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LSQ Vol. 62, Nos. 2 & 3 (June & September 2022)

GOD HAS NOT CALLED THE MEMBERS OF HIS church to have a blind faith in the reliability of the Scriptures because it can be shown clearly, and even easily, that the text of the Scriptures that is available today is far more reliable and certain, relative to the autographs, than any other ancient work of literature. In addition to the physical evidence which proves the reliability of the Scriptures, the philosophical evidence is also compelling. When those two areas of proof are combined and viewed in light of each other, then there is no reasonable basis to conclude that the text of the Scriptures is unreliable and not worthy of trust. This is the emphasis of the essay by the Rev. Paul Webber, entitled "The Relationship Between Faith and Reason in the Reliability of the Scriptures." The Rev. Webber is the pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in West Jordan, Utah.

Christian prayer is an act of worship in which we speak to God from the heart asking something of Him or thanking Him for His mercy. In the essay, "Prayer: Prayer Warriors, Prayer Chains, and the Efficacy of Prayer," the Rev. Michael Lilienthal discusses many practical questions concerning our private prayer life and prayer in corporate worship. The Rev. Lilienthal is pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Albert Lea, Minnesota.

Teaching is a vital part of the public ministry. It isn't only the Lutheran elementary teacher who is teaching, although they play a very vital role in the public ministry. Nearly every facet of the pastor's work

entails teaching. The essayist points out that the pastor is certainly an important Christian teacher. The essay, "Striving to Be Ideal Christian Teachers," by the Rev. Milton Otto, was presented at a Bethany Lutheran College faculty workshop on August 29, 1963. The Rev. Otto was dean of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary for many years.

Pastoral education has always been an important aspect of the public ministry. Those in the public ministry should be properly trained to carry out the labors that God has given them by divine call. The essay, "The Divine Art of Shepherding: A History of Pastoral Education," provides a general overview of pastoral education throughout the life of the church. The essay was written by Dr. Timothy Schmeling, professor at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota.

Herman Amberg Preus (1825–1894) was the organizer of the early Norwegian Synod. He was born in Kristansand, Norway, and in 1851 he arrived at Spring Prairie, a little north of Madison, Wisconsin, where he spent his entire ministry. He was president of the Synod for thirty-two years (1862–1894). At his funeral, Koren preached, calling him a *skrift teolog*, that is, a scriptural theologian. This essay, "Pastor Herman Amberg Preus as I Knew Him," by the Rev. Adolph Bredeson, portrays a colorful picture of the life of H. A. Preus.

There are many views of baptism in church bodies today. This essay, entitled "Baptism in Church History," considers the doctrine of baptism from a historical perspective. It indicates that regenerational baptism and infant baptism were maintained throughout the Early Church. Also it is noted that many of the baptismal customs that we practice today have their origin in the Ancient Church.

Also included in this quarterly are three sermons and a book review.

– GRS

The Relationship Between Faith and Reason in the Reliability of the Scriptures

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LSQ Vol. 62, Nos. 2 & 3 (June & September 2022)

MANY CHRISTIANS WOULD PROBABLY BE alarmed to learn that the autographs of the books of the Bible have been long lost to history. This is because many Christians, this author believes, have a faulty, Mormon-esque, understanding of the transmission of the text of the Scriptures, something along the lines of golden plates which have been passed down, in perfect pristine condition, throughout the centuries. And, in a certain sense, this mentality is logical in light of the high view of Scripture held to by the Confessional Lutheran Church and many other biblically conservative denominations and church bodies.

But when this misunderstanding about the transmission of the Scriptures comes into contact with the reality of the situation, whether in the classroom or through the media, there is a very real danger posed to the faith of those people because they have been trained or allowed to wrongly think something which is demonstrably false.[1] It is certainly not necessary to search in academic journals to find evidence of this. The media and entertainment industry have shown themselves to be more than happy to broadcast the claims of those who cast doubt, with evidence, on the reliability of the text of the New Testament, and by connection, the validity of the Christian faith. One of these experts, a

[1] Jeffrey Kloha, "Manuscripts and misquoting, Inspiration and Apologetics" (Lutheran Concerns Association Annual Conference, Fort Wayne, January 19, 2015), 1, https://concordiatheology.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Manuscripts-and-Misquoting-Kloha-LCA-2015.pdf.

best-selling author who has even done the late-night talk show circuit, is Bart Ehrman.[2]

Ehrman is an interesting individual for a number of reasons, one of which is that there was a time in his life when Ehrman was a Christian who trusted the Bible and worked to defend it against the claims of those who would cast doubt on the Bible's reliability. But when Ehrman was a graduate student, he wrote a paper in which he attempted to harmonize a seeming discrepancy between a historical statement made in Mark's gospel and the Old Testament. In response to this paper, Ehrman's professor asked him why he could not just admit that Mark had made a mistake in what he had written? Ehrman points to this experience as one which opened his eyes to see that the Bible is a human book full of errors and contradictions. As a result, Ehrman lost his faith.[3]

Ehrman teaches that it is no longer possible for the text of the New Testament to be honestly presented as a completely reliable representation of the autographs. There are a number of reasons for this. One of these is simply that the autographs, regardless of whenever and wherever they were first written, had to be copied. For much of history, the only way for this to happen was by human hand. It should not be hard to imagine why the hand copying of these manuscripts would have naturally resulted in variants between the original and the copies. Factors such as bad hearing, bad lighting, and lapses in memory could all have easily resulted in accidental changes to the text. But in addition to those variants that came about by mistake, it can be shown that some copyists intentionally made changes to the text. This could have been for as seemingly an innocent reason as smoothing out the language, according to their own judgment. Or it could have been because the copyist believed that the original text presented some doctrinal problem which needed to be corrected.[4]

There is also the account of a gathering of bishops in Constantinople around the year 350. At this gathering a bishop named Tryphyllios, who was an eloquent individual, quoted Jesus when the latter said, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." But when Tryphyllios quoted those words of Jesus, instead of using the colloquial word for bed that is found in the original text, he substituted a more refined Greek word. Upon hearing this, another Bishop got up out of his seat and criticized Tryphyllios

[2] Ibid., 2.

[3] Douglas Groothuis, C*hristian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), location 4861, Kindle.

[4] Bart Ehrman and Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament,* 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 251–258.

saying, "Are you better than Jesus who used the word you are ashamed to use?" What this shows is that it was not just simple copyists, who may not have known better, who were willing to knowingly introduce changes to the text of the New Testament, or who would have done so by mistake. The leaders of the early church were also guilty of this.[5]

But in Ehrman's opinion, the most egregious example of copyist error is found in a manuscript of the four Gospels that is currently held at the British Library. Ehrman explains that this particular manuscript must have been copied from another manuscript which had the genealogy in Luke's Gospel in two columns. But instead of copying the text by following the columns, the copyist followed each line entirely across the page. As a result of this, not only are almost all of the sons and fathers wrong, but the name of God is included within the genealogy instead of at the close.[6]

Bruce Metzger also observes:

> It was inevitable that handwritten copies of the Epistles would contain most of these as they are obviously accidental. But some of these differences arose from deliberate attempts to smooth out, or fix the grammar or eliminate perceived obscurities in the meaning of the text. For these accidental and intentional reasons hundreds and perhaps even thousands of variant readings arose just in the years immediately following the authorship of the New Testament texts.[7]

For reasons such as these, it is essentially impossible to know how many changes were made deliberately, or by mistake, to the texts of the various books of the New Testament as they were copied, and copied and copied again. Church fathers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian accused heretics in their day of corrupting the Scriptures in order to create support for their heresies, so this was a known problem for the ancient church.[8] Thus Ehrman and many other experts today say that it is difficult or even impossible to talk about the original text of some of the books of the New Testament.[9] And Ehrman himself observes: "If God really wanted people to have his actual words, surely he would have miraculously preserved those words, just as he had miraculously

[5] Ibid., 261.

[6] Ibid., 259.

[7] Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Bible society, 2002), 2–3.

[8] Ibid., 267–268.

[9] Ibid., 273.

inspired them in the first place. Given that he didn't preserve the words, the conclusion must be that he hadn't gone to the trouble of inspiring them."[10]

So what is the reply to all this? Is Ehrman correct that the evidence indisputably points to the unreliability of the text of the Scriptures? Confessional Lutheran textual scholars answer with a resounding, No! But the reason why such scholars as Jeffrey Kloha, James Voelz, and many others disagree with Ehrman's claim that the Scriptures are not reliable, and therefore cannot be divinely authoritative, is not because they dispute the evidence on which Ehrman bases his conclusions.

Ehrman is correct that the autographs are long lost to history. There is an astounding amount of textual evidence for the books of the New Testament available to scholars today, and not one of the over six-thousand whole or partial manuscripts that have been found are identical and in complete agreement with each other.[11] Even though the autographs of the books of the New Testament were given by divine inspiration, the copying and dissemination of these books was very much a human process. Laziness, sloppiness, and other regular human failings resulted in the rise of variants. And there were some scribes who, it seems, were willing to make intentional changes to the text which they believed caused problems for the doctrines they had been taught.[12]

But it is very important to remember that the reason why all this is known is the vast amount of evidence that exists today. John Warwick Montgomery observes: "The New Testament text is far better attested than that of any other work of ancient literature. Its problems arise not from a deficiency of evidence but from an excess of evidence. In the case of no work of Greek or Latin literature do we possess manuscripts so plentiful in number or so near the date of composition."[13] So even though it would certainly be "easier" for conservative Biblical scholars to make the case for the reliability of the text of the Scriptures if there was much less evidence which was much more in agreement, it is certainly still much more of a blessing than a curse that there is so much textual evidence that can be studied today.

And contrary to popular notions, the manuscripts of the New Testament books are, for the most part, very consistent. The differences

[10] Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 211.

[11] Kloha, 6.

[12] James Voelz, *What Does This Mean*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 31.

[13] John Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus*, 5th ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 75.

between them tend to be small and have almost no impact on how the manuscripts would be translated and understood.[14] And the recent discoveries of early fragments and manuscripts in recent years have only confirmed the stability of the text of the New Testament as it is understood.[15]

But this does not mean there is not still work for textual critics, or that this work is not necessary. Popular media has and surely will continue to amplify the voices of those who claim that the Bible is not reliable. These claims will reach the ears of traditional Christians, causing them to wonder if what they have read and heard from their pastors about the truthfulness and reliability of the Scriptures is really true. So there is the inward-looking apologetic need for the study of the text.

And there is also the need for this study for the sake of honoring God's inspired word. Kloha writes:

> It is the Scriptures of which we speak; it is a desire to teach and preach precisely God's Word, and nothing else, that the expenditure of our time and attention is necessary. Because the Lutheran church relies on Scripture and not church tradition to establish truth, any changes to the Biblical text made as the text was handed down in the church must be identified and resolved. We do not want to teach the things of man as if they are of God.[16]

So it is also out of respect for God's Word that textual critics are obligated to study it, and even to decide what should, indeed, be categorized as God's Word. But naturally there is discomfort in this prospect, not only for lay people but even for clergy who, like the author of this paper, are not especially experts in the Biblical languages or the transmission of the text. This is why it is important to remember that the task of textual scholars is not to grant authority to God's Word, as if God himself was being put on trial before a jury of men, even well-educated faithful Christian men.

God's Word establishes its own authority. It is authoritative because it is from God. But the study of the manuscripts by which the Word of God has been passed down through the ages is necessary in order to establish which words are God's and which words are men's, even if that means deciding that some passages which, in the past, were granted the

[14] Kloha, 12.
[15] Ibid., 13.
[16] Ibid., 14.

authority of God's Word should no longer retain that authority on the basis of the available evidence.[17]

Approximately 97% of the text of the New Testament is certain, agreed upon by essentially all scholars. This, just by itself, is a sign that the text of the Bible is reliable.[18] And in addition to the fact that 97% of the text of the New Testament is certain and agreed upon by all, there is Scriptural basis for all the doctrines of the Christian faith found in the passages that comprise that 97% figure. But because the Bible is not just another book, 97%, even though it is good, is not enough. Textual scholars work to determine, as best as can be known, what the remaining 3% of the New Testament should be, or rather what the remaining 3% *is*.[19]

The process for weighing the evidence between variant readings can be complex, involving not only knowledge of the Biblical languages, but also handwriting, history, geography, and other factors. But essentially there are two kinds of evidence that are considered when deciding which readings should be preferred and included in the text of the New Testament that is published and translated and presented to the world as "the Bible." These are internal evidence of the text, what the words say, and the external evidence of from where and when the manuscript came.

According to Voelz, there are some textual scholars who contend that the internal evidence of the text is not a good basis for determining what should be included and excluded. This is because making that decision on the basis of the internal evidence relies too much on the subjective judgment of the scholar. So instead of relying on internal evidence, the earliest manuscripts should be preferred when wading through the variants and establishing the text of the New Testament.[20]

But then there are scholars who contend that the oldest manuscripts should not be preferred just because of their age. Instead, those manuscripts that are most widespread should be preferred, because that greater acceptance and use by Christians who lived far closer than

[17] Ibid., 14. On page 11 of his essay which this paper cites, Kloha writes that it is in keeping with the spirit of the Reformation for textual scholars to consider the option of excising some passages if the evidence supports that action. "Luther had no difficulty removing a passage from the text when the evidence warranted it, a lesson that should be learned as we study other passages as well.

[18] Groothuis, 5045.

[19] Kloha, 10.

[20] Voelz, 54.

scholars today to the time of the original authorship of these texts would be a strong proof for their reliability.[21]

But it is not even so simple as weighing the age of certain manuscripts and readings against the more widespread use of other manuscripts and readings. There is also the factor of different "text families" which developed in and around the main centers of theological study in late antiquity, such as Alexandria and Constantinople. As congregations were founded around those cities, and copies of the Scriptures were produced for those new congregations, whatever variant readings that were found in the chief text which was copied in the major city would be multiplied and spread.[22] Not surprisingly, the manuscripts from within these text families are usually very consistent and unified in their readings.[23]

However, the textual evidence to which scholars have access from earlier in history, from the 6th century and earlier, is not so unified and consistent. In these oldest manuscripts, one can find a mixing of traditional and textual characteristics which would disagree with the assumptions of scholars based on the text families that developed centuries later, but still in the first millennium AD.[24]

It is for these reasons that textual criticism is far from a mathematical calculation. The task of wading through the available evidence to the end of reconstructing the original text of the books of the New Testament is much more of an art than a science.[25] And even the most thorough, faithful, research will not always give clear answers to all the questions. Voelz observes: "It is by no means obvious at all times what should be considered the original text of a book. Were there multiple versions of books? Were there multiple copies of epistles, that were not exactly the same, that were sent out simultaneously?"[26]

And Bart Ehrman and Bruce Metzger (in a work which they co-wrote) comment:

> Even though, in many cases, textual critics are able to ascertain with certainty what the original reading was in the case of variant readings, occasionally this is not possible, none of the variants presenting themselves, or being presented by the evidence, as the original which

[21] Voelz, 56.
[22] Metzger, 4.
[23] Voelz, 39.
[24] Ibid., 40.
[25] Metzger, 16.
[26] Voelz, 79.

> stands above the others. This is why, in textual criticism, one must seek not only what can be known, but also what cannot be known.[27]

So what is the assessment of the physical evidence for the reliability of the text of the Scriptures? Related to that question, how can the Bible be described as inerrant if the original content cannot be 100% verified from the study of the available evidence? Essentially, the answer to those questions is that the reliability and inerrancy of the text of the Scriptures does not depend solely on empirical proof that there are no questions whatsoever surrounding the text possessed by the Church today.

It is helpful to look to the example of the church fathers to see how they handled these questions which were already present in the first millennium. Kloha recounts the example of Jerome, who was one of the greatest language scholars of the early church, when the latter was faced with the question of a seeming disagreement between the Gospels regarding the timing of Jesus' resurrection. Jerome wrote:

> This problem has a twofold solution. Either we do not accept the testimony of Mark, because this final portion is not contained in most of the Gospels that bear his name—almost all the Greek codices lacking it—or else must affirm that Matthew and Mark have both told the truth, that our Lord rose on the evening of the Sabbath, and that He was seen by Mary Magdalene in the morning of the first day of the following week.[28]

Jerome was not especially bothered by what some saw as a discrepancy. He continued to trust in the reliability and divine authority of Mark's Gospel even though there were questions about its ending.

It is interesting that even Bart Ehrman, who has become famous for casting doubt on the reliability of the text of the New Testament, admits that the consensus manuscript for each book of the Bible is a faithful representation of *a* text that was produced at a specific time and place, and which then served as the basis for all the later copies that textual critics weighed and evaluated.[29] Ehrman is not willing to say that the consensus manuscript for each book of the Bible is a faithful representation of the *autograph* of that book. But he is willing to say that modern scholarship has been able to arrive at the manuscript which was

[27] Ehrman and Metzger, 343.
[28] Kloha, 8.
[29] Ehrman and Metzger, 274.

the source for all the copies and fragments to which textual scholars have access today.

To this author, this seems like an unwillingness on the part of Ehrman to give himself and other scholars of the text of Scripture the credit they deserve. It is possible to establish, on the basis of the physical evidence, that the text of the New Testament, which has certainly gone through the filter of the minds and pens of men and been subject to the failings of men, is still reliable. Christians do not have to worry that the Bible they possess "misquotes" Jesus as Ehrman famously asserts.

The reason why Ehrman and others reject the divine authority of the Scriptures is because the texts of the various books have not been preserved in a perfectly-pure, obviously divinely-guided manner. But this is a dishonest standard to which to hold the Bible, far beyond what any other book of history would be subjected to. Such an "all or nothing" approach to the authority and reliability of the Bible is simply not in keeping with how historians treat and view other documents of history. If a document has been proved to be generally reliable, that reliability is not undone just from one or a few demonstrable mistakes. And it is far from clear that the Bible contains mistakes, for if it did, would not the experts of the past, who were *at least* as knowledgeable as the experts of the present, have been equally disturbed by them?[30]

When Ehrman and other critics choose to focus all the attention of their readers onto the small number of the most interesting and significant variants in the text of the New Testament, they mislead their readers into thinking that those few difficult-to-answer questions represent a greater body of uncertainty in the Scriptures than actually exists. Douglas Groothuis wisely observes that those people whose faith is shaken and lost as easily as Ehrman's suggests that instead of coming to the Scriptures with an open, but still trusting mind, they are actually looking for reasons to not trust the Scriptures and abandon their faith.[31]

The purpose of textual criticism is to arrive at as faithful a version of the text, relative to the autograph, as possible. The purpose of textual criticism is *not* to empirically prove the doctrines of inspiration or inerrancy. Jack Kilcrease observes:

> We can trust the scriptures as reliable because God in Christ promises that they are reliable, not because we can perceive directly

[30] Groothuis, 4861.
[31] Ibid., 4883.

> that the text of the scripture is free from error.[32] … It is a form of rationalist enthusiasm to perceive every seeming contradiction, discrepancy, or scientific misrepresentation as calling into question the status of the Bible as a reliable, inspired, testimony until those matters can be worked out through empirical evidence. Faith in the word of God should not be provisional or conditional. It should be absolute as Faith demands.[33]

Kloha, who is himself a well-respect textual scholar concurs regarding the limitations of his craft:

In the end, we either trust the promises of Christ, or we do not. "Surely I will be with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20):

> But when the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me" (John 15:26)… We cannot make the Scriptures authoritative, we cannot prove them to be authoritative; any foundation or method which depends on our interpretation or reconstruction is, by definition, self-referential, self-serving, and ultimately uncertain. Only one based on Christ and his promises, which we know through his Word, is certain.[34]

To conclude the first section of this paper which focuses on the physical evidence for the reliability of the Scriptures, yes, it is most definitely possible to make a strong apologetic case for the reliability of the Scriptures on the basis of the physical evidence available to scholars today. The fact that Ehrman and others are not convinced of the reliability of the Scriptures from the available evidence is not because the evidence is lacking, but is because they are approaching the evidence asking the wrong questions and looking for the wrong answers.

These words from the British historian, A. N. Serwin White, written more than half a century ago, are still very applicable today: "It is astonishing that while Graeco-Roman historians have been growing in confidence, the twentieth century study of the Gospel narratives, starting from no less promising material, has taken so gloomy a turn. This gloom should be replaced by a much more optimistic spirit."[35]

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[32] Jack Kilcrease, *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *Holy Scripture*, ed. Gifford Grobien (Fort Wayne, IN: Luther Academy, 2020), 2:109.

[33] Ibid., 110.

[34] Kloha, 16.

[35] Groothuis, 4748.

The focus of this paper will now shift to the philosophical evidence for the reliability of the Scriptures. Perhaps the description, philosophical evidence, is somewhat inadequate for what this section of the paper desires to present. But what this author means by the philosophical evidence is the non-physical evidence that the Scriptures are reliable and, as the scholars cited in this section would put forward, that the Scriptures are necessarily without error. This paper will focus especially on the philosophical arguments for the reliability and inerrancy of the Scriptures put forth by two scholars, John Warwick Montgomery and Jack Kilcrease.

Neither Montgomery nor Kilcrease dismiss the importance of textual criticism and the physical evidence for the reliability of the Scriptures. However, both of these men remind their readers that the physical evidence for the reliability of the Scriptures is not sufficient to prove that the Scriptures are divinely authoritative. Kilcrease writes:

> Just as the validity and power of the sacraments does not depend on the ability of Believers to detect the invisible presence of divine grace in them, so also the scriptures are not regarded as inerrant because human reason and investigation can overcome every apparent error and discrepancy contained in the scripture … Even though Christians accept Christ, his resurrection, and the authority of the scriptures not merely on the basis of historical evidence, there is a significant amount of historical evidence that validates these realities.[36]

And Montgomery also writes:

> It may be taken as certain, therefore, that anyone who selectively rejects the New Testament but retains confidence in documents of secular antiquity is either ignorant of the facts or so biased against the case for Jesus Christ that she prefers a rationality to what she perceives as the dangers of Christian commitment.[37]

In the above comment, Montgomery mentions the danger of the Christian commitment. What he means by this is that there are far greater ramifications for accepting the historical reliability and authority of the Bible than there are for accepting the historical reliability and authority, relative to the author of course, of other written

[36] Kilcrease, 100.
[37] Montgomery, 77–78.

works. Montgomery also points out that even though the claim that the Christian Church does not possess the autographs of the New Testament is correct, the same is true for essentially all of ancient literature. That claim is even true of all the plays written by William Shakespeare. But the lack of the autographs does not, at all, deter scholars from asserting with confidence that they possess texts which accurately reflect the works of Shakespeare.[38]

But asserting that the text of the Scriptures is reliable and historically accurate carries with it much more spiritual and moral baggage. Because if the Scriptures are accurate, and if they clearly present Jesus Christ as dying and then rising from the dead, then naturally it is necessary to believe in him, and submit oneself to his authority in one's life and faith. This would explain why many scholars are unwilling to admit that the Scriptures are historically reliable but are willing to admit the reliability of other ancient works of literature even though the evidence for the latter is much thinner than for the former.

But, at the same time, it is understandable why the Bible would be held to a greater standard, because it clearly presents itself as a divinely given document, not just the work of men. And one of the ways the Bible does this, which is the first philosophical case for the reliability of the Scriptures on which this section of the paper will focus, is through prophecy and fulfillment of those prophecies.

Montgomery makes the case that the vast array of fulfilled prophecies in the Christian Scriptures can only lead one to logically conclude that the Scriptures are authoritative and without error. First, Montgomery explains what constitutes a legitimate prophecy. A prophecy cannot be ambiguous or vague so as to allow for any number of possible fulfillments. Prophecies must be specific, so that the connection between the prophecy and its fulfillment will be obvious and clear.[39]

The next requirement for a legitimate prophecy is that it be impossible for the one who made the prophecy to influence events to ensure that the prophecy is fulfilled. For example, it would not be a legitimate prophecy if the author of this paper told his wife in the morning that he would go to the grocery store that afternoon. But the prophecies in the Bible are not so trivial as that. Montgomery points to the examples of the murder of the innocents of Bethlehem and the Messiah being betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, both events that were predicted hundreds

[38] Ibid., 76.
[39] Ibid., 135.

of years before those predictions were fulfilled.[40] And of course there are many more than two Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Christ which have been fulfilled.

Montgomery explains what this means, logically and mathematically:

> If one arbitrarily sets the probability of the occurrence of a single valid Old Testament prophecy of Christ at 50-50, then the probability against 25 of them happening by chance is 1 in 33 million. But since the likelihood of any one of these prophecies succeeding is considerably less than 50-50 ("behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son."), we can legitimately lower the probability of one occurrence to 25%. The probability against 25 similar events transpiring by chance would then be one in a thousand trillion.[41]

Montgomery anticipates the objection some might make that Jesus was able to arrange his life in such a way that he would fulfill a number of the Old Testament messianic prophecies. Montgomery admits this is possible, but he points out that Jesus hardly could have arranged the time, place, and manner of his own birth, or the number of pieces of silver agreed upon by the chief priests and Judas for the latter's betrayal.[42] And if the gospel writers would have attempted to lie in their works in order to make the life of Jesus fit with the Old Testament messianic prophecies, the fact that they wrote their works within the lifetimes of people who would have known they were lying would have made it impossible for the gospel writers to get away with it.[43]

But of all the Messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in the life of Christ, far and away the greatest was the prophecy of the resurrection. Something which is interesting about this prophecy is that even though it is present in the Old Testament, many centuries before it was fulfilled, it was also given by Christ himself. But this would not violate the rules Montgomery gives for what constitutes a legitimate prophecy, because it is impossible for someone to claim that on the third day after he is killed he will rise from the dead. That is, it is impossible for someone to make that claim unless he is, himself, God.[44] Therefore, because the Bible contains such a great number of fulfilled prophecies, prophecies

[40] Ibid., 136.
[41] Ibid., 136.
[42] Ibid., 137.
[43] Ibid., 81.
[44] Ibid., 138.

and fulfillments which meet the most rigorous standards, Montgomery asserts it is necessary to conclude that the Bible is the product of divine revelation. And if the Bible is the product of divine revelation, then it is also necessary to conclude that it is without error.[45]

When this author first read the above conclusions from Montgomery, his reaction was that Montgomery was giving a philosophical answer to a question which demanded physical evidence. However, this author has come to understand that the question of whether the Scriptures are reliable and without error is not one that relies on, or can be answered, solely on the basis of the physical evidence.

However, because the question of the reliability of the Scriptures is one that is being asked today nearly 2,000 years after the Scriptures were first written, and because this question is being asked with full awareness of the agreed upon process by which the Scriptures were handed down through the generations of the church in a way which can only be described as human and fallible as this paper has already presented, this author believes that Montgomery's philosophical conclusion regarding the relationship between fulfilled prophecies and the reliability of the Scriptures is somewhat lacking.

This does not mean that Montgomery is incorrect in his conclusion about the autographs of the books of the Bible. But, as the sainted Robert Preus wrote, "Inerrancy pertains only to the canonical Scriptures, and only to the original autographic texts. There is no preclusion of error in copies and versions of the Bible."[46] It is not possible to philosophically prove, as this author believes Montgomery tries to do, that the inerrancy of the autographs has automatically been carried down through the ages to the text of the Scriptures that the church possesses today. Certainly Montgomery's evidence would strongly support that the Bible in general, and the Gospel of Christ in particular, is reliable and worthy of faith. But the evidence Montgomery presents is not able to prove beyond any doubt, or beyond the need for faith, the complete truthfulness of the text of the Scriptures today.

The need for faith, or trust, brings this paper to the next point Montgomery makes for the reliability of the Scriptures, including even the text possessed by the church today. This is that Jesus, himself, had a perfect trust in the Scriptures. Now, of course, during Jesus' earthly life the Scriptures were only the Old Testament, so the objections raised by

[45] Ibid., 135.

[46] Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), 55.

scholars against the reliability of the text of the New Testament would not have been applicable. But by that time in history the autographs of the Old Testament books had also been long lost. The Old Testament had also gone through a process of textual transmission which had resulted in the presence of variant readings of the Old Testament text.[47]

But never once did Jesus cast doubt on the complete reliability and divine authority of the text of the Old Testament. Jesus frequently quoted from a wide variety of Old Testament books, often prefacing his quotations with the statement, "It is written," which clearly indicates Jesus' own faith and confidence in the words he was about to quote. Montgomery observes, "It cannot seriously be doubted that Jesus viewed the Old Testament as a unitary work with a single, divine author."[48] "Jesus never criticized the Old Testament. He accepted its teachings in every respect."[49]

This is no minor point. Jesus, who is shown in the Gospels to be the very definition of a reliable individual, mentally fit with sound logic and reason, had complete trust in the reliability of the text of the Old Testament to which he and other believers had access at that time in history. And because Jesus proved himself to be more than just a reliable person, but also God, who would have known if the text of the Old Testament had been corrupted and was unreliable, Jesus essentially bound his own divine reputation to the reputation of the Scriptures.[50] Montgomery concludes his point: "If Jesus was mistaken in his evaluation of the Old Testament and its reliability, then he could not have been God incarnate, and thus he would not have the ability to save mankind by his work on the cross."[51]

This argument certainly is an argument from Scripture, about Scripture, which skeptics would probably dismiss as a circular argument. But it is necessary to remember that serious scholars no longer deny the existence of Jesus as a historical figure, nor do they deny that the Gospels give the most reliable view of who Jesus was and what he did and said."[52] Therefore, even those individuals who do not personally trust in Jesus for their salvation, but who at least acknowledge his existence in history and the soundness of the moral guidance he gave in

[47] Voelz, 63.
[48] Montgomery, 139.
[49] Ibid., 140.
[50] Ibid., 146.
[51] Ibid., 148.
[52] Groothuis, 4727.

his preaching and teaching, would hopefully take seriously the obvious trust Jesus had in the Old Testament Scriptures.

But what about the New Testament Scriptures? How should the actions and words of Jesus affect how people today view the reliability of the Scriptures that were written decades after Jesus ascended from the earth? Now that Jesus has ascended out of human perception to the right hand of God the Father, the way that Jesus promises to still be with his church and exercise authority in it is through the words of Scripture. The Scriptures are the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus himself being the cornerstone, on which the church is built.[53]

Apart from the Scriptures, the Christian Church on Earth would have no knowledge of, or access to, the historical events prior to and of the life of Christ. Without the Scriptures, those events which culminated in the redemption of the world would be lost to history, and therefore not result in the salvation of the world. For this reason, Kilcrease writes, it is necessary that the Scriptures through which the human race has awareness of and access to Christ be not only inspired and preserved in their general framework, but that these Scriptures be completely without error.[54] Kilcrease explains:

> Without scriptures that are fully inspired, God's historical acts of revelation would remain hidden, lost, or at least twisted beyond recognition. Modern theologians who reject the inspiration of the scriptures, or at least the full inspiration, effectively make the claim that after revealing himself in history, God made no Provisions to ensure that his Revelation would be handed down to future generations. Such a decision on God's part would be very out of character and would not agree with the analogy of faith.[55]

This is actually a very compelling point. Just as the triune God bound himself to the fate of the human race at the first giving of the Gospel,[56] so also at the incarnation God bound himself to ensuring that the Gospel of the incarnate Son would remain with mankind in all its truth and purity. If God did not ensure that his Gospel remained in the world, and not just the basic story but in a state of inerrancy, then God

[53] Kilcrease, 98.
[54] Kilcrease, 90.
[55] Ibid., 90.
[56] Ibid., 51.

would be leaving it up to chance and the works of men for the human race to be able to know Christ for salvation.[57]

The reason why it is necessary for God to preserve his true word in the world as Kilcrease asserts is that knowledge of Christ is not the same sort of knowledge as knowing about other important people in the history of the world. To know Christ means to know him through faith, as Kilcrease puts it, having a "participatory knowledge" so that trusting in Christ, one can "taste and see that the Lord is Good."[58] Looking at the issue more from the perspective of the faith which is believed, but still agreeing with Kilcrease's point, Preus writes: "If scripture is not entirely true it cannot be the organic foundation and source of theology. The organic norm of faith and life must be subject to no doubt whatsoever."[59]

God has not just given his word to the world, but God has actually attached his grace and forgiveness to the word that he has given. In this way the Word of God is, by itself, sacramental in its character and power.[60] And when the Word of God is united with the earthly elements of water, bread, and wine, according to God's institution and purpose, then the Word of God effects a sacrament according to the traditional definition.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism:

> For as truly as I can say, "No man has spun the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer out of his head, but they are revealed and given by God Himself," *so also I can boast that Baptism is no human trifle, but instituted by God Himself*. … Baptism is quite another thing than all other water; not on account of the natural quality but because something more noble is here added; for *God Himself stakes His honor, His power and might on it*. Therefore *it is not only natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water, and in whatever other terms we can praise it,-all on account of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word*, that no one can sufficiently extol, for it has, and is able to do, all that God is and can do [since it has all the virtue and power of God comprised in it]. … Therefore we always teach that the Sacraments and all external things which God ordains and institutes should not be regarded according to the

[57] Ibid., 92.
[58] Ibid., 92.
[59] Preus, 80.
[60] Kilcrease, 93.

> coarse, external mask, as we regard the shell of a nut, *but as the Word of God is included therein.*[61] (Emphasis added)

The point that Kilcrease and Luther are making together here is that if there is any doubt, whatsoever, concerning the Word of God, then it is necessary to also doubt the validity and salvific power of the sacraments. And if one doubts the sacraments, how can one not also doubt the power and promises of God to save and be with his church. "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."[62] "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever."[63]

This author finds the argument from Kilcrease to be very compelling, assuming that one already accepts and believes in the basic authority and reliability of the Bible. In fact, this argument from Kilcrease could be described as the missing link, as it were, between the reality of the reliability, truthfulness, and power of the Scriptures, and the extent to which physical and philosophical evidence are able to prove that reliability, truthfulness, and power.

Reason, used ministerially in that way, is able to show that the Scriptures, and by connection Christ, are historically reliable. But reason is not able to empirically prove the power of the Scriptures to save. That is something which can only be perceived in faith, trusting in the promises God has made concerning his word.

After God inspired the writing of the books that comprise the New Testament, God did not directly and consistently intervene in human history so as to guide the process of the transmission of those books in such a way so as to completely avoid the introduction of errors and inconsistencies between the original texts and their copies. It is possible, even likely, that God did guide the process of the transmission of the text of the Scriptures so as to ensure that his promises concerning the Scriptures would be kept. But this would have been akin to raising up certain men at times of special need in history, such as Athanasius and Luther, where there is no actual proof that God intervened.

Perhaps many Christians would prefer that God had made his guiding of the transmission and preservation of the text of the Scriptures more obvious. But that was not God's plan. And even if God had worked in history so that there were no variants in the text of the New Testament, so that it was "pure," it would be wrong to assume that

[61] LC IV, 6; LC IV, 17; LC IV, 18 (https://bookofconcord.org/large-catechism/part-iv/)

[62] Matthew 28:20.

[63] Isaiah 40:8.

a great many more people would believe the gospel and be saved. The "danger," as Montgomery put it, of admitting the reliability and divine origins of the Scriptures would still be present even if the unreasonable and overly rigorous demands of Ehrman and others for the reliability of the text were met. The true Christian faith would still be in those things that are not seen and cannot be known apart from faith.

But God has not called the members of his church to have a blind faith in the reliability of the Scriptures because it can be shown clearly, and even easily, that the text of the Scriptures that is available today is far more reliable and certain, relative to the autographs, than any other ancient work of literature. In addition to the physical evidence which proves the reliability of the Scriptures, the philosophical evidence is also compelling. When those two areas of proof are combined and viewed in light of each other, then there is no reasonable basis to conclude that the text of the Scriptures is unreliable and not worthy of trust.

As Western culture becomes further and further removed from the traditional Christian worldview, and from the assumption that the Bible is reliable and trustworthy, it will only become increasingly necessary for all Christians, regardless of their vocations, callings, and level of education, to know the evidence that the Scriptures are reliable, for their own sake and for the sake of being able to defend the reasonableness of their faith and giving an answer to those who ask about their hope in Christ. LSQ

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Prayer: Prayer Warriors, Prayer Chains, and the Efficacy of Prayer

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PRAYER REQUESTS COME FROM ALL SORTS OF places, and in this internet-saturated age, digital requests are becoming even more prevalent. This creates a conundrum for pastors and Christians who may not know the identity of the asker. Certainly, we wish to fulfill the apostle's injunction to offer "petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings … for *all people*" (1 Tim. 2:1), but we also would prefer to avoid offering a false prayer, or a prayer for something contrary to God's will, or a prayer that implies fellowship with those with which we do not have any true confessional unity.

The concept of "Prayer Warriors" is connected to this, as is the "prayer chain." Email chains since the late twentieth century have been a source of annoyance to grandchildren—the old, *"Forward this email to 10 friends or have bad luck!"* Obviously, that's a scam and is better deleted. But what about the email that ends, "*Forward this to 10 friends who will join their prayer to ours—1 John 5:14–15*"[1]? Aren't you pierced with a little guilt when you hit the "delete" button on that one? But frequently we do so, and there's good reason.

There are certain misunderstandings, and even abuses, that come about with some of these theologies of prayer requests. At the core is this simple dichotomy when a person asks another to "pray for me," they can mean, effectively, one of two things: 1) *My* prayer is not worthy of God's

[1] "This is the confidence that we have before him: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we also know that we receive the things we have asked from him."

audience by myself, and therefore I need the intercession of someone else with greater merit or spiritual strength. 2) I wish my brothers and sisters in Christ to unite their prayer to mine, as a demonstration and exercise of the close fellowship and bond we share as members of the body of Christ.

Certainly there are shades within and between these two, some more insidious than others, and some relatively harmless if not actually beneficial, but we see that a prayer request will either divorce a person from the body of Christ and put him into the sphere of "all people" (1 Tim. 2:1) who need to be prayed for, especially so that they may be brought into the body of Christ;[2] or unite a person into a strong tie under that body (Rom. 15:30), fulfilling the Lord's command to "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). And for either one, a Christian is directed to pray.

So how ought we to respond, as pastors, as Christians, and as a synod, when we receive prayer requests? In the first place, there is never a situation in which we should not go to God in prayer when asked. So yes, always say "yes" to a prayer request, even if we may have to offer a somewhat different petition than the one specifically requested for the sake of confession or to avoid causing offense. False practices, this further means, must never be incorporated into our prayer (instead, we should emphasize and keep ourselves aware of true practices and theology in prayer). And finally, whether the prayer request comes from a place of correct or false understanding, prayer should always be accompanied by the Word of God.

Always Say "Yes" to a Prayer Request

Prayer is the exclusive exercise and privilege of the priesthood of all believers, for, "The Lord is far away from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous" (Prov. 15:29). We might even say it is our obligation, because "the Christians' prayer sustains and governs *instrumentaliter* the whole world."[3] This touches on the concept of prayer's efficacy.

In some of the false theology of Prayer Warriors,[4] prayer is turned into a facet of synergism by which God is able to work in the channel

[2] Cf. this petition in the Prayer of the Church: "Open the door of faith unto all unbelievers and unto the people of Israel" (*ELH*, p. 48).

[3] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. Walter Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–1957), 3:80.

[4] The term "prayer warrior" likely has its origin ca. 1907 from "Kingdom Notes," *The Christian Work and the Evangelist*, 82 (April): 543, and has since then been used

you have opened by your prayer to accomplish his purposes, especially to instruct you how to pray so that it moves the spiritual forces in the right direction to win a battle for God's kingdom.[5] Prayer-Warrior theology blurs the distinction between God and man, between Creator and creature. Through the power of our prayer, teach the Prayer Warriors, we can accomplish things that (although they would never say it explicitly) God *can't* do without us. Compare this statement, related by self-proclaimed Prayer Warrior Stormie Omartian about her experience praying for the Berlin wall to fall: "I did not have enough faith to believe that wall would come down, but I had faith that the God of the impossible could do anything He willed to do *if He could just find enough people to go to battle for Him against the enemy in prayer*."[6]

But we are not God, nor do we have power over him beyond what he has promised. Despite this, prayer is efficacious, and in support of this fact we have numerous passages of Scripture: "If you ask me for anything in my name," says Jesus, "I will do it" (John 14:14). In another place, "I tell you, everything that you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24). One of the most famous is from the epistle of James: "The prayer of a righteous person is able to do much because it is effective" (5:16). Just how much prayer can do, and the extent of its efficacy, is the matter of the debate.

Martin Luther outlines three essential motivations for prayer in his Large Catechism: 1. It is a duty and a command; 2. God has given a promise and comfort attached to it; and 3. God has taught us the very way to pray. "And the first matter is to know that it is our duty to pray because of God's commandment."[7] In other words, because God said so. For any Christian, that ought to be answer enough. We faithfully regard any petition brought before us, therefore, as an opportunity with which our Lord presents us to speak to him. But God still gives more motive for our prayer.

C. S. Lewis cites Pascal, who says "that God 'instituted prayer in order to allow His creatures the dignity of causality'…. He made His own plan or plot of history such that it admits a certain amount of free

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primarily in the context of Dominion Theology. It has deep inroads into all facets of popular American Evangelicalism.

[5] Cf. Stormie Omartian, *Prayer Warrior* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 188: "When a situation or person is going in the wrong direction—that is, against the will of God—He will show you how to pray and take it in the direction of victory for the glory of God."

[6] Omartian, *Prayer Warrior*, 132–133, emphasis added.

[7] LC III.5, (*Triglot* 699).

play and can be modified in response to our prayers."[8] We might regard Lewis's analysis here a little too speculative, but the core remains true, that God has promised to listen in prayer, and even assigns it some power: "The prayer of a righteous person is able to do much because it is effective" (James 5:16). Pieper's assertion, again, is right. The Christian's prayer sustains the world. And this is tied to the bleeding heart of Johann Gerhard, who preached: "Where there is true love in the heart, there one also takes on the needs of the neighbor. However, if a person takes to heart the neighbor's need, then one most certainly will pray for him."[9] So we see the union of love and power in the context of prayer requests. Pastors are urged to "look at people as Jesus does: souls for whom he died."[10] That means we ought to see the people around us with a sense of urgency and deep love, and we can recognize the tools we bear to bring them salvation: the Word and Sacraments especially, but also prayer.

Put another way: love for our neighbor and faith in God's promise will lead us to pray at every opportunity.

And we even have God's own teachings for our prayers. Especially see Jesus' instruction: "Therefore pray like this," at which point he taught the well-known Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9). This really removes any excuse we would have against offering a prayer. God has told us to do so, and even promised that he hears and that the prayers would have great effect, and further, he has taught us how to pray so that we can't back out—even sealing the deal with a promise regarding silent prayers: "We do not know what we should pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that are not expressed in words" (Rom. 8:26), which reflects Jesus' own declaration that "your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matt. 6:8). Notice that this is not used as a roadblock to prayer but *as a reason to pray!*

The question of prayer's efficacy is rendered moot. Can prayer change the mind of the omniscient God? Or is prayer futile because, *que sera sera*? Question no further! God knows what you need, he has laid his plan for your salvation and promised it to you in his Son, therefore, *pray*.

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[8] C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock,* in *The Timeless Writings of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Inspirational Press, 1996), 371.

[9] Johann Gerhard, *Postilla*, trans. Elmer M. Hohle (Malone, TX: The Center for the Study of Lutheran Orthodoxy, 2003), 1:404.

[10] Harold L. Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 222.

Finally, here is a simple syllogism to prove that a Christian always honors a prayer request brought before him: 1. A Christian is never not praying (1 Thess. 5:17),[11] and praying for all people (1 Tim. 2:1),[12] especially for his neighbors (Luke 10:36, 37).[13] 2. A person who asks a Christian to pray for him is his neighbor, and someone for whom a Christian *may* pray. 3. Therefore, a Christian prays for that person.

Now, notice that there are some gaps in this syllogism, especially that little sneaky phrase under heading 2.—"someone for whom a Christian *may* pray." The question has to be asked: Who is there for whom a Christian may *not* pray? One clear example from the Confessions is the dead: "nothing has been [divinely] commanded or enjoined upon us concerning the dead."[14] Therefore, if a request is made that we pray for so-and-so's dearly departed relative or friend, we cannot honor that request.

And yet, we may still pray for that neighbor. Here is one example of our having to *alter* the petition we offer from the request made—and this itself is out of "true love" for that neighbor, when we have actually "take[n] to heart the neighbor's need."[15] A true motive will not want to pray to our neighbor's detriment, or to pray contrary to God's commands. In short: "the will of Christians as expressed in their prayers coincides with the all-sustaining and governing will of God,"[16] or as a footnote of Pieper's has it: "All that the Christians ask is asked 'according to His will.'"[17]

It is best to regard prayer simply as have faith in God and love your neighbor. Therefore, the warning is not to incorporate any false or erring practices into prayer.

Never Incorporate False or Erring Practices into Prayer

One clear error has already been presented, that of prayers for the dead. Related to this is the other blatant (to Lutheran and Reformed eyes) error of the Roman Catholic Church: the invocation of saints. The Augsburg Confession has addressed this error clearly and succinctly:

[11] "Pray without ceasing."

[12] "First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people."

[13] "'Which of these three do you think acted like a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers?' 'The one who showed mercy to him,' he replied. Then Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

[14] SA II.ii.13 (*Triglot*, 465).

[15] Gerhard, *Postilla*, 1:404.

[16] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:80.

[17] Ibid., 3:80n135.

> Of the Worship of Saints they teach that the memory of saints may be set before us, that we may follow their faith and good works, according to our calling, as the Emperor may follow the example of David in making war to drive away the Turk from his country. For both are kings. But the Scripture teaches not the invocation of saints or to ask help of saints, since it sets before us the one Christ as the Mediator, Propitiation, High Priest, and Intercessor. He is to be prayed to, and has promised that He will hear our prayer; and this worship He approves above all, to wit, that in all afflictions He be called upon, 1 John 2:1: If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, etc.[18]

To summarize, we rely on no one for an answer to our prayers except Jesus Christ. For his sake, because of his merits and intercession, our prayers are acceptable.

This does relate in a rather unexpected way to the concept of Prayer Warriors. I have heard several Catholics explain that prayers to the saints are not worship, but in fact are imploring help from those of greater faith and merit to add their prayers to one's own, implying that by this the prayer becomes more acceptable. Prayer-Warrior theology also has built up a number of super-meritorious saints on earth whose prayers, when added to your own, make yours more acceptable or effective. "This is what being a prayer warrior is all about," says Stormie Omartian. "It's about consistent paying and making those prayer deposits in that heavenly bank until one day you need a major withdrawal."[19]

Now, there are certainly points in the theology of Prayer Warriors like Omartian that seem acceptable and even parallel what the theology of the Bible and Lutheran Confessions would state. For example, Prayer-Warrior theology emphasizes being certain of God's audience and grace. "You can't win the battles you will face if you are not convinced you have authority as a prayer warrior."[20] She even explains, "The foundation for your authority in prayer is that you have received Jesus and have *His Spirit* in your heart."[21] In other words, faith grants sure and certain authority in prayer. We might compare Jacob who, when he wrestled with God, declared with defiance and authority, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Gen. 32:26). Martin Luther certainly spoke no less strongly when writing in the Large Catechism:

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[18] AC XXI.1–4 (*Triglot*, 57-59).
[19] Omartian, *Prayer Warrior*, 154.
[20] Ibid., 62.
[21] Ibid., 59, emphasis original.

> But all depends upon this, that we learn also to say Amen, that is, that we do not doubt that our prayer is surely heard, and [what we pray] shall be done. For this is nothing else than the word of undoubting faith, which does not pray at a venture, but knows that God does not lie to him, since He has promised to grant it. Therefore, where there is no such faith, there cannot be true prayer either.
>
> It is, therefore, a pernicious delusion of those who pray in such a manner that they dare not from the heart say yea and positively conclude that God hears them, but remain in doubt and say, How should I be so bold as to boast that God hears my prayer? For I am but a poor sinner, etc.
>
> The reason for this is, they regard not the promise of God, but their own work and worthiness, whereby they despise God and reproach Him with lying, and therefore they receive nothing. As St. James 1:6 says: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. Behold, such importance God attaches to the fact that we are sure we do not pray in vain, and that we do not in any way despise our prayer.[22]

It might even be surprising to hear these words from Gerhard: "St. Paul, in Eph. 6:10ff., wants to equip spiritual warriors who **will be able to withstand the evil assaults of the devil.** He additionally states that a person should **in the Spirit steadfastly pray in every situation.**"[23] "So also a spiritual, combat-ready warrior must have similar weapons—faith and the fruits of faith, i.e., the Christian virtues with which he protects himself, and the Word of God and prayer with which he fights."[24]

The warfare of prayer is also expressed by the ELS's *Catechism & Explanation:*

> Through the work of the Triune God we have become members of Christ's kingdom. In spite of this the devil, the world and our sinful flesh continually try to destroy us. These enemies desire to rob us of faith and prevent us from keeping God's commandments. Left to

[22] LC III.119–124, (*Triglot* 731).
[23] Gerhard, *Postilla*, 1:410, emphasis original.
[24] Ibid., 414.

> ourselves we would lose this battle. But God has invited us to come to Him in prayer for His help.[25]

LCMS pastor Bryan Wolfmueller has tapped into this concept as well: basing his statements on the Large Catechism, he says, "We are, therefore, at war, and we wage this war with the Word of God and prayer. … Prayer, then, is our fighting back against the troubles of this life. 'Pray' is the positive side of the negative command 'Do not worry.'"[26]

This language sounds strikingly similar to the phraseology of the Prayer Warriors, but these representatives of Confessional Lutheran theology all approach the subject with an entirely different basis. Prayer Warriors assume a power God has not guaranteed. The clear words of Scripture direct us to claim the power God has *given* to the Christian warriors who may bear the weapon of prayer alongside the sword of the Spirit.

In practical terms, when it comes to avoiding erring or false practices, Prayer Warriors will in the first place emphasize prayer groups in which we, for reasons of fellowship, may not take part. We want to avoid giving the impression that we agree theologically with those who deny various teachings in Scripture. Now, "Prayer Warriors" are not a denomination, but are a cross-denominational movement like the Charismatics—and it does share many similarities with that movement. By this fact itself, even calling oneself a "Prayer Warrior" implicitly allies oneself with all who label themselves in the same way, whatever the denomination, whatever the confession. For fellowship reasons alone, confessional Lutherans should avoid the term.

But more than the term, the practices of Prayer Warriors are in many cases contrary to Scripture, and where not contrary, at the very least dangerous to true faith. There is a fine line between Prayer-Warrior theology and the true teaching of Scripture, but where that demarcation comes in is the difference between *theologia gloriae*, trusting in some way upon the merits of man, and *theologia crucis*, resting our whole confidence on Christ and his cross and resurrection.

This paragraph from Stormie Omartian's influential book is telling:

> Believers can suffer from cross fire too, but that's because they don't understand a war is going on and they are in it. Far too many

[25] *An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* (Mankato, MN: Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2001), 155.

[26] Bryan Wolfmueller, *Has American Christianity Failed?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 204.

> believers are being knocked around by the enemy of their soul and their life, but they think bad things just happen to them because that's the way life is. So they are not actively engaged in the war, even though they are on the receiving end of the consequences of that war. They are attacked and become wounded and incapacitated because they are totally unprepared to face enemy opposition. They are completely uninformed about how to do battle.[27]

The implication is always that a person cannot be sure of his salvation if he is not a Prayer Warrior. And more than that, tragedy in a person's life, teach the Prayer Warriors, is attributable to a failure to pray rightly, i.e. *theologia gloriae*. Omartian relates the case of a pastor's wife she knew who failed to pray as she ought: "As it turned out, their daughter's life was ruined in a horrible car accident, and their son had such disagreements with his parents that the family split apart. Their church dwindled so much that the pastor eventually lost his pastorate completely."[28] Omartian would be very comfortable giving the advice of Job's friends, e.g.: "Be reconciled with God. Be at peace with him. Then good will come to you" (Job 22:21).

Therefore, Prayer Warriors serve in the form of a sort of new monasticism: "When you pray *as a prayer warrior*, you are serving God directly and intimately," says Omartian, implying that those who do not pray with that title or who serve in any other vocation in life are *not* serving God in such a meritorious way.[29] This theology even encourages a person to neglect other God-given vocations in favor of withdrawing to pray: "When you are engaged with the Lord, you have promised to love and serve only Him. When other things cry out for your time and attention, there comes a point when you have to respond by saying, 'I'm engaged. Engaged with my Lord. And I want to spend time with *Him*.'"[30] Prayer Warriors are effectively placed into a higher and holier sphere than the rest of us.

And the emphasis is always on the good works to be done by the individual: "In this war we have victory over the enemy, but we still have to fight each battle in order to see victory happen."[31] "Jesus secured our freedom from control of the enemy, but we still have to establish that liberty in our lives and in the lives of others. We do that in prayer as

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[27] Omartian, *Prayer Warrior*, 12.
[28] Ibid., 43.
[29] Ibid., 134, emphasis added.
[30] Ibid., 138, emphasis original.
[31] Ibid., 14.

prayer warriors."[32] "God gives us a free will, and we are judged by what we choose to do in response to what God says."[33] As much as Omartian objects that she gives all glory to God, by her attitude and theology she glorifies and gives credit to the fervor of her own prayers and those of other Prayer Warriors. "We prayer warriors don't receive much credit for our labor from people who are not prayer warriors themselves," she protests with a martyr's façade, "but we have the great reward of seeing God move in response to our prayers."[34] It boils down to what she calls the "hard-and-fast law of the universe": that "we reap what we sow," or we earn, by our works and prayers, the blessings of God.[35] "The only way this is not true," she says, "is when we confess and repent of the bad things we have sown. Even then, sometimes we have to reap the bad crop before we can reap the new crop planted with good seeds. We can appeal to God's grace so that we won't receive what we deserve, but that cannot be manipulated. God decides."[36]

This last quote is worth examining closely. The summary of this karmic philosophy is that you get what you deserve, unless you repent, in which case you *might* get better than you deserve. In this case, your sin has put up a blockade to the prayers you want answered, but if God is feeling particularly gracious, he might lower it, even if only a little bit. See how much of this theology causes you to depend upon your own worthiness!

Omartian's book does have a chapter entitled, "See What's Happening from God's Perspective," which gives a glimmer of hope for some better theology. However, the beginning of the chapter is taken up by a story the author relates of a member of her Prayer Warrior group who was fast declining in the hospital. One might expect the story to end with this friend, "Roz," passing away and the rest of the "solid prayer warriors—who established boundaries in the spirit realm that the enemy could not cross,"[37] learning the distinction in prayer that we teach our catechumens:

> When praying for that which is necessary for salvation, we should ask unconditionally; when praying for other gifts, we should ask that God grant them if it is His will. … God sometimes answers

[32] Ibid., 29.
[33] Ibid., 50.
[34] Ibid., 132.
[35] Ibid., 186.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 177.

> our prayers by giving us something better than what we ask for; He may also delay His answer in order to train us in Christian living.[38]

But this was not the perspective of God that Omartian learned, or that she wished her readers to gain. Instead, the perspective she wrote about is the spiritual aspect of physical battles. While we certainly would agree that Jesus is the Savior of both spirit and body, her ultimate point was, once she could see from God's perspective (i.e., see *where* the Devil was aiming his attacks), she and her "amazingly dedicated band of intercessors"[39] could direct their defense more effectively.

> When we first began praying for Roz, she was very weak, her breathing was labored, and she could hardly talk above a whisper. But the more we continued to pray, the more she showed signs of renewed strength right before our eyes. While we were praying, I felt strongly led to remove the numerous bouquets of flowers from her room and put them in the hall outside her door. We continued praying for about twenty minutes, even though nurses came into her room to check on her. They seemed totally fine with what we were doing. By the end of our prayer time she showed remarkable improvement. Her strength had revived, she was breathing normally, and her countenance had visibly changed. She became more animated and talked freely and clearly. She vigorously described how much better she felt. She said, 'This is a miracle.' And we all agreed. By the time we left, she seemed totally well.[40]

That detail about the flowers demonstrates additionally that Prayer-Warrior theology is rife with what Luther called the first heresy: Enthusiasm.[41]

Now, Omartian has praised the power and work of the Word, but in many cases it is deemed secondary to the immediate operation of God's Spirit. Again, the certainty of grace and salvation is called into question, supplanted "by a forced, man-made assurance based on 'feelings,' which fail when terrors of conscience assail man."[42] This is the key emphasis of Prayer Warriors: "You leap into a situation in prayer and God shows you how to take it in the opposite direction from the way it is headed. … When a situation or person is going in the wrong direction—that is,

[38] *Catechism & Explanation*, 157, nos. 238, 239.
[39] Omartian, *Prayer Warrior*, 177.
[40] Ibid., 178–179.
[41] See SA III.viii.5, 6 (*Triglot*, 495).
[42] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics,* 3:130.

against the will of God—He will show you how to pray and take it in the direction of victory for the glory of God."[43] This perspective demonstrates how the false theology of the Prayer Warriors is an awful web of *theologia gloriae*, enthusiasm, and synergism.

Right prayer and the theology behind it, in contrast, demonstrates *theologia crucis*, the means of grace, and *sola gratia*.

Wolfmueller summarizes the distinction: "Prayer is not putting a quarter in the heavenly vending machine and pushing the right buttons so a blessing will fall down upon us. Prayer is wrestling with God, grabbing ahold of His promises, and even if He tries to get away, we don't let go until He gives a blessing, until He *keeps His promise*."[44] Whereas Prayer Warriors will emphasize the warfare of prayer as Christian vs. the Devil, we recognize all fronts of this war, including the enemies of the world and our own sinful flesh, and sometimes even how the experiences of life would seem to indicate that God himself is our enemy. The common illustration, again, is of course Jacob wrestling with God. In prayer, we wrestle with the God who seems to betray himself, until he gives what he has promised. We wrestle with the God who has seemed to abandon us until we seize him around the throat and receive his grace, which he teaches us through these trials "is sufficient for" us, and so that we may boast not in our own prowess or righteousness, but instead with St. Paul in our weaknesses: "For whenever I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). Indeed, based on Jesus' instruction and example in prayer, "the faithful subordinate their desire for immediate deliverance to the greater will of God for the salvation of all people. Suffering may be a necessary part of the divine plan to bring salvation to the ends of the earth."[45]

The means of grace are likewise emphasized by a correct theology of prayer: "In order to pray to the King," says Rev. Joel Petermann, "we first need to hear his Word."[46] He gives the example of Jesus wrestling in prayer:

> When Jesus was tempted in the Garden of Gethsemane, what did he do? He prayed. On what basis did he pray to God? He prayed on the basis of God's Word and promise to him. When Jesus finally

[43] Omartian, *Prayer Warrior*, 188.

[44] Wolfmueller, *Has American Chrsitianity Failed?*, 193, emphasis added.

[45] Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Luke 9:51–24:53* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 861.

[46] Joel V. Petermann, *Prayer: An Audience with the King* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001), 45.

> said, 'Not my will, but yours be done' (Luke 22:42), he showed that he had found the answer and defense against temptation in God's Word. He had become convinced of the truth and faithfulness of God and the reliability of his Word. He trusted in that Word, rather than the deceptions of Satan. Do you see how prayer and listening go together? When Jesus prayed that God might remove the cup of suffering from him, he at the same time listened to the Word of God that said he must drink it. His prayer, therefore, correctly responded by saying, 'Not my will, but yours be done.'[47]

Prayer is a conversation—that is, in prayer we speak to God as he has invited us to in his Word, and his communication to us comes in that Word. "God speaks to His children through His Word and invites them to speak to Him in prayer."[48] The Lord's Prayer is a particularly comforting example of a place where God has actually given us the words to say: "When one learns to pray the Lord's Prayer, one learns how God has established his hospitality with us in his name and his kingdom and how we respond to this welcoming God by petitioning him for those things that we need to keep us faithful and from falling into unbelief."[49]

"Prayer is taught," says Rev. Wolfmueller. "This is contrary to our thinking. We value impulse, words straight from the heart…. On the other hand, if prayer is something taught in the Scriptures, our prayers arise from the richness of the Lord's Word and not the depravity of our own sinful heart. Prayer is not the overflow of our depraved desires but the imprint of the Lord's Word being brought to God."[50] On this basis we may be sure of God's hearing our prayers, we may "ask in faith, without doubting" (James 1:6). Prayer Warriors and other evangelicals value that passage of St. James as well, but the source of this certainty, this lack of doubt, is a self-generated force of will. There can be no true certainty in this, but where the sinful heart is there will always be doubt. In contrast, where the Word of God is the source, absolute certainty may be had.

And the Word and Sacraments not only *precede* prayer, but also *follow* it, because the answer to our prayers, God's side of the conversation, resumes with his communication to us in the means he has selected. Think of the very salutary prayer to understand the Word of God—how

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[47] Ibid., 50.

[48] *Catechism & Explanation*, 159.

[49] Just, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 471.

[50] Wolfmueller, *Has American Christianity Failed?*, 199.

foolish it would be to pray such a prayer and *not* open the Bible! In the liturgy of our own Divine Service, the Lord's Prayer is located in response to hearing the Word and in anticipation of the Sacrament. The attitude for such ordering is this: the Word has taught us that we may speak to our King, for through the mouth of the preacher God "has invited his people to feast on the Bread of Life,"[51] and so we petition him for the great gifts he may give, the "daily bread" especially of the Sacrament of the Altar; we pray "for the effectiveness of the Lord's Supper in [our] lives."[52] This hunger for his blessings in the Sacrament is illustrated by Luther's example prayer before the reception:

> Lord, it is true that I am not worthy for you to come under my roof, but I need and desire your help and grace to make me godly. I now come to you, trusting only in the wonderful words I just heard, with which you invite me to your table and promise me, the unworthy one, forgiveness of all my sins through your body and blood if I eat and drink them in this sacrament. Amen. Dear Lord, I do not doubt the truth of your words. Trusting them, I eat and drink with you. Do unto me according to your words. Amen.[53]

When taught correctly the way to pray, surrounded always by listening to what God has to say first and foremost ("He has much more to say to us"[54] than we have to say to him), we also learn to rely on him and his grace alone. We cannot claim any glory for ourselves or others in prayer—no medals are pinned on the soldiers of prayer among us—but instead we see that it is God giving us what he wishes to give out of his grace and love. The question of prayer's efficacy is raised again: One way to understand this dilemma "is to conclude that God has built our prayers into his overall governance of all things. So, from his perspective, everything is determined. But from our perspective, things can happen differently when we pray."[55] This is just as acceptable as Lewis's belief about the "free play" that God allows us.[56] However we understand it, we simply leave it to God, give him the glory, trust in his grace, and bow ourselves in humility before him.

Again, the Lord's Prayer highlights all of this. Beginning with the invocation of "Our Father, Who art in heaven," we have acknowledged

[51] Bruce Backer, *Lutheran Worship*, fourth edition, 1988, 62.
[52] Ibid., 64.
[53] LW 42:174.
[54] Petermann, *Prayer*, 43.
[55] Ibid., 145.
[56] Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 371.

him as the Almighty and ourselves as the sinful people living in our fleshly limits. Especially we see this attitude in the third petition, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," of which Luther says, "In the first place, we judge and accuse ourselves with our own words, declaring that we are disobedient to God and do not do his will. For if we really did his will, this petition would not be necessary."[57] Indeed, the whole prayer is the humble request of a child before his father, but bears the confidence of the same child that his father is gracious and will give him the care and providence he needs.

We have discussed at length the false and harmful theology of Prayer Warriors, and why we ought to avoid their practices. However, prayer chains also have adopted many of the foundational beliefs of Prayer-Warrior theology, although perhaps on a lesser scale. When we receive those emails asking us to pray and forward, there are certainly those who send them on with no other motive than to ask their brothers and sisters to bear in prayer something that weighs on their hearts. However, there is still the belief underlying much of this practice first of all that God will hear the prayer if more merit is presented, if more voices cry out, as though the kingdom of heaven were a democracy, or at least a republic run by lobbying. At its core, the theology of prayer chains is the superstition that enough repetitions of a magical formula will cause it to come about: "And when you pray, do not babble like the heathen, since they think that they will be heard because of their many words. However, do not be like them because your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matt. 6:7, 8). Many people are unwittingly swallowed up into prayer chains, believing that they are doing good Christian service, even glorifying God by "taking it to the Lord in prayer,"[58] but in fact their prayers are the desperate cries of those who can only be sure of an answer based on their own efforts. Jeffrey Gibbs comments on these words of Jesus:

> Jesus specifically rejects the thinking that the deity needs some sort of extra effort on the part of the devotees in order for their prayers to be heard. Longwinded, wordy prayers are not a sign of piety, nor are they some guarantee that God will hear the prayers of his children. This is life under the *Father's* care. Jesus' disciples do not need to be like 'the Gentiles' (Mt 6:7), and that for one all-important

[57] LW 42:42.

[58] Cf. J. M. Scriven, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," *ELH* 385.

> reason: 'Your Father, before you ask him, knows [the things] [sic] of which you have need' (6:8)![59]

What is remarkable, glorious, absurdly contrary to our thinking, and a wonderful demonstration of God's grace is that the fact that God already knows what we need is not given as a reason *not* to pray, but instead is in fact "impetus and motivation for Jesus' disciples to pray all the more confidently for the things that they need—that is, for the things that the Our Father teaches us that we need."[60] We pray because of God's grace, not because we have to convince him that what we're praying for is really important. This demonstrates again our humble position and salvation *sola gratia*, as well as the blessing of *theologia crucis* and the value of the means of grace.

Also this—the God-given purpose for prayer, the promises he gives us, the fact that he always has more to say to us than we to him—all indicates the necessity for prayer to be accompanied by the Word.

Always Accompany Prayer with the Word

After reflecting upon Martin Luther's statement that "the Lord's Prayer is the greatest martyr on earth,"[61] Gibbs presents methods by which this martyrdom may be avoided among us, and first and foremost he advises:

> pastors can *teach* the Lord's Prayer. No Christian should assume that he or she has exhausted all its meaning or application. Abstractions like God's 'name' or 'kingdom' need to be unpacked over and over again. That will help Christians to pray with the mind as well as the spirit. The more fully we understand the theology of the Lord's Prayer, the better we will be able to pray its petitions and believe its promises. Faith seeks understanding.[62]

That is all-important. When we realize to whom we are addressing our prayers, according to the First Commandment, the first and most natural reaction ought to be fear ("We should *fear*, love and trust in God above all things"[63]). He is the almighty and just King who created the universe, who vows to "follow up on the guilt of the fathers with their

[59] Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 320.

[60] Ibid.

[61] LW 43:200.

[62] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 346.

[63] *Catechism & Explanation,* 13.

children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren" (Ex. 20:5). Therefore, "To understand and know him is critical if we are going to pray to him."[64]

Petermann's book gives a wealth of information on the one to whom we pray, the reason anyone can pray, the etiquette, language, and posture of prayer, and even a handbook on prayer. It is so useful that one wishes he could hand a copy to each person who offers an uninformed prayer request. When a prayer-chain email is received, wouldn't it be better, rather than to click "Forward," to click "Reply" and attach a PDF of the book?

While that itself may be impractical, the principle still may be employed. It's easier when a prayer request is offered in person. Picture the ideal situation: a pastor sitting in his study with a troubled soul sitting before him who is pouring out his soul and begging the pastor to pray for his family, friends, nation, or self. With a great deal of listening, the pastor can share some Scripture—whether a verse or chapter that directly applies to the situation or one that is of simple encouragement—and then pray *with* the petitioner.

Depending on each pastor's particular situation and call, this may likely be the exception when it comes to how prayer requests are made. But both pastors and parishioners will likely encounter prayer requests along the lines of prayer chains, with all the baggage of Prayer-Warrior theology. There are two faces the pastor must address in this situation. One is dealing with these chains themselves and those who forward them, and the other is the preparation and instruction of both parishioner and pastor himself.

Again, this instruction is all-important. Prayer is *always* informed by Scripture. In a sermon by Rev. Prof. Gaylin Schmeling, we discover from Scripture some instruction on prayer. Based upon Moses' intercession for Israel in their sin of the golden calf, five points are brought out that we may apply to our own prayers:

> First our prayer should be regular and consistent. We shouldn't just pray once in a sea of despair and then give up. No, we should daily go to the Lord in prayer (Luke 11:5–13). …
>
> The second important thing to remember in prayer is that God doesn't answer our prayers on the basis of how good we are. …
>
> The third thing is that we will make regular use of the Psalms which are the prayer book of Christ's body, the church. [Notice here

[64] Petermann, *Prayer*, 16.

> the unity of Scripture and prayer, that what better prayers could we offer than the very words our Lord has taught us.]…
>
> The fourth thing we need to remember about prayer is that God hears and answers every prayer which is uttered in faith (Matthew 21:22). …
>
> Finally prayer and action must also be connected. … This is what Moses did; he prayed and then he went down the mountain and preached repentance. Likewise we should diligently pray for our brother and then give ourselves as willing instruments to accomplish the same.[65]

All five of these are things we know, as Christians and as pastors. But we must always be reminded. The instruction must not stop. C. S. Lewis expressed this: "That is why daily prayers and religious readings and churchgoing are necessary parts of the Christian life. We have to be continually reminded of what we believe. Neither this belief nor any other will automatically remain alive in the mind. It must be fed."[66]

In one sense this instruction is easy for pastors: we have people sitting before us in the pews ready to hear our sermons as well as our prayers (which also may instruct in personal prayer). We have a captive audience we can naturally teach. This is the best preparation we can give for parishioners who will encounter these prayer chains and other movements that are wolves in sheep's clothing. It is important always to bring up fellowship in prayer, of course, but this is only one of the issues present. All the doctrines of Scripture should be always made clear, because one by one, each of these is undermined by false motions for prayer.

Consider the Apostles' Creed alone (intentionally placed before Prayer in the Catechism). We confess faith in the God who made all things, who continues to provide for all things. He is the Father to whom the Lord's Prayer is directed, the one who has promised his care for us, who is *able* to answer prayer in the first place, and who is the King who has invited us into his presence. We confess faith in the Son of God who is also Man, who suffered, died, and rose again for us, who intercedes at the Father's right hand, for whose sake our prayers are heard. We confess faith in the Holy Spirit who comes to us in Word and Sacrament, who gives us faith, who speaks in us and to us and for

[65] Gaylin R. Schmeling, *From Wilderness to Promised Land* (Mankato, MN: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2012), 74–75.

[66] Lewis, *Mere Christianity* in *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperOne, 2002), 117.

us (Rom. 8:26), therefore providing the power input for our prayers, in a manner of speaking. If you trace through each article of the Creed, there is not a single clause that does not inform our prayers.

It is clearly important to prepare the people in our care. Harold Senkbeil recognizes this need:

> Therefore we do well as spiritual physicians to teach each person to tend their own souls by means of prayerful meditation on God's word. One of the most effective things we can do for each soul's ongoing health and recovery is to teach that person how to pray confidently and regularly as a beloved child of the Father in heaven through faith in the Lord Jesus. While we need to be men of prayer ourselves…we need also to patiently teach our people the art of spoken prayer rooted in God's word.[67]

He presents an effective, profound method of prayer that Luther called a "prayer wreath": "Choose one concise text of Scripture, then pray that text to God, weaving a prayer rosary of four strands from that one word: (1) precept; (2) thanksgiving; (3) confession; (4) supplication."[68] Certainly this prayer method is magnificently beneficial, but is it necessary? Of course, this is not the *only* way to pray.

Think of the way a child may be taught to pray. My foster daughter was recently worried about her brother who had a small injury. I asked if she wanted to pray for him. She was eager to, and was familiar with our table and bedtime prayers, as well as the Lord's Prayer, but said, "What words can I use?" I taught her how to pray in that moment not by telling her to simply say the words that she felt in her heart, but to remember that Jesus can take care of all things, including her brother, and so she could ask him, because he also loves her and her brother, to take care of her worries. Prayer is informed by the teaching of Scripture.

There is comfort to be had in this, because many people have had this issue "that they don't know how to pray. They don't know what words to speak."[69] Even when we simply express the words on our heart, such as my daughter's prayer, "Jesus, please take care of Samuel," this prayer is based on the scriptural truth that God has promised: "Call upon me in the day of distress. I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Ps. 50:15), and Jesus has also: "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you" (John 16:23); that is: "Our

[67] Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls*, 106–107.

[68] Ibid., 107.

[69] Petermann, *Prayer*, 95.

prayers already have the favor of our King because of the merits of his Son, Jesus Christ."[70] It's so simple, but also easily forgotten. While even Prayer Warriors will confess that "it is important to read the Bible every day,"[71] their emphasis is on the heart of the person who prays, rather than on the external, objective promises of God. Instead, we have this comfort:

> Jesus has given us his name to carry with us wherever we go. It is his name that has gained entrance for us into the throne room of the King. It is his name that gains us an audience. It is his name that gives us the right to make our requests and to be heard…. The best part, however, is that even as we depend on his name with still shaky hands, he is with us, standing by our side and seeing to it that for his sake our requests are honored. Then, as he promises, our joy will be complete.[72]

We can consistently brace our parishioners and ourselves with these truths, so that *we* know better how to pray, and on what our prayers are founded, but what about that other face: those who send us requests with misguided ideas, especially if we have no opportunity to see them in person?

The "Reply" button becomes tempting at such a time. That might not be such a bad idea. The "Forward" button, however, is an act of confession. When a person forwards an email (especially with no personal disclaimer added), by implication he tells his recipients that he agrees with everything in said email. We wish to avoid giving the implication that we are on the side of false teaching. Therefore, good advice would be never to press "Forward" on a prayer chain unless one does, in fact, agree with the request and its implications, with no reservations.

But what if it is a request that, in itself, is a good request? A prayer for healing is good, as is a prayer for the nation, or for those who suffer natural disasters or diseases or losses. There seem to be essentially three options when receiving an emailed prayer-chain request: 1) Pray and forward it, as requested; 2) Offer prayers but *don't* forward it; 3) Delete it without praying.

Option 3 should be immediately excluded. Even if the recipient of such an email decides that the request itself is sinful, prayer should be

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[70] Ibid., 96.

[71] Omartian, *Prayer Warrior*, 113.

[72] Petermann, *Prayer*, 116.

offered: prayer for those who have written the email, as well as those who have forwarded it and others who may receive it.

To pray and forward the email (option 1) would indicate a common confession, so this should be reserved for such public prayer requests that come *from* those with whom a person is in fellowship, and forwarded *to* the same. An example of just such a "chain" is an email that comes from the office of the president of the ELS. It is responsible, not to mention beneficial, for pastors receiving such an email to forward it to the deacons of their congregations, or at least to share it with them in person.[73]

For prayer requests that one feels he may pray without harm to his conscience, but that come from those outside his fellowship, option 2 is the better choice. In this, the Christian's office in priesthood, requiring him to offer prayers "for all people" (1 Tim. 2:1), is fulfilled, without an implied breach in fellowship that would be made by a forwarding of that email.

I do not mean to say that the "Forward" button is equivalent to sharing pulpits or Communion, but it has to do with appearance. Many people, already pressured to believe so by the world, would be led by such practice to believe that there's no real, substantial difference among Christian churches and confessions. A much better option, if one feels the need to share the prayer request, is to compose one's own email, listing the request, and excluding the request to forward it.

And this is where the "Reply" button may be an option. One who receives a request to join a prayer chain may respond to the request by telling the sender, first of all, that the request is kept in prayer. Second, comforting Scripture may be shared, emphasizing especially God's grace, on the foundation of Jesus' merits. Too often, prayer chains form in a place of panic. The request is regarded as urgent, and if we can't get God's ear soon enough, the request won't be answered and the Devil will win the battle. It also develops in an attitude of misplaced confidence: the idea is that the prayers will be heard because of the strength, fervor, power, and volume of prayers. Whoever clicked "Forward" so that we receive the request in our inboxes needs the comforting truth that "your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Therefore pray" (Matt. 6:8, 9). And, as Gerhard says, "Our prayers should take place with true humility and total reliance. In them, we are to submit all our desires to God's will and leave everything up to Him."[74] One must of

[73] An obvious exception would be those emails that are designated as confidential.

[74] Gerhard, *Postilla*, 1:409.

course avoid the temptation to become pedantic when employing this strategy, but such comfort, such Scripture, informs not only our own prayers, but may assist others in theirs.

Conclusion

Prayer is a wonderful gift that our Lord has given to us. See how beautifully Bishop Laache describes it:

> Dear Christian, by Baptism you are adopted into Christ's kingdom and believe in Him. You are in His household, in His service, completely His own, and likewise the Father's child whom he loves and is fond of. Jesus said you should go to the Father on His business…. Pray in simple faith, and present Jesus' words to the Father. Think with the certainty of receiving it for His sake. Look away from your own unworthiness,—though, as a matter of fact, the Father is fond of you for Jesus' sake. Stay at the throne of grace until you are heard, in any case until your faith receives the needed assurance. See, when you pray in Jesus' name, you also shall receive it, and your joy shall be full.[75]

Luther, likewise, expounds upon prayer's beauty in many places, including:

> We should be the more urged and incited to pray because God has also added a promise, and declared that it shall surely be done to us as we pray, as He says Ps. 50:15: Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee. And Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew 7:7: Ask, and it shall be given you. For every one that asketh receiveth. Such promises ought certainly to encourage and kindle our hearts to pray with pleasure and delight, since He testifies with His [own] word that our prayer is heartily pleasing to Him, moreover, that it shall assuredly be heard and granted.[76]

It's tempting again at this juncture to say simplest is best. In fact, with all these other concerns, about fellowship and right practices, it is comforting to know the truth: God hears our prayers, based on his promise, and by his power. We sinful creatures have been granted this audience. As with any precious gift, we do well to care for it, to treasure it, to appreciate it, and we may also share it. It is a responsibility and a

[75] Nils Jakob Laache, *Book of Family Prayer*, trans. Mark E. DeGarmeaux (Mankato, MN: ELS, 2000), 342.

[76] LC III.19, 20, (*Triglot* 703).

blessing. There will be many strange and impossible-to-anticipate situations in our lives with regard to prayer requests and the issues involved, and casuistry will always come into play. In all, we take Jesus' invitation:

> I tell you, keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep seeking, and you will find. Keep knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives. The one who seeks finds. And to the one who knocks, it will be opened. What father among you, if your son asks for bread, would give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, would give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, would give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? (Luke 11:9-13)

Trust God to know what you need, and to answer your prayers. We fall back to the simple explanation of our Catechism: "We pray because God commands us to pray, God promises to hear us, we constantly need His help, and we want to thank Him for His blessings."[77] It's all certainty and comfort and blessing, *sola gratia*, because of the means of grace, informing our lives in *theologia crucis:* God is in his heaven, we are humble sinners granted audience because we are baptized in Jesus' name, all based on *his promise*, and that is the way it should be. LSQ

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Striving to Be Ideal Christian Teachers

Milton Otto

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BECAUSE OF THE TYPE OF SOCIETY IN WHICH WE are living, it is today far more appropriate to say, "The hand of the teacher rules the world." We hear Martin Luther saying that already in his day:

> A schoolmaster is as important to a city as is a pastor. We can do without mayors, princes, and noblemen, but not without schools; for these must rule the world. Therefore schools are indispensable. And if I were not a preacher, there is no other calling on earth I would rather have. We must, however, consider not how the world esteems and rewards this office, but how God regards it.

If the above is true, and certainly no one disputes it, then we as teachers are morally compelled to give most serious attention to the type of teaching we do. That is even more the case when we remember that the influence we have on the young people entrusted to us has eternal consequences, for, above all, we are to be *Christian* teachers. At the same time, let us at the very outset also remind ourselves that teaching in a school where the Word of God reigns supreme is not just a job but a very high privilege. We are rendering a service that should not only benefit the individual student but through that student both church and society. To help us be successful teachers who leave an impact on the student that endures for a life-time, teachers who will literally set the

world on fire, and teachers who will at the same time be enjoying their labors, let us devote some time to the consideration of this topic:

Striving to Be Ideal Christian Teachers

First, **how do we approach our task?** There is no question but that it should be with a serious determination to carry out our task in a most conscientious manner. One cannot shake a lecture or class-preparation out of the proverbial sleeve. It requires a tremendous amount of planning and preparation to lead, guide, direct, encourage, inspire, and motivate the students so that their being present in the class will not be a mere marking of time. The very fact that we have accepted positions as teachers, and especially as Christian teachers, makes us morally obligated to offer the best instruction of which we are capable; we "for conscience sake" have no other choice but to devote all our energies and talents to our task, in keeping with the Scripture which says, "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor 4:2). To do that kind of teaching, taxes one's energies to a degree that makes it one of the most demanding and exhausting professions.

Because of the great responsibility that is ours in training the future leaders and citizens of both Church and State, because effective teaching is no easy matter, because we are dealing with immortal souls, it behooves us to enter upon and carry out our task with the earnest prayer that the Lord would graciously guide us in our preparation and study and also bless the instruction that results therefrom. That is what the Apostle by inspiration bids us to when he by inspiration says, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him" (Col 3:17).

In brief, we ourselves must then be properly motivated if we are to be good, effective teachers. That means regarding our work as much more than just a job; it is a *noble* work, this shaping and training of our young people; it is a *holy* work, for we are doing it in Jesus' name. In other words, the attitude we manifest is of supreme importance. It will never do to say, as a pastor once did of his work, "I know that no one likes me, but I'm a teacher here, and I don't care what people think." A defeatist or hostile attitude is bound to affect the atmosphere in the classroom as well as the teaching itself. If we cannot have respect for ourselves and our teaching, we can be certain the students will not have any either. To be sure, we should not be running a popularity contest at this institution, but we should strive to reflect a positive and wholesome attitude in our conduct in the classroom. Then, though the students may

not especially like us, they should be respecting us, *and*, what is perhaps even more important, we shall then be instrumental in building up the proper respect and a high regard for every teacher. If we can accomplish that, we have done far more in our classroom than to teach the particular subject that happens to be our field. Thus, attitudes are very important.

That leads us to the consideration of the particular areas with which we are occupied. Self-evidently, our first task is to broaden the individual student's knowledge in the various subject areas, to point to and open doors to new insights, to teach him or her to think critically, to be able to communicate intelligibly, to develop native and acquired skills, and, in general, to create a desire for more knowledge and a better understanding of him or herself and the world about us. This is no small or easy task when we consider how much the so-called body of knowledge has increased during just the past few decades. It gets to the point where the teacher has to despair of ever covering all the material that should be dealt with, which then means that the instructors must be very judicious in the selection of what is the best and most necessary. And while each is concerned with his or her academic area, there should be an enthusiasm engendered and respect created for every branch of learning to which the student is being exposed. Each course is important and each teacher worthy of our admiration and respect for the efforts expanded in his or her respective department.

However, it is not only the subject matter itself with which we are to be concerned. The real issue is how can we most effectively present it. In the academic world as well as in the church, those who would instruct others must "be apt to teach" (1 Tim 3). This aptness is something that is a constant concern to the conscientious teacher. That is why a goodly number here spend their summers furthering their own knowledge and skills, and that is why every class period during the school-year is a challenge calling for the utmost use of one's imagination and skills. Name any area you please, we can always find ways and means for a fresher approach and be alert to a varied and perhaps even more effective method of presentation. This certainly calls for intense and careful preparation, so that the instruction is at least equal to, if not superior to, that given in any public institution. For "conscience sake," it cannot be otherwise.

Since ours is a Christian school, we have an added obligation, namely, to correlate the truth of Scripture with all other truth. By that we do not mean an artificial allusion to Scripture which will not only

be ineffective but also distract from the subject matter at hand. What is meant can perhaps be best shown with a few illustrations.

Mathematics would seem to be a field that would allow little, if any, reference to Scripture. And yet, there is a very basic connection. Mathematics is an exact science—it allows for no deviation and will ever remain the same. We shall never see the day when two and two will equal five. The Word of God is also exact and never-changing; there are rules there (the Ten Commandments) that are as binding and inexorable as are the rules governing mathematical processes. We shall never see the day when it will mean something different from what it means today. On the other hand, Scripture does something mathematics can never do—it proffers the righteousness of One that is equal to and even greater than all the unrighteousness of all men, makes negatives positives by calling sinners saints, and rewards all wrongdoing with forgiveness and eternal life to those who, repenting of their short-comings, firmly believe in this One who died that they might live.

In the field of science, we again have certain principles and laws which, like the Word of God, will remain true as long as the world stands. Wherever we look in the world about us, we in addition should see the almighty, wise, and benevolent hand of God. But there is far more to this. A science course can never be taught correctly unless those parts of the Word of God that refer to the subject remain basic and determinative. This would encompass all that Scripture says about the origin of the world and of man, about the providence of God operating through the so-called laws of nature, about the deteriorating effects of sin, about the transiency and temporality of all things material.

Likewise, the social sciences give us unlimited opportunities to make frequent reference to that Book which was written for men of every culture and clime. How often can we not point out and point up the hand of God in the affairs of men! How many examples may we not find for the Biblical principle that "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov 14:34). How frequently do we not find proof for the very Scriptural adage that "man proposes but God disposes." Equally pertinent—how often do we not see those succeed and prosper "whose God is the Lord!" (Ps 33:12)

Especially in the area of sociology do we get the opportunity to see what bearing the truth of Scripture has on the subject. Man is not an animal—he is not only wondrously made, but was especially created in the image of God. He is not a comparative newcomer on the scene but came on the scene as soon as the world, over which he was to have

dominion, had been fashioned by the almighty hand of God. Because man's body is such a unique and marvelous gift of God, it should be respected as such and its well-being and preservation not be made a matter of indifferent concern. Furthermore, man is a being who, starting out as the crown of God's creation, through sin found himself and all about him deteriorating. It is sin which is the cause of all this world's ills. Nor can we overlook the fact that man is a moral and religious being for whose behavior standards have been set by the Word of God, and did not come into being through a social development of trial and error. But while "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23) for every man, God in His mercy has provided a perfect society for him in a life of bliss and glory which extends beyond the grave and into which all who accept His grace in Christ shall enter.

The study of literature certainly points up the spiritual side of the Lord's crown of creation. It portrays him as a most noble creature, it reflects his hopes and aspirations but also reveals his utter helplessness over against the trials and vicissitudes of life and underscores his depravity and need of a power outside himself if he is to survive.

Even the study of language finds an application from the Word of God. It was sin which raised the language barrier in the first place back in the days of the tower of Babel. Yet, the Lord mercifully enabled men to learn other tongues, not only to be able to communicate with, but also for the purpose of bringing the Word of life to, others. In fact, God Himself became a language teacher when He, on the first Pentecost, moved His disciples to proclaim His grace in Christ in tongues they had never learned. And, with few exceptions, every language has the basic concepts within it that permit the Gospel to be transmitting through its medium.

Little need be said about the connection between music and the Word of God. Besides satisfying our aesthetic sense, music becomes a most natural and appropriate vehicle for giving expression to the hopes, yearnings, and the gratitude which the Christian finds in his heart. In the same way, an art class can bring out the magnanimity of God in instilling such creative and imaginative abilities in men that further depict the beauty and glorify the whole realm of His marvelous creation.

Thus, we see that there are innumerable opportunities for the Christian teacher to be an ideal teacher. He or she has access to a truth that can give full and complete meaning to any and every subject, can, then, provide the student with an education that takes account of his whole being—body, soul, and mind—something only the Christian

teacher is able to do. Surely, this is one place, if we are to justify our existence as a religious or non-secular school, where we would all strive with might and main to be good teachers. In the final analysis, only a Christian teacher can be the ideal teacher.

When discussing our striving to be ideal teachers, we certainly must give consideration to **the students themselves**. Who are they and what should we be trying to do with and for them? For one thing, they are a trust committed to us. Parents and other interested persons direct them to us in order that we may help prepare them for life. That preparation, of course, includes our teaching them what they do not yet know, guiding them in a way that will enable them to get the most out of their academic career, and supplying them with the tools that will help them make their way through life with some assurance of success. But it also means respecting the student as a worthy individual, being sensitive to his or her pride and reputation, and being on the alert for any weakness or tendency that would interfere with said student's academic, social, and spiritual well-being. We have the whole student before us and he or she will in the aspects just referred to be influenced for good or for ill by the way we deal with them.

This is not the easiest task when we consider how disinclined many people today are to work, especially to carry out difficult tasks; and how many distractions there are to entice the individual out of his or her sphere as student and learner! Yet, we cannot be ideal teachers and certainly not Christian teachers, if we treat all the students before us as mere children, or as people in an opposite camp who are defying us to teach them something. Each student is an opportunity, a challenge, and an obligation. We, to the best of our ability, want to discharge our duties in such a way that the individual students as well as the class as a whole will profit from our instruction and guidance.

This leads us to a problem of no little proportions—how can we conduct a class that will prove challenging to the gifted student and at the same time not be too difficult for the one of lesser ability without causing the class to feel that there is unfair discrimination? If the students get to see that we are striving to be fair to all and to deal with each one according to his God-given potential, we should not encounter any real dissatisfaction. This proper discrimination will call for considerable tact and imagination, but as Christian teachers we cannot do otherwise than to start with the student where he or she is, hoping for a gradual assimilation into the broader group.

Another part of our classroom conduct which we cannot ignore is the **problem-student**. It certainly requires no end of concentration, skill, and devotion to our task to bear with such a student. But should we not also regard such students as objects of our special interest and concern? Perhaps the one reason they are here is that we give them the sympathetic and evangelical attention which they could not get at a purely secular institution. As Christian teachers, we are bound to apply Law and Gospel as incidents occur and crises develop which disturb the orderly conduct of the class or discipline of the school. For this the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, plus the grace of the soul-loving Savior will be in great demand. It should not have to be mentioned, but we need never be discourteous even when we must be firm. The student's dignity is as deserving of respect as is our own.

In this connection there are a few temptations against which we, since we are still flesh and blood creatures, must be on our guard. It is very easy to become sarcastic with an individual student, and while it may be enjoyed by the rest of the class, it should not be overdone. Some young people, especially girls, are so sensitive, that any sarcasm directed as them can produce an emotional block which may take a long time to eliminate. It requires real skill to know when and with whom one dare use this device and if one is not certain of the effect, one had better not resort to it.

Another danger is the inclination to keep a mental blacklist, and once a student's name has been inscribed thereon to be almost impervious to the idea of erasing said name again. We must continually be on guard against thinking that one certain student can do no wrong and another can never do anything right. Such thinking is, on one hand, bound to make one partial to some students and so be unfair in the treatment of the others, which is a serious moral fault, and, on the other hand, it makes one guilty of the same poor judgment Nathaniel showed when he asked whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth. (John 1) There are times when there is a change for the better in a student and should that be evident, we ought to make a special effort to have things continue in that direction. We are not going to be very effective teachers, even with the rest of the class, if the impression is gained that we are prejudiced or bear resentment against a particular student in the class. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21) might well be the motto which we keep in mind in our striving to be ideal Christian teachers.

There remains one more item which comes into play in our striving to be ideal Christian teachers and that is **our life and conduct outside the classroom**. Even public schools are concerned about their teachers' away-from-school conduct. How much more important is it not for us as Christian teachers ever to be mindful of the fact that our lives not only are but also have to be an open book.

Therefore, we shall not fail to be regular in church and chapel attendance. It will be next to impossible to try to impress our students with the importance of the "one thing needful" in their lives and to neglect it in our own. Our language cannot be any different outside the classroom than within it. The type and place of recreation we seek cannot be of a questionable nature. Here we must remember that we have very young high school students as well as older college students observing us, and while some pursuits and actions may be lawful they are not always expedient. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom 12:17) might well be a fitting adage for us to follow, too.

Also of great importance is the matter of our being ethical with the respect of our colleagues here at Bethany and in the Church in general. It seems to be the very nature of students to try to pit one instructor against another. However, we in all our conduct with students, whether in or outside the classroom, cannot afford to detract from another teacher's integrity or reputation. If students hear us being critical of a fellow teacher, or speaking disparagingly of him or her, they may rightly conclude that we do not respect confidences with them either, and then the whole system will break down. If we feel we have a legitimate criticism to make, surely the Christian thing to do is to go to that instructor in private, both to establish the facts as well as to seek the proper solution. Of course, there is also the administration to which we may go, but we are not justified in airing any such complaints in the presence of any student. Being respectful to and considerate of student and colleague will go a long way towards making our common task a harmonious and enjoyable one.

It has been your speaker's aim to lay before you things to which he himself must give attention, to warn against weaknesses or inclinations to which he himself can so easily succumb. If these remarks and the discussion they evoke serve to make us better instructors, if they can aid us in our striving to be ideal Christian teachers, then the effort has not been in vain, for, then not only we but all the precious young people, the members and leaders of the Church and society of tomorrow, will be the beneficiaries.

Mindful of the fact that our labors may not always be fully appreciated by either our students or our church's constituency, we, as Christian teachers, have a truly noble calling. In what other profession can we have as great a part in molding Christian young people into upright citizens of our land and into faithful members of our Church than as teachers right here at Bethany? May we, for our inspiration and encouragement, ever keep before us these words of the Apostle Paul, "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58), and remember, our labors are indeed "the work of the Lord," and must always be so if we are to justify the existence of our school and our laboring in and for it. LSQ

The Divine Art of Shepherding:
A History of Pastoral Education

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IN A 1523 LETTER TO THE RENAISSANCE HUMANIST Eobanus Hessus (1488–1540), Martin Luther (1483–1546) stressed how vital the liberal arts, more specifically the humanities, are to a Lutheran education and for maintaining the Gospel.

> I myself am convinced that without the knowledge of the [Humanistic] studies, pure theology can by no means exist, as has been the case until now; when the [Humanistic] studies were miserably ruined and prostrate [theology] declined and lay neglected. I realize that there has never been a great revelation of God's Word unless God has first prepared the way by the rising and flourishing of languages and learning, as though these were forerunners, a sort of [John] the Baptist.[1]

This essay provides a cursory overview of pastoral education in broad strokes.

Education in Ancient Israel

Education in general is a fundamental Old Testament concern, but the Sacred Scriptures do not provide a complete picture of how it was carried out. The dominant Ancient Near Eastern cultures give a

[1] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut Lehmann, and Christopher Brown (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press, 1955–), 49:34.

fuller picture, but not even these cultures produced an extant treatise on educational theory. Biblical scholars have drawn on reconstructions of non-Israelite education to round out what the Old Testament says about Israelite education.[2] Given the theological and infrastructural differences, Biblical scholars remain cautious about what can and should be inferred from such sources.

Both Israelite parents were chiefly responsible for their children's education (Prov 1:8; 6:20; 23:22). This included more than discipline (Deut 21:18–21; Prov 13:24; 29:15) and teaching their five to seven year olds their professions (2 Kgs 4:18; Prov 31:10–31). Parents were to nurture in their children fear, love, and trust in God above all other things. They were to pass down the Messianic promise (Gen 3:15; 12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:1–27; 26:1–5; 35:1–15; 49:8–12). Parents were to recount to them the LORD's saving acts during the Exodus (Exod 10:2; 13:8; Deut 4:9; 32:7). Fathers were to explain the Old Testament sacraments and rituals (Exod 12:26). Parents were to teach them the commandments—statutes and rules—of the LORD as Moses declared in his final sermons (Deut 6:1–12).[3] Sabbath would especially be set

[2] What is extant are student exercises that have been preserved in clay tablets, such as unilingual (i.e., Sumerian) or multilingual (i.e., Sumerian + Akkadian if not more languages) word lists, grammatical paradigms, and dialogues. Occupational guides (e.g., "Instructions to a Farmer") have also been recovered. Some descriptions of school activities (e.g., Sumerian school regulations), scribal training, and scribal practices have been preserved as well. Thus, "schools" for elites seem to exist in Mesopotamia and Egypt already in the third millennium BC. Since the Sumerian word for "school" (É-DUB-BA-[A]), which literally means "tablet house/room," can also mean administrative center or archive, it is hard to identify actual schools in texts. Scholars maintain that there is still no definitive evidence of buildings used only for schools though some archaeologists have claimed as much.

Parents most likely provided rudimentary religious instruction for their children and taught them their own occupations in the home. Scribes, priests, and royals conversely were probably trained in administrative and religious centers. Education focused on learning how to read and write syllables, specialized vocabularies, grammatical forms, and sentences. Eventually students learned to read and write the administrative and religious texts required of them. Such students were reportedly taught in courtyards covered by awnings which contained a school well that provided water for mixing with clay for the purpose of tablets. They sat on felt cloth and used the sand in front of them like a blackboard. Memorization via copying and recitation was foundational to teaching. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Education: Education in Mesopotamia."

[3] "Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply

aside for this (Exod 20:10; 31:15–17; Lev 23:3; Deut 5:14). Parental religious education was supplemented by the Levites stationed in cities throughout the land (Num 35:1–8), the celebration of the annual pilgrimage feasts (i.e., Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) (Deut 16:16), and the public reading of the Old Testament Torah/Law every seven years at Tabernacles (Deut 31:9–13).

The goal of all Israelite religious instruction was more than just godly "knowledge" (דַּעַת), it was about "understanding" (בִּינָה), and "wisdom" (חָכְמָה) (Ps 111:10; 119:104, 130; Prov 1:2, 7; 9:10). Coupled with fear, love, and trust, the LORD also recreates in believers the capability to make law and gospel prudential judgements within the framework of one's vocations (i.e., callings in life). The core objective of lay and clerical education then is the cultivation of this capability, fear, love, and trust through prayer, meditation, and the cross/trial (Ps 119:15, 26, 84). Therefore, religious education (from the Latin, "to draw out") is really about the religious formation of the entire recreated human person so that they might become a unique "confessor" (מוֹדֶה) of the faith in word and deed (Exod 19:5–6; 1 Chr 29:13; Ps 18:49; Prov 28:13).

Eventually, certain Israelite craftsmen were trained as apprentices in guilds (Neh 3:8; 11–32; 1 Chr 4:14, 12–23). Military training transitioned from the father (or tribe) to military officers (2 Kgs 25:19; 1 Chr 27:16–22; 2 Chr 17:13–18; 26:11–15). Scribes, officials, and royals were probably trained in royal scribal schools that may have emerged with King Solomon (r. 971–931 BC) (1 Kgs 12:8, 10; 2 Kgs 10:1, 5–6; 12:2). Clay tablets of student exercises dating at least as far back as the monarchy support such schooling. The twenty-two letter Hebrew Alphabet made reading and writing much easier than in cultures that used syllabic and ideographic scripts. Education

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greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.** "And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Deut 6:1–12 [ESV]). Emphasis mine.

progressed from specialized vocabularies, to grammatical paradigms, then to sentences, etc. Memorization remained essential to Israelite education (Deut 6:6–7). Mnemonic devises helped students internalize their lessons (e.g., acrostic psalms [Ps 119], poetic parallelism [Ps 1], etc.). Like the catechism's table of duties, the Old Testament provided a framework for living out certain vocations in the fear of the LORD. For instance, Deuteronomy 17:14–20 admonishes kings to have a personal Torah/Law scroll for his own daily meditation and provides the theological ethics of godly kingship. By the reign of King Jehoshaphat of Judah (r. 870–848 BC), officials, priests, and Levites were sent with the Book of the Law to teach in the cities and among the people according to 2 Chronicles 17:7–9.[4]

Before the Exodus (1446 BC), the patriarchs served as the prophets, priests, and kings of God's people (Gen 4:4; 8:20; 22:13; 20:7). After the Exodus, the Israelite public ministry was conducted by the Levitical high priest, Levitical priests, non-priestly Levites, prophets, and the scribes. The high priest (Num 35:25) performed the Day of Atonement sacrifice (Lev 16:1–34) and received oracles via the Urim and Thummin (Num 27:21; Deut 33:8). The Levitical priests (Exod 29:9) made other sacrifices (Lev 1:1–7:38), presided over liturgical life (Lev 23:1–24:9), taught the Scriptures (Lev 10:11; 14:57; Deut 33:9–13), blessed (Lev 9:22; Num 6:22–26; Deut 10:8), demarcated the holy from the profane (Lev 10:8–10; 11:47; 20:24–26) (as well as the clean from the unclean [Lev 13:1–15:33]), collected tithes (Exod 30:11–16; Lev 27:1–33; Num 18:8–32; Deut 14:22–29; 18:1–8; 26:1–15), and functioned as judges in difficult cases (Deut 17:8–13; 19:16–17; 21:1–5). The rest of the Levites assisted them by guarding the tabernacle/temple, transporting or caring for its furnishings, and served as temple musicians (Num 3:5–10; 4:1–49; 18:1–32; 1 Chr 15:16–22). Central to their education was the Mosaic Torah/Law (תּוֹרָה) and the Davidic Psalter. They were likely trained in Levitical schools (2 Kgs 22:8). Some prophets (e.g., Elijah) simply proclaimed their inspired oracles (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:22). Others only preached and expounded God's prophetic Word to the people. Still others God inspired (e.g., Isaiah) to write the Old Testament Prophets (נְבִיאִים), which unpacked the Torah/Law's meaning, called for repentance, and expanded on the Messiah's salvific work. In addition to the Torah/Law, the Prophetic Literature was especially important in their education.

[4] *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Education: Ancient Israel"; James L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

Whereas some prophets were trained in prophetic guilds (2 Kgs 2:7; 5:22; 6:1–2) or Levitical schools (e.g., Ezekiel), others like the shepherd, Amos, received no prophetic education. The scribes (2 Sam 20:25; 2 Kgs 12:10; Ezr 7:6, 11–12) did not just catalogue and produce non-Scriptural civil texts (e.g., contract or census), they also preserved and interpreted Israel's Scriptural texts (particularly legal texts). Besides the Torah/Law, the Old Testament books categorized as Historical Books and Wisdom/Poetic Books by the Greek translation of the Old Testament (i.e., *Septuagint*) had a certain pride of place among them. This Wisdom Literature recognized other culture's wisdom traditions could promote a sort of wisdom and civil righteousness stemming from natural law (Gen 4:6–7), but Old Testament Wisdom Literature maintained true wisdom and good works flowed from grace alone.

Greco-Roman Education and Hebrew Education

After the Babylonian Exile, Jews entered the second temple period (515 BC–70 AD). Synagogues now became a force for religious education. With Alexander the Great's (356–323 BC) conquests, Jews experienced Hellenization (i.e., the propagation of Greek culture), which was chiefly accomplished via Greco-Roman or classical education. Its goal, which Greeks called "paideia" (παιδεία) (literally, "child-upbringing") and the Romans called *humanitas* (from which the English term "humanities" is derived), was more than mere "knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη) or even "speculative wisdom" (σοφία). It was the full cultural development of the human person and "phronesis" (φρόνησις); that is, "practical wisdom" or "prudence." All of this was so that one could become a well-rounded, virtuous, and beneficial citizen of a city or state.[5] Such education was accomplished through the study of classical Greek authors (Homer above all else but also Hesiod, Euripides, Aristophanes, Menander, and Demosthenes), the liberal arts (*artes liberales*), and athletic competition. The Greek philosopher Aristotle's (ca. 384–322 BC) ideas about habit

[5] Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 30–32; Isocrates, *Antidosis* 167–319. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to classical authors are based on the following: *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1911–). Werner Jaeger explains the elusiveness of the paideia further, "It is impossible to avoid bringing in modern expressions like *civilization*, *culture*, *tradition*, *literature*, or *education*. … Each of them is confined to an aspect of [paideia]; they cannot take in the same field as the Greek concept unless we employ them all together. The ancients were persuaded that education and culture are not a formal art or an abstract theory, distinct from the objective historical structure of a nation's spiritual life. They held them to be embodied in literature, which is the real expression of all higher culture." *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1:v.

formation, virtue as the mean between vices, and friendships only further enhanced classical education. When the Romans assumed this education, Latin writers were added to the canonical authors (Virgil, then Terence, Cicero, and Horace). Athletics and music seem to have been played down a bit. Still, the Latin satirist Juvenal (ca. 55/60–130 AD) stressed praying for a "sound mind in a sound body (*mens sana in corpore sano*)."[6] This broad interdisciplinary humanism was intended to combat reductionistic thinking, the immoral use of knowledge or skills (e.g., sophistry), and the lack of adaptability it associated with mere "professional skills" (τέχνη).

When the Carthaginian lawyer Martianus Capella (fl. fifth century AD) defined the seven liberal arts as grammar, dialectic (logic), rhetoric (speech), math, geometry, music, and astronomy in his *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, the liberal arts' number and contents remained fixed for centuries to come. The first three humanities would be called the trivium. After the Roman consul Boethius (ca. 480–524 AD), the last four math/science disciplines were called the quadrivium. Despite the Greek philosopher Plato's (ca. 434–348 BC) desire to make the theoretical (i.e., speculative) math/science disciplines the inner core of Greek education, the Greek rhetorician Isocrates (ca. 436–338 BC) was successful in keeping the practical (i.e., moral- and social-oriented) humanities the inner core. Nevertheless, a healthy tension between the humanities and math/science would remain a hallmark of Western Civilization. When the math/science disciplines ignore the humanities, at best they focus on mere technological development that can make life less human in the quest to make it easier. At worst, they become a dehumanizing reductionistic scientism (i.e., positivism) that continually pushes the limits of math/science regardless of the moral implications (e.g., Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*). When the humanities ignore math/science, at best they become a false conservatism. At worst, they become a relativistic evolutionary historicism bent on social construction (e.g., LGBTQ community). While the Roman rhetorician Cicero (ca. 106–43) best represented the fusion of the rhetorician and philosopher, the most comprehensive guide to classical education was the Roman rhetorician Quintilian's (ca. 35/40–96 AD) *Institutes of Oratory*.

The liberal arts were intended to free human beings from mere animalism through culture. But they were also for free men. Thus, the liberal arts were not originally the education of the masses or slaves. Eventually, primary education (sport, reading, and writing) became more

[6] Juvenal, *Satires* 10.356.

widespread for boys and some girls. Even slaves were taught to read and write if necessary for their tasks. Secondary education focused on the classical authors, liberal arts, and sport. Students looking for higher education sought out the rhetoricians, philosophers (be it the Platonists, Aristotelians, Stoics, or Epicureans), medical doctors, or later lawyers in the Roman Empire. Of these, rhetorical education was most favored because Greco-Roman society wanted to be democratic or republican. In higher education, a student community gathered around a sage who midwifed wisdom in them through dialogue.[7]

In response to Hellenization and Greco-Roman education, some Jews (e.g., Hellenizing Jews) forsook their faith. Others (e.g., Maccabees) resisted it altogether (1 Macc 1:10–3:9; 2 Macc 4:7–8:7). In time, even those offering Hebrew secondary education, which centered on the Hebrew Bible, adopted elements of classical education. This is not surprising given that Israelite education also focused on humanization and practical wisdom via classical authors and the humanities' interpretative techniques. But since the Jews also knew this could not be cultivated in a disordered human nature by paideia alone, they focused on the inspired authors of the Hebrew Bible who alone offered the grace for humanization and practical wisdom. In contrast to Greco-Roman elitism, the Jews further believed manual labor was not below the dignity of a scholar, a notion the Benedictines would later stress in Christendom with their motto: prayer and work (*ora et labora*) (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 4:12).[8]

Given the late explicit evidence of Hebrew secondary schools and compulsory Hebrew primary education, scholars think both rose in the wake of Hellenization. The scribe Ben Sira (fl. 200–175 BC) is the first to speak of a "house of instruction" (οἴκῳ παιδείας) for scribes, albeit this reference is contested (Sir 51:23). The famous Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder (fl. first century AD) ran his own school of higher education (Acts 5:34; 22:3). The High Priest Joshua ben Gamla (r. ca. 63–65 AD) ordered six to seven year old children be instructed by school teachers assigned to every province and town, though it appears primary schools already existed.[9] Jewish primary education focused on reading, writing, reciting,

[7] H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 46–313; Yun Lee Too, ed., *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Mark Joyal, "Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Education*, ed. John L. Rury and Eileen H. Tamura (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 83–97.

[8] t. Qidd. 1.11.

[9] b. B. Bat. 21a. See also y. Ketub. 8:11, 32c; b. Sanh.17b.

and translating the Hebrew Bible and liturgical texts. Secondary education focused on the Jewish Oral Torah (i.e., Jewish tradition not found in the Hebrew Bible but deemed authoritative for the Jewish community [Gal 1:14]). Jewish Oral Torah assumed two forms: commentary on Scripture (i.e., Midrash) or topically-arranged discussions of religious questions (i.e., Mishnah and later the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds). Jewish advanced education focused on Scripture study and Jewish law. Students then became disciples of sage teachers.[10] St. Paul represents someone who had both a Greek and Hebrew education. His approach to Scripture shows Greek exegetical approaches and early Rabbinic approaches as well. Moreover, he studied under the aforementioned Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).[11]

Education in the New Testament and Early Christianity

In the New Testament, Christ assumed the role of prophet, priest, and king. However, he reinstituted temporal government (Matt 22:21; Rom 13:1–7) and the public ministry. The latter he did via the apostolate from which all grades of the ministry flow (Matt 10:1–16; Luke 10:1–11; John 20:21–23; Rom 10:14–15; 1 Cor 4:1; Eph 4:11–12). Apostolic education consisted of three years of communal life with Christ and Old Testament instruction, a model still influencing seminary education (Luke 3:1, 23; John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; Acts 1:21–26; Gal 1:11–20). The apostles apprenticed their successors (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), and they in turn their successors. Through the Old Testament, the Epistles, and later the Gospels, the apostles taught how the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and how the latter is revealed in the former (John 5:39).[12] The Gospels became a renewed Torah/Law for the Christians. Some Gospels may have served as catechisms too (e.g., Matthew and Luke). The doctrine and

[10] *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Education: Greco-Roman Period;" Jacques Brunschwig and Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd, ed., *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000), 870–81. Rabbi Yehuda ben Tema writes, "At five years, one is fit for the Scriptures, at ten years for the Mishnah, at thirteen for the commandments, at fifteen for the Talmud, at eighteen for the Bridal-chamber, at twenty for pursuing (a calling), at thirty for authority." m. 'Abot 5:21.

[11] W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1958).

[12] Augustine, *Questions on the Heptateuch* 2.73. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the Church Fathers are based on the following: *Patrologiae cursus completes: Series Graece*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris and Turnhout: Migne and Brepolis, 1857–66); *Patrologiae cursus completes: Series Latina,* ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris and Turnhout: Migne and Brepolis, 1859–63).

theological ethics concretized in the Gospel narratives are fleshed out in the Epistles' more propositional form. The Pastoral Epistles and the Letters to the Corinthians provided the pastoral theology of the new clergy. The New Testament moreover reaffirmed the notion that theology is a God-given practical wisdom (2 Cor 3:5–6; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; 3:15–16). This divinely-instituted ministry initially took the forms of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (i.e., bishops [overseers]/ presbyters [elders]), and teachers (Act 13:1; 1 Cor 15:28; Eph 4:11–12; 1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–16). The apostles soon added deacons (Act 6:1–7; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 8–13). Some of these grades like the apostles were immediate calls and eventually ceased in the life of the church. Since they were directly called by Christ, their calls were not limited to the local church. Other grades were mediate calls; that is, they were called by Christ through the local church.

By the time of Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. 110), the presbyters (later shortened to priests) raised one of their own over themselves, designating him alone as bishop for good order (1 Cor 14:40).[13] These bishops reserved certain pastoral functions for themselves, such as oversight, preaching, confirmation, and ordination. For example, the rhetorician and Latin theologian, Augustine of Hippo (354–430), was unique because he was permitted to preach as a priest at this time. As Christianity spread beyond imperial cities to form parishes, priests (who conducted liturgies, performed sacraments, and did pastoral care) would now resume preaching duties (1 Tim 5:17) as well as confirmation in the East. Teachers initially functioned as catechists, who instructed new converts in the faith, but later some, like Origen (ca. 185–254), became the higher education teachers of the clergy. Deacons originally cared for the Christian community's social needs, but soon they assumed a liturgical function, assisting with some sacraments, offering certain prayers, and performing Scripture readings. Other grades of the ministry were added as well.

The Latin theologian Tertullian of Carthage (fl. turn of the third century) raised objections to Christians receiving a Greco-Roman education because of the pagan ideas accompanying it. In response to Tertullian's objection, "What indeed has Athens have to do with Jerusalem," Augustine's approach represented the norm, "Spoil the Egyptians."[14] In other words, a Greco-Roman education (esp., the

[13] Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 4; *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 8.

[14] Tertullian of Carthage, *On the Prescription against Heretics* 7; Augustine, *On Christians Doctrine* 2.58–63.

humanities) was so helpful in proclaiming the religion of the book that it was retained. Even St. Paul referenced classical (literary and philosophical) authors and athletic training (Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 9:23–27; 15:33; Tit 1:12). Still, whatever presuppositions, subjects, and methods of a Greco-Roman education conflicted with Christianity, these were to be scrutinized as Basil the Great (ca. 330–79) did in his *On the Reading of Profane Authors* (Col 2:8; 1 Thes 5:21). Therefore, Christians became some of the most influential teachers of grammar, rhetoric, classics, and philosophy in the ancient world. Not unlike the Old Testament faithful, Christian parents remained primarily responsible for their children's religious education (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). Christians who were able continued to receive a classical education at Greco-Roman schools alongside pagans. This remained normative in the Eastern Roman Empire until Constantinople fell (1453). Those that converted later in life went through an additional three year period of catechetical instruction. Some of the most famous catechism lectures are those of Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315–87) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428).

Those entering into the public ministry received their formation in apprenticeships to their bishops and in dialogue with proven theologians. As heretics argued for strange and new teachings, orthodox (i.e., true teaching) clergy stressed the unbroken line of their pastoral mentors and their theology back to the apostles and their teaching.[15] By the second century, the Apologist Justin Martyr (d. ca. 167) offered theological lectures analogous to those of the Greek philosophers. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) and Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 170–235) offered something similar in the third century. Nevertheless, it was not until Origen added lectures on Scripture and theology to the Alexandrian catechetical school that an official school of Christian higher education came into existence. However, Origen's school neither lasted nor became immediately normative. In short, the Early Church Fathers generally had an extensive Greco-Roman education that facilitated their theological study but less formal Christian higher education in the modern sense.[16]

Nevertheless, the Early Church produced writings in all of what would be become the four disciplines of theology to facilitate pastoral education. Theology finds its foundation in exegetical (Biblical)

[15] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against the Heresies* 5.20.

[16] Marrou, *A History of Education*, 314–29; Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press Harvard University, 1961); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

theology. The distillation of theology's past applications to souls (*cura animarum*) is made available in historical theology. Systematic (doctrinal) theology builds on these first two disciplines as well as the questions of today to prudently apply theology to the present. All of this reaches its crescendo in practical theology where a curate of souls (*Seelsorger*) carefully applies theology to the concrete needs of the people entrusted to his care. While the Church Fathers contributed most in exegetical and practical theology (for Scripture study, pastoral care, and preaching were primary), they also initiated the beginnings of historical and systematic theology.[17] Here Origen led the way, but the three Cappadocian theologians (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus [ca. 330–90], and Gregory of Nyssa [ca. 335/40–95]) and Augustine would become the preeminent orthodox teachers of the Eastern Church and Western Church respectively.

Western Middle Ages and Education

Monasticism had arisen before Anthony the Great (ca. 251–335) as a quest for a deeper spiritual path and a protest against nominal Christians who found it expedient to enter the church when Emperor Constantine I (ca. 271/73–337) legalized Christianity (313). But monasticism's stress on *lectio divina* (i.e., reading the Scriptures, then

[17] The text criticism of Origen's *Hexapla*, his threefold sense of Scripture, and his Bible commentaries prompted the greatest of the early commentators, John Chrysostom (d. 407), Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus (ca. 393–466), Augustine, and Jerome (ca. 347–419). In contrast to the Eastern Church which favored the *Septuagint*, Jerome's *Vulgate* ensured that the Western Church would use a Latin translation of Old Testament based on the original Hebrew. The church histories of Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 265–339), Socrates Scholasticus (d. ca. 439), and Hermias Sozomen (fl. fifth century) laid the seeds for historical theology. Besides the early apologists' writings and the creeds, the most significant doctrinal treatises were Irenaeus of Lyon's (ca. 130/140–98) *Against the Heresies*, Athanasius of Alexandria's (295/300–73) *On the Incarnation*, the Cappadocians' Trinitarian writings, Cyril of Alexandria's (370/80–444) Christological writings, Maximus the Confessor's (ca. 580–662) Christological writings, as well as Augustine's *On the Holy Trinity* and his polemic writings against Manicheanism, Donatism, and Pelagianism. The closest things to a proto-systematic theology after Origen's *On the First Principles* was John of Damascus's (ca. 650–749) *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. The great liturgical traditions, church orders (e.g., *Didache*, Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition*, and *Apostolic Constitutions*), and synodical/conciliar decrees helped the clergy guide Christian life. Finally, Ambrose of Milan's [ca. 337–97] Ciceronian *On the Duties of the Clergy*, Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood*, Gregory the Great's [ca. 540–604] *Pastoral Rule* (i.e., the pastor's complement to the monk's *Rule of Saint Benedict*) and Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* (i.e., a Christian hermeneutics and rhetorical manual) all highlight how the study of Scripture, prudential pastoral care, and preaching remained the heart of Early Christian pastoral theology.

meditating upon their meaning, next praying for their promises' realization, and finally using the Scriptures to effect contemplation), the communal chanting of the Scriptures (esp., the Psalter) in the Divine Office (i.e., the eight canonical prayer hours), and the acceptance of child oblates required monks be given Christian education. When the Germanic tribes took over the collapsing Western Roman Empire and its school system came to an end, Celtic and Benedictine monasteries became outposts of learning and culture. Their scriptoriums (i.e., manuscript copy rooms) and libraries preserved more than Biblical and ecclesial texts. They also preserved classical texts and the liberal arts. Cassiodorus's (ca. 490–585) monastery at Vivarium and his *Institutes on Divine and Secular Learning* is one of the most significant examples. The study of Scripture so filled these monks with evangelistic zeal that they (e.g., Columba [521–97], Columbanus [ca. 543–615], Boniface [ca. 675–754], Ansgar [ca. 801–65]) were instrumental in the evangelization of the rest of Europe. Alcuin of York (ca. 740–804), who seems to have lived like a Benedictine, helped start the Carolingian Renaissance from the court of the new Western Roman Emperor Charlemagne (742/47–814). As a result, Benedict of Nursia's (ca. 480–560) *Rule of Saint Benedict*, a synthesis of the *Rule of the Master*, John Cassian's (ca. 360–435) monastic writings (e.g., *Institutes* and *Conferences*), and Augustine's theology, became the official monastic rule of the empire. It was most balanced, fostered an educational revival, and contributed to Europe's conversion. Monastic theology retained classical education's humanities orientation and stressed an experiential approach to the theology which it deemed wisdom.[18] A grammatical and literary study of the patristic fourfold (i.e., literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical) sense of texts for spiritual enrichment was its hallmark. Besides Cassian and Benedict, the two greatest exemplars of Western monastic theology were the Venerable Bede (ca. 673–753), an English church historian and Bible commentator, and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), a powerful preacher and the greatest monastic proponent of man's profound need for grace.[19]

Before the empire's fall, some bishops surrounded themselves with a community of monks or canons focused on learning and pastoral care. After the fall of classical schools, it became imperative for bishops to train their clergy in episcopal or cathedral schools. The boys trained in

[18] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on Song of Songs* 1.

[19] Jean Leclereq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Noted Medievalist Studies the Monastic Culture of the Middle Ages*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Mentor Omega Book, 1962), 57–151.

these schools served in the cathedral choir (*schola*), working their way up from lector to deacon and then to priest. It was from monastic and episcopal schools that future bishops were taken. Unfortunately, literacy remained low in the Early Middle Ages (500–1000). Many priests learned through apprenticeships where they memorized the mass rote and gained some measure of pastoral know-how. By the Second Council of Vaison (529), priests were instructed to start presbyterial or parish schools for a more reliable stream of literate ministerial candidates. Early schools were largely limited to forming monks and clergy, but presbyterial schools provided educational opportunities for those not already committed to the clerical life. Some monastic and episcopal schools retained an interest in liberal arts, classical authors, and philosophy. Many others insisted that only reading, writing, and the Bible were suitable for monks and clerics. Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (ca. 1033–1109), the Benedictine father of Scholasticism (i.e., method of the schoolmen), and Anselm of Laon (ca. 1050–1117), the father of the glossed Bible, conversely expanded the educational objectives and the impact of the episcopal schools.[20]

During the High Middle Ages (1000–1300), a new period of revitalization occurred. Cities began to rise. The crusades fostered culture exchange. A merchant class arose that was distinct from peasants, clergy, and nobility. Gothic culture took new interest in Christ's humanity, human beings in general, and Scripture's literal sense. The School of St. Victor revived interest in Hebrew. Mendicant (i.e., begging) religious orders (e.g., Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, and Augustinians) rose up. They sought to actively engage society through preaching and evangelization like the apostles of old. As a result, the Mendicants developed an extensive school system (cloister schools, provincial schools, and *studium generale*) for training their own and became the leading theologians of the day. The Medieval university now took shape where potential lawyers, physicians, and theologians studied.

At universities a new approach to learning called Scholasticism took root that challenged the monastic approach. Scholasticism focused on the math/science orientation to classical learning and stressed a theoretical (i.e., speculative) approach to theology which it deemed science.[21] Logical analysis of texts via questions and disputations (i.e., debates) for the purpose of knowledge was its hallmark. Hence, study shifted

[20] Marrou, *A History of Education*, 330–50.

[21] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947–48), 1.1.2; 1.1.4.

from commentary on authoritative texts to the production of systems of thought that integrated authoritative texts in a unified system. Medieval universities consisted of four faculties. Graduation with a master's degree (i.e., a license to teach at university) from the lower liberal arts (also called philosophy) faculty was the gateway to the three higher faculties of (secular and canon) law, medicine, and theology, the queen of the sciences. Few students graduated with a master of arts degree, let alone a master's or doctor's degree in law, medicine, or theology. As more of Aristotle's writings were recovered from Islam, Aristotle's writings, particularly his logic, came to dominate Scholastic teaching from the liberal arts faculty on up. While Aristotle could serve as a very useful handmaiden (*ancilla*) to theology and source of natural philosophy (just as Neoplatonism and Stoicism did before him), all worldviews forget their place when they contradict revelation or foster dangerous speculations. To earn a master of theology degree, one first had to hear lectures and disputations on the Bible as well as conduct lectures and disputations on the Bible. Second, one had to hear lectures and disputations on Peter Lombard's (ca. 1095/1100–1160) *Sentences* as well as conduct lectures and disputations on it. The doctor of theology degree eventually became distinct from and higher than the master of theology degree. Different theological schools of thought quickly vied for influence and were divided by their metaphysical (i.e., theory of the underlying structures of reality) views as well as their understanding of epistemology (i.e., theory of knowledge) and language. There were two "old way" (*via antiqua*) schools. The Franciscan Bonaventure (1221–74) affirmed Augustinian metaphysical idealism. The Dominican Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–74) affirmed Aristotelian metaphysical realism and the analogy of being. There were two "modern way" (*via moderna*) schools. The Franciscan John Duns Scotus (1265–1308) affirmed another approach to Aristotelian metaphysical realism and the univocity of being. The Franciscan William of Ockham (ca. 1287–1347/8) affirmed metaphysical conceptualism, which is sometimes called nominalism. Since the popes were losing control over the university theological faculties, the Counter-Reformation popes would champion the rise of diocesan seminaries to maintain control of what was taught.[22]

The Medieval Church made some significant contributions to exegetical theology, but its chief contribution to pastoral education lies

[22] John Tracy Ellis, *Essays in Seminary Education* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, 1967), 3–16; Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, ed., *A History of University Education*, vol. 1, *Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 307–59, 409–41.

in its proto-systematic theology and practical theology.[23] Even though a resurgence of learning, preaching, and pastoral care took place, the Gospel was obscured by the incorrect imposition of Aristotelian logical, metaphysical, and ethical categories upon the doctrines of man, sin, and grace. Most learned their theology from translated digests rather than a contextual reading of the primary sources. Books were expensive and precious few libraries could own many. Pastoral education largely degenerated into the formation of an unbiblical priesthood empowered to merit grace via their performance of mass sacrifices rather than of preachers (*Predigtamt*) who applied God's Word in oral, written, and sacrament forms. Preaching fell to the Mendicants and later to endowed urban preachers (*Prediger*). As the church entered the Late Middle Ages (1300–1500), it would be embroiled in papal scandal, war, famine, plague, social unrest, economic turmoil, and spiritual unrest.

Education in the Renaissance, the Lutheran Reformation, and Lutheran Orthodoxy

Renaissance Humanism (not Secular Humanism) was a cultural reform program and educational approach that sought to humanize and cultivate the active life through the study of ancient authors and the five humanities (*studia humanitatis*): grammar, poetry (not logic), rhetoric, history (previously neglected), and moral philosophy. It began with Francesco Petrarca (1304–74) in Italy but crossed the Alps to impact all of Europe. Thus, it was a critique of Scholasticism's positivistic scientism, its philologically unsound and ahistorical reduction of

[23] Besides the *Ordinary Gloss*, a massive work that surrounded the Biblical text with the best commentary of the Ancient and Medieval Church, another contribution of the time were Bible commentaries that took an interest in Hebrew and the literal sense. Nicholas of Lyra's (ca. 1270–1349) commentaries became so famous that they were appended to the *Ordinary Gloss*. After the writings of Anselm of Canterbury, the *Yes and No* of the controversial Peter Abelard (1079–1142) advanced systematic thinking until Lombard's *Sentences* became the normative textbook, resulting in an impressive tradition of commentaries. The greatest systematic and apologetical works of the period were Thomas Aquinas's *Summary of Theology* and his *Summary against the Gentiles* respectively. Medieval historical theology had not progressed much beyond chronology and hagiography, save for Otto of Freising's (ca. 1111–58) *Chronicle or History of the Two Cities*, Geoffrey of Villehardouin's *The Conquest of Constantinople* (ca. 1150–1213), and the apocalyptic Trinitarian history of the controversial mystic Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202). More model sermons, preaching helps, and pastoral theology manuals were produced than times past because of technological innovations and need. One of the most famous pastoral theologies was Guido of Monte Rochen's (fl. 1331) *Handbook for Curates*. The crisis of the Late Middle Ages brought about a flood of devotions like the *Golden Legend* and the *Imitation of Christ*.

everything to logic, its theoretical/speculative approach to theology, and its claim that the active religious (monastic and priestly) life was superior to the active lay life.[24] The Humanists revived classical Latin, Greek, and Hebrew as well. The first trilingual Humanist was Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522), the great uncle of Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560), the "teacher of Germany" (*Praeceptor Germanicae*). This permitted the Humanists to return "to the sources" (*ad fontes*), challenging interpretations of classical authors, the Church Fathers, and the Bible that were grammatically and historically dubious. For example, Lorenzo Valla (1407–57) showed from the language, style, and historical references of the *Donation of Constantine* (which granted central Italy to the pope) that it was an eighth century forgery. The invention of moveable type allowed Humanists to work with printers and produce critical editions of ancient texts. Critical editions also allowed scholars to work through the math/science of the classical world to discover what held up and what needed further work. But while the Renaissance Humanists had the foresight not to neglect the wisdom of the past, they sometimes suffered from "the older is always better" syndrome and stifled vernacular learning. The third generation of Humanists defended Martin Luther's (1483–1546) Reformation because they deemed it part of their project.[25]

The Lutheran Reformation emerged out of the need for an educated clergy capable of Gospel-oriented preaching and prudential pastoral care in the aftermath of the Late Middle Ages. To facilitate this, Luther and Melanchthon introduced a Renaissance Humanist curriculum reform at Wittenberg University, which gave the Lutherans the ability to read the Biblical and patristic sources in the original languages and counter the unsound teaching that accumulated in the Medieval Church. Coupled with the Gospel, such an education could then truly cultivate pastoral practical wisdom. In other words, Wittenberg returned to a Biblical, classical, and patristic educational model focused on a historical-grammatical explication of Scripture rather than an explication via mere syllogistic logic. Monastic theology, Ockhamist Scholasticism, German mysticism, and a new approach to hermeneutics also played an important role in Luther's rediscovery of salvation by passive righteousness alone, but finally only a historical-grammatical analysis could properly interpret, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17). Therefore,

[24] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 22–23.

[25] de Ridder-Symoens, *A History of University*, 1:442–68; Albert Rabil, Jr., ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, vo1. 3., *Humanism and the Disciplines* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 5–22.

Lutherans have been voracious defenders of a humanities education for all Christians. How else would both clergy and the laity be able to properly interpret the Bible so as not to fall prey again to papal tyranny or the Radical Reformation mob (John 8:31–32; 1 Pet 3:15)? As the Reformation historian, Bernd Moeller correctly observed, "Without Humanism, no Reformation."[26] Of course, Lutherans still championed math/science education and later social science education. The following are but a few thinkers it produced: Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) was a Danish astronomer whose assistant Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) used his work to develop the three laws of planetary motion. Carl Linnaeus (1707–78) became the Swedish father of modern biological taxonomy. Anders Chydenius (1729–1801), a Finnish pastor and politician, anticipated the Scottish economist Adam Smith's (1723–90) *Wealth of Nations* by a decade.

After the Electoral Saxon Visitation (1528–29) revealed just how illiterate the priests and the people had become, Luther provided the *Small* and *Large Catechisms* in placard and print form to facilitate their catechization. He advocated for parish schools where both boys and girls could learn reading, Scripture, and doctrine. Those able to assume spiritual and secular leadership roles were sent to Latin schools to prepare them for university via Latin, history, music, math, and the classics.[27] Clergy were required to have some university liberal arts (esp., humanities) instruction, Biblical languages study, and theology instruction. In contrast to the Radicals who felt God spoke to them directly, Lutherans continued to stress schooling, including master's and doctor's degrees in theology, to provide competent Scriptural interpretation and legitimate reformation. In fact, Luther defended his reform's legitimacy on the basis of his doctorate which bound him by oath to watch over the teaching of the church. At Wittenberg, exegetical theology once again became the center and foundation of pastoral formation.[28] The 1592 Wittenberg University statutes still made provision for one professor to teach the Pentateuch and Psalter, another the Prophets, a third the New Testament (esp., Pauline Epistles), and a

[26] Bernd Moller, "The German Humanists and the Beginning of the Reformation" in *Imperial Cities and the Reformation, Three Essays*, ed. and trans. H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 19–38.

[27] Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools, 1534," in *LW*, 45:339–78.

[28] Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, ed., *A History of University Education*, vol. 2, *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 457–70, 474–86, 570–99.

fourth the chief articles of the faith as explained first by the Formula of Concord and second by Melanchthon's Romans-based *Commonplaces* (*Loci Communes*). Theological commonplaces remained extensive Biblical reading guides rather than systematic theology until Johann Gerhard's (1582–1637) *Theological Commonplaces* introduced prolegomena. Wittenberg also established historical professorships at the liberal arts level, but a professorship in historical theology only become normative after the 1650s.[29]

Following the Formula of Concord, Lutherans called themselves "orthodox" to indicate their catholic and evangelical continuity with the consensus of the Church Fathers and the Scriptural teaching of the *Book of Concord*. Even Luther did not do theology in a vacuum but ran his ideas through his Wittenberg circle and reputable theologians of the past so as to avoid private interpretations of Scripture (2 Pet 1:20–21). Likewise, Lutheran Confessionalism reasserted that confessing in all its forms (repentance, proclaiming, praising, thanking, fellowshipping, serving, witnessing, etc.) is the Biblical heart of what the church does. Since the Formula was not universally accepted, the Orthodox Lutherans felt tasked to achieve wider and deeper consensus about Scripture's theology via various theological genres and cultural forms of engagement. In contrast to Scholasticism, theology had a prudential and pious aim for them. As Abraham Calov (1612–86) put it: "Theology is a practical habit of knowing (*habitus practicus cognitionis*), derived from divine revelation, from true religion. By [this practical habit of knowing], fallen human beings are brought by faith to eternal salvation." In other words, theology is a God-given prudential habit or ability to apply law and gospel to others so as to create saving faith in them as well as preserve and exercise that faith until the blessed end. Just like faith, this habit or ability that comes with faith also needs to be exercised by praying (*oratio*) the Holy Spirit reveal the meaning of Scripture, meditating (*meditatio*) on that Scriptural meaning, and gaining experience applying Scripture to one's self and others amid the crosses and trials (*tentatio*) of life as Luther observed in Psalm 119.[30] Since doctrine was a singularity and an extension of Christ himself (John 1:14; 5:39), Orthodox Lutherans refuted attacks on any article of the faith as attacks on Christ himself. To facilitate (pastoral and lay) formation, to

[29] Walter Friedensburg, *Geschichte der Universität Wittenberg* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1917), 395–430.

[30] Abraham Calov, *Systema Locorum Theologicorum … exhibens* (Wittenberg: Andreas Hartmann et al., 1655–77), 1:1; Abraham Calov, *Isagoges Ad SS. Theologiam … Calixtine,* 2nd ed. (Wittenberg: Andreas Hartmann, 1666), 2:31–36.

engage in Lutheran consensus-building, and to counter the pernicious attacks of others (Roman Catholic and Reformed) trying to convert Lutherans, Orthodox Lutherans were pressed to use the full spectrum of tools at their disposal, including various theological disciplines, Renaissance Humanism, religious and secular thinkers of every age, and Neo-Aristotelianism and natural science. But their work was cut out for them because they had to form pastors during the greatest crisis since the Late Middle Ages, which culminated in the most destructive war before the twentieth century; namely, the Thirty Years' War (1618–48). The success of the Reformed, Roman Catholics, Syncretists, and Pietists at marginalizing Orthodox Lutheranism through it all caused some Lutheran pastors to become doctrinaire and combative.

In order to provide practical theological training (i.e., sermonizing, liturgical theology, pastoral care, catechesis, etc.), Lutheran theology students had initially followed up their university study serving as schoolmasters or deacons under experienced pastors before becoming pastors themselves. Lutherans soon recognized the need for post-university schooling in practical theology. The beginnings of the seminary first emerged at the Lutheran Cloister at Loccum in 1677. Even then the first true Protestant post-university seminary was established at the Lutheran Cloister at Riddagshausen in 1690. Students there prayed the canonical hours, did daily exegesis, and practiced their preaching and catechizing.[31] Lutheran literary output to supplement pastoral education was massive to say the least,[32] but they also

[31] *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, s.v. "Theological Education;" Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 45–80.

[32] Lutherans wrote guides to theological study of which Gerhard's *Method of Theological Study* and Calov's *Isagogics for Sacred Theology* are best. Luther produced a High German Bible translation. Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558) did the same for Low German, Hans Poulsen Resen (1561–1638) for Danish, and Sebastian Schmidt (1617–96) for Latin. Salomon Glassius's (1593–1656) *Philologia Sacra* advanced hermeneutics after Flacius and Gerhard. Following Luther, Melanchthon, and Johannes Brenz (1498/99–1570), Lutheran exegetes are legion, but Tilemann Hesshusius (1527–88), Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627), Calov, and Schmidt are frequently cited. The *Harmony of the Four Gospel* which Martin Chemnitz (1522–86) began is also particularly noteworthy. Lutherans even produced German Glossed Bibles (e.g., Weimar Bible, Calov Bible). Wittenberg, Jena, Eisleben, and Altenburg editions of Luther's writings were published. After Gerhard's *Theological Commonplaces*, Johann Andreas Quenstedt's (1617–88) *Didactic-Polemic Theology or Theological System* was the most comprehensive systematics, but Calov's *System of Theological Commonplaces* is more insightful. The best polemics were Chemnitz's *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Leonhard Hutter's (1563–1616) *Concordant Harmony*, Nikolaus Hunnius's (1585–1643) *Diaskepsis*

made new contributions. Matthias Flacius's (1520–75) *Key to the Sacred Scriptures* pioneered modern hermeneutics (i.e., Biblical interpretation). His collaboration in the *Magdeburg Centuries* initiated polemical history which charted the corruptions that had developed in the church. Johann Gerhard developed the discipline of patrology with a work by the same title. Johann Benedikt Carpzov I (1607–57) established the study of symbolics (i.e., confessions). Hymnals too were products of the Lutheran Reformation.

Education in Pietism, the Enlightenment, and Modernity

Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) initiated Lutheran Pietism as a movement that stressed conventicles of the pious, chiliastic hope for better times, and the centrality of lay Bible reading. Despite many good things in Pietism, many Pietists also understood it to be about a personal conversion experience necessary for salvation, a salvific need for a certain degree of sanctification, and the pitting of the priesthood of all believers against the clergy. Like many movements in church history that created a false dichotomy between doctrinal fidelity and the Christian life, Pietism's desire for the Christian life at all costs prompted its adherents to make doctrinal compromises that sometimes cost them their faith. In exchange for an alliance with Hohenzollern Calvinism and the German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) against Orthodox Lutheranism, Lutheran Pietism was allowed to form Pietist pastors via the new founded University of Halle (1694). The new religious, educational, economic, and political situation allowed Pietism to make positive contributions via their social work, their production of cheap Christian literature (e.g., Bibles and devotions), and their foreign mission work. Unlike Lutheran Orthodoxy, Pietism proved unable to contend with the Enlightenment.

The sixteenth and seventeenth century wars of religion eroded many people's certainty in the revealed truth of Scripture. If Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed could not agree on the meaning of the same Bible passage, many thought they could find a "more certain"

Theologica, Gerhard's *Catholic Confession*, and Calov's manifold polemics. The confessions, liturgical agenda, and ecclesial law of each territory were laid out in church orders. The most highly regarded pastoral theology was Conrad Porta's *Pastoral Theology of Luther*. Of the others, Johann Ludwig Hartmann's (1640–84) is the next most highly regarded. Balduin, Georg Dedekenn (1564–1628), and the Wittenberg faculty offered treasure troves of casuistry. Johann Habermann (1516–90), Philipp Nicholai (1556–1608), Johann Arndt (1555–1621), Gerhard, Christian Scriver (1629–93), and Heinrich Müller (1631–75) wrote the most beloved devotionals. Hardly any theologian failed to publish sermon collections.

foundation for truth in reason. The father of the Enlightenment, René Descartes (1596–1650), birthed Rationalism with his methodical doubt and attempt to ground truth in deductive reasoning from necessary or analytic (*a priori*) truths. Accordingly, Gotthold Lessing (1729–81) argued that the Bible cannot be trusted as a source of necessary truth. He claimed there was an unbridgeable chasm between the necessary truths of math and the contingent or synthetic truths of Biblical revelation in history. Alternatively, John Locke (1632–1704) birthed Empiricism with his blank slate view of the newborn human mind and his less ambitious attempt to ground probable truth in contingent or synthetic (*a posteriori*) knowledge from inductive investigation. Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) pioneered progressive education by arguing that the human being in a state of pure nature was good, civilization corrupts all things including human beings, and self-mastery inhibits self-actualization.

But when David Hume (1711–76) undermined the provability of causality, threatening the very foundations of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) revolutionized philosophy to save math/science through synthetic *a priori* knowledge. Kant argued that humans cannot really know the way the world (much less God) works for certain, but they can know how the world appears to them because humans are universally hardwired to see the world through the lens of space, time, and causality. Kant further maintained that human beings have a unique dignity and are distinct from animals which lack the self-conscience ability to control themselves and make moral decisions. From this, he posited human free will, the soul's immortality, and God are all conditions for human life. By limiting reason to make room for his conception of faith, Kant took away the Rationalists' arguments against Christianity, but he also undermined traditional apologetical arguments for Christianity. More importantly, he problematized Biblical revelation and was understood to have reduced faith to ethics. Finally, Kant caused a shift in the German university that elevated the liberal arts/philosophy faculty above the law, medicine, and theology faculties. He deemed the liberal arts/philosophy faculty the most free and capable of arbitrating knowledge claims.

The worst of Kant and his progeny, German Idealism and Neo-Kantianism, can be seen in Classical Liberal theology. Its father, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), reground Christian theology in man's feeling of absolute dependence on God. This reduction of theology to human anthropology allowed his new "science" (*Wissenschaft*) of

Christian theology to be accepted at the new University of Berlin, which displaced theology from its position of oversight.[33] As the preeminent model of the nineteenth century university, Berlin fostered a driven, academically free, and interdisciplinary community of scholars where seminars were the link between teaching and research. Despite being a product of the Enlightenment, Berlin scholars (like Schleiermacher) also shared Romanticism's and German Classicism's (Neo-Humanism) objection to the Enlightenment's ahistoricism and neglect of the wisdom of the past. These concerns fueled German philology, history, as well as Humanist approaches to the social sciences. Germans called this study of the human spirit via the humanities and social sciences the "human sciences" (*Geisteswissenschaften*). Their purpose was to achieve self-cultivation (*Bildung*).[34] As problematic as Deistic Enlightenment thinking was for theology, it was German historical thinking that birthed the historical critical method and evolutionary theory. The historical critical method challenged the historicity of the Scriptures. Evolutionary theory denied that humans were created in the image of God, humans had a unique dignity in creation, and the existence of a fixed human nature. All schools of modern theology are rooted in these streams of thought including those like Karl Barth's (1886–1968) Neo-Orthodoxy, which tried to distance itself from Classical Liberalism. Of the modern theologians, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45) and his pastoral formation program for the Finkenwalde Seminary, *Life Together*, has had the most positive impact on a pastor's spiritual development.

The appreciation of the past helped Confessional Lutheranism (Repristination [i.e., Orthodox], Grundtvigian, Neo-Lutheran, and Erlangen) reassert itself against the various schools of modern theology, Neo-Pietism, and the Prussian Union (which forced Lutherans and Reformed into a united church). Whereas some Confessional Lutherans were able to retain posts in the German universities or at least at the new mission schools, many immigrated to North and South America or Australia. Lutherans that experienced persecution started more than their own seminaries. They founded printing houses, liberal arts colleges, gymnasium high schools, and parish schools. Forming clergy from hard working immigrant stock proved challenging, but it was also a blessing.

[33] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith: A New Translation and Critical Edition*, trans. Terrence N. Nice et al. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 1:1–3, 8–45; 2:833–56.

[34] Howard, *Protestant Theology*, 80–418; Walter Rüegg, ed., *A History of University Education*, vol. 3, *Universities in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800–1945)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47–53, 55–57, 393–491.

Confessional Lutherans not only reprinted the greatest works of Early Modern Lutheranism, they also made new contributions in all disciplines of theology to educate their clergy.[35] The Father of Confessional Lutheranism was Claus Harms (1778–1855) who protested the Prussian Union. Few Lutherans had the cultural impact that the Danish pastor, poet, historian, educator, and politician, N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783–1872), had, albeit he equated the living word with the oral word (esp., creed) and sacraments. Erlangen theology's dynamic approach to Confessionalism was inaugurated by Johann W. F. Hoefling (1802–53), Gottlieb C. A. von Harless (1806–79), and Johannes C. K. von Hofmann (1810–77). The Repristination or Orthodox Lutheran, C. F. W. Walther (1811–87), showed that a truly American Lutheran Church could exist that did not conflate "American" with Evangelical Revivalism, like Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799–1872) and many since have tried to contend.

As Confessional Lutherans have critically engaged the modern theologians, Confessional Lutherans have increasingly revealed modern theology's flawed presuppositions and shown that a robust Confessional Lutheranism can better address the concerns of modern theology without abandoning the apostolic faith. The most significant twentieth century developments in Confessional Lutheran seminary education have been vicarages, seminary field experience, and the further expansion of new areas of study within practical theology (e.g., new facets of missiology, pedagogy, counseling as well as parish administration, leadership, communication theory, interpersonal relationships, conflict management, media and mission, etc.), especially in light of the social sciences and the social upheaval since the 1960s. While Scripture remains the sole source of theology, Lutheran theology can only properly be done when it is keenly applied with the bedside manner of an old time physician of souls who knows just how to apply it because he intimately knows each of his sheep and thoroughly understands the human condition.

[35] The most significant exegetes were Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1802–69), Franz Julius Delitzsch (1813–90), Carl Paul Caspari (1814–92), and Theodor Zahn (1838–1933). Gottfried Thomasius (1802–75), Friedrich Adolf Philippi (1809–82), von Hofmann, and Franz H. R. von Frank (1827–94) represent Erlangen's dogmatic and historical innovations. The most noteworthy apologist was Christoph Ernst Luthardt (1823–1902). August F. C. Vilmar (1800–1868), Friedrich Julius Stahl (1802–61), Wilhelm Löhe (1808–72), and Theodor F. D. Kliefoth (1810–95) argued for a high church ecclesiology. The most significant scholar of liturgy and church orders was Kliefoth. The Hermannsburg Harms brothers and Löhe represent the most important mission church planters in Germany.

At present, Confessional Lutheran seminary formation is confronted by the following new challenges: How to provide a sufficient enough foundation for pastoral education in an education environment that has increasingly demoted the humanities? This is compounded by the problem that many humanities and social science programs no longer believe in a fixed human nature and have become hotbeds of social constructionism. How best to realize the four dimensions of pastoral formation; namely, spiritual formation, academic formation, pastoral formation, and human formation? How best to equip the new generation of pastors to minister in an increasingly globalized, secular, and hostile world, while keeping them filled with the joy of the gospel and confidence that the one holy Christian and apostolic church will prevail until Christ comes again because Christ has already prevailed over sin, death, and the devil? LSQ

Pastor Herman Amberg Preus as I Knew Him

Adolph Bredeson

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Editor's Note: This article concerning Herman Amberg Preus (1825–1894) was written by the Rev. Adolph Bredeson (1850–1913). The Rev. Bredeson, after serving as assistant pastor for the Spring Prairie congregation, wrote his memories of H. A. Preus. Adolf Bredesen was born in Solør, Norway. He came to America in 1852 and graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1873. This article was originally published in Symra magazine in 1910, pages 114ff. It was translated into English by Nils Oesleby (1910–1972), a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

THE FATHERS OF THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD, THE seven pastors who founded the Norwegian Synod in 1853, were all personally known to me, with the exception of Gustav Dietrichson. Jacob Aall Ottesen was for ten years my nearest neighbor pastor at Koshkonong. Nils Brandt was my teacher and pastor in Decorah, and prepared me for confirmation. Herman Amberg Preus, president of the synod for thirty-two years, was for many years our pastor, in the 1850s at Roche a Cree and later at Spring Prairie. He confirmed me in 1866 and ordained me in 1873. Between 1861 and 1865, I frequented the parsonage at Spring Prairie perhaps more than was reasonable. There were many books and papers and pictures there: *Harper's Weekly* with accounts of the Civil War, *Norwegian National Costumes*, *Norway Sketches*, and *Pictures of Folk Life in Norway*. Little Christian and Sina, who lived in the parsonage, were fine playmates.

Together with them I got to learn Norwegian and German from Mrs. Preus and Miss Henriette Neuberg, and in the summer of 1865 student Brynjolf Hovde instructed Christian Preus and me in Latin. During my schooldays at Decorah and St. Louis, from 1865 to 1873, I spent all summers at Spring Prairie. Being a theological student, I followed Pastor Preus on Sundays to his many churches and preached for him, or heard him preach and catechize or conduct congregational meetings. Finally, for over three years, from the spring of 1873 to the fall of 1876, I served as assistant at Spring Prairie. In all this time, I lodged at the parsonage and ate at the table of Pastor Preus. Therefore, I dare say that I have known the Synod President Preus, and since I have been requested, I shall tell the readers of this magazine *Symra* something about this remarkable man, and the big day's work he did in our church.

After his first meeting with young pastor H. A. Preus, Dr. Walther of St. Louis is said to have exclaimed, "*Ein determinirter Kerl!*"—A determined fellow. This was also my first impression of Preus, and the impression became deeper and deeper the more I learned to know him.

"He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again."

Pastor Fuglesjel, mission pastor in Northern Minnesota, last December risked and lost his life to get to a preaching station in bad weather. There was a readiness for this also in Pastor Preus. As Dr. Koren said at his funeral, "there was in him the spirit which makes martyrs."

On his missionary journeys, Preus twice lodged with my parents, who lived in the Roche a Cree settlement about eighty miles northwest of Spring Prairie. The first time I saw him was in the spring of 1858 or perhaps 1859. The first time he stayed with my parents, he came in the midst of the worst spring rains. He had gone with a stage as far as the city of Necedah, seven miles from my home. To get to Necedah, he had to cross the Wisconsin River. But the large river was in spring flood over its banks and full of ice. At Piton Well, which old raftmen will remember, was a ferry; but because of the strong current and the ice, the ferry could not be used. But Preus risked his life to get across to the service which he had announced in Roche a Cree. He talked the ferryman, a French "Squawman," into trying to get him over in a canoe. And they got over, but a long ways downstream from the place where they launched out. Now Preus, sack on his back, had to walk the rest of the way through swamps and thick primeval forest and it was almost evening before he reached our home. I remember that mother at once

began to cook potatoes and fry pork for her tired and hungry guest. But Preus asked for some bread and butter and milk at once. He could not wait for the potatoes and pork. The next time Preus came to us, he had one arm in a sling. He had recently had the misfortune that the horse he rode on either had thrown him or had run away with him, and the result was that Preus had broken his collarbone. Crippled as he was, Preus did not concede defeat, but drove the long way from Spring Prairie over the miserable roads of the day, and preached and carried out ministerial functions in the various settlements on his mission field. Such was Preus as mission pastor.

Preus' basic call was to seven congregations, lying in an area of from eight to twenty miles from the parsonage. Thus, there was continual journeying winter and summer. In all directions, the roads went over the open prairie. At that time, the fences on each side of the roads were not as now of wire, but of rails, sod, etc., and between these fences, the snow packed in the winter and lay many feet deep. The highway department did little to keep the ways open, and after each snowstorm, the pastor was generally the first or one of the first who had to be out. In the spring flood, which could last for months, there was almost boundless mud, and above the mud, in many places, there was either one or two feet of water. After a sharp freeze, there was a crust of ice over the mud and ponds in the roads, and a person may know how it was to journey for fifteen, twenty, or thirty miles.

What Preus experienced in his forty-three years of continual journeying was something that, as far as I know, he did not talk about. Of my own experience, I know something of it and shall relate a little. Many a time in the winter, in strong and bitter cold, I had to make a path for the horse through miles of snowdrifts. Sometimes I became so tired and breathless that I had to stop, lie down in the sled, cover myself in the horse blanket, and rest until I was able to continue. Once when services were scheduled at Bonnet Prairie, the snow was so deep that it was impossible to drive ten hard miles. I had not learned to travel on skis, so I took my gown and books in a sack on my back and went on foot. I got there but was lame for eight days. Again, at Easter time, I was scheduled to preach in Madison, Lodi, and Norway Grove. I set out on Maundy Thursday with horse and sleigh in much snow, but at once it began to thaw and rain. Between Madison and Lodi, I had to leave the sleigh with a farmer and borrow a buggy. At Norway Grove, I had to leave the buggy and ride on horseback. The big spring flood had washed away all bridges. I had to ride through creeks and ponds so

that my shoes were full of water. Halfway between Norway Grove and Spring Prairie, a boy from the parsonage came looking for me. There was a rumor I had drowned at Eagle Point. It seems to me to be a kind of a miracle that Preus was able for forty-three years to hold out as well as he did without losing health or life. I well remember how so many a time in the sixties Preus drove past our house on the way to Bonnet Prairie Church or on a pastoral call, now in pouring rain, now in driving snow, now in ice cold weather, or on frightfully impassable roads. Whatever the weather and the condition of the roads, Preus started out and usually got through. We could appreciate a thing like that and had respect for such a clergyman, we who as pioneer farm boys went from morning to evening in stiff frozen boots, and who in winter time made long journeys to the city, to Columbus or Madison, without overcoat or overshoes and poorly clad as well.

In his professional work, Preus was the same determined fellow. He was a strong-willed man, bold and determined. He wanted the best for congregation and Synod, and with trust in God, he labored with a zeal and power and endurance that could move mountains.

Christian church discipline according to Matthew chapter 18 and private confession and absolution before Communion were unaccustomed matters to people coming from the State Church of Norway. There was much prejudice and animosity against those things. Now Preus was a free-church man. He knew that in the congregation he was not a master but a servant, God's servant and also servant and co-worker of the congregation. In order to get his way, he did not use the authority of office, he did not dictate that such and such should be done. But he preached about church discipline and confession, and discussed it with congregations in meeting after meeting, and did not quit until they were convinced from God's Word. So scriptural church discipline after a fashion, and private confession were introduced into all the congregations.

To get Norwegian-American congregational schools going forty years ago was even more difficult, if possible, than now. On all sides there were hindrances and opposition. Those who spoke and worked for such schools were from more than one direction described as being well-nigh traitors, enemies of the public school and of enlightenment and of almost all that was good in this land. But in spite of all the hindrances, Preus did get two Norwegian-American congregational schools going, one at the Spring Prairie church, with J. R. Valler (now pastor Valler) as teacher, and another in the city of Madison, with Lars Lynne as teacher.

To gather contributions of money year after year to the many funds of the Synod is sometimes called "begging" and is often uncomfortable and unthankful work, carried out with sighs and sadness of which the pastors easily grow weary, and which they postpone as long as possible until a week or two before the close of the financial year. Preus did not shrink from it and never grew tired of it. He did not complain about the many requests. He did not ask to have the expenses of the Synod diminished. According to ability and beyond ability, he worked as a shining example in admonishing and encouraging his congregation to generosity. The many empty treasuries of the Synod and the needy schools, the poor mission pastors and mission congregations were always on his heart, and so he gathered subscriptions the year round. His love for the Synod and all its congregations and pastors and schools and missionaries was unfailing. It was one of the most beautiful aspects of his personality. In his intercessions morning and evening, he asked God to bless and preserve "these congregations and each soul in them, and our church body with all its teachers and members." Among his last words in the hour of death were these: "Greet my congregations and greet the brethren."

I learned to know Pastor Preus as a personally pious man. He had weaknesses, as do others. He was not always as cozy, mild, and indulgent as one would desire. In controversial articles, especially from his younger days, he might surely have expressed himself in a less severe tone and in more modest phraseology. Not a few of his parishioners complained that he "bit them off" curtly, or spoke "right out of the sack" (bluntly) about greediness and stinginess. Preus did not wear his piety on display, as, for example, by condemning a sin and sternly forbidding matters which God in His Word has not designated as sin, or by going about with a long face, sighing and complaining over others, that they were not so pious and spiritual as they should be. But for all that, Preus was a sincerely pious Christian, in spite of the best of them who called him a spiritually dead state church minister and raised up opposition altars to him. To this all his life and activity bore witness, his patience and devotion to God under manifold crosses, and a beautiful and happy death. I received a living impression of Preus' Christian seriousness and unvarnished piety during family devotions, and on each occasion when I ministered to him with absolution and the Lord's Supper. Before me, his young assistant, this revered old pastor and Synod president kneeled humbly and poured out his heart in repentant confession of sin and in childlike trust in God's grace in Christ. Like Luther, he found great

comfort and strength in absolution as being God's own voice and forgiveness for him.

I also learned to know Pastor Preus as a great theologian, namely in the real and biblical understanding of the Word. I do not mean that he was a learned man, a scholar like Rudelbach or Caspari, both of whom knew the two ancient biblical languages like their mother tongue. Preus was not especially gifted in the study of language. What he had acquired of Greek, Latin, or Hebrew, he had probably in great measure sweated out, for all his days he was occupied with practical matters. He did speak German and English, but in the same way as the Duke of Wellington claimed to speak French, namely "with great intrepidity." The definite article in German was "the" for all genders, cases and numbers. Preus had a very large library, with long rows of "pigskins" from the 16th and 17th centuries, the old Lutheran fathers' works in dogmatics and exegesis, written in Latin and spotted with citations in Greek, Hebrew and other dead languages. But I don't think he made much use of this learned apparatus. For one thing he had little time for it, and for the other, during his theological studies in Christiania (Oslo), he had not been properly introduced to the works of our old church fathers and was not at home in their church Latin and scholastic terminology. And yet for all that, he was a theologian and a scholar. For Luther says that one becomes a theologian by three things: namely prayer, study and experience. Theology, according to Luther and the ancients, is not scholarship, but practical skill and ability in administering the means of grace, and in saving one's own soul and that of others. If this be the case, and it surely is, then President Preus was a great theologian. He was a man of prayer. He read and studied much. When he was not otherwise engaged, he read day and night. He kept up with church affairs, especially in this land and in Norway. His favorite reading, next to the Holy Scriptures, the Book of Concord and Luther's Works, was the Missouri Synod's theological journal *Lehre und Wehre*, and synod reports and other publications, especially all that came from the pen of Dr. Walther. Practical experience as a Christian and as a preacher and shepherd of souls, Preus had in richest measure. He was an old-Lutheran Scriptural theologian, as orthodox as the catechism and the hymnbook and the Book of Concord. *Summa summarus* of Preus' theology was

1. All Scripture is inspired of God and is the only sure and perfect rule of faith, doctrine, and life.

2. A sinner is born again, justified before God, and saved, not in the least by his own good attitude, virtue or merit, but alone by the working of the Holy Spirit, through the means of grace, and purely of grace for Christ's sake.

Preus knew, as few, the difficult art of "rightly dividing the word of truth," law and gospel. He did not mix law and gospel. When he preached the law, he preached the law in all its sternness, so that very mouth might be stopped and all the world might become guilty before God. When he proclaimed the gospel, he proclaimed it with all its sweetness, so that the most miserable sinner could grasp God's grace in Christ and be sure of his own state of grace and of salvation. If his sermons were not scholarly, spiritually rich and eloquent in the prevailing sense, they were scriptural, full of God's Word, and timely and practical, and also so clear and simple, that, as Luther says, Hans down at the door could and would understand.

In all his work, Pastor Preus was conscientious and faithful. He prepared his sermons as thoroughly as time and circumstances allowed, and he always kept in view the special need of his hearers. Thus he preached in season and out of season against greediness, drunkenness, neglect of God's Word and communion, and against neglect of the Christian education of children, sins which he knew so easily captivated his hearers. He was particular in the matter of absolution and admission to the Lord's Table. He refused to admit those who were openly unworthy. He summoned them before the congregation and had them excluded. As mentioned before, he had private absolution instituted in all his congregations. To speak one by one with communicants in so many congregations was a strenuous work for the pastor. When there were many communicants, he had to stand and speak, instruct, warn, admonish and comfort from ten o'clock until towards evening. But Preus did not spare himself. No one should go unworthily to the Lord's Table if he could help it. Also in the preparation of the confirmands, Preus was diligent and was particular as to whom he confirmed. The young people had to get the necessary knowledge of Christianity, even if they had to "go to the pastor" for two or three or four years. Children that were openly unworthy for confirmation were turned away and had to get along without confirmation if they would not reform. That Preus got ingratitude for his pay in such a matter is almost to be taken for granted. Parents and children who lacked judgment stirred up enmity against him and spoke about him behind his back. Thus I hear

whispers that Preus denied children confirmation because they were the children of poor people or because the parents had refused to give a certain amount to Luther College or to pay off the church debt. The Christian children's school and children's education lay close to Preus' heart, perhaps more than any other single thing. He preached and wrote about these matters, and brought them up in congregation meetings, pastoral conferences, and synod conventions. His zealous work for the congregational school has been mentioned above. He was diligent in catechizing the young people on the floor of the church during the church service. He was not satisfied to meet with confirmands every third or fourth Sunday when there was service in the different churches, but he gathered all the confirmands—except the few in Madison—every week at Spring Prairie, and the instruction lasted four or five hours each time. Mention should also be made of the establishment of Monona Academy in Madison. This was Preus' work more than any other single person.

I learned to know Preus as a diligent and industrious man. This is self-evident. He served seven congregations, and besides, for many years, had a large mission field. For several years, he, with Pastor J. A. Ottesen, edited the Synod's paper the "Monthly News" (*Maanedstidende*). Finally, for thirty-two years, he was president of the Norwegian Synod and a member of the church council. As president of the Synod and the church council, he had much correspondence. Whenever there was strife in a congregation, or a poor mission pastor or a congregation was in need and desired help, Preus got a letter asking for advice and support. In the three years that I lived at the Spring Prairie parsonage, there was hardly a time that Preus left his desk and sought rest before midnight. He took little part in the physical work on the farm. But this was not because he "looked down on physical labor and laborers" as had been said of the Synod's oldest pastors. He had all respect for physical labor. More than once I have seen President Preus together with his hired man bring in hay and grain, or build and repair fences. There was no work on the farm which he regarded as beneath himself or his sons.

As father in the house, Preus was a man who understood his own house, "having his children in subjection with all gravity" as it is said in the *Table of Duties*. All disobedience or other sin on the part of his children was sternly punished—we boys thought that sometimes it was too stern—but at the same time with love. Many a time it was even touching to be a witness of his fatherly tenderness and love to the children which

God had given him and to see the reverence and love with which they again embraced their father.

Finally, I have known Pastor Preus as a polemicist, as an ecclesiastical warrior. In closing I will say a few words about that. As is known, he took a large part in our church controversies, the many battles concerning faith and doctrine which have been waged among us Norwegian Lutherans in this land. Preus built the walls of Zion in this manner, that "with one of his hands he wrought in the work and with the other hand held a weapon." He wrote many a polemical article, and took part in many a discussion with his ecclesiastical opponents. That Preus had right and truth on his side in the matters at issue is my conviction, and I say that now, but will not enter further on the matter at this time. But as already intimated, I do not insist that his method of conducting the battle was always ideal. The attacks which he had to meet were sometimes of a kind which both demanded and deserved a sharp answer. I call to mind the *Open Declaration*, *Wisconsinism* by Weenaas, *The Report* by Lars Oftedal, and the quite well-known accusations that the Synod pastors defended slavery, worked for the slavery of the South, and aroused sympathy for the rebels, the accusations that they were spiritually dead orthodoxists and unconverted state church pastors, and that their congregations were the "common herd." If any answer was to be made to such attacks, the answer had to be sharp; and Preus did at times answer more sharply than was necessary or useful. It is not always easy to deal in proper measure. But it can be said, and it ought to be said, that in controversy as in all else, Preus was an honorable and conscientious man. Especially in regard to difficult or doubtful matters, he was not hasty to express his meaning and to take sides, but he took time to consider the matter. Then when in God's Word he had reached a conviction, he followed it and stood firm and unshakeable. He was not a church politician. He did not carry his cap as it was blown by the wind. He did not ask, "On what side is the majority?" or, "What will people say?" or, "What will the consequences be?" On Good Friday of 1883, he was deposed by a majority in one of his old congregations. It was demanded that he subscribe to a number of theses, and with a few strokes of the pen, Preus might have avoided the insult of being deposed in his old days. But he was convinced that the theses were ambiguous, and besides contained false contentions and accusations, and so he rather permitted himself to be deposed than to subscribe. In his honor, it shall also be said that he always fought with open visor. Others attacked him in anonymous articles, but he himself attacked no one in that cowardly

manner. He was always ready to bear responsibility for his words, and he took as well as gave hard blows. Finally, I will say that Preus was not a frivolous and impetuous man, who set forth accusations and made stern judgments before first being sure that they were just and could be proven. While I was living at his house, he wrote his detailed answer to the *Wisconsinism* of Weenaas. I can testify that his answer was not a work of haste, but the fruit of several months' labor, and was built on a painstaking search of all documents in the case. Several times, Preus came to me with a bundle of documents and asked me to help him investigate whether this or that was as he had understood and depicted it, whether this or that assertion or judgment was well-founded. He desired to do no man injustice.

Pastor Herman Amberg Preus has now for sixteen years rested in his grave in the Spring Prairie churchyard. Time passes. Soon his memory among us will be only a sage. Any great and impressive monument at his grave he has not received and surely he did not desire. May his monument be a church body and a ministerium which will faithfully follow in his footsteps in all that is good and praiseworthy. LSQ

Baptism in Church History

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I. Baptism in the Ancient and Medieval Church

BAPTISM IS A GLORIOUS CREATIVE ACT OF THE Triune God in which we are born again as the children of God the Father through faith in Christ Jesus the Savior (Galatians 3:26). Through baptism we become members of Christ's body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12–13), and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, including all the blessings of salvation (Acts 2:38).

The Early Church was a missionary church. The context, then, of baptism in the Early Church belonged to the context of evangelism, of preaching the Gospel and calling people to faith in the Savior. From the example of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) and the jailor at Philippi (Acts 16), we see that a certain amount of instruction was required for an adult to be baptized. This was especially true when more and more pagan converts were brought to the church. They needed much more instruction in matters of Christian belief and the Christian way of life than Jewish converts who were familiar with the Old Testament.

Baptism and the Ancient Church

One of the earliest sources of information concerning the baptismal doctrine and practice of the Ancient Church is found in the *Didache: The Teachings of the Apostles*. It is dated from the last third of the first century, possibly around 90 A.D. This document contains instructions

on preparing candidates for baptism, on the way baptism should be performed, and on the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The instruction for baptism is summarized under this theme: the two ways, the way of life and the way of death. There are only two ways or paths to be followed. The way of life is found in Jesus, the Savior, which will result in a moral life and lead to salvation. The way of death is the broad road of immorality which leads to destruction. When this instruction was given, one could be baptized.

Concerning the method of baptism, the *Didache* gives these directives:

> Regarding baptism, baptize thus. After giving the foregoing instructions, "Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" in running water. But, if you have no running water, baptize in any other; and, if you cannot in cold water, then in warm. But, if you have neither, then pour water three times on the head "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." But, before the baptism, let the one who baptizes and the one to be baptized fast, and any others who are able to do so. And you shall require the person being baptized to fast for one or two days.[1]

This quote from the *Didache* confirms the fact that our Lord's words in Matthew 28:19–20 have always been used in a proper baptism. They are the words that must be added to the water to have a sacrament. For the Ancient Church a valid baptism was the application of water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The writer of the *Didache* was not dogmatic about the amount or manner of applying water in baptism. He preferred baptism in running water, that is, in a river or a stream. However, if that was not possible, simply pouring water over the individual's head three times would be proper and legitimate. His directive here indicates the Christian freedom in this area. Scripture does not dictate any particular method of applying water in baptism.

The earliest Christian baptismal font found is from the house-church at Dura Europos on the Euphrates in modern day Iraq, dating from the early third century. This font, like most of the remaining early ones, is altogether too small for immersion and could only have been used for baptizing by pouring. An indicator of how it was used is seen in the pictures surrounding the font. Very low on the left-hand side is a picture of Adam and Eve being tempted into sin by Satan. Higher

[1] Didache 7, *The Fathers of the Church*, 1:177.

up, but also on the left-hand side, is a picture of the Good Shepherd. It seems evident from this that the candidate stood at the right-hand of the shallow bath, with the water hardly above his ankles. As he leaned forward for the pouring of the baptismal water, he saw the picture of the fall. Then standing after the baptism, he saw the picture of the Good Shepherd, the source of his salvation. These early baptismal fonts indicate that immersion baptism was not the norm in the Ancient Church.

From the very beginning of the church, baptism was considered to be an indispensable means through which an individual participated in the salvation of Christ and was received into Christian fellowship. It was not a mere outward symbol of conversion, but a powerful sacrament which gave forgiveness and rebirth. This is confirmed in the writing of Justin Martyr who was one of the most important witnesses to life, faith, and worship in second century Christianity. He was a Palestinian living in Rome where in 160 A.D. he wrote his first *Apology* or defense of Christianity. In this document, one can discern the basic structure of the divine liturgy as it is known today, and he gives valuable instruction concerning the Lord's Supper and baptism.

> Then we lead them to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated. In the name of God, the Father and Lord of all, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ said: "Unless you be born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.[2]

In his *Apology*, Justin teaches that baptism regenerates. This means that baptism gives new birth, for here a trust in Jesus as the Savior is worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The term regeneration or new birth was commonly used to designate baptism in the Ancient Church. For Justin, baptism is a means through which the Holy Spirit works faith and new life. This confirms the fact that regenerational baptism has always been confessed by the church as the doctrine of Scripture.

There is no question in Justin Martyr's mind that John 3 is a direct reference to baptism. Jesus told Nicodemus that one must be born again to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Here Justin points out that the means to be born again is baptism. Baptism is the birth of water and Spirit of which Jesus speaks in John 3:5. Any interpretation of John 3:5 which denies that it refers to baptism is contrary to the clear word of Scripture and the witness of the whole Ancient Church.

[2] *Apology* I, 61, *The Fathers of the Church,* 6:99.

Baptism in the Ancient Church was not only the washing of rebirth, but it was also known as a participation in Christ's death and resurrection following the baptismal teachings of St. Paul in Romans 6. As a result, the baptismal font came to be seen as both a watery tomb and womb. The recipient of baptism was united with Christ's death and resurrection, and thus participated in the redemption that these events have accomplished. Augustine speaks of baptism as dying and rising with Christ in many of his writings, and there he especially emphasizes that in baptism complete forgiveness of sins is offered and given.

Infant Baptism in the Ancient Church

Early Christian baptism was clearly oriented toward adults. This should not surprise us because many people in the early church were received into the church as adults. They were brought into the church through the missionary activity of the first Christians. This does not mean that infants and children were thereby excluded. The children were baptized along with their parents who came for baptism. Justin Martyr asserts that in his day there were many Christians in their sixties and seventies who had been Christ's disciples from childhood.[3] One could not be a disciple of Christ without being baptized. Therefore, this must refer to people who were baptized as children between 80 and 90 A.D. Polycarp of Smyrna, in modern-day Turkey, a student of St. John, was martyred for the faith around 156 A.D. At his martyr's trial, he testified, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?"[4] He served the Lord for eighty-six years which indicates that he was brought to faith as a very young child or an infant. This means that he was baptized as a child during the lifetime of the apostles.

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in France, was born around 130 A.D., probably in Smyrna. Here he heard the cities' great martyr-bishop Polycarp, a disciple of St. John. Thus, he had a direct link to the apostolic age. He was the most important theologian in the second century. In his writings, he defends the biblical doctrine of baptism which was being attacked by heretical groups already then. He explains that Jesus came to save both young and old through himself, through his redemptive sacrifice and this salvation is conveyed in the rebirth of baptism. "For he (Jesus) came to save all through means of himself—all I say who through him are born again to God—infants, and children, and

[3] *Apology* II, 15; Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:167.
[4] *Mart. Pol.* 9; Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:41.

boys, and young and old men."[5] The phrase "born again to God" is a clear reference to baptism. It was common terminology for baptism, both in Irenaeus' works and throughout the Ancient Church. He says that infants are born again to God or baptized, clearly indicating that he knew of infant baptism. It was a practice handed down from the apostolic era and continued in his time.

Among the young men whom Irenaeus taught during his ministry was one named Hippolytus. He became Irenaeus' spiritual successor and one of the foremost Christian leaders in the West. He was born around 170 A.D. and spent much of his life in Rome. Hippolytus was known as a conservative in his outlook and approach. From this, one can assume that his writings in general would be a preservation of the accepted tradition with few innovations. In his church order, *The Apostolic Tradition*, the baptism of little children is explicitly mentioned. They were to be baptized together with their parents, and their parents were to speak the baptismal confession in their place.[6]

From the eastern end of the Mediterranean world, we have the testimony of Origen concerning infant baptism. Origen was born toward the end of the second century in Alexandria, Egypt, to a well-to-do Christian family. He was well-educated, a prolific writer, and he established a theological school in Caesarea. In regard to infant baptism, he wrote: "The Church has received from the apostles the custom of administering baptism even to infants. For those who have been entrusted with the secrets of the divine mysteries [the apostles] knew very well that all are tainted with the stain of original sin, which must be washed off by water and the spirit."[7] This statement points out that the baptism of infants is of apostolic origin, and it explains why babies need to be baptized. They are by nature sinful, stained with original sin. The way they can be washed clean and born anew is by water and the Spirit.

These great theologians and leaders from the various different geographical areas of the Ancient Church bore witness to infant baptism in their era and presupposed it to be the unquestioned practice of the church from apostolic times. They considered it to be an apostolic practice based on apostolic theology, and not a later development of the church.

The only major church father before the fourth century to criticize infant baptism was Tertullian (150–220 A.D.) who lived at Carthage, in

[5] *Adversus Haereses*, II, 22, 4; Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:391.

[6] *Apostolic Tradition*, 21; B. S. Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus,* 45.

[7] *Commentary on Romans* 5:9; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 2:83.

North Africa. He, however, never rejected the apostolic origin of infant baptism. He desired to postpone baptism except in cases of emergency because he felt that infant baptism placed too much responsibility on the shoulders of the sponsors. Also he seems to have believed that infants were innocent until they reached the age of reason. Tertullian questioned the wisdom of baptizing infants. Yet, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (200–258 A.D.), who considered Tertullian to be his spiritual father, urged his people not even to wait the customary eight days after birth to baptize their children.[8] This shows that Tertullian's viewpoint was not the accepted teaching of the time.

Tertullian himself made an interesting statement concerning baptism in connection with the Christian fish symbol or the *Ichthus* symbol. The Greek word for fish was *Ichthus*. This word is an acronym for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." In Greek, if you take the first letter of each of the words in this phrase, it spells the Greek word for "fish." Tertullian wrote, "We as little fish, in accordance with our *Ichthus* (fish), Jesus Christ, are born in the water."[9] Notice that he speaks of those baptized as "little fish." This seems to imply infant baptism.

In the fourth century, a crisis arose concerning the practice of infant baptism. The belief became common that baptism forgave only those sins committed before baptism. Therefore, Christian parents began to postpone the baptism of their children until they were through the rebellious and stormy years of youth. In fact, many tried to delay baptism until the hour of death, as was the case with Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman Emperor. This same view influenced Augustine's mother Monica. When her son, who was born in 354 A.D., became very ill around 365 A.D., she asked that he be baptized. But then she postponed the baptism when he suddenly recovered, "because the guilt incurred in the filth of sin would be greater and more perilous after the washing than before."[10] This improper practice of the fourth century was corrected by the beginning of the fifth, as is seen in the Synod of Carthage (418 A.D.) which condemned anyone who said that newborn infants should not be baptized.

The postponement of baptism in the fourth century has been interpreted by some to mean that infant baptism was not of apostolic origin, but a more recent innovation that only became universal at the beginning of the fifth century. This is not the case. Infant baptism began

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[8] *Letter* 74; Roberts and Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:354.

[9] *De Baptismo*, 1.

[10] *Confessions* I, 11; R. Warner, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, 29.

with the apostles on a sound scriptural basis and can be documented throughout the Ancient Church in the second and third centuries. The postponement of baptism practiced by some resulted from a misunderstanding of the doctrine of baptism. Baptism offers the forgiveness of all sins and not only those committed before baptism.

Baptismal Customs of the Ancient Church

A lengthy period of instruction before the baptism of adults was established by the beginning of the third century. This period of instruction called the catechumenate could last two years or more. When a person desired to become a Christian and was recommended by a sponsor from within the church, he was received into the course of instruction for baptism. The individual's sponsors would vouch for him that he really wanted to become a Christian and that he was not a spy of the persecuting government trying to destroy the church.

During this period, there was instruction in the Christian faith and the Christian way of life. Intensive preparation of the candidates for baptism began at Lent of the final year, with the actual baptism occurring on Easter Eve, the vigil of Easter. During Lent, they were taught the baptismal creed, the Lord's Prayer and the other treasures of the faith which were otherwise withheld from profane ears. Then, at their first communion on Easter morning they used the creed and the Lord's Prayer for the first time with the other members of the faith community as a sign of their oneness with Christ and his church.

On Easter Eve, Hippolytus reports in the *Apostolic Tradition* that those to be baptized were brought to pure flowing water together with their sponsors and others. They removed their clothing. This was to picture the putting off of the sinful flesh in baptism (Ephesians 4:22–24). First the infants of those instructed were baptized and then the adults themselves. They were asked to renounce Satan and all his wicked works. Then each individual would enter the waters where the baptismal water was applied to him three times. Before each time, he would confess that portion of the baptismal creed referring to the person of the Trinity in whose name he was about to be baptized. The baptismal creed, which is virtually identical with the Apostles' Creed, was intimately connected with baptism.

After the candidate was baptized, he received the laying on of hands and was anointed with oil, signifying that the gift of the Holy Spirit was received in baptism. In the Ancient Church, the laying on of hands and the anointing symbolized the impartation of the Spirit. The climax

of the catechumenate was the celebration of first communion at dawn on Easter Sunday. Baptism was placed into the context of the Easter festival to indicate that in baptism one died with Christ and arose to new life by the power of Christ's resurrection (Romans 6).[11]

When the church no longer faced a predominantly pagan world, the use of the catechumenate became less common. The use of infant baptism increased and adult baptism decreased. In the Middle Ages, the catechumenate virtually fell into disuse.

The liturgy of baptism was embellished with many different ceremonies and symbols to help explain the significance of baptism. The sign of the cross was made on the forehead and breast showing that one was united with Christ's death and resurrection. The newly baptized were given milk and honey indicating their possession of the heavenly Canaan with milk and honey blessed. Salt was placed in their mouth (Mark 9:50) and their eyes, nose, and tongue moistened with saliva with the words, "'Ephphatha!' which means, 'Be opened!'" alluding to Mark 7:34. At times, the newly baptized received a pure white garment, symbolizing their putting on of Christ (Galatians 3:27), and a burning candle, indicating that baptism was the sacrament of enlightenment (Hebrews 6:4).

Such customs and symbols connected with baptism were a great benefit in explaining the meaning of the sacrament. But they also at times tended to blur the meaning of baptism, as was the case with the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil. Originally this ceremony symbolized that the Holy Spirit was received in all his fullness in baptism. But gradually the idea developed that baptism only gave the forgiveness of sin, while the laying on of hands and the anointing in and of itself imparted the Spirit. In the latter part of the fourth century in the Western Church, the laying on of hands was separated from baptism and developed into an unscriptural sacrament of confirmation. Baptism was performed at infancy by any local pastor, but confirmation was administered later in life by the bishop. In the Eastern Church, this laying on of hands and anointing called Chrismation was never really separated from baptism but was considered a second sacrament performed immediately after baptism. The laying on of hands and anointing with oil offered no spiritual blessings of itself. It was a mere

[11] *Apostolic Tradition,* 16–20, B. S. Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 41–49.

ceremony which symbolized that the Holy Spirit was received in full measure in baptism.[12]

Baptism and Augustine

In the middle of the third century, a question arose concerning the value of baptism performed by ministers of a schismatic church. Cyprian of Carthage would not accept such baptisms, while the bishop of Rome recognized them as valid. One hundred fifty years later, with the help of the great North African bishop Augustine of Hippo (354–430), the Roman view which was based on Scripture prevailed.

Augustine faced a bitter struggle in a controversy with Donatism. Donatists were Christians who would not recognize the official church in North Africa because they believed that some of its bishops were improperly ordained. They held that sacraments administered by an unworthy minister or by one who was ordained improperly were invalid. The keystone of Donatist theology was its strong emphasis on the outward purity of the church. Since this was the case, they assumed no one living an immoral life could effectively administer the sacraments. This position made the existence and the reality of a sacrament depend upon the worthiness of the minister. But since this worthiness was ultimately unknowable except to God, no one could be certain if he had received a valid sacrament or not. Augustine saw that what was at stake here was the objective existence and reality of the church's sacraments.

In his writings against the Donatists, Augustine insisted that the unworthiness of a clergyman does not nullify the benefits of his ministry for believing Christians. The validity of the sacraments does not depend on the character or faith of the individual performing the sacrament. If the proper form is used in accord with Christ's Word and institution, baptism is valid even when administered by immoral pastors and heretics.

The important matter in the sacrament was not the holiness of the minister, but the command and institution of Christ. Augustine explained that it is the Word of God that makes a sacrament. "The Word comes to the element and it becomes a sacrament."[13]

In the later years of his life, Augustine came into conflict with a Celtic monk by the name of Pelagius. Pelagius could not accept the teaching that the salvation of man was dependent entirely on the grace of God—a view which left no room for human efforts and participation.

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[12] Schmeling, *Baptism: My Adoption into God's Family*, 22–23.

[13] Augustine, *Tractate on John* 80, 3.

This controversy deepened Augustine's understanding of the depravity of man and the need for God's grace. All people are born spiritually dead in original sin and are dependent totally on the grace of God for salvation. As a result of this, the stress that he placed on the necessity of infant baptism became even more predominate.

Baptism in the Medieval Church

Augustine remained the greatest authority in the Western Church throughout the Middle Ages. Building on his foundation, theologians of the medieval period like Thomas Aquinas developed the medieval system of seven sacraments. Some theologians counted more sacraments and others less, depending upon their definition of a sacrament. However, their number was finally set at seven. This was officially sanctioned at the Council of Florence in 1439. Baptism, Lord's Supper, confirmation, extreme unction, penance, ordination, and marriage were designated sacraments.

The medieval theologians believed that the sacraments conferred grace simply by performing the rite (*ex opere operato*). They were efficacious merely because they were administered, independent of the psychological state or faith of the minister or recipient. One received grace in the sacrament as long as he placed no hindrance in the way, even though there was no good impulse in him.

Augustine had correctly taught that the validity and efficacy of a sacrament does not depend on the worthiness of the minister. However, the medieval theologians went farther than this. They taught that one received the benefits of a sacrament even without a proper attitude or faith. Here they went contrary to the teaching of Scripture. One cannot receive the blessings of the sacraments without repentance and faith in the Savior.

In the medieval period, baptism was considered to be the door to the other sacraments and to the kingdom of heaven. It was essential to salvation, except for a person who desired to be baptized and did not have the opportunity to do so. Those baptized, it was taught, were imprinted with an indelible character. This character was an indelible spiritual stamp on the soul which marked one as belonging to Christ and his body, the church.

Baptism was to confer grace which infused into the essence of the soul, deleted all sins, placed one into a state of grace and made one able to do good. Here the merits of Christ were applied like medicine to the spiritual wounds caused by sin. The merits of Christ gave the individual

the power to live a more Christ-like life. Baptism began a process by which an individual was gradually made more and more righteous and acceptable to God. This righteousness was seen at least partially as saving, as necessary for salvation. Thus, one was not saved alone by the righteousness of Christ accomplished through his holy life and death, but also in part by the righteousness growing out of his own Christ-like life.

The medieval theologians confirmed the view developed by some in the Ancient Church that baptism was not beneficial for the entire life, rather it only removed original sin and those sins committed before baptism. With the first grave sin after baptism, one would lose his baptismal grace. For those sins committed after baptism, one was to look to the sacrament of penance for help. This became standard Roman dogma in the Council of Trent where it is stated, "If anyone says that all sins which are committed after baptism are either remitted or rendered venial solely through the remembrance and faith of the baptism once received, let him be anathema."[14]

II. Baptism in the Reformation and Modern Era

Luther's reformation of the church was evangelical and moderate. Only those things were changed in the Medieval Church which were contrary to the Word of God. All doctrines and teachings in the church were to be judged on the basis of the inspired inerrant Word, the Holy Scripture. This had been the teaching of the whole Ancient Church.

Luther did not accept the medieval system of seven sacraments. According to Luther, baptism and the Lord's Supper alone should properly be called sacraments. Only they had both a divinely instituted sign and the promise of forgiveness. At times the Lutheran fathers spoke of absolution as a sacrament because it was instituted by God and gave the forgiveness of sins. Luther, however, preferred to speak of absolution as a continuation of baptism. It is the Christian's daily return to baptism.

Luther and the Medieval Doctrine of Baptism

Luther had definite concerns about the scholastic or medieval view of baptism. Baptism was seen as infusing grace which enabled the individual to finish the work which was begun in him through the merits of Christ. It helped the individual cooperate in his own salvation. Luther rejected this idea. Baptism was not an infusing of grace which was to assist the individual live a holy life, thus partially winning his salvation.

[14] Chemnitz, Ex. 2, 155.

Rather, it was a distribution of the full forgiveness of Christ won for all on the cross. The whole world was declared not guilty through Christ's redemptive work, and this verdict of innocent is imparted to the individual in baptism, transforming his life. As a result, he lived a Christ-like life out of thanks for this free salvation.

Theologians of the Middle Ages believed that baptism annihilated all sin within the individual. From Scripture Luther saw that this was not the case. Baptism did not delete sin making it vanish, nor did it neutralize evil lust, for the flesh continues to rage. The Christian must struggle against the passions of the old sinful flesh throughout life. Sin is altogether forgiven in baptism, not in such a manner that it is no longer present, but in such a manner that it is no longer imputed to us or counted as ours.[15]

The magical view of a sacrament, that it conferred grace simply by performing the rite (*ex opere operato*), was not accepted by Luther. It was believed that the sacraments were efficacious merely because they were administered, independent of the psychological state or faith of the minister or the recipient. Luther agreed that the validity and efficacy of a sacrament does not depend on the worthiness of the minister. However, he maintained that faith was needed to receive the blessings of baptism. If the treasure of forgiveness offered in baptism is not received by faith, baptism is of no benefit.

Luther emphasized that faith in the Savior was essential for receiving the benefits of the sacrament. But he did not by this imply that the validity of the sacrament depended on the faith of the person receiving it. Baptism properly administered is valid whether or not it is received in faith. The validity of the sacrament is based on the Word and command of Christ. Baptism is valid whether faith is present or not. Yet baptism is efficacious, that is, its benefits are received alone through faith.[16]

It was the Word and command of Christ that made baptism a sacrament and a gracious water of life. When asked, "How can water do such great things?" Luther responded in the *Small Catechism*:

> It is not the water that does these things, but the Word of God which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word of God in the water. For without the Word of God the water is simply water, and no baptism; but with the Word of God it is a baptism,

[15] LW 35:34–35.

[16] LW 40:246, LC IV 53, 443.

> that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says, Titus 3, 5–8: "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying."

According to Luther there was no greater comfort on earth than baptism. It offered forgiveness of sins, delivered from death and the devil, and gave eternal salvation. Therefore, he rejected the unscriptural teaching of the Medieval Church that baptism only removed original sin and the sins committed before baptism. This deprived the Christian of wonderful comfort. He vehemently denied that penance was a "second plank" to rescue the Christian whose baptism had been shipwrecked by subsequent sins. The ship of baptism remained solid.[17]

The forgiveness of baptism was always present for the individual. One needed only to return to his baptism in repentance and faith to receive its benefits. Seeing the blessing of baptism Luther marked himself each day with the sign of the holy cross in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit to emphasize: "I am baptized." His baptism gave meaning and purpose to life in a seemingly meaningless world.

Baptism certainly had a daily use and value for life. Luther explained this under the meaning of baptism in the *Small Catechism:*

> *What does such baptizing with water mean?*
>
> Such baptizing with water means that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts; and that a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.
>
> *Where is this written?*
>
> St. Paul writes, Romans 6, 4: "We are buried with Christ by baptism into death, that just as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The Christian life was a daily baptism once begun and continued. Repentance, therefore, was nothing else than a return and approach to

[17] LW 36:58–61.

baptism.[18] Here one continued daily the dying to sin and the rising to new life of baptism. For Luther baptism was the continual unfolding of the Christian life, reaching its full consummation at the last day.

Luther and the Reformed Doctrine of Baptism

Zwingli of Zurich and the other leaders of the Reformed movement looked upon baptism as a human action. It was a rite which one performed because of God's command, or an action by which one symbolically showed what happened when he became a Christian. Baptism was a mere sign and not a powerful means of grace.

In opposition to the teachings of the Reformed, Luther confessed that baptism was "God's own act."[19] It was not a mere human action done in obedience to Christ, nor was it only a picture of what occurred when an individual was brought to faith. It was a powerful, creative act of God which distributed all the blessings of Christ's cross and worked the faith to receive them. Baptism is not a human action or work, but God's action.

When the Anabaptists arose in the 1520s who rejected infant baptism, Luther staunchly upheld the baptism of infants. This defense is to be found especially in his *Concerning Rebaptism* of 1528 and the *Large Catechism.* Luther believed that God supplied faith in and through baptism to the infant. Thus, he could say, "Even if infants did not believe, which, however, is not the case, as we have proved, still their baptism would be valid and no one should rebaptize them"[20] "Thus we also say that the child is indeed brought to baptism through another's faith and work. But when they have come and the pastor or the baptizer deals with them in Christ's place, he blesses them and gives them faith and the kingdom of God since the words and actions of the pastor are the words and works of Christ Himself."[21]

Roman Catholic Errors Concerning Baptism

The baptismal doctrine which is taught in the Roman Catholic Church today is essentially that of the Medieval Church, with its deviations from Scripture and the teaching of the Ancient Church. The medieval view of the sacrament was affirmed as Roman Catholic doctrine in the Council of Trent (1545–1562). The decisions of the Council of

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[18] LC IV 79, 446.
[19] LC IV 35–37, 441.
[20] LC IV 55, 443.
[21] St. L. XI, 492–493. See also LW 40:243; LC IV 57, 444.

Trent were formulated in reaction to the Lutheran critique of the medieval sacramental doctrine. The Lutherans desired to restore the biblical teaching of baptism which had been confessed in the Ancient Church.

The most dangerous error of the Roman Catholic Church concerning baptism is its doctrine of infused grace, which they inherited from the Medieval Church. According to this teaching, saving grace is a good quality put into the individual by which he is able to cooperate in his own salvation. Baptism is to infuse grace which assists the individual in living a holy life, thus partially winning his own salvation. This viewpoint is a direct attack on the central article of the Christian faith, that we are saved through faith alone in Christ's redemptive sacrifice. If we base our salvation on anything besides Christ's work of redemption, be that our own Christ-like life or some other regulation, we have been alienated from Christ. We have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4).

Baptism is not an infusing of grace which empowers one to live a holy life and help in his own salvation. Rather, baptism is a distribution of the full forgiveness of Christ, accomplished through his holy life and death. The entire human race was declared not guilty through Christ's redemptive work, and this verdict of innocent is imparted to the individual in baptism. This verdict of innocent is given in baptism and is received by faith alone in the Savior, which is worked through this very same means of grace. At the same time, this faith in Christ's salvation worked in baptism transforms one's life. As a result, he lives a Christ-like life out of thanks for the free salvation. He lives this life not to be saved, but because he has already been saved by faith alone.

As the medieval theologians, the Catholic Church teaches that the sacraments confer grace simply by performing the rite (*ex opere operato*). Catholics assume that the Holy Spirit and his gifts can be bestowed without faith or a proper attitude in the recipient. Here they teach contrary to Scripture. One cannot receive the blessings of the sacrament without faith in the Savior (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Roman Catholic theologians believe that baptism deletes all sin in the individual. Sin ceases to exist in the newly baptized until he commits grievous sin after baptism. "In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, or the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God."[22]

St. Peter says, "And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a

[22] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* par. 1263, 321–322.

good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is not the removal of the filth of the flesh. Baptism does not save by causing sin to cease to exist or by annihilating our sinful desires. Our old sinful nature remains after baptism. Sin is forgiven in baptism not in such a way that it no longer exists, but in such a way that it is no longer counted as ours.

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, baptism only removes original sin and those sins committed before baptism.

> Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace."[23]

Baptism does not shipwreck as a result of the first grave post-baptismal sin. It is not ineffective because of subsequent sins. One does not need to be pointed to the "second plank of penance;" the baptismal ship remains solid. St. Peter says that baptism saves us (1 Peter 3:21). There are no limitations on its saving effects. The forgiveness of baptism is always present for the individual. The Christian need only return to his baptism in repentance and faith to receive its benefits.

Reformed Errors Concerning Baptism

The Reformed churches are all Christian churches which are not Lutheran or Catholic and Orthodox. The teachings of the different Reformed churches vary considerably. Yet, they all adhere to certain basic errors concerning baptism.

The primary error of the Reformed, which pervades their entire doctrine of baptism, is this: baptism is something we do, rather than being something God does for us.

> All who repent and believe on Christ as Saviour and Lord are to be baptized. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life... Water baptism is a picture of our spiritual union with Christ. It shows the believer as identified with Christ in a spiritual death, burial, and resurrection. By baptism the believer

[23] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 1446, 363.

> announces he has died to the old life of sin. By being "buried" in the water he shows his intention never to return to the former way of living. By being brought up out of the water he pictures a spiritual resurrection. By the new life he has received through identification with the Son of God, he will walk in "newness of life," differently from the way he formerly conducted himself.[24]

Baptism is not a mere rite which we must perform because God commanded it. Nor is it only an action by which we symbolically show what happened when we came to faith as the Reformed teach. St. Peter says that baptism saves us. It is not the removal of dirt from the body, a bodily cleaning, a mere outward rite (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism saves; it washes away all sin (Acts 22:18). Here the Almighty God is active. Baptism is a divine work apart from all human actions.

Baptism for the Reformed is a human work or action. Since this is the case, it is not a real means of grace, a channel which brings the benefits of the cross to us and produces faith in us to receive them. The only real means of grace for the Reformed is prayer. One wrestles with God in prayer until he feels forgiven and saved. Thus, the certainty of salvation is based on human feelings and emotions and not on the objective means of grace. The Bible, however, teaches that baptism is a means of grace. Baptism forgives sins (Acts 2:38), it washes them away (Acts 22:18), and in baptism we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ (Galatians 3:27).

The Reformed churches do not believe that baptism gives rebirth, that it works faith. How can it if it is a mere human rite? They maintain that the Holy Spirit works faith apart from the means of grace.

For most of the Reformed today, natural man is not totally dead in transgressions and sin, contrary to St. Paul (Ephesians 2:1). Natural man's will cooperates in salvation, making a decision to accept Christ as his personal Savior. Here again, prayer is the only real Reformed's means of grace because the individual must ask Jesus in prayer to come into his heart. He invites Jesus into his heart as his personal Savior and he has an experience of Christ within. This is what the Reformed call being born again.

The Reformed have a preoccupation with having a born again experience. But isn't it interesting that their born again experience conflicts with the meaning of the term "birth" or "being born"? In birth, a child is passive. A child can do nothing to be born from his mother's womb, but

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[24] Thomas Sanders, *Assemblies of God Our Faith and Fellowship*, 27–30.

they believe that they can help in their spiritual birth. They can cooperate in their conversion.

This Reformed doctrine of rebirth can easily lead to work-righteousness, the idea that we have to do something to help in our own salvation. If our salvation depends on our decision to accept Christ or on our inviting him into our life, then we are not trusting alone in Christ's redemptive sacrifice. But, at the same time, we are trusting in some effort or action of our own for salvation.

St. Paul rejects the idea that we can help in our salvation. He writes, "God our Savior … saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). God did not save us because of anything we did, our decision for Christ or our God-pleasing life. He saved us because of his undeserved mercy in Christ. That treasure was brought to us in baptism, the washing of rebirth, which caused us to be born anew by creating faith in the Savior in our heart. Baptism is indeed the sacrament of rebirth which conveys Christ's forgiveness to us, and creates the faith to receive it and make it our own.[25]

The Reformed teach that baptism is a human action. It is a rite which pictures what happens when one comes to faith. The logical conclusion of this teaching is that children should not be baptized. An infant cannot cooperate in his salvation by making a decision for Christ. Therefore, many Reformed churches like the Baptists do not baptize infants.

Baptism, however, is not a human work but God's own action. Therefore, we have every reason to baptize our children. The blessings of baptism are offered to both us and our children (Acts 2:38). Jesus wants our little ones brought to him so that they may be part of his kingdom (Mark 10:13). God has provided a way for even our babies to be born anew through the washing of water and Spirit, creating faith in their hearts to receive the blessings of baptism (John 3:5). Being born again is not primarily an experience of Christ within us, but it is the creation of trust in Christ as our Savior in our heart through the means of grace.[26]

The Pentecostals and Charismatics who assert the need for another experience after the born again experience, called Spirit baptism, are consistent with Reformed doctrine. If water baptism is a mere human rite, it cannot give the Spirit. As a result, the Pentecostals and Charismatics have a water baptism without the Spirit, and a Spirit

[25] Schmeling, *Baptism: My Adoption into God's Family,* 36–41.
[26] Schmeling, *Baptism: My Adoption into God's Family,* 50–61.

baptism without water. But more important, they have a Spirit baptism without Christ's command or the promise of his blessings. Scripture promises the Holy Spirit and his gifts only in the means of grace, Word and sacrament. The New Testament speaks of only one baptism, water baptism (Ephesians 4:45), and in that one baptism the Holy Spirit is promised in all his fullness (Acts 2:38–39). It is the washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).[27] LSQ

[27] Schmeling, *Baptism: My Adoption into God's Family,* 43–49.

Ascension Sermon on Psalm 47:1–9

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Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, our ascended Savior, we rejoice in Your power and greatness. We thank You that You have gone to heaven to prepare a place for us. Be with us in this life and rule our thoughts, words and deeds. We desire to be with You, the Father and the Holy Ghost in glory. Therefore, strengthen us in the faith and always point us toward heaven so that in the end we may be with You forever. We ask it in Your name. Amen.

Text: *Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth! He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet. He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved. God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne. The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham, for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted. (Psalm 47:1–9, NIV)*

TODAY WE CELEBRATE A MOST WONDERFUL AND glorious festival. It is the capstone of Jesus' victory and triumph of which the ancient writer declared, *"Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. … God has ascended amid shouts of joy … God is seated on His holy throne"* (47:1, 5, 8).

Yet when Jesus told His disciples on Maundy Thursday night that He was going to His Father, sorrow filled their hearts. They thought they were going to be left as orphans, as sheep without a Shepherd. If that was what happened on the Ascension, then this would be a sad day indeed and, by the way this festival is celebrated in the church today, I am afraid many people think that way. But Jesus said to the sorrowing disciples, *"I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away"* (John 16:7). Only after the resurrection did they comprehend this. This we too must understand to celebrate this day as the **Glorious and Joyous Ascension of Our Lord Jesus**.

I. First we consider its meaning. During the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, Jesus confirmed the fact that He was indeed alive through many appearances. In addition, He continued to teach His disciples, preparing them for their important work of being His witnesses in all the world.

Then on that fortieth day, He took them to the Mount of Olives on the way to Bethany. In a little garden on the side of the mount on Maundy Thursday night, He groveled in His suffering like a worm in the dust, sweating great drops of blood. Now from this very hill, He ascends triumphant. When He finished His last words of instruction and comfort, the Lord spread His hands over them in a blessing and slowly and majestically went heavenward from the earth higher and higher. Our psalm says, *"God has ascended amid shouts of joy"* (47:5). The angel hosts were in ecstasy. The same hands that were bore through with rusty nails would now hold the reins of the universe. Finally, a cloud took Jesus from the Apostles' sight as a heaven-bound chariot, which reminds us of Elijah's chariot of fire. He then ascended to the right hand of power.

In the ancient world after a king defeated all his enemies, he had a triumphant procession in his capital, making public spectacle of them. He made his enemies lay down before his throne. After this, he sat down on his throne using their heads as a footstool, showing he was completely victorious. So, Jesus began His triumphant procession from Olivet, ascending to glory after glory. He then sat down at the right hand of the Father using the Devil and the powers of evil as His footstool, showing He was completely victorious as the Psalmist prophesied, *"The Lord says to my Lord: 'sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'"* (Psalm 110:1).

This triumph and victory of Jesus is our victory. Everything He did, He did for us. Therefore, when we see Him enthroned in glory, our Victor divine crushing the old serpent, the Devil under His feet, we know our salvation is certain. He has given us the victory over sin, death and the devil. Now, no one can say to us our sins are not forgiven, there is no place for us in heaven, because the Ascension makes these things certain.

Next, Jesus' ascension shows that our path here should always be heavenward bound; bound for the promised land. The Christian's citizenship is in heaven and he is traveling here only as a pilgrim (Philippians 3:17–21). Out of thanks for the salvation victory of Jesus, we will want to live as the citizens of heaven. Yet far too often we live like illegal immigrants trying to cross the border into Satan's pleasure kingdom, rather than being in this world but not of it. We continually lust after the cheap carnival pleasures of this world when God has prepared for us the greatest treasures in heavenly mansions. I'm afraid we sometimes feel cheated that we aren't supposed to do things contrary to the moral law. Here we are living the humdrum goody-goody life; we are not supposed to get drunk, have premarital sex, go out on our mate, use drugs, overeat, cheat, lie, steal or gossip. Anything that is considered fun, we are not to have anything to do with. Yet realize, dear believers, that any one of these things when done only leads to physical harm and spiritual death. But oh how Satan makes them look candy sweet. Therefore, thanks be to God that in Jesus we have the victory. Through His means of grace, He gives us the power to live as citizens of heaven. When we do fail, we are assured of his full forgiveness through the Ascension. Then may we each strive to live as though we were bound for the promised land.

II. Now we consider the blessings of the Ascension. As wonderful as the meaning of the Ascension is, if the Lord left us here, it still has a very somber note. Sad to say, there are many who think that way. All the Reformed, all those who follow the teachings of John Calvin, say that after the Ascension, Jesus' human nature remained in some specific place in heaven reserved for the Second Coming. Then when they say Jesus is present with us at all times they mean only His divinity because His human nature, His body, is in some location in heaven. Here they take away the comfort of the Lord's presence, for it is not our loving human brother who is present who knows all our needs and concerns (Hebrews 2:18) but only the fiery all-consuming deity before whom

man does not even dare to stand. Luther said that he wanted to know no god except the God made flesh (LW 38:46). Here they rip Jesus asunder and destroy the comfort of His presence.

Because they believe that Jesus' human nature is now absent from us in heaven, they deny the real presence of Jesus' body and blood in the Sacrament. If Jesus' body is one place in heaven, how can it be present on many altars when the Holy Supper is celebrated? Thus, Zwingli and Calvin said the bread and wine only represent Jesus' body and blood, and we lose the wonderful comfort of the Supper.

Now back to the original question: did Jesus leave us in the Ascension? No, definitely not; He said before He ascended, *"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matthew 28:20). He says, "I am with you, not just part of Me, the divine nature, but both natures." For since the Incarnation, the divinity is never without the humanity in Christ. The visible Ascension was to show the disciples and all Christians that now Jesus would not appear visibly as He had done during the forty days until He appeared in the clouds at the Second Coming.

In His omnipresence, being present everywhere both as God and man, He is even closer to us now than when He walked among men. If Jesus was present here on earth in one place, say Jerusalem, to talk to Him we would feel a need to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But now He is with all of us at all times so that we can talk to him at any time in prayer. He is present here not only with His fiery divinity so we must fear Him but also as our human brother who knows our needs and is always willing to help. Because his humanity is present everywhere, we know that His body and blood can be present in the Supper as the Words of Institution say. Just think of it: a man, our human brother, is at the helm of the universe.

Here He functions as our Prophet, Priest and King. As our Prophet, He continues to proclaim the Word through the preaching and teaching of the Church. Then through every proclamation of the Gospel, Jesus is speaking to His brothers and sisters. In every Baptism, Lord's Supper, and absolution, Jesus is functioning. As our Priest, Jesus sacrificed Himself as the one atonement offering and now intercedes for us in heaven. He stands before the throne of the Father and says concerning us there, "The prayers of this sinner should be heard because I have washed him clean in My blood." As our King, He rules all the forces of the universe for the good of His brothers and sisters, the Church. He allows nothing greater to come upon us than we can bear and always

gives us in His Word and Sacrament the power to overcome. Even through the conflicts of life, He is working for our good.

Finally, because Jesus ascended into heaven, we know there is a place there for us. Jesus says, *"In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you"* (John 14:2). He went to prepare that wonderful home for all His believing brothers and sisters in the Ascension. Therefore, we know that right now a place is waiting for us—our home—for heaven is our fatherland, heaven is our home. Then at His appointed time which is different for each of us, He will come again to receive us unto Himself that where He is there we may be also.

Therefore, as we await His appearing, we will live as the blood-bought children of God, citizens of heaven, longing to reach the Fatherland. May heavenly light and heavenly love shine through us to all men, the power for which we receive only from our Lord in Word and Sacrament as the hymnist says, "Draw us to Thee, for then shall we walk in Thy steps forever and hasten on where Thou art gone to be with Thee dear Savior." LSQ

A Scandalous Stewardship: Sermon on Luke 16:1–9

Kyle Madson
Pastor, Norseland Lutheran Church and
Norwegian Grove Lutheran Church
St. Peter and Gaylord, Minnesota

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Note: Serving as the ELS president since January (2021) at the sad loss in this life of President John Moldstad, I have been attempting to visit as many of our ELS congregations within driving distance from Mankato, Minnesota, on Sunday mornings. I have been so delighted, not surprised, that our ELS pastors consistently continue to conduct Christ-centered services, preaching Christ crucified and Jesus our righteousness. Attending Norwegian Grove Lutheran Church on Trinity 9, I heard an excellent sermon on the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1–9). It was considered under the blessed theme: A SCANDALOUS STEWARDSHIP.

It was a source of great frustration for me to preach on this text several times throughout my three decades of service at Parkland Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Washington. Pastor Hugo Handberg's widow, Harriett, told me upon the first time preaching on it that she did not get the whole notion of the master commending the dishonest manager. The last time I preached on it, motivated now to finally nail it for her, Harriett said on the way out that Sunday "I still do not get it!" My comfort is that she is in heaven with the full understanding of it now.

Having heard Pastor Kyle Madson's sermon expounding upon this parable, I concluded that he definitely nailed it by approaching it with a very refreshing take, which I never used and is definitely Christocentric. So, I suggested to Pres. Schmeling that this would be submitted for the brethren in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. Read it and be edified as I am

sure all Kyle's listeners were that day. I could picture sitting in the pew with Harriett across the center aisle, turning to each other giving an approving wink and nod expressing that Kyle nailed it for sure. Blessed be the name of our dear Unjust Steward and His scandalous stewardship for us!

— Glenn Obenberger,
President of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Prayer: O Lord, Heavenly Father, who through Your Son our Savior taught us that we cannot serve both God and mammon: Deliver us, we pray You, from the love of money and grant us grace to use wisely and faithfully all the possessions You so mercifully entrust to us for our short time for the extending of Your kingdom, for the relief of the needy, and for our own daily necessities of body. This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text: *Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and this manager was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.' And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings. (Luke 16:1–9, NASB)*

DID YOU NOTICE IT? … HOW YOU BRISTLED UPON reading the word "*stewardship*" in your service folder? Nothing gets us quite so riled up as any Christian preaching or teaching that has to do with "*our money.*" The only thing more damning than our instant aversion to Scripture's talking about money might be when

we Christians *hope* the sermon is about "*giving*" because we're pretty comfortable with how our giving *ranks us* with our peers.

Truth be told, most pastors get a near-allergic reaction to any text that smells of *stewardship* too. Few things are more important to the old sinful nature of us pastors than remaining "popular" with the people—and preaching about money ... well, that's a high-speed train to *"unpopular-ville."*

Whether it be our greed, our pride, or the pastor's vanity, the mere mention of the word *stewardship* is like opening a closet and having the mess of sin and guilt tumble out on top of us.

This Gospel account—sometimes titled "*The Unjust Steward"*—does make use of this tension-filled verbiage—*stewardship*. And while our sin and guilt may be plaguing us at its mention, money and its proper management, while related to this text, isn't really at the center of Jesus' parable here, not any more than gardening is at the center of His *Parable of the Sower* or parenting at the heart of the parable of the *Prodigal Son.* Management of money is simply the *understood medium*—the known exercise used to teach the mysterious ways of God's Kingdom and the unnatural faith that clings to and lives on an "unjust stewardship."

We often compliment Jesus for "teaching in parables" as if that were Him being so kind, mission minded, and accessible. But Jesus Himself bursts that balloon: "*To you [disciples] it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest [it is] in parables, in order that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand*" (Luke 8:9–10). Parables are catechism class, NOT outreach. They are inside speak… and intentionally so.

Leading up to this *Unjust Steward* anecdote, Jesus has just shocked the system of the "*seeing-but-not-seeing*" Pharisees with the utterly ridiculous love of a Father for his rebellious son. After this account, Jesus confounds the eyes and ears of the Pharisees again with a poor, boil-covered beggar who dies right into heaven by the work of mere *Word*—that which *Moses and the Prophets* gave to him.

Couched between these two mysterious and unnatural accounts is this one regarding A SCANDALOUS STEWARDSHIP.

It begins with the clear-cut diagnosis of mismanagement and an expected firing. You're status is as "steward," care-taker of what belongs to me. You've managed poorly what was placed in your purview. So, turn over your books while I find someone who will ACTUALLY care for my goods.

There's nothing out of the ordinary here. So far, only a simple illustration of an accountability that seems all-too-absent in our day. But this *IS NOT* where Jesus leaves us, with a moral tale exalting personal accountability. Rather, we find a man who has been given his "*two-week-notice*"—a very brief amount of time left to remain in his calling between the master and the minions. And as his life and livelihood "circles the drain" so-to-speak, he takes inventory of what his role is now. And there's something scandalous about a manager on his way out, resolving to become decisive with his master's goods.

His station is not that of a *strong man*—able to change the trajectory of life by way of his physical power. His role is not that of a beggar—one whose life can be sustained by the charity of others toward him. His status, *at least for this short time,* is this unique station of **the one who stands in between**—in between the Master who possesses all *AND* the debtors who are *"on-the-hook"* for it all.

So, as is helpful with all Jesus' teaching parables, it's good for us to ask:

> What's expected? The accountability exercised upon the poor steward.
>
> What's shocking? That the steward isn't resigned to riding out quietly into his lost/least life.
>
> What's REALLY shocking? **HOW** he decides to be decisive in this his closing act as steward.

We'd most likely expect the steward to desperately try to ingratiate himself to his master by becoming the most-aggressive of all collection agents so that he might stand before the master one-last time with as impressive a wad of collected money as he could. But instead, the middle manager embraces his new station among the commoners—the debtors. He sees fit to ingratiate himself *to them* by removing their debt so that they might become welcomers of him—of His presence among them.

And the final scandal of all: *the land-owner applauds it!* The same master with whom we quickly and easily relate for firing the failure-steward now commends that same steward for wiping away debt owed to him!!! Even more, the master calls it *shrewd—wise???!!!*

This parable of Jesus uses money-management/stewardship lingo. And while hearing it may help us recognize our own greed, our own pride, or our own vanity, our own mismanagement of many of our daily-bread gifts … most of all, this scandal is all about the Kingdom

of God—about *JESUS—The One who is in between the Master and the debtors.*

Jesus "lost his position" of esteem and power at God's right hand. Like the "fired steward" Jesus embraced His commission as the One on the way to the bottom. In this lowly status Jesus didn't aim to raise Himself up to glory and power again. Rather, He spent His life and breath wiping away the debt of every last debtor short on funds for the Master. And with this scandalous stewardship the Master is well-pleased.

Those debtors relieved of debt by the scandalous Steward must have been like someone who just found a pile of money in their backyard!—wondering how they might spend this new-found wealth in celebration and thanksgiving. With His *scandalous* forgiving of our debts, Jesus enlists us as spenders of all the new-found wealth—all the grace and mercy of our Redeemer as well. From this pile of wealth that is our forgiveness paid for by Jesus, comes the forgiveness and the mercy we "steward" out to one another: forgiving others as the Master, *in Christ,* has forgiven us; sharing generously of our daily-bread bounties with those whom our Master has related us in our various callings.

Dear Christian friends, we often mistake ourselves as "masters of our money/wealth," "masters of our time," "masters of our talents"—to use or not use what we call "ours" as we see fit … And then the commodities/stock market crashes and "our money" is not "ours" anymore. Then cancer comes, a stroke strikes, a child gets sick and suddenly dies … and "our time" proves NOT to be *ours* at all.

Our misbeliefs about our "master-ies"—these are among the many outstanding debts that separate us from our Master—the REAL *Master*. For these condemning sins, God our Father exercised a very scandalous stewardship. He gave everything He had—His own sinless Son—to be steward for us debtors. The Scandalous Steward spent His Master's wealth to death for you and me. The great Steward has redeemed us to lives of stewardship—lives that have been bought back from the debt of sin and death and filled with good things so that we might be bold 'stewards' of grace and mercy, of kindness and generosity toward our neighbors too. Dearly redeemed debtors, REJOICE and be exceedingly glad for such is the Kingdom of God and the stewardship of faith to which you are called. LSQ

Sermon at the Funeral of Dr. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker

Torald N. Teigen

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Editor's Note: Sigurd C. Ylvisaker (1884–1959) was born in Madison, Wisconsin, to Prof. and Mrs. Johannes Ylvisaker. He attended Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, from 1904 to 1907. The next three years Ylvisaker spent at Leipzig University in Germany and earned his Doctor's Degree in Semitics in 1910. In 1919 he became the representative of the ELS on the teaching staff of Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1923 he accepted a call to Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Madison, Wisconsin, where he served until 1930 when he became president of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota. He served as president until 1950. Because of Ylvisaker's faithful and tireless efforts, Bethany Lutheran College survived and prospered during some of the most difficult years of its existence. This funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Torald Teigen on April 29, 1959, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Text: *And 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 bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:14–17, NKJV)*

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST: FRIENDS OF DR. Sigurd Ylvisaker, former parishioners and former students, brethren in the ministry of the Word of God, his relatives, and especially you, dear widow and children of Dr. Ylvisaker: Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

In speaking an appropriate tribute at the burial of him whom many among us knows as a dear Father in Christ, where shall I begin?

How the scenes come back! I see him breaking the news and bringing real comfort to two young students whose brother's life was snuffed out by a tragic accident. I see him again with evangelical scholarship setting right the mind of a young student who had begun to doubt the reliability of the Bible. I see him in the college chapel each morning of the school year, book by book and verse by verse opening to us the Gospels and Epistles—and our hearts burning within us. I see him in his household one evening after supper savoring and setting out to his family and guests the graceful and gracious language and truth of Psalm 103. I hear him administering a gentlemanly, well-timed and well-earned rebuke to a young minister who had fallen into some slovenly ways. I see him discussing with this brethren the problems and fears, the hopes and encouragements of the college and synod with which his life and labors were bound up for so many, many years. I see him again as essayist before the synod convention leading his hearers among the mountain-tops of the Holy Scriptures and bringing forth old things and new from its treasures. I see him standing beside the casket of one and another of our Synod's pastors, as one by one they were taken from our ranks, speaking words of gracious consolation and penetrating admonition to relatives and friends.

These things and many more I saw and heard, and in the cases mentioned I was a chief beneficiary. Many, many other people, some present today and some absent, will have similar recollections of how they profited.

Interesting though it might be to pursue that line of thought, it would no doubt be putting the accent not quite on the right syllable, and would finally leave us with our arms less than half full. We will do better by going directly to sources, to the Word of our most high God.

A few years ago a book was published whose title was *Grace for Grace*. Dr. Ylvisaker was the editor-in-chief, and he wrote the introductory and the concluding chapters. And in these chapters he had a thoughtful and penetrating exposition and application of the truths found in our text. I know that the ideas found in the text were the leitmotif of his life and

labors, and I cannot think of anything better than to bring them to your attention also today.

The words "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" give us a remarkable insight into the meaning of the Gospel and the mission of the Church, the believers, for whose work's sake alone the Word allows the world to stand.

The message which the believers have been called upon to proclaim is "grace and truth." It is a grace which is true, and a truth which brings grace. This grace is the full and free forgiveness of all sins and all sinners through the holy life and innocent sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, the God-man. By his life and death for us, our debts have been paid, and God has declared us in Christ to be holy and just, His sons and His heirs. It is "grace for grace," that is, abundant, always new and flowing freely, a grace to "cover all my sins." Grace by its very nature is unmerited. It cannot be earned, for "by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight" (Rom 3:20). Grace is accompanied by no "if" or "buts," demands no worthiness nor preparation on our part. This grace goes hand in hand with truth, and is thus dependable, real, sure, certain, trustworthy. And because grace came by Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, and is based upon Him and His eternal promises, it is a sure anchor for our soul in life and in death. Without the message of grace and truth the sinner is at loose ends and stands on sinking sand. But with this message he builds on a rock that cannot be moved and he boldly and confidently sings: "Salvation unto us is come through freest grace and favor."

This doctrine of grace and truth meant everything to Dr. Ylvisaker. In it he lived and taught and worked. He knew that every deviation from the teaching of Scripture, even in what many would consider a minor point, would detract from the doctrine of grace, and he regarded that as a flippant crime against the most high God and a cruel crime against the sinner. And so **with** this doctrine of grace and truth he stood where the Lord had placed him and applied the trowel to the walls of Zion, and **for** this doctrine of grace and truth he contended, upon occasion even sharply, with the Sword of the Spirit.

If we should ask why the doctrine of grace meant so much to him, the answer is simply that he knew that it is a treasure from our merciful God and that he knew that he himself and others with him needed it so sorely.

Some years ago Dr. Ylvisaker was in correspondence with an elderly man who was perplexed and troubled about the Scripture doctrine of

divine election or predestination. Today I am going to cite to you in part what Dr. Ylvisaker wrote to that man, and that for a number of reasons: First, it exemplifies in a remarkable way his manner of holding forth the grace and truth in Christ, for the comforting of troubled souls; Second, I am sure that, also, he consoled himself as he, too, was in the twilight of life; Third, it is a confession of his on a teaching of Scripture which in many circles, even Lutheran circles, has been vitiated or discarded completely; Finally and chiefly I am going to cite it because I like to think of it as a good Gospel message from him to us today. This is what he wrote to that old man:

> I wish I could bring to you, Mr.—, the comfort of the doctrine of election as we teach it, and that just now at your stage of life. As you look back upon your long life, I know that you will agree that there would have been no hope for you unless your divine Shepherd had sought you out, found you, and carried you safely along the difficult path of life. How hopeless it would have been unless He had known you as His from all eternity, had made you His own in holy baptism, had followed you mercifully through life, raised you up when you stumbled, supported you when you were weak, quickened you when you were in despair, fed and nourished spiritually when you were hungry and thirsty, instructed you when you were ignorant and foolish, comforted you in time of trouble, forgiven you every day when you sinned and rebelled against Him, and now remains your mainstay and hope and strength when the days become fewer and the end of the journey is not far away.
>
> Is there a single hour or minute in your long life when His grace has not shined on you, and is there any song you would rather sing more than this: '*Alt af Naade*,' 'all by grace'? Can you imagine that the saints in heaven would make it a part of their song of praise and thanksgiving: 'I am glad that I at such and such a time had sense enough to believe in Christ, to show such and such a *godt forhold* (good conduct) that God would show favor to me above others, and that He saw in me something which determine Him to grant me the final favor of predestination?' Do you not see how any such idea or teaching would rob God of the glory due Him, as if it were not quite true when Christ cried out: 'It is finished!' Are you not comforted now to know that your salvation is dependent not on anything (mark you, anything!) in you, but on His grace for me, you,

personally before the world was, and before there was any chance for us to show a 'good conduct?'

I want to assure you of this that our reasons for carrying on as a synod apart from the 1917 Merger … [are] our love of the Gospel of pure and free grace, a Gospel which we want all men to keep and to enjoy in all its divine glory and brightness, and by which we want to be comforted ourselves and are eager to comfort others against sin and every ill. There is no doctrine of Scripture which is more comforting than the very doctrine of election when you learn to know it aright. For nothing can be more comforting than this, that our salvation is altogether in the merciful hands of God. There it is safe, and there alone.

Now may God keep you in this true and living faith, trusting with full confidence in the promise of Him who has said that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

I know that most of us who are present today, bereaved family, former students, brethren and friends, in one way or another learned to know better the doctrine of grace and truth in Christ in large measure through His servant, Sigurd Ylvisaker. We ought to pause for a little self-analysis. How have we used this doctrine? Has the hum-drum of living often crowded it out of our vision? Have we been so busy chasing the world's rainbows that we have often lost sight of God's rainbow and covenant of grace? Have we whole-heartedly thrown ourselves into the work of retaining and teaching and spreading this doctrine of grace and truth where our good doctor left off?

In our introspection we will, I have no doubt, be impressed with our neglect, and we will have to count ourselves miserable servants. And our nature being what it is, we won't even realize the real depth of our sluggishness and neglect. What then? Then we will rejoice and be glad that it is really "grace for grace." "Grace over grace," enough to cover even that.

On this day we will rejoice and thank God that He taught our father in Christ His grace and preserved him in it to his dying day. We will rejoice that our God through him continually held it before us and led us into a deeper appreciation of it. And will resolve anew to use God's grace humbly day by day for ourselves, contend for it if need be, proclaim it in season and out of season—and this we will do as an expression of gratitude to our God "who has saved us and called us with

a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (1 Tim 1:9). Amen. LSQ

Book Review

LSQ Vol. 62, Nos. 2 & 3 (June & September 2022)

Book Review: My Savior's Guest

My Savior's Guest: A Festschrift in Honor of Erling Trygve Teigen. Edited by Thomas Rank. Lake Mills, IA: Thomas Rank, 2021. 268 pp. $20.00. ISBN: 9781667116259.

I wish I had taken more classes from Prof. Erling Teigen. That isn't the way I always felt. I was one in a long line of students who cycled through his classrooms during his forty-year career as a Bethany Lutheran College professor. When I took one of his religion courses as a college freshman, I thought the texts he required us to read were a bit over our heads and therefore not very helpful. I decided his classes weren't for me.

But as the semesters passed, my perspective began to change. I started to see Prof. Teigen in a new light. I listened more carefully to what he said. My respect for him grew. When it was time to take a 300 level religion course my junior year, no one had to force me to take his class on the Lutheran Confessions. I knew what the Confessions were, but I had not read them all (or even most of them). I was curious. That semester, we read *The Book of Concord* cover to cover.

What we discussed in that class and what I learned had a profound effect on me. It opened my eyes to what it meant to be a "Confessional Lutheran." I knew what it was to be an ELS Lutheran (or I thought I did)—I had been one my whole life. But now I understood clearly what made the Lutheran confession distinct from the confessions of other denominations. I learned that a Lutheran church body without a *quia* subscription to the Lutheran Confessions would not be a church body worth belonging to.

After the Lutheran Confessions course, there were more eye-opening Teigen classes to follow, such as a

survey of the life and writings of Martin Luther and the history of Lutheranism in America. With a more mature outlook and a better mindset, I grew tremendously in my knowledge of and appreciation for our rich Lutheran heritage.

Reading *My Savior's Guest: A Festschrift in Honor of Erling Trygve Teigen* was like returning to a Prof. Teigen classroom. It reminded me how much I have to learn, and it helped me grow in appreciation for Confessional Lutheran theology. The book contains a unique selection of essays that touch on areas of history, liturgics, dogmatics, education, government, and the application of confessional Lutheran teaching in the contemporary setting.

Nearly every writing in the book makes reference to the Lutheran Confessions. Pres. John A. Moldstad makes the case in his essay for our confessional subscription. He addresses the question of whether we interpret Scripture in view of the Confessions or the Confessions in view of Scripture. Citing Teigen's own contribution to the topic, Moldstad writes that Lutherans accept the Confessions as the correct interpretation of Scripture. For those who decide to follow their own exegetical insights in contradiction to the doctrine of the Confessions, "this carries with it the obligation to declare oneself *other than* Lutheran" (p. 175).

Each generation of Lutherans must make the Confessions its own. Chaplain Don Moldstad writes that what "we must learn is not merely to mimic what one's church body says, but to know *why* it says what it says. One of the greatest threats to retaining the truth is to convince yourself that you already possess it simply due to your synodical affiliation" (p. 168). Pr. Martin R. Noland and Prof. John T. Pless provide case studies on this point. Both of them pastors in the LCMS, they write about the compromise of pure theology that led to the break-up of the Synodical Conference and the LCMS's pursuit of fellowship with those who denied clear biblical teaching (pp. 177ff., 207ff.).

But what is unique about the Lutheran Confessions? Why should they guide us as opposed to other confessions of faith? Weren't the Confessions written by men just like us, sinners in thought, word, and deed? Prof. John M. Brenner demonstrates that the foundational Lutheran confessional writings had Scripture and not human reason as their basis (pp. 27ff.). In the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, Philipp Melanchthon consistently appealed to Scripture both in identifying the errors of the Roman Church and in stating the pure teaching.

We hold up the Lutheran Confessions because we are convinced—as a great many before us have been—that the confessions contained in the 1580 *Book of Concord* correctly teach the doctrine of God. We regard the confessional writings as we do because of *what* they say and not because of *who* wrote them. Not all of Melanchthon's theological writings are doctrinally correct. The same goes for Luther. Even so, we revere these men and acknowledge their

monumental impact in shaping not only life in the church but also life in the home and in the world.

Prof. Robert Kolb sketches the contributions of Melanchthon, Luther, and their colleagues to the fields of university education and the Christian liberal arts. He gives a fascinating survey of educational life at the fledgling University of Wittenberg in the early part of the sixteenth century (pp. 91ff.). Martin Luther arrived in 1508 after studying at the University of Erfurt. He was influenced there by "humanism," which advocated a return to original sources (p. 93), and by the "nominalism" of William of Occam, which likewise encouraged a healthy questioning of the *status quo* (see Charles L. Cortright's essay, p. 76). Melanchthon arrived in Wittenberg in 1518. He was also a proponent of humanism and spoke in his inaugural address about the need for a solid training in the liberal arts. He was concerned about the reform of all areas of education, but especially of theology since it "really demands the highest possible capacity for thinking, for intensive concentration, and for precision in analysis" (p. 97).

With the fast spread of the Reformation movement after Luther's posting of the Ninety-Five Theses, men traveled from all over Europe to receive instruction in Wittenberg. When they finished their studies and returned to their homes, they were faced with the question of how to implement their Reformation learning in a local setting. The primary concern of evangelical pastors was how the pure Gospel should be proclaimed and presented in the Divine Service. Pastors Bruss (pp. 47ff.), Krikava (pp. 109ff.), and Schöne (pp. 218ff.) explore these challenges in their respective essays and discuss how the Lutheran Confessions helped provide a clear way forward in worship.

The same challenges were experienced in the Scandinavian lands. Luther's pastor, Johannes Bugenhagen, traveled to Denmark to help organize the Lutheran Church there. In 1537, he produced an order of service, which is the predecessor to "The Divine Service: Rite One" in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. The Reformation brought a new era of song to the church. Prof. Dennis Marzolf shares the history of an early Danish-Norwegian chorale that made the long journey from a 1569 collection of hymns to our hymnbook today (pp. 148ff.).

The history of Scandinavian Lutheranism and its arrival on American soil through Norwegian immigration in the mid-1800s is of particular interest to Prof. Teigen. Young pastors trained by Confessional Lutheran professors at the University of Christiania brought confessional theology to the Midwest frontier. They formed the Norwegian Synod in 1853. After a series of controversies and then compromises, the vast majority of Norwegian Synod pastors participated in the Norwegian Lutheran church merger of 1917. Only a remnant was left to continue in the old paths of the Norwegian Synod, a group which later adopted "Evangelical Lutheran Synod" as its name.

Chaplain Moldstad provides a helpful summary of the causes that led to the 1917 merger (pp. 163ff.). But we might have expected to see more essays touching on these topics in Teigen's festschrift. Teigen calls the history of Norwegian Lutheran divisions and mergers in America the "Lutefisk Lament" (p. 261). While proud of his Norwegian heritage, he is not hesitant about poking fun at Scandinavian foibles, such as the embrace of trouble and suffering. "It hurts so good!" he says with a laugh. I remember another classroom quip about those in the church who "get a sore crotch riding the fence" while working for compromise at the expense of clear teaching.

The collection of essays in *My Savior's Guest* is a worthy representation of Teigen's academic and theological interests. The essays are both encouraging and challenging. They encourage us to stay the course of a faithful, biblical confession. And they challenge our tendency to take for granted what has been handed down to us and to proclaim peace when there is no peace. The essays are somewhat jarring at times when pointing out the dissonance between Lutheran practice in the sixteenth century and Lutheran practice today. This book does what a Teigen class did. Borrowing Chaplain Moldstad's words, it "challenge[s] our presuppositions and force[s] us to engage in our own studies both in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions" (p. 162).

I recommend this book for any who have a love for Confessional Lutheran theology. You may not agree with all the conclusions arrived at by the essayists, but you will appreciate their research and clear writing. I also encourage you to read the footnotes for each essay. You will find some helpful explanations and suggestions for further study there, along with some surprising personal anecdotes. Until I took Teigen's college courses, I don't know if I ever read footnotes. Now I always do—thanks to his encouragement! (I think he even quizzed us on the footnotes.)

It is clear from the varied backgrounds of the essayists that Prof. Erling Teigen has had an influence in the Lutheran Church beyond the borders of the ELS. He did not set out to "make a name for himself." Like so many Lutheran leaders before him, he gained his knowledge and wisdom in the school of *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* by the grace of God. He knows where the glory belongs, and he states it clearly at the end of each of his writings: Soli Deo Gloria.

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