human nature, and it is another thing that through this suffering and death the wrath of God is placated, the head of the serpent crushed, death destroyed, life restored, and captives liberated. For these are all activities of the divine power, and they are not accomplished apart from the flesh.[25]

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[23] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.19.3 (PG 7, 941A).

[24] Martin Chemnitz, *On the Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 223–24; Johann Gerhard, *On Christ: Theological Commonplaces, Exegesis IV*, trans., Richard Dinda (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 196. See also Cyril, *Dialogus* VI.605–607 (SC 246, 66–68); John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 3.14, 3.19, 3.20.

[25] Martin Chemnitz, *On the Two Natures in Christ*, 222 (translation altered). Chemnitz clarifies his understanding of Christ's cry of dereliction by using a quote from Irenaeus. According to Irenaeus, the Logos remained quiet (ἡσυχάζειν) so that the human nature could be crucified and die. This does not mean, explains Chemnitz, that the Logos was in any way absent. Rather the Logos was "present with the suffering nature, and by His power and activity He caused it to be able to bear the wrath of God which was poured out upon the person, and through the suffering to conquer sin, the devil, death, and the wrath and curse of God, with the result that there was a kind of alliance (συμμαχία) between the divine and human natures in the work of our redemption" (224).

The cross and all that it entails is the work of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the very Son of God, begotten of the Father in eternity, born of the Virgin Mary in time. Although a profound mystery, the cross reveals not a separation or division of Christ's two natures, not a breach of divine unity between Father and Son, but in a sublime way both the common and inseparable work of the Trinity and the proper work of the Son for us and our salvation.

Omnipresence and Christ's Human Nature

It is sometimes said that there were more theological works written on the Lord's Supper during the sixteenth century than any other topic. This is true but misleading. The real point of contention, the issue that divided the reformers more than any other, was Christology. If you want to understand why the various groups disagreed on the Lord's Supper, you need to look to their Christology. A church's liturgical celebration of the Lord's Supper—what you say, what you do, and how often you do it—enacts or practices your Christology, it is the fruit or expression of your Christological commitments. The chief disagreement on Christology, as seen especially with the Lord's Supper, had to do with Jesus and where he is. What does Jesus mean when he says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20); or "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20); or "I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power" (Matt 26:64). To answer those questions, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, required you to say something about the omnipresence of the man Jesus. To state the matter simply, on Ascension Day the Reformed "retired" the man Jesus to heaven but the Lutherans put him to work. For the Reformed, the Son of Man rests in heaven while the Son of God governs and rules creation at the right hand of God. The Lutherans strongly rejected this idea as contrary to scripture and the church's faith that the two natures of Christ, as expressed at Chalcedon, are without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation. For the Lutherans, wherever the Word is, the flesh is, and therefore whatever the Word does, the man Jesus does.

It is safe to say that no issue created more polemical heat than the Lutheran insistence that Christ's human nature received divine majesty, power, and wisdom through the personal union. Although this communication of majesty, termed the *genus maiestaticum* by Johann Quenstedt, occurred immediately at conception, as the whole fullness of

the Godhead dwelt bodily in the baby Jesus (Col 2:9), the full or plenary use of this majesty by Christ occurs only in his state of exaltation to the right hand of God.[26] Our Lutheran fathers, armed with scripture and an unwavering insistence on the personal or hypostatic union, never hesitated to attribute omnipresence to the man Jesus in both his state of humiliation and state of exaltation. The issue of Jesus' omnipresence, the source of bitter arguments on all sides, demanded a careful presentation of words and distinctions to clarify the witness of scripture and to confess rightly one of the greatest mysteries of our faith, the Word made flesh.[27]

After completing thirty-four volumes of his *Theological Commonplaces*, John Gerhard discovered he still had more to say. He returned to the first four topics—scripture, the nature of God, the Trinity, and the person and work of Christ—and offered a more extensive and detailed consideration of these topics. These so-called *Exegesis* volumes were published in 1625 as the final installments of Gerhard's *Theological Commonplaces*. Gerhard addresses omnipresence briefly in the volume on God and at length in the volume on Christ. In both volumes, his argument is polemical and aimed at refuting the false characterization of the Lutherans by the Jesuits and the Calvinists. They charge the Lutherans, the Ubiquitarians, as they call them, with attributing omnipresence and therefore infinity and immensity to Christ's human nature. The notion that a finite human nature could possess omnipresence, infinity, and immensity seemed monstrous and absurd to them. And indeed, it is monstrous and utter nonsense if we assert what the Jesuits and Calvinists say. But words have meaning, context matters, and saying something does not make it true.

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[26] FC VIII.26 (Tappert, 596): "He had this majesty immediately at his conception even in his mother's womb, but, as the apostle testifies (Phil 2:7), he laid it aside, and as Dr. Luther explains it, he kept it hidden during the state of his humiliation and did not use it at all times, but only when he wanted to."

[27] FC VIII.33 (Tappert, 597): "Next to the article of the holy Trinity, the greatest mystery in heaven and on earth is the personal union, as Paul says, 'Great indeed is the mystery of our religion: God was manifested in the flesh' (1 Tim 3:16)." Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 8.18, trans. Stephen Hildebrand (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 47: "Heaven, earth, the greatness of the seas, the creatures that live in the waters and the animals on dry land, plants, stars, air, time, and the diverse and ordered regulation of the whole cosmos—all this does not show an abundance of strength as much as the infinite God being able to join himself to death through the flesh without suffering, in order by his own suffering to give us freedom from suffering."

Gerhard responds with several important distinctions—some of which will now sound familiar to you. He begins by noting that omnipresence may be taken as either an *essential* or *relative* attribute. If taken essentially, omnipresence refers to God as he is in himself and may be used interchangeably with other essential attributes like infinity or immensity. If taken relatively, the word expresses God's *presence* in relation to all things in heaven and on earth, preserving and governing them by his power (Josh 2:11; Ps 139:7–10; Jer 23:24; Amos 9:2–3). Whether God created or not, we might say, he would still be without limit and measure, or infinite and immense. Omnipresence, on the other hand, chiefly refers to relation for Gerhard, to God's presence with all things in all places and that assumes creation.[28] Gerhard labors this point precisely because the Jesuits and Calvinists insist that the *cause* of omnipresence is immensity and infinity, such that anything said to be omnipresent must also be immense and infinite. Therefore, for them, to attribute omnipresence to Christ's human nature requires you to say further that his humanity is also without limit and measure. Gerhard disagrees.

The charge brought by the Jesuits and Calvinists relies on a philosophical assumption that Gerhard rejects. The church fathers, particularly the Cappadocians, Martin Luther, and our beloved dogmaticians insist that theology and philosophy work differently and arrive at their respective truths differently.[29] For this reason, the theologian must distinguish how words work in ordinary speech and how they work in scripture. As Luther insists in his disputation on the divinity and humanity of Christ, theology has its own rules.[30] Words receive new signification in Christ by the Holy Spirit and therefore the theologian

[28] Johann Gerhard, *On the Nature of God*, *Theological Commonplaces: Exegesis II*, trans. Richard Dinda (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), §181, pp. 175–76; Gerhard, *On Christ*, §218, p. 228: "omnipresence…is a relative attribute."

[29] See Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, 1.6 and 2.8 (contrast between common uses of words and scriptural use of words) and 1.9 (contrast of Aristotle and scripture). George of Trebizond translated Basil of Caesarea's *Contra Eunomium* into Latin in 1442 and revised the translation in 1467/68. The humanist circle around Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples published in Paris in 1520 a revised edition of *Contra Eunomium*, along with Basil's *Hexaemeron*, Gregory of Nazianzus' funeral oration for Basil, several sermons and letters by Basil, and Rufinus' adaptation and collation of Basil's rules. The use of the Cappadocians by Luther and the dogmaticians deserves more attention than it has been given. For a recent exploration of this topic, see H. Ashely Hall, *Philip Melanchthon and the Cappadocians: A Reception of Greek Patristic Sources in the Sixteenth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

[30] Martin Luther, *Disputatio de divinitate et humanitate Christi* (1540), WA 39/2, 111.7. For a translation of the disputation, see Mitchell Tolpingrud, "Luthers

will at times speak differently and indeed more properly than the philosopher (cf. 1 Cor 2:12–13).[31] This means that what is true in philosophy is not necessarily true in theology. This explains, in large measure, the difference between Gerhard and his opponents on the topic at hand.

Gerhard responds to his opponents by insisting that Lutherans do not attribute omnipresence to Christ's human nature; scripture does. Gerhard continues by clarifying what scripture attributes to Christ's human nature and by defending it against the philosophical arguments of the Calvinists and Jesuits. Although the philosopher might insist that where there is omnipresence there must be immensity and infinity, scripture does not. Similarly, the philosopher might argue that the finite is not capable of the infinite; such a notion appears utterly unreasonable. Faith knows otherwise and confesses that the infinite Word became finite flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14) or, as St. Paul puts it, "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" in the man Jesus (Col 2:9).[32] Our dear Paul even says that the infinite Holy Spirit dwells within the finite faithful (Rom 8:9–11). Reason knows nothing about this, but faith does. Indeed, faith knows more than reason as the source of faith is greater than the source of reason.[33]

Disputation Concerning the Divinity and the Humanity of Christ," *Lutheran Quarterly* 10 (1996): 151–78 and now LW 73:254–80.

[31] WA 39/2, 94.17–18, 96.38–39, 103.1–11. Martin Chemnitz notes that the church often uses words derived from the common language of people and not scripture. The church uses these common terms differently and assigns a meaning to them that reflects the meaning and intention of scripture. He writes, "The church for good and sufficient reasons from time to time must adopt certain terms and make changes in their meaning … [B]ecause the church speaks about things which are unknown to our reason, it uses these words in a somewhat different sense." Chemnitz has in mind the trinitarian terms "essence" and "person" but we could also say this about words like "peace" and "love" and "freedom." The world uses these words differently than scripture. Believers determine their proper meaning from scripture. Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 1:100; Carl L. Beckwith, *The Holy Trinity*, 7–8, 20–21. See also note 2 above.

[32] Cf. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:206, "Divine omnipresence, as everyone must admit, is certainly not greater than is 'all the fullness of the Godhead.' Now, if 'all the fullness of the Godhead' dwells in the human nature as in its body (σωματικῶς), then most assuredly divine omnipresence, too, can find sufficient room in it."

[33] Cf. Beckwith, *The Holy Trinity*, 23: "When faith and reason become separated both suffer; when faith no longer orders and directs reason, irrationality and anarchy follow. The separation of faith and reason belongs to modernity and especially to our day. For the fourth-century fathers, particularly Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus, and for our Lutheran reformers, we depend on faith to know God." Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, insists that faith must always lead reason because of the feebleness of reason. Only faith knows what surpasses reason (Oration 28.28) and therefore,

How does the distinction between an essential and relative attribute help Gerhard explain Christ's omnipresence? First, the distinction allows Gerhard to free omnipresence from infinity and immensity. Although it is true that God apart from creation is omnipresent, the word quickly loses its significance. Present to whom or to what, Gerhard wonders? Second, as John of Damascus and Martin Luther before him, Gerhard expresses essential attribute as natural and relative as personal. This language, the church's grammar of faith, as we might call it, allows him to clarify how scripture attributes omnipresence to the man Jesus. Gerhard explains:

> we do not say that Christ as man is omnipresent naturally and essentially nor through His own nature and essence, but personally, that is, insofar as His assumed human nature is raised up into the infinite hypostasis of the Word and is placed at the right hand of the heavenly Father in its exaltation.[34]

Gerhard's entire argument is here summarized—so long as we understand the meaning of the words he uses. Christ as man is omnipresent not essentially but personally. That's his argument. His proof follows: Christ as man is omnipresent because of the personal or hypostatic union with the Word *and* his exaltation to the right hand of the Father. Again, Gerhard writes:

> we by no means claim that Christ as man is *essentially* omnipresent. Instead, we claim that He is *personally* omnipresent, that is, not through and because of an immensity of His human essence but because of its utterly pure union with the Word and its exaltation to the right hand of God, which is contained by no inclusion of place.[35]

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as Gregory famously puts it, "faith gives fullness to reason" (Oration 29.21). Reason and faith coexist in such a way that it is only ever faith's reason or reason's faith.

[34] Gerhard, *On the Nature of God*, §182, p. 176.

[35] Gerhard, *On the Nature of God*, §182, p. 177. Chemnitz offers a helpful distinction on this point: "There is and remains a great generic difference between the divine and the human nature. For the divine nature of the Logos, essentially or in essence, in, according to, and through itself, by nature, in its very being (τῷ εἶναι), is life-giving, omnipotent, and omniscient, indeed it is life and omnipotence itself. But the assumed human nature in Christ is in no way life-giving or omnipotent, essentially, or in essence, in or through itself, by nature, formally, or in its very being (τῷ εἶναι) but only by possession (τῷ ἔχειν), that is, because it possesses the divine majesty and power of the Logos personally united to itself; and by virtue of the Logos which is wholly united with it, it makes all things alive, knows all, can do all, just as hot iron by virtue of its union with the fire can glow and give heat" (*On the Two Natures in Christ*, 293).

Here again we encounter all the main elements of Gerhard's argument: a distinction between essential and personal omnipresence and his two chief proofs, the personal or hypostatic union and the exaltation to the right hand of God. For some of you this sounds familiar. Gerhard's argument, as we would expect, closely follows Article 8 of the Formula of Concord. The difference lies in the theological distinctions used by Gerhard and derived from the history of the church to further clarify what the Formula confesses.

Gerhard continues with more distinctions. Just as the theologian needs to distinguish omnipresence as an essential or relative attribute, he must also distinguish the modes of God's presence. Gerhard, following the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, regards the personal and inseparable union of two natures in Christ as categorically unique. Gerhard appeals to Peter Lombard and his *Sentences* to explain this. God is present *generally* to all creatures, whom he preserves and governs (Jer 23:24; Acts 17:27); he is present *specially* by grace to his saints in this life and by glory in the life to come; and he is present *excellently* or *uniquely* by which "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" in the man Jesus (Col 2:9).[36] Gerhard insists that the personal union is categorically different from all other modes of divine presence described in scripture and, it goes without saying, known to philosophy. It is one-of-a-kind, singular, incomparable. We can point to nothing in ourselves or in creation that fully expresses this sort of presence. It exceeds our best insights and words. It is an article of faith. That does not mean we have nothing to say about this unique and excellent union, but it does mean we proceed with humility and faith.

Gerhard describes, as best he can, the union of Word and flesh and how it relates to omnipresence. He starts with apophatic words—words that express truth by way of privation, by way of what we know from our own temporal and spatial existence, which allows us to say, God is not that. For Gerhard the unique and one-of-a-kind personal union is nonlocal and indissoluble. To say the personal union is nonlocal is to say, for Gerhard, that there is no place where the union fails: "the Word is not outside the flesh nor the flesh outside the Word."[37] It is

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[36] Gerhard, *On the Nature of God*, §187, p. 181; cf. Martin Chemnitz, *On the Two Natures in Christ*, 425.

[37] Gerhard, *On Christ*, §218, p. 227: "nec ὁ λόγος est extra carnem, nec caro extra λόγον…" Cf. Martin Luther, *Confession concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528 (LW 37:218–19): "if you could show me one place where God is and not the man, then the person is already divided and I could at once say truthfully, 'Here is God who is not man and has never become man.' But no God like that for me! For it would follow from this

indissoluble, as Chalcedon insists, and therefore wherever you find the Word, you find the assumed humanity.

Although Gerhard's description of Christ's personal union sounds overly scholastic, it allows him to make a further distinction. This time with less technical language. Christ's omnipresence may be described inwardly or outwardly.[38] It is described inwardly when viewed from the perspective of the indissoluble union and the presence of the united natures to one another. Gerhard explains:

> The Word is never and nowhere absent from His flesh nor the flesh absent from the Word. Rather, wherever the Word is, there it is not without flesh but is incarnate, dwelling in His own flesh, which has been personally united to Himself.[39]

This understanding of omnipresence is a consequence of the personal union and may never be doubted. Gerhard acknowledges that most people do not think of omnipresence inwardly. They don't deny what is said about it but don't usually use the word in that way. Most people think of omnipresence outwardly, as viewed from the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God, preserving and governing all things in heaven and on earth.

What, then, does it mean for Christ to sit at the right hand of God? This is hard to explain, and Gerhard wisely stays close to the words of scripture. The right hand of God, according to scripture, is the right hand of power (Matt 26:64) and majesty (Heb 1:3). It is God's throne of glory (Matt 25:31; cf. Heb 8:1 and 12:2) from which he exercises his divine power, majesty, and dominion in heaven and on earth.[40] Here scripture refers not to a finite, circumscribed place, indeed, not to a place at all but rather all places at once. The one who sits in this place, which is both nowhere and everywhere at the same time, is the risen and exalted Christ, as he is, in the communion of his natures and the unity of his

that space and place had separated the two natures from one another and thus had divided the person, even though death and all the devils had been unable to separate and tear them apart. This would leave me a poor sort of Christ, if he were present only at one single place, as a divine and human person, and if at all other places he had to be nothing more than a mere isolated God and a divine person without the humanity. No, comrade, wherever you place God for me, you must also place the humanity for me." See also Martin Chemnitz, Timothy Kirchner, Nicolaus Selnecker, *Apology of the Book of Concord*, trans. James L. Langebartels (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), 147–48.

[38] Gerhard, *On Christ*, §218, p. 228.

[39] Gerhard, *On Christ*, §219, p. 229.

[40] Gerhard, *On Christ*, §220, pp. 231–32.

person. Scripture makes this abundantly clear. According to St. Paul, the Father of glory "raised him [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:20–23). St. Peter, in fewer words, writes that "Jesus Christ" has ascended to heaven "and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him" (1 Pet 3:21–22). These two texts show that Christ, *as he is*, as God and man in one person, governs and reigns at the right hand of God, which is neither local nor circumscribed, exercising his divine power, majesty, and dominion, as Gerhard puts it, "in a heavenly way" and not an earthly way.[41]

Scripture, which never deceives, aligns these two seemingly incompatible things and insists that they be understood together. Reason has no footing here and must give way to faith. As the right hand of God is neither local nor circumscribed, just so is this sitting of the crucified and risen Christ; as the sitting of Christ is real and according to his humanity, just so he is at the right hand of God.[42] The human mind, of course, struggles to understand how Jesus sits at the right hand of God because we only know and experience local presence and local sitting. Christ certainly exercised this sort of presence. He was in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:42), born in the little town of Bethlehem (Matt 2:1), and worshipped by wise men from the east (Matt 2:11). He was held in the arms of Simeon (Luke 2:28) and himself held a small child (Mark 9:36). He sat by the well of Jacob in Samaria because he was tired and thirsty (John 4:5), and yet he is the one who quenches all thirst (John 7:37). Crowds pressed in to touch him (Luke 6:19) and he invited Thomas to touch and see his pierced hands (John 20:27), the very hands that had touched and healed a leper (Matt 8:3), hands that had held Jairus' daughter by hand and returned her to life (Mark 5:41). He walked on water (John 6:19) but he also walked to Jerusalem (Mark 10:32). And there the hands that had once scribbled messages in the dirt (John 8:6) and the feet that had walked so many miles with the disciples were nailed to a cross (John 20:25). These things happened, in definite places, at definite times.

[41] Gerhard, *On Christ*, §221, p. 233.

[42] Cf. FC Ep VII.12 (Tappert, 483): "God's right hand is everywhere. Christ, really and truly set at this right hand of God according to his human nature, rules presently and has in his hands and under his feet everything in heaven and on earth."

Scripture, of course, has more to say about our Lord. The resurrected Jesus, who invited Thomas to touch his hands and side, to see his wounds, also walked through closed doors (John 20:19). On the road to Emmaus, as he walked with Cleopas and the other disciple, he opened the scriptures and interpreted to them all things about his suffering and resurrection from Moses and all the prophets. He sat at table with them and taking bread, he blessed it and broke it, and as he gave it to them, their eyes were opened and "he vanished from their sight" (Luke 24:31). Even before the resurrection Jesus did this sort of thing, vanishing from his enemies, and, as scripture puts it, "going through the midst of them" (John 8:59; Luke 4:30). These few examples demonstrate for Gerhard and our other dogmaticians that the personal union is categorically different from all other modes of presence known and experienced by us.

At times Jesus exhibits the sort of presence we know, the sort of presence we have. At other times he does not. We no more understand how Christ can pass through closed doors than we can his vanishing from the midst of his enemies. And yet both happened; both are true. Much less do we understand his even more exalted presence at the right hand of God or how he fills all things and yet scripture says its true and faith agrees. Here faith leads the way, ordering our reason, and resisting the philosopher's reasoned faith and doubts. As our dear Martin Luther colorfully puts it, "if you cannot think in higher and other terms than [what reason offers], then sit behind the stove and stew pears and apples and leave such subjects alone."[43]

Let me end by returning to the objection of the Jesuits and Calvinists. If we say that divine omnipresence is communicated to Jesus' human nature, don't we also have to say that all the divine attributes were communicated to Christ's human nature? Aren't the Jesuits and Calvinists right to insist that where we find omnipresence, we also find infinity and immensity and all the other attributes of the indivisible divine nature? That depends on what you mean. For starters, as I emphasized above, Lutherans do not attribute divine attributes to Christ's human nature; scripture does. A careful reading of scripture shows that Christ's human nature exercises, at times, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and the quickening powers of judgment and life. Lutherans confess what scripture teaches, as best we are able.

You are thinking, okay, that sounds pious but that doesn't answer the question. Does Christ receive only some attributes and not others?

[43] Martin Luther, *Confession concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528 (LW 37:220).

Does that not undermine our trinitarian commitment to the indivisible and simple essence of God? Do we sacrifice our confession of the Trinity for the sake of our Christology? No, we confess and teach what scripture reveals to us. When we consider the divine attributes absolutely or essentially, they are indivisible and inseparable. God is not one part wise, one part holy, one part righteous, but indivisibly and simply one. When scripture says the fullness of the deity dwells bodily in the man Jesus, it means all and not part of the divine essence. Since eternity, immensity, and infinity necessarily belong to the fullness of God, then they too are communicated personally, not essentially, to the human nature of Christ. And yet, scripture never directly attributes immensity, infinity, and eternity to the human nature of Christ. And here a theological distinction needs to be made to convey the truth of scripture. Johann Quenstedt, Gerhard's nephew, provides just such a tidy distinction for us. He writes: "It is properly said that *all* divine attributes are communicated to the human nature, likewise, *certain* ones, and *none*."[44] Quenstedt explains that we say *all* when talking about the fullness of the deity dwelling bodily in Christ; *certain* when confessing the attributes named by scripture; and *none* when talking about the essential attributes of Christ's human nature. Quenstedt's efficient distinction stays faithful to scripture, expressing what we confess and do not confess about the communication of divine attributes to the human nature of Christ.[45]

Conclusion

Words and theological distinctions matter. Because people often assign a false meaning to the salutary words of scripture, it falls to the faithful, especially to those who preach and teach, to be attentive to the

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[44] Johann Andreas Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica* or *Systema Theologicum*, II.3.2 q. 10 (Wittenberg: Johannis Ludolphi Quenstedii, 1701), 159: "Recte dicitur; *Omnia* attributa divina esse naturae humanae communicata, item, *Quaedam*, *Nulla*."

[45] Cf. Martin Chemnitz, Timothy Kirchner, Nicolaus Selnecker, *Apology of the Book of Concord*, 125: "The words 'the whole fullness of Deity' conclusively prove that all the properties of the Deity, as they are called, and not only some dwell in the assumed human nature. All of these dwell in the assumed human nature because of the personal union, as Paul writes. Nevertheless, Scripture nowhere says that eternity, infinity, and being a spirit are communicated to the assumed human nature in the same way it speaks about omnipotent power, making alive, conducting the final judgment, forgiving sins, cleansing from sins, being adored, etc. Therefore, we simply leave it there and go no further than Scripture enlightens us. …When we have God's Word for us saying that something was given, there we also say that this happened. God's Word cannot lie. But where it is silent, there we also are silent." Cf. Martin Chemnitz, *On the Two Natures in Christ*, 308.

pattern of sound or healthy doctrine given in scripture and guarded throughout the history of the church. As Martin Luther astutely observed, "error lies in meaning not words."[46] The theologian clarifies, as best he can, the meaning of the words of scripture with theological distinctions, often derived from the history of the church. Basil of Caesarea thought this task so important that he claimed it belonged to the calling of all believers. For Basil right knowledge of God comes through the scriptures and the faithful learn this through right teaching. He continues, "Speech, though, is the beginning of teaching, and the parts of speech are syllables and words. So, the investigation of syllables [and words] does not fall outside the goal [of our calling]."[47] It is safe to say that our wordy dogmaticians fully embraced Basil's wise words about their calling. May we too embrace this calling and hope to be accused by others of talking too much about Jesus. LSQ

[46] Martin Luther, *Disputatio de divinitate et humanitate Christi*, 1540 (WA 39/2:109.21–22).

[47] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 1.2 (Hildebrand, 28).

Trends in Modern Lutheran Christology

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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY FACES NEW CHALLENGES and opportunities in every era. In this essay, it will be our purpose to discuss the challenges to and the reformulations of Lutheran Christology during the modern era. "Modernity" has been periodized and described using various measures and criteria.[1] Here we will define "Modernity" as an era roughly encompassing the period between the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.[2] During this period, several novel cultural, philosophical, political, and economic phenomena emerged. These might be summarized as: The emergence of the nation-state, capitalism and communism, the scientific revolution, rights-based conceptions of political legitimation, and the invention of the concept of the secular.[3]

It will be our contention in this essay that modern Lutherans of both conservative and liberal orientations dealt with the person and work of Christ in different ways than their early Modern forebears because of the emergence of two chief intellectual currents: First, the

[1] See the following studies: Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[2] See similar periodization in: Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

[3] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2008).

emergence of modern philosophical outlooks that rejected, or significantly modified, substance metaphysics. Secondly, the rise of historical criticism in biblical studies which called into question the categorical reliability of the Bible.

Twin Challenges: Modern Philosophy and Historical Criticism

Although confessional Lutherans affirm the ultimate authority of the Bible alone (*sola Scriptura*), [4] various philosophical traditions have been legitimately utilized by Christians throughout history as an instrument in service of the true faith.[5] The pre-Modern and early Modern Church utilized thought-forms from Stoic, Platonic, and Aristotelian sources as means of explicating the central truths of the Christian faith to the post-biblical Gentile world.[6] Although sometimes the use of philosophy obscured the truth of the Bible in the early Church,[7] more often than not such thought-forms were used critically in light of the revealed realities of the faith.[8] This can be supremely observed in the development of the distinctive uses of the concepts of "substance," "nature," and "person" in the debates surrounding Nicaea and Chalcedon.

Broadly speaking, what most of the ancient metaphysical schemes that Christians utilized had in common was the concept of "substance."[9] Although various ancient philosophical traditions defined substance differently (Stoic vs. Aristotelian, for example),[10] broadly speaking

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[4] See: Jack Kilcrease, *Holy Scripture*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics Series, vol. 2 (Ft. Wayne, IN: Luther Academy, 2020).

[5] See: Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

[6] See: Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[7] See examples: Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition; Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[8] See comment on the use of creedal language in: Robert Louis Wilkens, "The Church's Way of Speaking," *First Things* (August/September, 2005): 27–31. Also see modification of philosophical concepts for the Creeds in: R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[9] See classic treatment in: Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[10] See discussion in: Jacques Brunschwig "Stoic Metaphysics," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 206–32; Mary Louise Gill, *Aristotle on Substance: The Paradox of Unity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

substance ontology assumes two basic ideas: First, that there is an objectively real common nature to entities in a class or species. For example, humans have a common nature with other humans. Secondly, that although certain features of entities change, there is a core of identity or essence within them that persists over time. For example, despite physical changes I am the same person I was when I was a baby.[11] It is easily observable that these aforementioned tenets of substance metaphysics imply linguistic realism and a correspondence theory of truth. That is, both aforementioned claims of substance metaphysics assume that how humans typically use language to designate the identity of a given entity generally corresponds to the actual functioning of the world.

As should be clear from the description above, the ancient councils and creeds of the Church (particularly, those of Nicaea and Chalcedon) assumed the validity of substance metaphysics. For classic creedal orthodoxy, God is a single entity (*ousia*) with three real centers of identity (*hypostasis*) subsisting through their relations with one another. Likewise, Christ is a single center of identity (*prosopon*) whose integrity persists over time. He possesses two natures (*physis*), that is, he has a common nature with the other persons of the Trinity as well as the rest of humanity.[12] From the great councils of the ancient Church, these thought-forms passed into the heritage of the Latin medieval church.[13] From there they were absorbed into the theology of the Magisterial Reformers of the sixteenth century with little comment.[14]

This tradition of classical substance metaphysics began to be upended by the emergence of Cartesianism in the mid-seventeenth century. Rene Descartes (1595–1650) sought to create an alternative metaphysics and epistemology in order to replace the traditional Aristotelianism that had dominated European universities from the

[11] These two meanings to the concept of substance find their embodiment in Aristotle's distinction between "Primary" and "Secondary" substance. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 7.1–13; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeves (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2016), 104–126.

[12] See: Dirk Krausmüller, "The Philosophy of the Incarnation," in *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Philosophy*, ed. Mark Edwards (London: Routledge, 2021), 139–52; Giulio Maspero, "The Trinity," in *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Philosophy*, 125–38.

[13] See Richard Cross, *Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Russell Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[14] Richard Cross, *Communicatio Idiomatum: Reformation Christological Debates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Christine Helmer, *Luther and the Trinity* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017); John Slotemaker *Trinitarian Theology in Medieval and Reformation Thought* (Cham: Springer International, 2020).

twelfth century onward.[15] Descartes's key claim was that knowledge could be autonomous.[16] Starting with the radical doubt of everything,[17] the autonomous subject finally gained access to the external world through interiorly accessible rational categories guaranteed by God.[18] The existence of God himself was to be proved using universal, self-evident laws of reason.[19] Moreover, substance was redefined as applying to two distinct realities: Mind as autonomous, centered consciousness. Matter as mechanistically configured pure extension.[20]

Since Descartes largely set the ground rules for modern philosophy, these changes to classical metaphysics were not inconsequential for the enterprise of Christian theology in the coming centuries. For example, if personhood was defined as centered consciousness, how could one define Christ as a single person if he possessed a divine consciousness and human consciousness? Similarly, if one took Cartesianism as a starting point, how could one credibly talk about the unity and distinction within the Trinity? If personhood is an autonomous centered consciousness, the two options would appear to be tri-theism or unitarianism.

Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) philosophy further complicated the problems that Descartes had raised and became almost definitive for modern German Protestant theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[21] Kant recognized with the British Empiricists (particularly Hume) that all human knowledge comes from sense-experiences or "intuitions" (*Anschauung*) as he termed them.[22] Nevertheless, with the Rationalist tradition (which Descartes had inaugurated) he recognized that sense-experiences would be meaningless if they were not filtered through certain mental categories like quality, quality, causality, etc.[23] Unlike Descartes, there was no possibility that among the categories of

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[15] Thomas Carr, *Descartes and the Resilience of Rhetoric: Varieties of Cartesian Rhetorical Theory* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 9.

[16] See: John Carriero, *Descartes and the Autonomy of Human Understanding* (New York: Routledge Press, 2019).

[17] Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Ian Johnston (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2013), 41–5.

[18] Ibid., 65–71.

[19] Ibid., 53–64.

[20] Ibid., 72–90.

[21] See Gary Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 1–22.

[22] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, etc., 1984), 14.

[23] Ibid., 52–3.

the mind that there were certain rationally guaranteed categories that could serve as an infallible guide to reality. Quite to the contrary, the categories that the mind used as a means of processing its sense-experiences created an impenetrable barrier to knowing things in themselves (*ding-an-sich*).[24] The problem is that there was ultimately no means of going around the categories of the mind to see if our experiences directly corresponded to objective reality.[25]

Hence, it was effectively impossible to do metaphysics, much less talk about the existence of God in metaphysically and linguistically realistic terms. For all practical purposes, theoretical or "Pure" reason was competent to talk about the phenomenal world as humans experienced it, but nothing beyond the boundaries of the world of sense could be spoken of as a postulate of reason.[26] People could speak of "God, freedom, and immortality" only within the rubric of what Kant called "Practical Reason," that is, what it was necessary to believe to maintain morality.[27] The best a religious believer could do is act "as if" God existed and there was an objective moral order in the universe. Based on our experience of morality, we should trust that God exists and that he will reward those who behave in a moral manner since morality should lead to happiness and it does not automatically do so in this life.[28] None of these propositions could ever be rationally proved though.[29] As we will see below, while most German Protestant theologians rejected the limitations of the "as if" theology, they nevertheless took the lesson from Kant that God could never be spoken of directly as an entity in himself, but only indirectly by means of the impact that his reality had on human consciousness.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a second major challenge to traditional Christology also developed in the form of historical criticism. Many in western Europe desired to destroy the authority of the Bible as a means of ending the Wars of Religion (1547–1648), as well as the hegemony of aristocrats who used the Church as a

[24] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 46.

[25] Ibid., 46–7.

[26] Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, 210–43.

[27] See: Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1929), 126–36.

[28] Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. Allen Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[29] Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, 174–209.

means of bolstering their power.[30] In this regard, both Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) in Britain and Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) are good examples of how historical criticism was directly linked with the development of a purely secular theory of politics.[31] In light of his impact on German Protestantism, our focus in this section will primarily be on Spinoza rather than Hobbes.

As an excommunicated Jew living in the Netherlands,[32] Spinoza published his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) in the midst of the Dutch struggle over the role of religion in the public realm.[33] In his posthumously published work, *The Ethics*, Spinoza developed a pantheistic concept of God as an impersonal force that was identical with the universe (*deus sive natura*).[34] Obviously, such a deity cannot give supernatural revelation since there is no supernatural. The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is more of a deistic work than a pantheistic one but is still anti-supernatural in its orientation. God, claims Spinoza, has set certain immutable laws of the universe. Breaking these in an act of supernatural revelation (such as speaking to Moses on Mt. Sinai or becoming incarnate in Jesus) was therefore impossible since God would be contradicting his own act of willing of certain immutable natural laws.[35]

Since supernatural revelation was impossible, Spinoza drew the conclusion that Moses had simply invented the Ten Commandments himself in order to manipulate the Israelites into virtuous behavior that they were too primitive to figure out on their own.[36] Here Spinoza draws

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[30] See: Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, *Politicizing the Bible: The Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture: 1300–1700* (St. Louis: Herder & Herder, 2013); Scott Hahn and Jennifer Morrow, *Modern Biblical Criticism as a Tool of Statecraft: 1700–1900* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2020).

[31] Jeffrey Morrow, "The Psalter and Seventeenth Century Politics: Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise," in *Theology, Politics, and Exegesis: Essays on the History of Modern Biblical Criticism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 16–34; idem, *Three Skeptics of the Bible: La Peyrere, Hobbes, Spinoza, and the Reception of Modern Biblical Criticism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 85–103.

[32] Antony Gottlieb, *The Dream of Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Philosophy* (Liveright Publishing, 2016), 85.

[33] Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 177–8.

[34] Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics: Demonstrated in Geometric Order*, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Matthew Kisner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3–42.

[35] Baruch Spinoza, *The Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2001), 71–85.

[36] Ibid., 53.

on the ancient Epicurean theory of the universe as a closed mechanical system to which the gods are indifferent, as well as the notion of religion as a form of manipulation.[37] The Pentateuch itself was not written by Moses but rather was a patchwork of different authors all vying for competing religious agendas.[38] Because there was no supernatural revelation and because the Bible was a merely historical work constructed by naturalistic forces, it should be placed under the control of secular authorities.[39]

Although many other figures could be named, Spinoza and those whom he influenced played a seminal role in the rise of later German Protestant historical criticism's upending faith in the historical reliability of the Gospels. Drawing heavily on Spinoza,[40] Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) argued that "natural religion" (that is, religion based purely on the natural knowledge of God) was sufficient and all supernatural knowledge of God was suspect.[41] Reimarus's skepticism of supernatural theology was then applied to his interpretation of the Gospels. According to Reimarus, Jesus was a failed revolutionary who ended up crucified. In order to keep the Church going, the disciples had spiritualized the kingdom that Jesus had promised and removed the element of nationalist revolution.[42]

In light of the religious environment in eighteenth century Germany, Reimarus did not dare to publish his writings on Jesus during his lifetime. Nevertheless, the German philosopher Gotthold Lessing (1729–1781) published fragments of Reimarus' work posthumously.[43] These fragments scandalized German Protestantism, but also raised important questions about the relationship of history and the Christian faith. Lessing pointed out that Christianity claimed to be both the absolute religion and at the same time one based on history. Nevertheless, history is always relative, provisional, and of only probable validity. How, asked Lessing, could absolute truth, or the "necessary truths of

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[37] Roy Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible and Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 42–3.

[38] Spinoza, *The Theological-Political Treatise*, 105–27.

[39] Ibid., 212–21.

[40] Preserved Smith, *The Enlightenment: 1687–1776* (Springfield, OH: Collier Books, 1957), 507.

[41] Carl Moenckeberg *Herman Samuel Reimarus und Johann Christian Edelmann* (Hamburg: Gustav Eduard Nolte, 1867), 120.

[42] See: Herman Samuel Reimarus, *Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger: Noch ein Fragment des Wolfenbüttelschen Ungenannten*, ed. G. E. Lessing (Braunschweig: 1778).

[43] Ulrich Groetsch, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768): Classicist, Hebraist, Enlightenment Radical in Disguise* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 310.

reason" (using the language of Wolffian Rationalism[44]) be deduced from contingent historical particularities?[45] Lessing's own response to these quandaries was to abandon Christianity. On his deathbed Lessing admitted that he had been a closeted Spinozist for years to the thoroughly shocked conservative Lutheran philosopher Fredrich Jacobi.[46]

Schleiermacher's Christology and the Rise of Liberalism

Although Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) was a Reformed theologian,[47] his theology was definitive (in a positive and negative sense) for both Reformed and Lutheran German theologians in the nineteenth century.[48] After various Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers, Schleiermacher (who was raised a Reformed Pietist) discovered that he could no longer accept many of the key doctrines of orthodox Christian theology.[49] Nevertheless, while working as a hospital chaplain in Berlin he found that although the doctrinal concepts of his faith had changed, his underlying religious experience had not changed. From the continuity of his religious experience, Schleiermacher drew the conclusion that Christian theology in the post-Enlightenment era could be reconstituted around the concept of religious "feeling" (*gefühl*).[50]

Schleiermacher's most comprehensive statement of his theology in general, and his Christology in particular, can be found in the second edition of his work *Der Christliche Glaube* (1830–1831).[51] Drawing on the Romantic and Pietist traditions,[52] Schleiermacher sought to establish an alternative route to the knowledge of God through the category of "feeling."[53] Because humans could not know things in themselves through their sense-experiences or deductive reasoning as Kant had

[44] Frederick Mayer, *A History of Modern Philosophy* (Knoxville: American Book Company, 1951), 171.

[45] Gotthold Lessing, "The Proof of the Spirit and of Power," in *Lessing's Theological Writings*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1956), 53.

[46] Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit*, 63.

[47] Theodore Vial, *Schleiermacher: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5, 21.

[48] Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 197–211.

[49] Terrence Tice, *Schleiermacher* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 3–4.

[50] See: Geoff Dumbreck, *Schleiermacher and Religious Feeling* (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2012).

[51] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. and ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (New York: T & T Clark, 1999).

[52] Philip Merklinger, *Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel's Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821–1827* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 48.

[53] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 5–12.

said, Schleiermacher asserted that Christian theology must find an alternative route to the knowledge of God.[54] To resolve the problem, he hit on the notion that each human being possesses a direct pre-cognitive and pre-linguistic sensation of God. Such a feeling or sensation could in turn serve as a kind of epistemic ladder for deductively ascending to the true knowledge of God by way of inferences drawn from the nature of the experience of the divine.[55] Later, Neo-Kantian philosophers like Hermann Lotze would come to similar conclusions about epistemology in general and argue that although we cannot know things in themselves, we can know them to the extent that they have an impact on us.[56]

This of course raised the thorny question of what kind of experience could give a direct access to the metaphysical ground of all being. Schleiermacher posited that all humans possess within their interior life a feeling or sensation of "absolute dependence."[57] As a Reformed theologian, Schleiermacher developed a post-Kantian version of Calvin's notion of the *sensus divinitatis*, or the *semen religionis*.[58] Such an experience must come from God because it is different from the experience that humans have of other entities in the universe, where there are elements of both freedom and dependency. The experience of God was distinct because it was one of pure and radical dependence.[59]

Humanity's consciousness of its absolute dependency on God exists in varying degrees[60] and is frustrated by the power of sin which inheres in our sensible nature.[61] All the world religions in various degrees thematize this experience of the divine using the concepts available in their culture and historical context.[62] Christianity is the absolute religion because it centers on the unique person of Jesus.[63] Jesus was a man who possessed an uninterrupted and perfect God-consciousness, which in turn he was able to communicate to others.[64] The absolute and unique

[54] Thomas Kelly, *Theology at the Void: The Retrieval of Experience* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2002), 15.

[55] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* 5–18.

[56] See comment in: Hermann Lotze, *Logic in Three Books, of Thought, of Investigation, and of Knowledge*, vol. 2, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 237.

[57] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* 12–8.

[58] John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. and ed. John T. McNeill and Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 35–44.

[59] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* 13–6.

[60] Ibid., 18–26.

[61] Ibid., 54–5, 271, 355–8.

[62] Ibid., 26–34.

[63] Ibid., 52–60.

[64] Ibid., 361.

nature of Jesus's God-consciousness in the midst of history overcame the problem that Lessing had posed regarding the contingency and particularity of history.[65]

Jesus communicated his consciousness of God to the apostles, who likewise communicated it to the Christian Church so that Jesus' experience of God would be mystically transmitted generation after generation down to the present community of believers.[66] Therefore, the problem of historicity that Reimarus had posed could be resolved by the recognition that Jesus and his consciousness of God must be a historical fact in order to make sense of the religious experience of the contemporary Church.[67]

Following Kant, Schleiermacher rejected the metaphysics of classic Christian orthodoxy as illegitimate because they posited ontological realities beyond their direct impact on human experience. Hence Chalcedonian Christology was existentialized into the idea that Christians experienced and encountered God through the man Jesus' God-consciousness.[68] Likewise, the doctrine of the Trinity was consigned to an appendix at the end of the *Glaubenslehre*, where it was argued that the doctrine was speculative and of no value to religious consciousness. The experience of the believer is of the unified ground of all existence and not of the three persons.[69]

Neo-Lutheranism and the Struggle Over the Person and Work of Christ[70]

In reaction to the rise of theological Liberalism, as well as alarm at the havoc caused by the establishment of the Prussian Union (1817),[71] many German Lutherans sought to return to the roots of their faith in the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions. This movement was known as "Neo-Lutheranism" (*Neulutherthum*) and possessed two different wings. One wing was that of a repristinating theology, that sought simply to reproduce the theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth

[65] Ibid., 362–5.

[66] Ibid., 361–5.

[67] Ibid., 377–85.

[68] Ibid., 385–413.

[69] Ibid., 738–51.

[70] See some of this material in a similar, but distinct form in: Jack Kilcrease "Johann Gerhard, the Socinians, and Modern Rejections of Substitutionary Atonement," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 82, no. 1–2 (2018): 19–44.

[71] Christopher Clark, "Confessional policy and the limits of state action: Frederick William III and the Prussian Church Union 1817–40," *Historical Journal* 39, no. 4 (1996): 985–1004.

century dogmaticians in the present.[72] That tendency ended up having very minor influence in Germany and found a greater home in Australia and in North America, particularly in the theology of the old Synodical Conference.[73]

The other faction of Neo-Lutheranism found its center of activity at the University of Erlangen.[74] Under the influence of Adolf von Harless (1806–1879), Erlangen required strict adherence of its faculty to the Lutheran Confessions.[75] Nevertheless, the Erlangen theologians were also fascinated with finding points of contact between the theology of the Lutheran Confessions and modern German intellectual culture. This took the form not only of historical research into the Bible and Church history utilizing newer methods, but also the synthesis of traditional Lutheran theology with Romantic and German Idealist metaphysics.[76]

A significant example of this tendency can be found in the writings of Johannes von Hofmann (1810–1877), who played a major role in precipitating debates among Neo-Lutherans on Christology and atonement.[77] Hailing from a Lutheran Pietist household,[78] Hofmann became a professor at Erlangen after studying at the University of Berlin (the premier Romantic research university of the era) under Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Ranke.[79]

Following Hegel and Schelling, Hofmann saw God as a being in process. G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) viewed God as a kind of absolute

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[72] August Suelflow and E. Clifford Nelson, "Following the Frontier: 1840–1875," in *The North American Lutherans*, ed. E. Clifford Nelson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 150–2.

[73] See: Armin W. Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference: Ecumenical Endeavor* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000).

[74] See: Lowell Green, *The Erlangen School of Theology: Its History, Teaching, and Practice* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Legacy, 2010); Karlmann Beyschlag, *Die Erlanger Theologie* (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1993).

[75] Green, *The Erlangen School of Theology*, 97–104.

[76] Ibid., 33–5.

[77] Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 593–601; Beyschlag, *Die Erlanger Theologie*, 61–83; Matthew Becker, *The Self-Giving God and Salvation History: The Trinitarian Theology of Johannes von Hofmann* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004); Gerhard Forde, *The Law-Gospel Debate: An Interpretation of Its Historical Development* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), 12–36.

[78] Becker, *The Self-Giving God and Salvation History,* 3; Green, *The Erlangen School*, 105–7.

[79] Green, *The Erlangen School*, 107.

subject,[80] reflecting on himself using human history as a medium.[81] God would eventually resolve his quest of self-discovery in an eschatological event Hegel referred to as the "Speculative Good Friday."[82] After Hegel's death in 1831, two schools of Hegelianism arose: "Right Hegelians" and the "Left" or "Young Hegelians."[83] Whereas a strain of the latter school eventually evolved into Marxism,[84] the former sought to synthesize Hegel's views with those of orthodox Lutheranism.[85] Although not explicitly a Right-Hegelian, Hofmann's thought can broadly be viewed as operating within that trajectory.

In developing his view of Christology and atonement, Hofmann synthesized Hegel and Schelling's concept of God with tendencies drawn from his own highly experiential version of Lutheranism. According to Hofmann, salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) recorded in the Bible should be seen as a history of the evolution and unfolding of God's Triune being in time.[86] In this, he rejected classical theism, with its belief in the immutability of God and his transcendence of the historical process. God's being was mutable and historically determined by his choice to enter into relation with humanity at various points in the history of salvation.[87] Following Schleiermacher and his Pietist upbringing, Hofmann held that the Christian could be certain that this history of salvation had actually occurred because otherwise the structure of Christian experience and the contemporary Christian community would be inexplicable.[88]

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[80] See Quentin Lauer, *Hegel's Concept of God* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1982), 115.

[81] See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[82] G. W. F. Hegel. *Faith and Knowledge, or the Reflective Philosophy of Subjectivity in the Complete Range of Its Forms as Kantian, Jacobian, and Fichtean Philosophy*, trans. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), 190–1. Also see discussion in Deland Anderson, *Hegel's Speculative Good Friday: The Death of God in Philosophical Perspective* (Missoula: Scholar's, 1996).

[83] See: Douglas Moggach, *Politics, Religion, and Art: Hegelian Debates* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

[84] Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[85] See examples in: Isaak Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, 4 vols., trans. Alfred Cave and J. S. Banks (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005); Hans Martensen, Christian Dogmatics: A Compendium of the Doctrines of Christianity, trans. William Urwick (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1874).

[86] Becker, *The Self-Giving God*, 144.

[87] Johannes von Hofmann, *Interpreting the Bible*, trans. Christian Preus (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), 31–2.

[88] Ibid., 28–30.

According to Hofmann, God unfolded his being first in the era of the Old Testament according to a pattern of wrath and mechanical legalism.[89] God had nevertheless decided to evolve to a higher and better relationship with humanity through becoming incarnate in Jesus. In his kenotic incarnate existence, Jesus not only preached an ethic of love but actualized God as love. Addicted to legalism, sinful humanity under the prompting of Satan killed Jesus in order to put an end to his gracious behavior.[90] As God, Jesus could very well have retaliated with righteous justice. Instead, he submitted to and endured their rejection, thereby triumphing over their cruel legalism and reconfiguring the divine being to relate to humanity in a new way in the resurrection. This conquest of wrath with love was the act of atonement.[91] Whereas God had inflicted the wrath of retributive justice in the Old Testament, in the era of the New Testament God had put away such patterns of behavior and evolved into a God of love who promoted an ethos of love in the Christian community.[92]

As can be observed, Hofmann rejected the traditional Lutheran distinction between law and gospel. Law and gospel are not to be identified with two words and two existential relationships between God and humanity, but with two dispensations.[93] Law and gospel are morphed into the Old Testament dispensation of mechanical legalism vs. the New Testament dispensation's ethos of love.[94] Beyond this, it should be clear that Hofmann also rejected the traditional Lutheran doctrine of penal substitution. Being mutable, God could evolve past his utterly holy demand to exact retribution for sin. Hence the fulfillment of the law was an unnecessary condition for the forgiveness of sin.

Hofmann's theology of atonement provoked a debate with his fellow Erlangen colleagues Theodosius Harnack (1817–1889) and Gottfried Thomasius (1802–1875),[95] along with the Rostock theologian and

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[89] Johannes von Hofmann, *Der Schriftbeweis*, 2 vols., 1st ed. (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1852–1855), 2.1:115–40.

[90] Johannes von Hofmann, *Encyclopädie der Theologie. Nach Vorlesungen und Manuscripten herausgegeben von H. J. Bestmann* (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1879), 84–85.

[91] Hofmann, *Der Schriftbeweis*, 2nd ed, 1:441–51.

[92] Johannes von Hofmann, *Die Schutzschriften für eine neue Weise alte Wahrheit zu lehren*, 4 Pts. (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1856–1859), 2:95.

[93] Johannes von Hofmann, *Theologische Ethik* (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1878), 35.

[94] Ibid., 35, 78. Hofmann, *Interpreting the Bible*, 186.

[95] Gottfried Thomasius, *Das Bekenntniss der lutherischen kirche von der Versöhnung und die Versöhnungslehre D. Chr. K. v. Hofmann's: Mit einem Nachwort von Th. Harnack* (Erlangen: Theodor Bläsing, 1857).

Jewish convert to Lutheranism F.A. Philippi (1809–1882).[96] All three theologians agreed that Hofmann's view of the work of Christ effectively destroyed the Book of Concord's view of justification as forensic. Philippi was especially aggressive in his appeal to Anselm and Luther's belief that it was necessary for God to express his justice and mercy in his redeeming act in Christ.[97] Philippi accused Hofmann (with some justification) of effectively returning to the Roman Catholic doctrine of infused righteousness and merit.[98]

Hofmann counterargued that his theology was ultimately orthodox because it stood in continuity with that of Luther. He noted that his view of atonement primarily relied on an image of Christ as one triumphant over Satan and sinful humanity. He appealed to the Reformer's writings where he described Christ triumphing over Satan and the forces of darkness in the work of atonement. In this, Hofmann claimed Luther had not actually fully accepted penal substitution. Rather he had taught something very similar to the *Christus Victor* model of atonement found in the majority of the Church Fathers.[99] In response, Theodosius Harnack skillfully refuted Hofmann's claim with a lengthy two-volume study of Luther's theology where he demonstrated that Luther had integrated both the atonement motif of substitution and *Christus Victor*.[100]

Another figure in the Erlangen school, mentioned above and of some significance for the development of Christology within Neo-Lutheranism, is Gottfried Thomasius.[101] As noted above, Thomasius responded to Hofmann by pointing out that his understanding of atonement compromised justification by faith as well as his oath to uphold the Lutheran Confessions as a member of the faculty at Erlangen.[102]

Thomasius also added another critique of Hofmann's view of atonement from the perspective of his peculiar understanding of the

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[96] F. A. Philippi, *Dr. v. Hofmann gegenüber lutherischer Versöhnung- und Rechtfertigungslehre* (Erlangen: Theodor Bläsing, 1856).

[97] Ibid., 35.

[98] Ibid., 28.

[99] Forde, *The Law-Gospel Debate*, 62–4.

[100] Theodosius Harnack, *Luthers Theologie besonderer Beziehung auf seine Versöhnung und Erlösunglehre*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1969).

[101] Green, *The Erlangen School of Theology*, 148; Hans Schwarz, "Gottfried Thomasius," in *Nineteenth Century Lutheran Theologians*, ed. Matthew Becker (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 99–120.

[102] Thomasius, *Das Bekenntniss der lutherischen kirche*, 20–1.

Incarnation known as "Kenoticism."[103] Kenotic Christology was a theological commitment shared by Hofmann[104] and Thomasius, along with a number of other Neo-Lutheran thinkers.[105] Against Hofmann, Thomasius claimed that Christ could never help humanity suffering under the curse of God's wrath unless he himself had been placed under that same wrath thereby directly experiencing it.[106] While to many this may sound very much like the traditional Lutheran claim that the second person of the Trinity genuinely participated in his humanity's bearing of the divine wrath (*genus apotelesmaticum*),[107] Thomasius meant something even more radical by his formulation.

In one of his most significant works, *Christi Person und Werk: Darstellung der Evangelisch-Lutheranischen Dogmatik vom Mittpunkte Christologie aus,* Thomasius affirmed not only the three traditional genera of Lutheran Christology (*genus idiomaticum, genus apotelesmaticum, genus majestaticum*),[108] but also added a fourth genus, the *genus tapeinoticum*. According to the *genus tapeinoticum*, the divine nature took on the characteristics of human nature in its *kenosis*. Christ not only communicated the fullness of divine glory to his human nature (as in traditional Lutheran Christology), but the attributes of humanity were communicated to his divinity.[109] Traditionally, Lutherans had seen such a communication as being unacceptable because it would compromise the immutability of the divine being. Human nature could participate in the divine glory (*genus majestaticum*) without being transmuted into

[103] See Martin Breidert, *Die kenotische Christologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Gutersloher Verlagshaus: Mohn, 1977); Thomas Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology: The Waxing, Waning, and Weighing of a Quest for a Coherent Orthodoxy," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. Stephan C. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 74–111.

[104] Matthew Becker, "Hofmann's Revisionist Christology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (2003): 288–328; Breidert, *Die kenotische Christologie,* 161–84.

[105] Wolfgang Friedrich Gess, *Christi und Werk*, 3 vols. (Basel: Bahnmaiers Buchhandlung, 1870–1887), 3:345–410. Also see brief summary in: Law, "Kenotic Christology," 263–3; Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology," 8.

[106] Thomasius, *Das Bekenntniss der lutherischen kirche*, 100–5.

[107] Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 207–14.

[108] See the discussion in the Lutheran Confession in FC, SD VIII in *Concordia Triglotta: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English*, trans. and eds. W.H.T. Dau and F. Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 1041. Also see: Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951–1953), 2:152–242.

[109] Gottfried Thomasius *Christi: Person und Werk: Darstellung der Evangelisch-Lutheranischen Dogmatik vom Mittpunkte Christologie aus*, 2 vols. (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert Verlag, 1886–1888), 2:411–2.

it (after all, heated iron does not turn into fire), whereas the reciprocal communication would result in the transmutation of divinity into humanity. The transmutation of divinity would represent a serious deviation from basic Chalcedonian Christology.[110]

Thomasius attempted to resolve this difficulty by distinguishing between "immanent" and "relative" attributes in God. God's immanent attributes were his moral qualities, that is, his love and holiness by which he is eternally God. His relative attributes are those which are predicated of him in relationship to his creation. Implicit in Thomasius's reasoning is the notion that God is only omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent when compared to the finitude of his creatures. Hence these relative attributes could be temporarily suspended by the second person of the Trinity without causing him to cease to be God.[111] Jesus remained God because he continued to possess his immanent attributes in his state of humiliation and had his relative attributes restored to him in his state of exaltation. As can be observed, Thomasius here abandons classical theism in favor a concept of divine mutability in keeping with Hegel and Schelling's metaphysics that we examined earlier.[112]

Early Twentieth Century: The Lund School

In the early twentieth century, the University of Lund in Sweden became a major center of modern Lutheran theology.[113] This burst of new theology was initiated by the Swedish Bishop and theologian Anders Nygren (1890–1978).[114] Nygren's interests lay in justifying the place of theology within the Swedish academy by promoting what he referred to as "motif research." Motif research assumes that there are certain universal questions of human life, which humans answer using a range of thought-forms that possess a common structure. Nygren called these thought-forms "motifs."[115]

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[110] See confessional Lutheran critique in: Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:292–6.

[111] Thomasius, *Christi: Person und Werk,* 2:468.

[112] Becker, *The Self-Giving God*, 112.

[113] See: Arne Rasmusson, "A Century of Swedish Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2007): 125–162.

[114] See: Charles Kegley, ed., *The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren*, (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970).

[115] Rasmusson, "A Century of Swedish Theology," 134. Also see: Anders Nygren, *Meaning and Method: Prolegomena to a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology*, trans. Philip Watson (London: Epworth Press, 1972).

Nygren's seminal work, *Agape and Eros* is a tour de force of this new style of motif research.[116] In the history of Western ethical thought, Nygren identified three essential motifs regarding the orientation of the self: the nomos, eros, and agape motifs. The nomos motif saw law as the fundamental structure of the orientation and actions of the self. This motif was found in Judaism, Stoicism, and the North African Fathers of the early Church.[117] The eros motif referred to the idea that the self should be structured around love understood as a desire for self-fulfillment. This motif was found in eudaimonistic Greek philosophical thought, particularly Plato.[118] Finally, the agape motif involved self-giving loving action performed for its own sake. Agape love was the love taught by the New Testament and represents Christianity in its purest form.[119] Augustine corrupted the agape motif by combining it with the nomos and eros motifs, thereby creating the "Caritas Synthesis" and the medieval view of justification.[120] Luther's belief in the unconditional nature of the gospel and Christian freedom revived the true essence of Christianity as agape.[121] It should not go unnoticed Nygren's concept of agape was suspiciously similar to Kant's notion of moral autonomy, wherein acts only willed for their own sake were considered ethically authentic.[122]

Nygren's colleague at the University of Lund, Gustaf Aulén (1879–1977)[123] applied Nygren's method of motif research and concept of agape to issues of Christology and atonement. In his most popular work, *Christus Victor*, Aulén followed Nygren's motif-research method, and delineated three distinct motifs of the atonement in the history of Christian thought: substitution, *Christus Victor*, and moral influence.[124] Of course, there were many variations within these particular motifs of the atonement. Nevertheless, it must be recalled that a motif represents a range of answers relying on a common image or thought-form. Like

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[116] Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953).

[117] Ibid., 254–88.

[118] Ibid., 160–99.

[119] Ibid., 61–159.

[120] Ibid., 609–66.

[121] Ibid., 681–99. See Rasmusson, "A Century of Swedish Theology," 134–5.

[122] See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21–55.

[123] See brief description in: Hans Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context: The Last Two Hundred Years* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 255–6

[124] Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A.G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 1–16.

Hofmann, Aulén preferred the *Christus Victor* motif, and attempted to argued that it was the controlling motif not only of the ancient Church, but also of Luther's thought.[125] According to Aulén, Luther had improved on the Church Fathers because he had properly understood the law was one of the dark forces of the old creation which needed to be conquered by unconditional divine love.[126]

Lurking in the background of Aulén's preference for the *Christus Victor* motif was Nygren's concept of agape. For Christ's saving action to be genuine grace, it had to be a unilateral and unconditional movement from God to humanity. The substitution and moral influence motifs were inauthentic because they pictured humanity moving toward God through obedience. Indeed, Aulén seems to see penal substitution as a kind of eros, in that it seeks to make humans desirable through the payment of the debt of sin before God is capable of loving them fully. Only a concept of the divine Christ moving downward toward humanity with no reciprocal movement of merit could achieve an authentic image of divine agape-love necessary for a proper doctrine of atonement.[127]

An equally important and somewhat contrarian member of the Lund school can be found in the person of Gustaf Wingren (1910–2000).[128] Although Wingren was sympathetic with Nygren and Aulén's interest in retrieving the theology of the early Church and Luther, he was also critical of their approach to ethics and Christology.[129] Wingren pointed out that most post-Schleiermacherian theology had been not only anthropocentric (as the Neo-Orthodox theologians had charged)[130] but had deemphasized the doctrine of creation to the point of meaninglessness. This was not only true of the Liberal theologians of the nineteenth century (Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Troeltsch), but also Neo-Orthodox theologians of the early twentieth century (Barth, Bultmann).[131]

Forming the background of this lack of interest in the first article of the creed in modern continental Protestant theology was the

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[125] Ibid., 16–60, 101–22.

[126] Ibid., 111–6.

[127] Ibid., 145–59. See a similar argument in: Gustaf Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church*, trans. Eric H. Wahlstrom (London: SCM, 1960), 199–204.

[128] See: Mary Elizabeth Anderson, *Gustaf Wingren and the Swedish Luther Renaissance* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006).

[129] Rasmusson, "A Century of Swedish Theology," 138–9.

[130] Gustaf Wingren, *Creation and Law*, trans. Ross McKenzie (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg,1961), 12–4.

[131] See: Gustaf Wingren, *Theology in conflict: Nygren, Barth, Bultmann* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958).

Neo-Kantian presupposition that we can only speak of God insofar as he has an impact on us. Since the primary conduit of Christian experience is redemption in Christ, both Schleiermacher and Barth had claimed that all doctrine had to be deduced from God's revelation in Christ.[132] This can also be seen in Nygren and Barth's ethics, where ethical task is located in the revelation of God's love in the second article.[133] This tends to make the gospel into a new and higher law for both thinkers. Like Luther, Wingren believed that law and ethics should be located in the first article in the form of vocation amongst the Orders of Creation and not in redemption.[134]

As hinted at already, in part Wingren's theology was a reaction to the work of Karl Barth (1886–1968).[135] Barth's influence and importance cannot be underestimated for twentieth century theology.[136] Barth had begun his career as a theological Liberal in the Ritschlian school, which identified the kingdom of God with human progress in history.[137] Having been convinced of the failure of Liberal theology both by the horrors of the First World War and the capitulation of his former Liberal professors to the Kaiser's war program,[138] Barth sought to reassert key Reformation themes such as radical grace and the fallenness of humanity in his *Der Römerbrief* (1919).[139] After being appointed a professor at Göttingen of Reformed dogmatics and confessions,[140] Barth reappropriated the tradition of Protestant Scholasticism within the framework of Neo-Kantian epistemology in his thirteen-volume *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (1932–1967).[141]

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[132] Wingren, *Creation and Law*, 12–4

[133] See: Karl Barth, *Ethics*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

[134] See: Wingren, *Creation and Law*, 140–73. Also see: Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, Carl Rasmussen (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

[135] See: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Edward Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992); Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997),

[136] Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 76.

[137] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology,* 31–78.

[138] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 111–7.

[139] See Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1985).

[140] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology,* 291–374.

[141] We will be citing the English edition of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* throughout this article: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. Karl Barth. 4 vols. trans. G. T. Thomason et al. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936–77). Hereafter Church Dogmatics will be abbreviated as "CD."

According to Barth, Jesus Christ was God's only revelation,[142] although he cast a long shadow into the Old Testament.[143] In Christ, God irresistibly elected humanity and took upon himself the divine rejection of human sin. The events of the life of Christ in time were an analogical echo of God's being and self-determining judgment in eternity.[144] Humans were thereby given privileged access to God's nature and eternal being by using the man Christ as a kind of analogical ladder to ascend to the knowledge of God in himself.[145] This being said, Barth was emphatic that such knowledge of God was indirect and as a corollary of this strictly upheld the *extra Calvinisticum* throughout his dogmatics.[146] Although Barth had rejected Liberalism, the themes of anti-metaphysical thought and Christomonism one finds in Schleiermacher and Ritschl still remained in his theology.

Wingren noted that the core of the Christian gospel was divine grace and the triumph of God in Christ over the forces of darkness. The goal of the gospel was grace and forgiveness, not overcoming the post-Kantian epistemological hurdles to knowledge of God's being through analogy. The Lutheran principle that the finite is capable of the infinite (*finitum capax infiniti*) meant that God communicating with his creation was not a genuine difficulty. Rather, the actual difficulty was creation's enslavement to the devil.[147]

Wingren affirmed with Luther that in Christ God fully communicated himself to a creature (*genus majestaticum*) and directly entered the battlefield against Satan on the behalf of his creation.[148] Hence Wingren objected to Barth's theology of revelational analogy on the grounds of the Lutheran doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. The man Jesus is fully endowed with the fullness of God's glory and presence. His life and work were not an analogical echo of God's eternal and timeless decrees. Rather it is the very presence of God with us, dying on our behalf, defeating the devil, and rising into a new and everlasting life that he shares with us in the resurrection from the dead.[149]

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[142] CD I/1.119.

[143] CD I/2.457.

[144] CD II/2.116–8.

[145] CD II/1. 225.

[146] CD VI/1.180; CD IV/2.167–70.

[147] Gustaf Wingren, *The Living Word: A Theological Study of Preaching and the Church*, trans. Victor C. Pogue (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 92–4.

[148] Ibid., 92–3.

[149] Ibid., 31–2.

In his defense of the priority of the first article, Wingren was also fond of invoking Irenaeus' idea of recapitulation (*anakephalaiosis, recapitulatio*).[150] According to this conception, God in Christ had performed all that Adam was supposed to perform in the original creation, thereby overcoming where our first parents had failed. Jesus is the second Adam who fulfills the law and renews creation on our behalf. The law tells us the pattern that God wishes humanity to live-out in the world, and therefore the fulfillment of the law by Christ constitutes the fulfillment and renewal of creation.[151]

The Early and Mid-Twentieth Century: The Later Erlangen School

In regard to the question of Christology and atonement, the later Erlangen school represented by Paul Althaus (1888–1966) and Werner Elert (1885–1954) was in many ways more conservative than their nineteenth century predecessors.[152] The nineteenth century Erlangen school had taken over from Lutheran Pietism and Schleiermacher the concept that that along with the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions, Christian experience was a valid source of theological authority. By contrast, Elert and Althaus affirmed under the influence of their teacher Ludwig Ihmels, that Scripture was the supreme theological authority to which religious experience must subordinate itself.[153] Similarly, as we will see below, both Althaus and Elert abandoned Hofmann and Thomasius' metaphysically problematic belief in kenotic Christology in favor of a fairly traditional understanding of the two natures in Christ.

Both Elert and Althaus took an interest in responding to the historical skepticism concerning the identity of Christ and the historicity of the Gospels that marked the work of figures like Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976). Both Erlangen theologians held that Christianity would be meaningless and invalid if the Gospels were false and if Jesus was not true God and man.[154] In order to push back against theological Liberalism and historical skepticism, Elert and Althaus offered a series of common arguments in their respective works.

[150] See Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959).

[151] Gustaf Wingren, *Gospel and Church*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), 95–7.

[152] Green, *The Erlangen School of Theology*, 231–88.

[153] Ibid., 46–7. Also see: Ludwig Ihmels, *Die Christliche Wahrheitsgewissheit ihr letzter Grund und ihre Entstehung* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1908).

[154] Werner Elert, *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*, trans. Charles Jacobs (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1927), 47–9.

First, in his early and shorter dogmatics, Elert partially adopted Hofmann's line of reasoning by insisting that the present state of affairs in contemporary civilization in general (including the Christian Church) would make little sense if the events of the Bible (including the life of Christ) had not occurred generally as reported.[155] Analogously, contemporary Americans are not vexed about whether there was an American Revolution since the US government and other American institutions would not exist if it had not happened. The past exists in such a manner that it causes the contemporary states of affairs which we live in and which "fate" (*schicksal*) our present existence in history.[156]

Secondly, both Elert and Althaus argued that force of Jesus as an absolutely unique personality shows through the biblical witness. Elert stated that if this personality was not reflective of the real Jesus, it would be the same as claiming that Jesus had no existence at all. Another Jesus beyond the Gospel portrait is not accessible to us.[157] This utterly uniqueness of Jesus's personal character impressed itself upon the apostles and is reflected in the New Testament witness.[158] Althaus stated similarly that a common picture and pattern of who Jesus is emerges from the New Testament witness, and that even if some historical details of the Gospels are proven to be false it does not militate against the truthfulness of the overall Gospel-witness.[159] Elert went onto note that in light of the witness of the New Testament that the biblical and ecumenical doctrine of the two natures in Christ could be justified by pointing to the fact that the utterly unique personality of Christ presented in the Gospels contains both divine and human elements.[160]

Both Althaus and Elert also very zealously defended the biblical and confessional doctrine of penal substitution. In his seminal work, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Althaus vigorously argued against Aulén and his attempt at claiming Luther for the *Christus Victor* atonement motif.[161] Likewise, Elert in his work *Law and Gospel* (which is primarily a response to Barth's theology of grace and ethics) outlined and defended his affirmation of the doctrine of penal substitution.

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[155] Elert, *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*, 33–6.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid., 47–54.

[158] Ibid., 47–50.

[159] Paul Althaus, *Faith and Fact in the Kerygma Today*, trans. David Cairns (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959).

[160] Elert, *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*, 50–54.

[161] Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 201–23.

According to Elert, in the post-lapsarian world, humanity lives a "nomological" existence where humans are constantly enveloped by the experience of the condemnation of the law.[162] Jesus came into the world as the embodiment and fulfillment of divine grace and judgment. He exposed the hypocrisy of those who claimed not to be sinners, while forgiving and having fellowship with the moral outcasts of Jewish society. He not only gave forgiveness but taught an ethic of forgiveness that transcends the law.[163] Jesus' ethic of non-retaliation and forgiveness transcends the law because the final logical fulfillment of the law is retribution and retaliation (*lex talionis*). In order to make divine forgiveness and the Christian ethic of non-retaliation an actuality, Christ had to end the retribution of the law by bringing it to a completion by his death. The cross is the final retributive punishment for sin that ends all retribution.[164] This was the fulfillment of divine wrath against sin and is an act of pure law. By contrast, the resurrection is act of pure grace, since it reveals God's forgiveness won by the cross.[165]

Late Twentieth Century Lutheranism: The Eschatological Turn

After World War II, continental Protestant theology showed an increasing interest in the eschatological nature of the Christian faith. This was in part the result of the cultural pessimism that set in after the two world wars.[166] The Liberal Protestant belief[167] that the progress of the kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus could be identified with the progress of modern culture seemed not only naïve, but a transparently self-serving fiction.[168] Likewise, starting with Johannes Weiss, Wilhelm Wrede, and Albert Schweizer, newer New Testament scholars clearly demonstrated that Jesus and the apostles operated within the parameters of a worldview broadly described as "Jewish Apocalypticism."[169]

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[162] Werner Elert, *Law and Gospel*, trans. Edward Shroeder (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 28.

[163] Ibid., 23.

[164] Ibid., 29–30.

[165] Ibid., 30.

[166] See Roger Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 449–502; Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context*, 541–51.

[167] Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context*, 118–36.

[168] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 82–4.

[169] See discussion in: Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context*, 264–71. Also see the following: Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, ed. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven*, trans. Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland (Philadelphia:

The New Testament described God's kingdom breaking into history from the outside and destroying demonic forces that enslaved it. The kingdom did not develop within history by way of human moral progress, as Liberalism had taught.

An important Lutheran figure for the development of eschatologically oriented Christology was the New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976).[170] Bultmann's paradigm for understanding the New Testament was one partially established a century earlier by the Left-Hegelian theologian David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874).[171] Prior to the Enlightenment, historic Christian orthodoxy had seen the Gospels as supernatural histories. Eighteenth-century German Rationalists like Heinrich Paulus had rejected this view and characterized the Gospels as essentially accurate histories punctuated by misunderstandings of naturalistic events as miraculous ones by Jesus's contemporaries and the Evangelists themselves.[172] In contrast to both views, Strauss claimed that the Gospels were mythology misread by the later Church as history or allegory.[173] According to Strauss, since modern science had shown that the universe was a closed material system of cause and effect, any claims of literal supernatural events could not be taken seriously.[174] Strauss's method was to go through the Gospels and show the absurdity of the supernaturalist and Rationalist readings by pushing them to their logical conclusions, thereby demonstrating the plausibility of the mythological reading.[175]

Much like Strauss, Bultmann tended to define "myth" very broadly as the intervention in the temporal world of anything supernatural or preternatural in such a manner so as not to fit into the worldview of modern people.[176] Without much of a metaphysical defense of his

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Fortress Press, 1971); William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. James C. G. Grieg (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971).

[170] See: David Congdon, *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann's Dialectical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

[171] David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 2 vols. trans. Marian Evans (St. Clair Shores, MI: Scholarly Press, 1970); idem, *The Old Faith and the New: A Confession*, trans. Mathilde Blind (London: Asher & Co., 1874).

[172] See Heinrich Eberhard Gottlieb Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg: C.F. Winter, 1828), 1:357–60.

[173] Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 1:1–25.

[174] Strauss, *The Old Faith and the New,* 169–223.

[175] Harrisville and Sundberg, *The Bible and Modern Culture*, 91–3.

[176] Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsche, trans. Reginald Fuller (London: SCPK, 1953), 10. *"[Mythology is] the use of imagery to express the otherworldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side to this side."*

anti-supernaturalism, Bultmann simply quipped that people who used electric lights could not literally believe in the world of miracles, angels, and demons portrayed in the Bible.[177] This did not mean that the New Testament was without religious value though. Its descriptions of the coming judgment of the world and Jesus as God's eschatological agent could be decoded or "demythologized"[178] by the categories provided by the existentialist philosophy of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976).[179] Hence, according to Bultmann, Jesus and the kingdom of God which he represents in the Gospels is a symbol for a new world that God has opened up for humanity in an existence oriented to the future. In hearing the gospel, one was confronted by the existential choice of living an existence oriented to the eschatological future or to continue to be enslaved to one's past history.[180]

Many Lutheran theologians of the post-World War II generation saw value in Bultmann's emphasis on eschatology, while at the same time finding his rejection of the historical and the supernatural problematic. It should also be noted that there was an increasing interest in Christianity as a historical religion in post-World War II West Germany because Marxism had become the most popular philosophy among the intelligentsia.[181] History became an important Christian theological category, because Marxism offered a pseudo-eschatological redemption worked out through the historical process.[182]

In response to these challenges, Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928–2014) revived an interest in salvation history and elements of Right-Hegelianism that we observed earlier in Hofmann.[183] Pannenberg argued that throughout human history, different human cultures have made competing religious claims in response to the general human

[177] Ibid., 5.

[178] Rudolf Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologization (1952)," in *New Testament and Mythology, and Other Basic Writings*, ed., Shubert Ogden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984), 95–130.

[179] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

[180] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 152–3.

[181] Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature*, vol. 1 (New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 300.

[182] See: Francis Gillies, *The Eschatological Structures of Christianity and Marxism* (Ph.D Diss., University of Sussex, 1975).

[183] Stanley Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005); F. LeRon Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

awareness that a divine being lies behind the universe (Rom. 1–2).[184] In Israel's history, YHWH had gradually shown himself to be the true God by fulfilling his promises and overcoming tests of his reality against competing deities.[185] Nevertheless, all these tests and vindications of YHWH's power proved nothing more than that he was the God of Israel. It did not prove he was the universal God.[186] Nevertheless, throughout the writings of the Old Testament prophets there is a perpetual promise that there would be a great, universal, and definitive eschatological act at the end of history that would demonstrate that Israel's God was the universal God (Isa. 40:5). Apocalyptic eschatology identified this event with the resurrection of the dead (Dn. 12).[187]

Although Pannenberg rejected the virgin birth,[188] he accepted the doctrine of the Incarnation and the resurrection as literal truths essential to the Christian faith.[189] Nevertheless, Pannenberg developed his view of the Incarnation with what might be described as a significantly modified concept of substance. Channeling both Hegel and Heidegger, Pannenberg asserted that the fundamental identity of a particular being is to be identified with the final form it will take in the future. This is also true of God.[190] At present, God's sovereignty (which is identical with his being) is not fully realized and therefore in a sense God does not fully exist. In the future, God's being is complete because his sovereign kingdom is fully actualized. From the future, the Lord acts upon his creation drawing all things into his rule.[191]

In the case of the identity of Christ, seen merely from the perspective of isolated stages of his pre-resurrection existence (at the time of his birth, for example), Jesus could not be properly called God due merely to his ontological make up. The unity of divinity and humanity in the Incarnation is not the result of two substances being in continuous union, but rather a dynamic event of God becoming present through and disclosing himself in Jesus's life when seen as a whole.[192] In his

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[184] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* 3 vols. trans. Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991–1993), 1:107.

[185] Ibid., 1:168.

[186] Ibid., 1:169.

[187] Ibid., 1:332–3.

[188] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*, trans. Lewis Wilkins and Duane Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 149–50.

[189] Ibid., 115–90.

[190] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 55–6.

[191] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:327.

[192] Ibid., 2:363–97.

resurrection, Jesus proleptically disclosed God's universal self-revelation at the end of time as promised by the Old Testament prophets. In this, he reveals the very being of God himself.[193] As a result, retroactively, the entire life of Christ from his conception forward becomes an unveiling of the one, true God, and therefore can ontologically be identified with God. Hence, the Chalcedonian doctrine that Jesus is truly God made flesh is valid.[194]

In late twentieth century American Lutheranism, a similar appropriation of the eschatological turn in Christology can be found in the theologies of Robert Jenson (1930–2017)[195] and Gerhard Forde (1927–2005).[196] Like Pannenberg, Jenson represents a reappropriation of the Right-Hegelian tradition. For Jenson, God is a being in process.[197] The Father, Son, and Spirit are not so much eternally subsisting relations as they are *dramatis personae* developing in salvation history.[198] The unity of God is not to be found in the form of a common substance, but in the unity of salvation history as an event. Jenson likens the unity of the divine persons to a fugue. A fugue is a singular musical event which results from the coming together of the sound of many instruments.[199] Also, like Pannenberg, eternity is for Jenson not so much a transcendent realm beyond time as it is the future where God's being and life are already fully actualized. In the eschatological future, God is complete in his eternal relations as the Trinity. Nevertheless, in order to actualize their particular configuration in their final state he projects backward a history within which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit establish their identity.[200]

In this history of divine self-actualization, the Son possesses the unique status of the anchor of the whole Triune being. Jenson fully accepted historic Lutheran teaching on the *communicatio idiomatum* and the absolute omnipresence of Christ's human nature.[201] Nevertheless,

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[193] Ibid., 1:256.

[194] Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*, 115–211.

[195] See: Scott Swain, *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

[196] See: Jack Kilcrease, *The Doctrine of Atonement: From Luther to Forde* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 101–72.

[197] Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology,* 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997–1999), 1:60–6.

[198] Ibid., 89.

[199] Ibid., 1:236.

[200] Ibid., 1:66. See comments in: Oliver Crisp, "Robert Jenson on the Pre-existence of Christ," *Modern Theology* 23, no. 1, (2007): 32.

[201] Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:203–5.

unlike traditional Lutheran theology, Jenson utilized these concepts within his essentially Right-Hegelian framework of the development of God through history. The second person of the Trinity is exhaustively defined by becoming the man Jesus. Before the Incarnation, there is nothing in the existence of the second person of the Trinity other than an eternal motion to become incarnate in Christ. In this sense, the omnipresent human nature of Christ extends even back into eternity.[202]

It is the vocation of the eternal Son to become man and overcome sin and death by enduring the opposition of sinful humanity. By uniting himself with human existence under the power of sin and death, he absorbs their blow and overturns them in the resurrection.[203] The bond of union created by Jesus manifests itself in history as the Church-catholic as a kind of prolongation of the Incarnation.[204] All humans at the eschaton will be incorporated into the corporate reality of Christ and participate in the life of the Trinity from the vantage point of the Son.[205]

Jenson's seminary friend and later theological opponent, Gerhard Forde offered another variation on the eschatological turn. Steeped in the Luther Renaissance and Neo-Orthodox theologies of eschatological rupture (i.e., the younger Barth and Bultmann), Forde developed a Christology wherein Christ was described as an eschatological agent who would overturn God's negative existential relationship with humanity under law, hiddenness, and wrath. To achieve this, Forde relied heavily on both the early Barth's theology of grace in *Der Römerbrief* and Luther's notion of the hidden God from *The Bondage of the Will*.[206]

Apart from Christ, God relentlessly works all things to the destruction of sinful humanity.[207] The Incarnation of Christ represents an eschatological rupture of God with his wrathful and hidden reality, in favor of being a God of unilateral love. Drawing on the critiques of Hofmann and Aulén, Forde rejected the doctrine of penal substitution. God himself does not need the fulfillment of the law to forgive, but

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[202] Ibid., 1:141.

[203] Ibid., 1:186–92.

[204] Ibid., 1:191.

[205] Ibid., 2:369.

[206] Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden, "Introduction: Gerhard O. Forde and the Doctrine of Justification" in *By Faith Alone: Essays on Justification in Honor of Gerhard O. Forde,* eds. Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 5–6. Also see: James A. Nestingen, "Examining Sources" in Burgess and Kolden, 10–11.

[207] Gerhard Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation!* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 19–20.

unilaterally forgives humanity through Christ.[208] It is sinful humanity that seeks to maintain the law as the basis of the divine-human relationship and therefore opposes Jesus's ministry of forgiveness. As a result, humanity killed God in Christ, thereby exposing the depth of its depravity. God responded by raising Jesus from the dead and validating his practice of giving unconditional absolution to sinners.[209] In this, Forde follows the logic of metaphysical actualism that we have observed in previous modern theologies. It is appropriate to call the man Jesus God, because in him God "does himself" to humanity through judgment and grace.[210]

Conclusion

As should be clear from our very brief treatment of modern Lutheran Christology, the twin driving forces behind the modern deviations from confessional orthodoxy since the early Modern period have been the abandonment of substance metaphysics and the rise of historical criticism of the Bible. These two phenomena are a byproduct of Modernity's false belief that human rationality could be grounded in itself. The belief in the self-grounding nature of reason that begins with Descartes and is also found in modern biblical criticism is simply a continuation of the Enthusiasm of our first parents. The end results have been clear: Either the deification of our own thinly veiled preferences under the guise of universal self-evident truth, or absolute skepticism and solipsism. No proper Christian theology can function without linguistic and biblical realism that is grounded in the trustworthiness of God's Word manifest in creation and redemption. LSQ

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[208] Gerhard Forde, "Caught in the Act: Reflections on the Work of Christ," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Mark Mattes and Steven Paulson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 90–1

[209] Gerhard Forde, "The Work of Christ," in *Christian Dogmatics,* 2 vols., eds. Robert W. Jenson and Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 2:88–93.

[210] Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation,* 100.

Purging the Leaven: The Search for the Authentic Passover

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PEOPLE WANT AUTHENTICITY; THEY VALUE DEEP roots in the community, home-grown organic products, and old things in general. Often times instead of hiding a building's "old bones," the original brick is left exposed, and the old scarred hard wood floors proudly displayed—it's more authentic that way. Authenticity is an important question today as Christians of all different denominations search to "expose the roots" of their faith. To this end, American Christianity has seen a growing interest in conducting Christian Passover Seders. These meals and programs attempt to expose the Jewish roots of the Christian faith and recreate what Jesus may have celebrated with His disciples on Maundy Thursday. But are these interactive programs an authentic expression of the Christian faith? To answer this question, this paper will provide an overview of the elements of a traditional Passover celebration and will examine various objections to Christian Passover services. The goal of this paper is to serve as an introduction to the debate surrounding the Passover to enable an informed decision for its use in the parish.

I. Elements of the Passover

The term Passover is used quite broadly within Scripture and within religious communities. Both Scripture and Judaism use "Passover" to refer to any of the following: the week-long festival beginning on the tenth of Nisan, the preparation day on the fourteenth of Nisan, the

traditional meal eaten on the fifteenth of Nisan, or the sacrificial lamb. Most commonly in Christian communities, Passover is used synonymously with the English-speaking Christian term "Easter" and is still preserved in English speaking churches in terms like Paschal Candle or Paschal feast.[1] The first portion of this paper will explore some of the basic elements of the Passover as it was prescribed in the Old Testament and will show how they developed over time. These elements are 1) a retelling of the story, 2) the lamb, 3) unleavened bread, 4) the bitter herbs, and finally 5) blood/wine.

1. Retelling

An important term when discussing Passover celebrations today is "Haggadah" which means a ritual retelling of the Exodus story. We see this already outlined in Exodus chapter 12:26–27, God says, "And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt.…'" Strictly speaking, the Haggadah is the retelling of the Exodus and consists of an orderly narrative centering on questions that are asked and answered. In this way, the Haggadah fulfills a number of roles, but primarily it is a didactic tool to personally convey the meaning of the Exodus from generation to generation. At the same time, the Haggadah gives instruction about symbolic elements in the meal. These symbolic elements are described by the word "seder" which means "order." The term seder governs the specific order blessings, food, and drink are consumed, thus providing a framework for the Haggadah.[2]

The Passover celebration developed exclusively as an oral tradition for its first 1,600 years. In fact, the first written account of any rabbi performing Passover with his disciples is found in the four Gospels. In contrast, the Jewish Seder was not written down until around 200 AD in a document called the *Mishnah Pesaḥim*, which still guides the Jewish Passover today. The writing of the *Mishnah Pesaḥim* was not only a response to changing spiritual needs after the destruction of the temple (70 AD) but also addressed the growing popularity of the Christian interpretation of the Passover. For this reason, one should note that the term "seder" was not applied to the Passover celebration until *after* the

[1] Joachim Jeremias, "Πάσχα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 5:897.

[2] Joshua Kulp, "The origins of the Seder and Haggadah," Academia.edu, accessed November 10, 2020, 111.

Mishnah Pesaḥim was written (190–220 AD). Even though there are clear parallels between the Last Supper and the Seder service, out of historical sensitivity, one should be careful when applying "seder" to the Last Supper. Just how similar Jesus' Passover was to the Jewish Seder is a subject of ongoing debate—unfortunately arguments on both sides fall short for lack of evidence.[3]

2. The Lamb

The roasted lamb was the central feature of the Passover celebration from the first Passover till the third century AD. God gave strict instructions that a lamb without blemish was to be selected on the tenth of Nisan, live with the family until the fourteenth, and then the whole community was to slaughter the lamb "between evenings." Since the Jewish day began at 6:00 p.m. there is ongoing debate over whether the lamb was slaughtered on the first Passover at the end of the fourteenth just before the fifteenth, or if "between evenings" means the lamb was slaughtered first thing on the fourteenth (just after 6:00 p.m.) and eaten that same night. What we do know is that by Jesus' time the lambs were sacrificed on the fourteenth of Nisan any time after 12:00 p.m. but before 6:00 p.m.[4] The feast was then eaten in the home after twilight and before 12:00 a.m. on the fifteenth of Nisan.[5]

Throughout time, there has been tension between which part of the festival receives predominance—the sacrifice or the retelling. While the Jewish worship life revolved around the Temple, the sacrifice of the lamb predominated the festival; however, when the Temple was destroyed the pendulum shifted to the "retelling" of the story.[6] Some will claim that it was the temple's final destruction in 70 AD that ended the use of the paschal lamb in the festival; however, evidence suggests that it would take several hundred years before the eating of the lamb was entirely

[3] Joseph Tabory is a Jewish scholar who claims that there is much more in common between the Passover of the Second Temple period and the Jewish Seder of the third century AD than scholarship presumes today; however, this assertion has made him largely unpopular among scholarship.

[4] *b. Pesaḥ.* [*Talmud Pesaḥim*] 61a:5–6. Allows for the Passover lamb to be sacrificed any time after mid-day (since the sun was on its way down this qualified as "evening") but before 6:00 p.m.

[5] *m. Pesaḥ.* [*Mishnah Pesaḥim*] 5 (all references from sefaria.org) gives great detail on how the Passover sacrifice was made during the Second Temple era.

[6] Israel Yuval, "Early Jewish-Christian Dialogue," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 114.

removed from the Jewish Passover.[7] In the Seder today, a boiled egg takes the place of the sacrificial lamb,[8] and a shank bone recall's the lamb as the "mighty arm" of the Lord's deliverance.[9]

3. Unleavened Bread

Alongside the lamb, the unleavened bread or *matzah* was of great prominence in the original Passover. God commanded, "On the first day remove yeast from your houses … in the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day."[10] So, on the fourteenth along with preparing the Passover Lamb, the people were preparing their homes by removing the yeast so that, by the fifteenth, they would begin the seven-day festival of Unleavened Bread.[11] As noted earlier, as the pendulum shifted away from the sacrifice of the lamb and onto the retelling, the *matzah* took central prominence in the Seder meal.

One of the most controversial uses of the bread during the Passover Seder regards the *afikoman*. Three pieces of *matzah* are placed in a "unity" or together in a napkin.[12] At the beginning of the meal, the father reaches under the napkin and breaks the second piece in half. This half, the *afikoman*, is then wrapped in a napkin and hidden. At the end of the Seder, the youngest is sent on a mission to find the *afikoman* and use it to redeem a prize. Israel Yuval, one of the leading experts on Passover history states, "The eating of this piece of *matzah* is the climax

[7] Joseph Tabory, "Towards a History of the Paschal Meal," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 71. Tabory points to evidence that there were still Jewish communities eating lamb up through the Geonic Period (600–1100 AD): Blessings such as "Blessed are Thou … Who has commanded us to eat *matsah*, bitter herbs, roasted meat …" can still be found among the Ashkenazi Jews of central Europe.

[8] Numbers 9:13 (all Scripture taken from NIV 1984).

[9] David Brickner, "Mysterious Passover Symbols," *Jews for Jesus*, 2010, accessed March 22, 2020, https://jewsforjesus.org/ newsletter-apr-2011/ mysterious-passover-symbols#_edn3. The Hebrew for the shank bone is *zeroa,* which is used in Isaiah 53 as the "arm of the LORD."

[10] Exodus 12:15, 18.

[11] One interesting modern practice is that since the Passover saved the first-born, it is the first-born son in each family that performs the ritual of removing the leaven in each household.

[12] Israel Yuval, "Passover in the Middle Ages," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 145. The first to make the connection between the Unity and the Triune God is a Jewish convert to Christianity, Johann Pfefferkorn in the sixteenth century.

of the Seder and must be eaten before midnight when God passed through the land of Egypt."[13] Groups such as Jews for Jesus teach that the *afikoman* foreshadows Christ: He is the bread of life, the Second person of the Trinity (middle *matzah* in the unity) who was broken, buried, and resurrected.[14]

Today, much debate surrounds the meaning of *afikoman*. The word is of Greek origin, but the meaning is unclear. Though many believe the word is derived from *epikomen* meaning "that which comes after" (i.e. dessert),[15] a growing number of scholars today lean toward the connection to the Greek word *aphikomenos* meaning "coming one." This connection suggests that the *afikoman* originally had an intrinsic messianic meaning: that the Messiah would come, be hidden, and then be revealed.[16] This connection is strengthened by the reports of sixteenth century Jewish converts to Christianity who recounted the "sacred treatment" of the *afikoman*,[17] and rabbis who teach, "we are still awaiting the final redemption with the coming of Moshiach. Setting aside or hiding the larger half of the matzah reminds us that the best, the real redemption, is yet to come, still hidden in the future."[18]

4. Bitter herbs

The bitter herbs, called *maror*, were eaten along with the lamb and unleavened bread. In Exodus 12:8, God says, "That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs." Rabbi

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[13] Ibid., 145. Yuval notes that this final piece of bread represented the total consumption of the Passover lamb.

[14] Brickner, "Mysterious Passover Symbols," accessed March 22, 2020.

[15] *m. Pesaḥ.* 10:8 forbids the afikoman, this could be a reference to forbidding the Greek practice of revelry after the meal in a traditional symposium.

[16] Yuval, "Passover in the Middle Ages," 147. Here Yuval concedes that the afikoman is messianic. However, he argues that the ritual developed around it was meant to be parallel to Christianity hinting at hiding the consecrated Eucharist on Maundy Thursday and "resurrecting" it on Easter Sunday. He argues this is an example of common language with contradictory content.

[17] Ibid., 145–47. Johann Pfefferkorn reports: "The father of the family takes the broken middle matsah which is considered by Jews to be of special sanctity, and hides it in a clean napkin.… They open the door and ask God to bring their messiah speedily to them. After completing the prayers of the Seder the father returns the matsah that is reserved in the napkin." Jacob Kitzingen gives the following report about the afikomen: "[the leader of the Seder] dons clothes of darkness, that is to say, clothes of the dead who inhabit the dust in the realm of darkness and the shadow of death."

[18] Yehuda Shurpin, "Why do we Hide Afikomen?" *Chabad.org*, 2020, accessed April 20, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/ holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/2910434/jewish/Why-Do-We-Hide-the-Afikoman.htm,

Hillel from the first century BC reportedly took two pieces of matzah and made the first "Hillel Sandwich" with bitter herbs and lamb in the middle of two pieces of *matzah*.[19] Though the Bible never directly attaches meaning to the bitter herbs, a remarkable connection can be seen in Lamentations 3:15, "He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink." Whereas the *Mishnah Pesaḥim* connects the bitter herbs to suffering under the yoke of slavery in Egypt,[20] the Old Testament indicates this food points forward to the bitter suffering of Jesus on the cross.

The Seder also has traditional foods that were neither prescribed in Exodus nor the *Mishnah*. Unfortunately, it is unclear how and when these became common practice. As a reminder of the tears shed in Egypt, a bitter herb called *karpas* (commonly parsley or lettuce) is dipped in salt water. The Biblical connection between tears and bitterness is demonstrated in Zechariah 12:10, "They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."

Alongside the salt water was the addition of the *charoset*; a mixture of apples, honey, nuts, and red wine recalling the mortar made in Egypt. Interestingly, the wine in the mixture recalls blood that was shed during the hard labor as told in this story by Rabbi Akiba, "The Israelites collected dry stubble in the wilderness, and their donkeys, women and children trampled it into straw. The stubble pierced their heels so that blood ran all over the mortar."[21]

5. Blood/Wine

The last essential element of the Passover celebration was blood. In Exodus, God commands the blood of the Passover lamb was to mark the doorposts and lintels of the homes in which the lamb was eaten. It was the blood that caused the LORD to "pass over" the homes of the Israelites. The fathers were responsible for slaughtering the lamb and smearing its blood, and in this way they acted as priests before the institution of the priesthood. This tradition was preserved in the Second

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[19] Menachem Feldman, "Understanding the Sandwich," *Chabad.org*, 2020, accessed April 20, 2020.

[20] *m. Pesaḥ.* 10:3, 10:5.

[21] Yuval, 153. The use of wine in charoset is also connected to the ancient Hebrew story of Rachel, the granddaughter of Shutelach who miscarried while trampling the mortar with her husband, and the child's blood mixed with the mortar. When God saw the death of Rachel's firstborn son, He responded with the tenth plague and the death of the Egyptian firstborn.

Temple period; fathers were responsible for bringing the lamb and slaughtering it, and the priests would collect the blood and sprinkle it on the altar while chanting the *Hallel* (Psalms 113–118).[22] One interesting custom the Mishnah records took place at the end of the sacrifice while the blood was being washed away: a priest would "fill a goblet with the mixed blood and he sprinkled it once upon the altar."[23] With the destruction of the Temple, the blood ceased to be a major part of the celebration.

The Seder itself maintains a loose connection between wine and blood. As mentioned earlier, the red wine in the *charoset* is reminiscent of blood. However, the wine in the cup is never directly associated with the sacrificial blood of the lamb (as some Christian Seders suggest). The closest the Seder comes to the wine in the cup representing blood is the practice of pouring out wine during the recitation of the ten plagues: "We spill a bit of wine to demonstrate that our joy is not complete since it came at the expense of others, even if they were deserving of punishment."[24] Other than this, wine is simply referred to as the fruit of the vine.

The wine is divided into four cups and connected with four Divine "I will" promises from Exodus 6:6–7;[25] this four-fold division of the meal follows ancient feasting customs from the Greco-Roman world.[26] A fifth cup of wine is also part of the Seder, but is not drunk. This fifth and final cup of wine, the Cup of Elijah, is connected to God's promise "I will bring you to the land." Because this celebrates the future consummation of salvation heralded by Elijah, the cup is left

[22] *m. Pesaḥ.* 5:6–7.

[23] *m. Pesaḥ.* 5:8.

[24] Yehuda Shurpin, "Why Do We Spill Wine at the Seder?" *Chabed.org*, 2020, accessed March 22, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/4347492/jewish/Why-Do-We-Spill-Wine-at-the-Seder.htm. Other explanations have to do with the cup of wine "catching the words of blessing;" these blessings are then personally ingested to become living part of the participant. Wine is poured out during the plagues, because the wine catches the curses, and one should not drink these, but rather pour them out.

[25] The promises are as follows: "I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians, I will free you from being slaves to them, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and I will take you as my own people."

[26] Blake Leyerle, "Meal Customs in the Greco-Roman World" in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 37–38. Leyerle shows how Greek symposiums from the fourth century BC often had three to nine "bowls" of wine. With each bowl, a name of a god was invoked and a blessing spoken over the wine.

untouched. Instead, the youngest is sent to open a door and "check to see if Elijah has come." Then the door is closed and the child returns to their seat.[27] This tradition is connected to Malachi 4:3, "See I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes."[28] The expectation of the prophet Elijah appearing at the time of the Passover could provide an explanation for the taunt to Jesus, "Look, He's calling Elijah.… Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."[29]

II. Objections to Christians Celebrating Passover

The Jewish Passover, as it is celebrated today, has many strong messianic connections. These are the result of the Passover and its many traditions being rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures, of which Jesus Himself says, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me."[30] That being said, why do so many object to Christians celebrating Passover? The next portion of this paper will examine the various concerns both within Christianity and within Judaism.

1. Concerns within Christianity

Among Christians there are three areas of major concern regarding celebrating the Passover. The first this paper will examine is the question of historical precedence: What is the history of contact between Christianity and the Passover? The recent Christian interest in understanding the "Jewishness of Jesus" and Passover Seders can be traced back to a document titled *Nostra Aetate* published at the Second Vatican Council of 1965. The Catholic Church's goal in publishing *Nostra Aetate* was to examine its ties to non-Christian religions in the hope of seeking "what men have in common and what draws them into fellowship,"[31] and to establish a deeper "mutual understanding between Christians and

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[27] Naftali Silberberg, "Why is Elijah the Prophet Invited to the Seder," Chabad.org, 2020, accessed March 22, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/504495/jewish/Why-Is-Elijah-the-Prophet-Invited-to-the-Seder.htm. In this sense, Elijah is seen as a rescuer or deliverer.

[28] Yuval, "Passover in the Middle Ages," 137–38. Christians have suggested that in Old Testament times when the Passover fell on the Sabbath day it was called a "Great" or "Special Sabbath." In the Jewish tradition, the "Great Sabbath" isn't connected to the coming of Elijah, but the Sabbath before the first Passover, when the Passover lamb was first selected.

[29] Matthew 27:47, 49.

[30] John 5:39.

[31] Nostra Aetate, "Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," accessed April 20, 2020, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html,

Jews."[32] Though *Nostra Aetate* opened the gateway for the more recent phenomenon of Christian Seders, the history of Christians celebrating Passover can be traced back to Rome in the mid to late second century to what is known as the Quartodeciman controversy.

Unlike the Western church that separated the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection into Good Friday and Easter Sunday, the Quartodecimans of Asia Minor continued to follow the Jewish calendar and celebrated Christ's death and resurrection on the fourteenth of Nisan. Tensions rose between the two groups when the fourteenth of Nisan fell earlier in Holy Week, and as a result, the Quartodecimans would break their Lent fast early while the Western Christians were still mourning the death of Christ. The primary concern of the Roman Christians was the appearance of unity among Christians and secondarily, the appearance of reverting back to Judaism.[33] However, according to the Quartodecimans, celebrating the fourteenth was a tradition that had been handed down by the Apostles John and Philip,[34] and though they shared the same calendar day as the Jewish Passover, every effort was taken to avoid the appearance of syncretism: The Quartodecimans would mourn from 6 p.m. to midnight while the Jews celebrated, and their Easter celebration would begin after the Jewish celebration ceased

[32] Garry M. Bretton-Granatoor, "Don't Try this at Home," *America the Just Review*, 2020, accessed November 10, 2019, https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/569/article/dont-try-home, Bretton, the director of the Interfaith Anti-Defamation league pinpoints the Nostra Aetate from Vatican II as the beginning of Christian "interest in the Jewishness of Jesus." The documents states: "Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues." In his article for Logos, Dr. Timothy Wilkinson links the beginning of interest in Seders in evangelical circles to Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* published in 1978.

[33] Philip Schaff, "Pre-Nicean Paschal Controversy," *The Paschal Controversies*, PDF accessed March 22, 2020, 2.

[34] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *On Pascha With Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans—Melito of Sardis,* ed. John Behr (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001) 86–87. Eusebius records Bishop Polycrate's defense: "For we keep the day without interference, neither adding nor subtracting. And there are in Asia great lights who have died, and will rise again on the day of the coming of the Lord, when he comes with glory from the heavens and shall raise all the saints: Philip of the twelve apostles… And there is John who lay on the breast of the Lord.… All of these kept the fourteenth day in accordance with the Gospel, not deviating from the rule of faith but maintaining it."

and lasted till dawn culminating with the Lord's Supper. Along with contrasting times, the eating of lamb was strictly forbidden.[35]

The conflict came to climax between the years 190–194 AD when Victor, Bishop of Rome, sought to excommunicate the Asian Christians. Though many letters were exchanged, it was Irenaeus who talked Victor down. Recalling the first incident of this conflict from 150–155 AD between Polycarp and Anicetus, Irenaeus admonishes Victor: "The apostles have ordered that we should 'judge no one in meat or in drink, or in respect to a feast-day or a new moon or a sabbath day.' Whence then these wars? Whence these schisms? We keep the feasts, but in the leaven of malice by tearing the church of God and observing what is outward, in order to reject what is better, faith and charity."[36] Though Irenaeus himself preferred the Western practice, he thought it best to respect the tradition of John and Polycarp and not let outward ceremony break the unity of the church.[37]

Over the next century, the Quartodeciman practice waned in use so that by the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD only a few isolated groups of Christians still kept the fourteenth. Thus the practice of celebrating on the fourteenth was condemned in the name of outward uniformity and independence from the Jewish calendar.[38] In the end, the Quartodeciman controversy demonstrates that not only is there a historical precedence for a Christian Passover,[39] but, unlike modern attempts to use Seders as an expression of inter-faith unity, these ancient

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[35] Schaff, 4. This also shows us that up until this point, it was still common practice for the Jews to celebrate Passover with lamb, since it was so strictly forbidden among Christians.

[36] Ibid., 5.

[37] Stewart-Sykes, *On Pascha*, 88–89. Irenaeus says, "We mean Anicetus and Pius, Hyginus and Telesphorus and Sixtus. None of them observed, nor did any of those who were with them. And yet those who did not observe kept peace with those from the communities in which the observance was kept, and they engaged with one another.… And never was anyone cast out over this affair, but those elders before you who did not observe nonetheless sent the Eucharist to those from the communities who observed. And when the blessed Polycarp was at Rome in the time of Anicetus, although there were many other matters on which they had differences, they maintained peace with one another, not wanting to fall out with one another over this matter."

[38] Schaff, 5.

[39] Paul Bradshaw, "The Origins of Easter," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed, Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 82. Not only is the Quartodeciman practice old, but it is the first recorded "Easter" celebrated by Christians. Easter as we know it today, was not recorded as a practice until 165 AD.

services emphasized the distinctions between Christianity and Judaism in both form and theology.[40]

That being said, why would Christians want to resurrect a Passover service and what form would it take? This brings us to the second major concern. As mentioned earlier, when the gateway opened for Christians to explore Jesus' Jewish roots, a popular reason for introducing Christian Seders is to add more meaning to the Lord's Supper. Though the desire itself is commendable; one might recall that the connections between Jesus' Passover on Maundy Thursday and the Jewish Seder service are historically speculative.[41] Though one can certainly see parallels with a Seder in the account (such as blessing the cups, reclining at the table, washing etc.), the Gospel writers were not recording such details to preserve a Seder, but to provide a record of the new feast Jesus was instituting with His body and blood.[42] A second consideration when using the Seder to add meaning to the Lord's Supper is that many Christian Seders (at least the ones the author has found) stress the symbolic significance of the food throughout so the conclusion naturally follows when Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper "this *symbolizes* my body …"[43] Though one can fix the explanation for the words of institution, this does not change the overall arc of the service.[44]

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[40] Some efforts to this end could be careful to avoid the actual Passover, so one is not celebrating at the same time as Jews. One also might consider avoiding the term "Seder," and clearly labeling it as a Christian event.

[41] Statements such as "it was at this part of the meal that Jesus washed his disciples' feet" or "Jesus used the *afikoman* to institute the sacrament of His body.…" Though some of these statements would be profoundly neat if they were true, the fact remains that they cannot be proven, and therefore, one should be cautious about asserting them as fact.

[42] There is also the open question of whether or not Jesus actually celebrated a traditional Passover feast at all. According to John's Gospel, Passover on Holy Week fell on Saturday, not Thursday. A number of church fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Eutyches, and Eusebius) along with modern scholars such as F. F. Bruce, believe Jesus ate the Passover twenty-four hours early. If this is the case, Jesus' Passover did not have lamb and therefore could not have been a traditional celebration.

[43] Bretton-Granatoor, "Don't Try this at Home." The Rabbi emphasizes these foods *are not* symbolic: "The symbols are not reminders but reality. We eat the bitter herbs and have a bitter taste on our tongues. We eat the dry and almost tasteless matzo, as the food of desperation and flight. We experience the joy of community as we embrace family and friends. Finally, we express a communal desire to return to the land of our covenantal promise, the goal toward which we marched for forty years. For that evening, we are the slaves, and we are the redeemed."

[44] Also, many of the Christian Seders the author examined still had strong Zionistic themes running through them. For instance, the closing line "Next year in Jerusalem" is

Most of the theological complications and, indeed, the offense within Christianity result from an insistence on making the Passover about the Lord's Supper. But does that need to be the case? The Quartodeciman Bishop Melito of Sardis helps answer this question. In an attempt to resolve the conflict with Rome and answer the questions surrounding their practice on the fourteenth, Melito wrote the *Peri Pascha*—a letter that recorded the liturgy used by the Quartodeciman churches in Asia Minor. In brief, the *Peri Pascha* preserves a liturgy from the early church that both teaches the typology of the Old Testament Passover and demonstrates its fulfillment in Christ.[45] Of most importance, however, the overall flow of Melito's work follows the outline of a Haggadah so closely that a number of scholars today consider the *Peri Pascha* a Christian Haggadah meant to accompany a meal rite.[46]

But of special note in answering the question of "adding meaning" to the Lord's Supper, Melito's *Peri Pascha* remains true to "orthodox" Quartodeciman practice and maintains a strict focus on Jesus' Passion and Resurrection—avoiding the Lord's Supper altogether.[47] Instead, Melito's Passover theology draws on the wordplay between πάσχα and πάσχω from Luke 22:15.[48] Overall, it seems that allowing the foreshadow of the Passover to overshadow the reality of the Lord's Supper is causing much of the offense in Christianity today. Not only does Melito's service avoid this problem altogether, but by not trying to connect everything to the Lord's Supper, one finds Melito is able to draw more connections

meant to imply the rebuilding of the temple and the return to the sacrificial system when the Passover can resume as it had in the Second Temple period.

[45] Stewart-Sykes, *On Pascha*, 31. Concerning Melito's typology: "Melito has a theory of typology according to which the type, say the first Passover, precedes the reality, the salvation worked by Jesus, which fulfills it. A very similar typological scheme may be seen at work in the fourth Gospel; for instance the descent of the manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness is a type of Christ's descent as a gift of salvation."

[46] Ibid., 25. This would also suggest that Christians were the first to produce a written Haggadah and the Jewish Rabbis responded with *m. Pesaḥ.*

[47] Ibid., 22. The absence of the Lord's Supper in the *Peri Pascha* is thus explained: "But were Melito to point to the Last Supper he would have been stepping out of his Johannine tradition; there were indeed Quartodecimans who saw the Last Supper as the fulfillment of the Pascha [29] but Melito was not among them. For him the death of the Lord at the same time as, and in place of, the death of the Passover lambs was the fulfillment of the Pascha."

[48] Jesus said, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover (πάσχα) with you before I suffer (παθεῖν from πάσχω)." The Greek πάσχω means to "experience through suffering." (Strong's Greek #39). Using Jesus' words, the Quartodecimans argued that Passover is fulfilled in Jesus suffering, not the Lord's Supper.

with the Old Testament and keep the "big picture" of Jesus' death and resurrection as the true Passover in crystal focus.

This brings us to the third concern within Christianity: not only are Seder services overshadowing the Lord's Supper, but they are also quickly replacing the firmly established Christian celebration of Maundy Thursday. Why are churches dismissing 1,800 years of Christian tradition in favor of a practice with questionable historical and theological character? One of the suggested reasons for this liturgical shift is a failure of the Christian church to appropriate and pass on its own historic rituals and liturgy. Worship leaders, in an admirable effort to keep parishioners "engaged" during Holy Week, are searching for new material *outside* the Christian tradition rather than mining the depths of meaningful ritual and tradition within Christianity.[49]

In response to this problem, John Allyn Melloh in his essay "Revising Holy Week and Easter Rites," suggests the three-fold approach to liturgical piety: unity—all the services of the Triduum working together as a unified whole (as opposed to offering a Holy Week buffet); remembrance—engaging the congregation in physical actions that call to mind the events of Holy Week (such as the procession of palms), and drama—actions that dramatize the events Jesus underwent (such as the Medieval practice of hiding the host on Good Friday and resurrecting it for Easter Sunday Communion).[50] Furthermore, what role does the congregation have? Are they just passive observers or are they going through the sights, sounds, smells and indeed the emotions of Holy Week?[51] Perhaps the fact that these "Christian Seders" are becoming so widespread is a powerful tool of self-critique: Is there a standard service for the Triduum to utilize in the parish, or are pastors left to borrow, beg, and steal searching for "new content" to keep their parish engaged?[52]

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[49] Paul F. Bradshaw, "Easter in Christian Tradition," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 6–7.

[50] John Allyn Melloh, "Revising Holy Week and Easter Rites," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 229.

[51] Ibid., 228. Melloh emphasizes that though the liturgy, done correctly is its own sermon, it cannot stand alone. Effective preaching is also an invaluable way to help "present-ize or event-ualize the mystery."

[52] The author has greatly appreciated the Wisconsin Synod's Christian Worship Occasional Services which provides examples of rites to follow for Imposition of Ashes, Stripping of the Altar, The Service of the Holy Cross, the Seven Words from the Cross, and Tenebrae.

Yet, at the same time, celebrating Passover need not take away from the Triduum. Here again we may draw from the Quartodeciman practice that often celebrated the Passover well before Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Thus, the question is not asking what service the Passover can replace, but rather asking where does the Passover fit into the unity of Holy Week? For instance, one solution would be to use a Passover service on Palm Sunday evening, which is both the beginning of Holy Week and the first day of Passover (when the paschal lamb was chosen). Even as the traditional Passover ends with the Hallel from Psalm 118, "O LORD, save us (Hosanna!)… Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the LORD!" so too, the assembly can relive the shouts of the crowd as they welcomed the Passover Lamb into Jerusalem.[53] This way instead of breaking the unity of Holy Week, the Passover sets the stage as the *real* drama of the Triduum unfolds; Holy Week begins with the foreshadow and culminate with the shining reality of Easter Sunday.

2. Concerns within Judaism

Having examined the concerns within Christianity, this paper will shift focus to the two main concerns in respect to Judaism. The first is that the Passover Seder is an anti-Christian polemic and therefore to speak of a "Christian Seder" is a complete contradiction. There is some truth to this claim. Israel Yuval's analysis of the *Mishnah Pesaḥim* suggests that it is a point-by-point refutation of Melito's *Peri Pascha*. Other evidence suggests that later innovations in the Jewish Seder also unveil the tension between the two faiths in their early development. Such additions include hymns like *Dayyenu* (counteracting Melito's accusation of the ingratitude of the Jewish people),[54] and holding up the matzah bread and saying, "this is the bread of affliction" as a parallel dialogue to Christians holding up the host saying, "This is the body of

[53] Psalm 118:25–26. This Sunday observance would also allow the pastor to explore the rich typology of Easter without detracting from the drama of Christ's suffering during Holy Week.

[54] Yuval, "Early Jewish-Christian Dialogue," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 104. Yuval connects *Dayyenu* as a response to the traditional Christian *Improperia* for Good Friday Liturgy. Yuval says, "This is the context in which one should understand the dialogue between the *Improperia* and *Dayyenu*. The Christian prayer accuses the Jews of ingratitude; the Jewish prayer denies it. The end of *Dayyenu*, '[God] built us a Temple to atone for all our sins' is a kind of afterthought, indicating that Temple offerings atone, in contrast to the Christian claim that atonement comes through the crucifixion of Jesus."

Christ."[55] But some parts of the traditional Passover were also removed. For instance, in the retelling of the Exodus there is no mention of Moses as the mediator of God's Covenant—instead he is removed from the Seder to avoid a type of Christ.[56] Finally, the lamb was removed. As mentioned earlier, this was not so much a response to the destruction of the temple as it was a response to the Christian Passover sermons that pointed to Christ the Lamb of God.[57]

Whereas it is important for pastors to be aware of these theological undercurrents, it is equally important to note that a number of Jewish scholars such as Joshua Kulp are hesitant to fully endorse the Passover = Christian polemic bandwagon. Why? Whereas on the one hand this might keep Christians away from the Passover Seder, on the other hand pushing too hard down this road suggests not only have the rabbis broken from the original historic Passover,[58] but also demonstrates that modern Judaism owes its existence to being a reaction against Christianity.[59] All of this is evidence to the contrary that Judaism is the mother religion and Christianity the daughter faith—indeed this paradigm is being abandoned in favor of a "siblings" model: That the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD heralded the end of Biblical Judaism, and that from the ruins of the temple, each faith rebuilt along parallel lines.[60] At the very least this would suggest that both faiths have

[55] Yuval, "Passover in the Middle Ages," 150.

[56] Yuval, "Early Jewish-Christian Dialogue," 109–10. "The expounder need not entirely give up the detailed account from Exodus. But by including it as a gloss on Deuteronomy, where Moses is not mentioned, he can tell the story without mentioning the 'messenger,' thereby refuting the view that Moses is an archetype of Jesus."

[57] Ibid., 113.

[58] The removal of such integral parts of the Passover such as the lamb, Moses, and attempting to change the historic meaning and interpretation of practices like the hiding and "resurrecting" the afikoman all point to the fact that the Rabbis were so concerned with hiding or removing the Messianic content that pointed to Christ that they were willing to compromise the integrity of their sacred meal.

[59] The Christian-Jewish dialogue around the Passover is a long history of the Christian faith making the first move and the Jewish faith reacting. The four Gospels record Jesus fulfilling the Passover as the Messiah; the Jewish Rabbis begin removing the Messianic content from their Passover. Melito of Sardis produces the first written Haggadah, the *Peri Pascha*; the Rabbi's respond with *m. Pesaḥ*. The first printing of a complete Seder text was by the Franciscan, Thomas Murner in 1512. In response, the first Jewish printing press was established in Prague in 1526. This history is repeating itself today with the modern scholarly dialogue centering on "which tradition has the authentic claim to the Passover?"

[60] Kulp, 123. But notice how this model still favors Judaism as the "parent faith" because it ties Old Testament Judaism to Temple worship rather than faith in the Messiah. This temple model falls apart when we see that Old Testament "Judaism" still

claim to one in the same Biblical text and traditions. Whereas the Seder may represent a post-200 AD Jewish-Christian polemic, the Passover itself with its rich traditions and history has imbedded itself in the religious language and cultural identity of both traditions.

The second argument against Christian's use of Passover is one of cultural offense. In short, Christians are accused of hijacking something that, culturally speaking, has never belonged to them. It is true that in today's climate of sensitivity, the Christian wants to ensure that their actions do not offend someone for the *wrong* reasons and needlessly turn them away from the Gospel. Some have said, "How would Christians feel if their most sacred meal—the Lord's Supper—was being practiced by other faiths?" In academic circles, this "cultural robbery" is called anachronistic revisionism (i.e., reading contemporary Christian meaning into something that has historically carried Jewish meaning).[61]

Though this is certainly a case where Christians should proceed with caution, at the same time, one may also want to keep in mind that non-Jewish Seders are sanctioned all the time. Some of these sanctioned Seders including the Feminist movement, the Black liberation movement, LGBT, and even President Barak Obama was known for celebrating the first Seder in the White House.[62] These cross-cultural adaptations of Seders are perfectly admissible. As long as the message

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thrived before and after the destruction of the First Temple—instead the Temple was just "resurrected." Though modern Judaism's temple still remains in ruins, the Christian Temple was indeed rebuilt three days later.

[61] Rev. Dr. Timothy Jacob Wilkinson, "The Contemporary Protestant Seder: Anachronistic Revisionism?" *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 56 (2015), accessed November 10, 2019. "In instances where the Seder is practiced in such a way that its integrity as a Jewish ceremony is left intact, the Christian element is likely to be incompletely addressed. After all, the entire point of Christianity is that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). Omitting the belief that Christ is God incarnate from a 'Christianized' Seder would necessarily comprise the Christian content of the ceremony."

[62] Ibid. "In an article entitled, '*The Preposterous Politics of Passover: The Use and Misuse of the Haggadah in Our Time*,' cultural commentator Michael Medved catalogues what he considers to be numerous contemporary abuses of the Seder. He believes that the Haggadah has become a political battleground in the America's culture wars. For example, Rabbi Arthur Waskow began promoting a "*Freedom Seder*" after the assassination of Martin Luther King which celebrated the destruction of the "white man's stores" during the subsequent Harlem riots. He repeated the stunt in 2004 as a means of objecting to the George W. Bush administration. During the intervening years others used the Seder to promote a variety of causes such as eco-sanity, gay rights, peace between Palestinians and Israelis, and Latin American solidarity movements against tyrannical rulers."

is cultural liberation, these practices are not considered offensive nor are accusations of anachronistic revisionism levied against them. The offense to Judaism is not the fact that Christians are performing Seders (since there are numerous examples of sanctioned inter-faith Seder celebrations); the offense comes when Christians claim the Passover is fulfilled in Christ.

Though most want the question of Passover to remain a cultural issue, for the Christian the real issue is not cultural but exegetical: is the Biblical Passover simply a cultural narrative or is it a historic event celebrated for its fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ?[63] This is not about two competing views of the Passover, but two competing views of the Old Testament. Cannot the entire Christian view of the Old Testament be considered anachronistic revisionism—Christians attempting to impregnate "Christian meaning" into the historic Jewish texts? What about the use of the Aaronic blessing in the Divine service? Does this not belong to Judaism? What right do Christians have to use this ancient Jewish text in their Divine Service and, furthermore, claim that it is an Old Testament confession of the Triune God? Isn't this offensive to Jews? There is only one correct interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures, rites, and rituals: Jesus says, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me." Christians' use and proclamation of these texts confesses this one—Spirit inspired—meaning. It is no different with the Passover. This is so much more than "experiencing what Jesus *might* have gone through," but it is joining in the confession of the Old Testament saints that the real historical Passover happened when the Lamb of God painted the doorposts of eternal life with His blood, and three days later led His people through the sea of death into the glorious liberty of the Children of God.

Conclusion

This paper's purpose was to give an introduction to the debate surrounding the Passover so pastors can make an informed decision for its use in the parish. To this end, this paper has examined the different "essential elements" of the Passover—showing that these have their basis not only in Jewish tradition but also in the Old Testament. Secondly,

[63] When the content of the Passover is rightly focused on Jesus as its perfect fulfillment this will offend people. Jesus is the stone of stumbling; He is "the stone the builders rejected who has become the capstone" (Psalm 118:22). Much like Christianity today, the Christians of our ancient past also had a minority status in the Roman world. Yet that did not stop them from confessing the truth in love, nor did it discourage confessing the true Passover.

this paper examined different objections to Christian Passovers. Though there is a lot of theological and historical "yeast" to remove from other seders, Melito's *Peri Pascha* seems to provide grounds for a Christian Passover independent from the Jewish Seder tradition. At the same time, one would want to carefully distinguish their Passover from the Jewish and other Christian Seders[64] while also preserving the rich traditions of the Christian Church.

In the end, whether or not someone *can* use something doesn't answer the question if it is authentic. Is the Passover an authentic expression of the Christian faith? Authenticity is about remaining true to one's roots. When the old original bones of the past are allowed show through to the present, this demonstrates a deep continuity—some things don't change. This being said, it is worth noting that the Jewish Seder, as it exists today, is a long history of cover-up; attempting everywhere possible to hide the underlying bones of Old Testament faith under layer after layer of tradition. When these layers are peeled back, one can see that the true bones of Passover—indeed the faith of the Old Testament believers—clearly anticipated the coming Messiah. The first few centuries of Christians were so passionate about holding onto their celebration of the fourteenth because they witnessed those very Passover ceremonies fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Though modern sensitivities revile the thought, this suggests that the Christian has a more "authentic" Passover—not because it connects to the Jewish faith, but because it connects to the most ancient expression of the Christian faith.

Here the true Paschal Lamb we see,
Whom God so freely gave us;
He died on the accursed tree—
So strong His love–to save us.
See, His blood doth mark our door;
Faith points to it, death passes o'er,
And Satan cannot harm us. Alleluia!

[64] See chart on the next page. Though hardly comprehensive, this chart highlights some of the major themes and differences between the Passovers Seders one will find.

Then let us feast this Easter Day
On Christ, the Bread of heaven;
The Word of Grace hath purged away
The old and evil leaven.
Christ alone our souls will feed,
He is our meat and drink indeed;
Faith lives upon no other. Alleluia![65]

LSQ

Passover Distinctions

	Ecumenical Seder	Jewish Seder	Evangelical Seder	Melito's Pascha
Purpose of the Passover	Transcend cultural and theological barriers / carry on the theme of liberation	Relive the Exodus and preserve the living memory of Judaism	Relive Maundy Thursday and connect to the culture and time of Jesus	Relive the Passion of Christ through the Old Testament types / prophecies
Purpose of the Food	Connects one to the cultural narrative of the Exodus	Transports one *back* in time to experience the Exodus	Symbolic of the experience of slavery and deliverance	Transports one *forward* in time from prophecies to fulfillment in Christ

[65] Martin Luther, "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands," ELH 343 vs. 5, 7.

	Ecumenical Seder	Jewish Seder	Evangelical Seder	Melito's Pascha
Corporate Deliverance	Social Justice and Liberation theology	Freedom, Survival, Ushering in the Messianic Kingdom	Forgiveness of sins through Jesus' death on the Cross / salvation of Israel	Forgiveness through the blood of the True Passover Lamb / Destruction of Death!
Personal Deliverance	Overcoming oppression	Mystical connection with the past / prophet Elijah	Meaningful contact with Christ	Experiencing the Paschal mystery: passing with Christ from death to life
Celebrate the Lord's Supper	Sometimes during / after as an expres-sion of unity	Never!	As part of the Symbolic food of the Seder	Not during the Passover

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Resources for Passover Program

Food	Symbolism	Fulfillment
Salt Water	Tears	Sorrow over sin
Brown Egg *Haggagah*	Sacrifice	Thanksgiving for life
Parsley *karpas*	Bitter-sweet	Life and its struggles

Food	Symbolism	Fulfillment
Horseradish *maror*	Bitter labor	Sin and Death
Mixed nuts *haroset*	Mortar for bricks	Hard labor under the law
Shank bone *zeroah*	Strong Right Arm	Christ our mighty Savior
Matzah	Bread without yeast	Christ born without sin

Roles: There are several different roles to assign each person at your table (you can assign multiple roles or switch roles as you see fit).

Mother: lights candles at the beginning, says blessing; see parts 1 & 6
Father: leads many of the actions and speaking parts throughout program
The Wise Child: see part 6
The Simple Child: see part 6
The Wicked Child: see part 6
The Child that Does Not Know How to Ask: Does not speak; see part 6
Also identify: the **Youngest** and the **Oldest** at each table; see parts 6 & 12

Outline:	**Meaning:**	**Page:**
Brechat Haner	Candle Lighting	3
Kiddush	Cup of Blessing	3
Urchatz	Washing of Hands	4
Karpas	Bitter Herbs	4
Yachutz	Breaking the Middle Matzah	4
Maggid	Recitation	5
Rachatz	Washing of Hands	11
Motzi Matzah	Blessing of the Bread	12
Maror	Bitter Herbs	12
Korech	Sandwich	13
Sulchan Orech	Spreading the Table	13
Dinner is served & Intermission		**13**
Tzafun	Hidden Afikomen	14
Ha-Geulah	Cup of Redemption	14
Hallel	Cup of Praise	15
Nirtzah	Conclusion and Hymn Sing	17

Program Key:

Italicized Sections—Explanations and actions read by Narrator.

Bolded Names—Identify person or persons performing actions or speaking parts.

Bolded Italicized—Actions performed by participants during narration.

Excerpt from Passover Program

Mother: The LORD said to Moses at the burning bush: "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them ... but I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go."

Children: What did the Almighty do when Pharaoh would not let Israel go?

As each plague is named, each person ***dips their finger*** *into their wine glass to* ***place a single drop*** *on their plate. This is a solemn reminder that the gift of freedom must be purchased at the great cost of the shedding of blood, for "without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins:"*[66]

Blood*; God turned the water of the Nile into blood and all the fish in the river died.* ***Frogs****; God covered the land with frogs.* ***Gnats****; all the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats.* ***Flies****; dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and ruined the land.* ***Beasts****; all the livestock of the Egyptians died.* ***Boils****; Moses tossed soot into the air and festering boils broke out on men and animals.* ***Hail;*** *Hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation.* ***Locusts****; God sent locusts which covered the ground until it was black. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt.* ***Darkness****; God sent darkness upon the land that could be felt. Total darkness covered Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else.* ***Slaying of the firstborn****; At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon ... and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.*

Children: Is it for this that we praise the Almighty? For sending His plagues to punish the sins of our enemies?

Father: It is not for God's wrath, but for His mercies that we praise Him. In His mercy the Lord said, "Each man is to take a lamb for his family ... on the fourteenth day of the month ... slaughter them at twilight. Take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses ... On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt."

[66] Hebrews 9:22

Easter Exordiums

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Editor's Note: The exordium is a long-standing component of festival preaching in Norwegian Lutheranism. It is a brief message of festive joy lasting three to five minutes followed by the singing of the single stanza exordium hymn in our ELH: #142 (Christmas); #348 (Easter); and #399 (Pentecost). The present article includes two Easter exordiums.

First Easter Exordium

Christ is Risen … He is risen, indeed!

It was dark where they put him; sealed in.

There was no escape. They even posted a guard.

So much grief!

Even the judge knew it was unjust. He had tried and tried to find a way to release him.

He was innocent. He knew it was out of envy that they brought him before him.

It was those who accused him and condemned him that were truly guilty,

those conniving, deceiving traitors.

But they had fixed everything, or so they thought, to be rid of him.

Why? Why would people hate him? He had done so much good.

There were lots of people mourning for him.

Why? Why did he have to go there to pray?

Why did he have to go there, where people knew that he would be praying?

He prayed all the time. Couldn't he have skipped it this once or for a couple days.

He knew they were after him.

But what's done is done. They knew the end of the story.

There was no getting out of this now.

It was dark where they put him.

The raging and roaring lions surrounded him … but now they were silent.

What more could his enemies do against him? It was over …

And then morning came … The supposed tomb door was opened. Light streamed in …

And a voice … probably lots of voices … nervous, anxious, fearful, could be heard ...

"O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually,

been able to deliver you from the lions?" (Daniel 6:20).

Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!"

Those must have been such sweet, even if unexpected, words.

A human voice coming from the pit of death, having suffered, but not being overcome (Daniel 6:23).

Daniel then rose triumphantly out of the pit unharmed, because he had trusted in his God.

And of the enemies that put him there ... they themselves succumbed to their own devices.

Before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them

and broke all their bones in pieces (Daniel 6:21–24).

It's funny how history repeats itself, isn't it?

Or perhaps it isn't a repetition, but a foreshadowing.

Five hundred years later it wasn't a human voice that came from the pit, but an angel's…

"He is not here. He is risen."

The ending is the same: the enemies succumb to their own devices.

The judge has condemned them and throws them into their own pit to suffer eternal death.

Yet, those who trust in Jesus Christ will rise triumphantly out of their graves

when they hear the human voice of God call them forth and give them life once again.

Rise & rejoice with me as we sing our Exordium Hymn: #348 – He is Arisen! Glorious Word.

Second Easter Exordium

Christ is Risen … He is risen, indeed!

It was messy. No doubt about it. And it stunk.

Not just the situation, but the environment.

There had been lots of disobedience leading up to it (Jonah 1:3; 4:1–3).

How do you remove yourself from the Lord's presence (Jonah 2:4)?

They cast lots (Jonah 1:7).

There was blood-guilt. He was innocent of the death penalty as far as they knew (Jonah 1:14).

They tried everything they knew of to avoid it, but it didn't help (Jonah 1:5, 13).

Finally, they simply had to (Jonah 1:13).

Besides he told them it needed to be done (Jonah 1:12).

… As soon as it was done, they knew that they would not perish (Jonah 1:15).

And there he rested. He had sacrificed himself for the rest of the men (Jonah 1:14).

He was wrapped up (Jonah 2:5).

Yet even now, prayers came to his heavenly Father (Jonah 2:1).

Prayers of thanksgiving for His salvation (Jonah 2:9).

And that, even before he could see the light of day.

It had been three days.

For three days, he had laid there. What else could he do?

No one had ever returned from this.

But it was God's steadfast love that brought him back to the land of the living (Jonah 2:8).

And his captor had no choice but to disgorge him, to vomit him up (Jonah 2:10).

It was a completely unnatural act.

But he had more work to do. People needed to hear of their salvation.

They needed to know the Gospel of life.

And many believed and were saved because of it.

Who knows how long that fish smell clung to him. Like I said, it was messy.

But Jonah's story is a resurrection story, a foreshadow of what we are celebrating today.

In fact, his story was the sign that Jesus gave to those who didn't believe Him.

They were to be given the sign of Jonah,

"as Jonah was three days … in the belly of the great fish

so will the Son of Man be three days … in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).

People loved by God,

The one greater than Jonah is here (Matthew 12:41).

Not disgorged by a fish, but by death, and such an upheaval it is that all whom death has and ever will swallow up will be vomited up on the Last Day at our risen Lord's call.

And so that you and I and many others may be raised to life everlasting,

Jesus continues to work, calling sinners to repentance AND TO FAITH.

Rise & rejoice with me as we sing our Exordium Hymn: #348 – He is Arisen! Glorious Word. LSQ

Sermon on Exodus 14

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HAVE YOU HAD YOUR GREAT LIFE-DIRECTING experience yet?

A young woman was in a car accident that sent her to the hospital. That prompted her to pursue a career in medicine and she became a doctor. Some young people had an inspiring teacher who put them on a path to a special study that led to a life-long career. Meeting that special someone will always set a person in a lifelong direction. Later in life, you'll look back and say, yes, that is what changed everything. Has it happened to you yet? If not, it will. Look forward to it.

It can happen to groups as well. Our nation looks back to 1776, reveres the founding fathers and continues to follow the documents they produced. Our Evangelical Lutheran Synod, that owns and operates Bethany Lutheran College, looks back to 1844 and the outdoor worship service under two oak trees on the Koshkonong prairie in Wisconsin, and to 1918 when thirteen pastors gathered at a little church near Lime Creek in Iowa. If you haven't heard those stories yet at Bethany, you should and you will. They set us on a path that we are still following to this day.

It happened to the Israelites too, in a very big way. Their profound event is recorded in today's reading. You know the setting. The Israelites had been kept in slavery in Egypt, Moses was leading them to freedom, the Egyptian king Pharaoh changed his mind about letting them go and sent his army to bring them back into slavery. The Israelites were

trapped between the army behind them and the Red Sea in front of them. We read what happened next from Exodus chapter 14:

Text: *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. … Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen." And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.*

Exodus 14.21–23, 26–30 NKJV

Wow! What it must have been like to be there! We know this momentous event as "the Exodus"—that's a Greek word that means "departure." It was **the event** by which God in love saved His people from their lives of slavery, the defining event that determined their future. It's only a slight exaggeration to say you can't turn two pages of the Old Testament without finding a reference to it, a constant reminder that their God, the only true God, is the One who saved them from the pursuing Egyptian army by this great miracle of water—parting it for the Israelites and returning it to its place to destroy the enemy.

Let's pause a moment and ponder what a wonderful thing water is! Almost the simplest of molecules—two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom—but God has endowed this molecule with marvelous properties. Temperature changes its state. When cooled it becomes a solid; ice is lighter than the liquid so it floats atop the lake and life can be preserved beneath it. When warmer, it is the familiar liquid, so crucial for life and so taken for granted by us—we just turn on a faucet and it's always there. And as a liquid it's heavy, very heavy, so that ships, even the most massive warships, can float on it. When heated it turns into vapor that makes possible the weather system that carries water to nourish the

world's crops and forests. And here on earth we have a lot of it—there's no way that evolution can account for where all our water came from.

Now look to see in our reading that God chose water to bring about this momentous event that directed the course of Israelite life from then on, forever. You already sense where this is going don't you? I asked earlier: has the momentous event that guides your life happened yet? My answer for you is this: yes, it has. It happened with water. Just as God in His love chose water to save the Israelite people from slavery—and they looked back on that every day of their existence forever—so God has used water, the water of baptism, to rescue you and me from our slavery to sin and to change our destiny from the anger of God and the punishment we deserve to a new birth into God's family as His precious children.

Let me finally take you to a mountain top where another strange event took place, an event we call "the transfiguration of Jesus." Three disciples were blessed to observe Jesus there, shining in glorious light, talking with two men who appeared with him. One was Elijah, the Old Testament prophet. The other was Moses, the man who led God's people across the Red Sea on dry ground. And what were they talking about? The Evangelist Luke tells us; let me read Luke 9:31: "They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." Luke wrote in Greek, and the Greek word Luke used here that is translated "departure" was "**exodus**."

And Jesus then went down from that mountain to Jerusalem where he accomplished the greatest Exodus by giving his life for us on the cross.

You see, it is all one picture, and you and I are in it along with the Israelites leaving Egypt. God led His Old Testament people out of their slavery with a mighty exodus. God in Jesus Christ led all humankind out of our slavery to sin and death, with the most mighty exodus of all, winning forgiveness for everyone complete and free. Your sins are forgiven! Your life is in Christ now and forever! You are a precious child of God! And you received the seal and guarantee of that forgiveness and of that adoption in **the water** of your baptism.

If you are baptized, the most momentous event that guides your life has already happened. Look back on your baptism every day with gratitude and renewed strength. LSQ

Book Reviews

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Book Review: Faith Alone: The Heart of Everything

Faith Alone: The Heart of Everything. By Bo Giertz. Translated by Bror Erickson. Irvine, CA: 1517 Publishing, 2020. 286 pp. $19.99 (Paper). ISBN: 978-1-948969-35-2.

Bo Giertz (1905–98) is well known in the ELS through *Hammer of God*, which became widely read among American Lutherans after most of the 1941 book was translated from Swedish into English in 1960. The entire novel was made available in English in 2005. It has been required reading at both Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The life of Bo Giertz—Swedish pastor, bishop, and author—is a fascinating story of God's word triumphing over rationalistic modernism, in his personal faith and through his work. Giertz does not work out a way for biblical faith to capitulate to modern criticism. He fortifies the strongholds of sacramental faith, law and gospel, and liturgical spirituality. Probably the most high-profile stance Giertz took during his career was opposition to women's ordination at a time when the Church of Sweden was implementing it. Even in articles that would reference him regarding other issues, he would be labeled the "women's ordination enemy." His influence has been far reaching in Sweden and around the world, and that influence is ongoing through his many written works: exegetical, devotional, and pastoral writings in addition to the novels.

Faith Alone: The Heart of Everything was written in the same style (historical novel) and around the same time (1943) as *Hammer of God*. Though *Faith Alone* has been considered a prequel to *Hammer of God*, it was put

out for the first time in English just last year (2020), translated by LCMS pastor Bror Erickson and published by 1517 Publishing.

While *Hammer of God* focuses on Swedish religious life in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, *Faith Alone* brings us back to Sweden in the sixteenth century, when the nation was experiencing upheaval in almost every area of life. For over a century (1397–1523), Sweden was ruled by the Danish monarch under the Union of Kalmar, an agreement that united Norway, Sweden, and Denmark under Danish control. In the early 1520s, Swedish nobility gave their support to a man named Gustav Eriksson Vasa to counter Danish power under King Christian II, who in 1520 had violently put down Swedish resistance to his rule (the Stockholm Bloodbath). Gustav Vasa was successful in driving out the Danes, and in 1523 he was declared king of Sweden (Gustav I). This shift in governance coincided with the introduction of Lutheranism to the Roman Catholic nation, which Vasa encouraged.

Even after Gustav Vasa's consolidation of power, all was not well. Because his throne was newly established, Vasa was challenged by nobles and peasants on various occasions. He had funded his expulsion of the Danes with money from German lenders, which crippled his government's finances. To ease the debt, he raised taxes and, central to the plot of *Faith Alone*, skimmed wealth off the churches. He had newfound freedom after declaring the Swedish church independent from Roman Catholic control in 1524, and with that freedom he required church silver and bells be given over to fund his treasury. Little of this went over well with the Swedish people. Gustav Vasa faced uprisings, which he successfully put down, and the Lutheran faith had great obstacles to overcome since it had now been tied to Gustav's heavy-handed policies. In time Lutheranism did not just gain a foothold in Sweden. It became part of the fabric of Swedish life. Nevertheless, as the historical introduction to the novel states, "This was a traumatic and chaotic period, and the lives of many Swedes were deeply disrupted by these religious changes" (xiii).

In *Faith Alone*, Giertz brings this trauma and chaos to life through two fictional brothers, Anders (also referred to as Andreas) and Martin Ragnvaldsson (also spelled Ragvaldi). The brothers grew up in Östergötland, an actual region in southern Sweden. Martin, after being caught reading a Lutheran book at school, fled to Stockholm and entered government service as a scrivener. Working as a scrivener (cognate of "scribe") involved writing official documents and correspondence. Before the advent of typewriters and computers, virtually all governments, businesses, and other professional offices required scriveners who could read, write, take dictation, and sometimes work in several languages. In Stockholm Martin takes in the preaching of pastors who had studied in Germany with Martin Luther and came back with his insights. Anders, on the other hand, continued in Latin

school and became a Roman Catholic priest.

The collision course of the two brothers becomes quickly apparent. Not only are they on opposite sides of the religious shift taking place, they hold corresponding views of King Gustav's policies. Martin believes Gustav is sent from God to clear out foreign control as well as Roman Catholic error from Sweden. Anders, who is forced to account for his parish's treasures so they can be collected for royal funds, sees the king as a tyrant sent by the devil to pillage churches and destroy the old faith.

These paths of the brothers continue for much of the book, though they twist and turn along the way. They are coincidentally both at a battle, though on opposite sides, connected to the Dacke War. The Dacke War was an uprising begun by Nils Dacke in 1542 against Gustav Vasa for many of the reasons Anders objects to Vasa's rule. This battle causes each of them a crisis of conscience. The brothers are eventually reconciled, largely through the influence of a mediating voice in the novel, Peder, a priest who took up Lutheran teaching. He speaks as a pastoral voice, guiding Martin out of legalism to the truth of the gospel and then helping him share that truth with Anders. Self-righteousness and despair both rear their ugly heads, playing out in the areas of two-kingdoms theology, apostasy, and the lure of the Radical Reformation. However, the novel uses their faultiness to highlight the sturdiness of the gospel in Jesus' finished work, as is clear from the closing line of the book, "This is the heart of everything: the atonement and the forgiveness of sins" (271).

Though the book contains a good deal of historical references, foreign words (which are mostly defined and explained), and grammatical errors (they could have done a better job in the proofing before this first edition), it is still accessible for anyone willing to learn a little along the way. If your Scandinavian Reformation history is a little rusty, be sure to take in the historical introduction, written by Luther Seminary church history professor Mark Granquist. This historical introduction and the few basic maps included in the book go a long way in making the novel easier to follow. Something additional that would have been helpful is a dramatis personae, especially since the titles and the spelling of characters' names vary throughout the book.

As in *Hammer of God*, Giertz puts Lutheran teaching in clear relief against a backdrop of alternatives shown to be woefully inadequate. Woven into dialogue and character development, this approach makes *Faith Alone* essentially an exercise in Socratic teaching. It would be an excellent tool for catechesis at several levels.

A dominant theme in the novel is a growing clarity about the two kingdoms: the sphere of the world and the sphere of faith. In the beginning, only Peder, the Lutheran priest, really sees King Gustav as he should. Over the course of the novel, Martin's idolization and Anders' hatred of Gustav both settle into a biblical sense of citizenship: even the persecuting king is worthy of respect, taxes, and honor,

and even the best king cannot do everything God desires for the sinner.

For application to pastoral practice, the novel provides a good metaphor for catechesis of new Christians or those coming from other denominations. When people are brought to believe the gospel and live as members of the Lutheran church, their personal lives undergo a shift not unlike that the Swedes underwent at the Reformation. A convert's notions of time, government, death, life, guilt, responsibility, and sacredness are all in flux. Peder provides a glowing example for pastors. He is at the same time winsome and serious about the truth. He is at the same time gentle and firm as he gives people structure in faith and life who feel their framework for everything has just collapsed. "Confusing and traumatic" describe the experience of Reformation for whole nations, but those are also descriptors of the personal experience of those who join our congregations, especially when our biblical teachings are so jarring in comparison with the worldviews around us.

Finally, we who are busy and stretched thin get an opportunity in *Faith Alone* to refresh and refocus ourselves. The content of our ministry is simple: to administrate the reconciliation between God and sinners that Christ has prepared. Amid all the noise of politics, power, and personalities, now as in the past, Giertz shows God clearing a space with his word for the center of it all: what the law could not do, God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

The book rises to its highpoint in the context of divine service, fitting the high liturgical piety the ELS shares with the book's author. The end is worth the slow burn in the beginning as Giertz sets historical anchors and crafts the characters. Two-kingdoms confusion is never absent from our people or us, so the clear paragraphs Giertz writes on the subject, some of the best in the novel, are always timely. There is much to be praised in the book and its translation. Other pastors in the Synod have gone out of their way to recommend it, and this review has set out to do the same. If the novel were proofed and the translation smoothed out, a second edition would let shine even more brightly the heart of the book, the heart of everything.

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Book Review: Sent by the Shepherd: Seventy-five years at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

Sent by the Shepherd: Seventy-five years at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. By Gaylin R. Schmeling. Mankato, MN: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2021. 194 pp. $18.00. ISBN 978-0-931057-02-1.

"The opening of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary was a very significant event in the history of the

ELS" (37). Seventy-five years later, the history of the seminary has been chronicled by Gaylin R. Schmeling in the 2021 publication: *Sent by the Shepherd: Seventy-five years at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary*. Gaylin Schmeling is a well-qualified author having served as the seminary president for twenty-four years and as a professor of Lutheran church history.

In the preface the author states, "This history is intended to show the continuum between the seminary of the Norwegian Synod and our present seminary" (vi). In eleven chapters, the author draws that line of progression through seventy-five years.

Chapter 1 begins to trace seminary education from the days of Gisle Johnsen and Carl Caspari in Norway, at the University at Christiania, throughout the establishment of a professorship in St. Louis where 127 men graduated prior to the Norwegian Synod's establishment of a seminary in Madison, Wisconsin. The author notes how the Norwegian Synod found brothers in the faith with those German Lutherans. This arrangement was considered to be preparatory as when proper funds were available, a Norwegian school should be established.

Chapter 2 explains that the Lord's grace and mercy did not come to an end for Norwegian Lutheranism in 1917 when the merger occurred between the Norwegian Synod and two other synods. For the next twenty-eight years, the synod again became dependent upon her sister synods for seminary training. Yet a synod cannot remain strong and healthy without its own seminary for pastoral training. The purchase of Bethany Lutheran College also led to the eventual establishment of the seminary with a shared Board of Regents and faculty.

Chapter 3 relates how the responsibility of maintaining the new seminary fell to Norman A. Madson Sr. who was called as the dean of the seminary and taught most of the classes. He is most remembered for his teaching of homiletics. Soon, he was joined by George Lillegard and C. U. Faye while Bethany Lutheran College president, S. C. Ylvisaker, served as the seminary president. These men had been "through the wars" prior to the Norwegian-Lutheran merger of 1917 and understood the unique needs of the synod.

Chapter 4 leads to the time of M. H. Otto who joined the seminary faculty in 1957. At the time of his death in 1982, two-thirds of the pastors in the synod had received much of their theological training under Prof. M. H. Otto. During his years, Otto taught the core classes of the curriculum. The "Mequon Program" began during these years as did the current vicarage program.

Chapter 5 speaks of the fourth decade of the seminary's existence which brought both maturity and changes to the institution. Maintaining the Norwegian Synod's tradition of a mid-October "remembrance of the zeal and dedication of the forefathers to Christian education," the cornerstone was laid for a seminary building in 1977. Previous to this, the Rev. Theodore A. Aaberg, who is described as "one of the most important theologians that the

reorganized synod produced," was called as the full-time seminary president. Due to ill health, he tendered his resignation shortly before his death. The Rev. Glenn Reichwald served as acting president.

Chapter 6 brings the reader to the years when Wilhelm W. Petersen served as president. Along with considerable changes in the faculty, a new seminary building was dedicated in 1997. Among the artwork in the building, photos of the fathers of the Norwegian Synod are placed in the atrium, reminding all who enter of the synod's rightful claim as the theological successors of the old Norwegian Synod. President Petersen especially is remembered for his pastoral heart and his stress on pastoral theology. During these years, the ELS had discussions regarding the Lord's Supper and participated in the founding of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

Chapter 7 begins in 1997 when Gaylin Schmeling was installed as the president of the seminary on the same day when the current seminary building was dedicated. During the following years, the work of the seminary advanced quietly. A number of changes in the teaching staff took place with the new millennium. During these years, the synod experienced considerable discussion about the public ministry of the word which culminated with a formal statement in 2005. Much of this time, Melvina Aaberg served as the secretary of the seminary and "brought warmth and a Norwegian kindness to the seminary."

Chapter 8 emphasizes that the chief purpose of the seminary continues to be to prepare men for the public ministry. The three things that predominate in seminary education are the same as the historic teachings of the orthodox Lutheran Church: the central article of justification by faith alone, the Lutheran doctrine of the means of grace, and the predominance of the gospel.

Chapter 9 reminds the reader that the seminary belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the people of the synod support the seminary. Today the seminary offers a Vicar Workshop, Seminary Retreats, Pastors' Institutes, and Study Tours. In addition, the seminary provides a library, rare book collection, an annual Reformation Lecture, and publishes the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. As it looks to the future, it continues to stand with St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and U. V. Koren.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod observes frequent anniversaries. In part, this is a testimony to the synod as the spiritual successor of the Norwegian Synod. The author has succeeded in demonstrating this point. Not only does Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary continue the historical continuation of the Norwegian Synod but, of far greater importance, it stands with historical orthodox Lutheranism rather than bending with the trends of current society.

This volume is written from a doctrinal perspective allowing the reader to place seminary education within the broader context of Lutheran history. The additional

side-bar information provides a wealth of related information. Of special note in this 194-page volume are the numerous illustrations which bring an added dimension to the text. Interestingly, the headings of the first seven chapters contain the signatures of the leaders of the seminary. A time-line chart of the professors who have served at the seminary could have been a helpful addition to explain the changes that have occurred and place them in context with one another.

The final two chapters of the book include a complete listing of the Reformation Lectures. This makes a convenient index to the lectures as they are published in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. A year-by-year photographic list of seminary graduates also is included.

This volume stands as a commendable companion piece to the centennial history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod: *Proclaim His Wonders*. It is a book that reaches beyond the interest of anyone who has graduated from this seminary or has interest in the history of the ELS. The doctrinal approach of this book makes *Sent by the Shepherd: Seventy-five years at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary* an appropriate resource for the contemporary seminary education that continues today among confessional Lutherans.

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