

JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN Mission

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THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

Witness Always



WITTENBERG: THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE REFORMATION

ALMOST 500 YEARS AGO, the Reformation, which proclaimed a pure and undefiled Gospel to the world, began in the lowly city of Wittenberg. At the time of the Reformation, Wittenberg was a small, provincial town with a developing university. Wittenberg appeared insignificant to the world (and many would say the same today). Yet in a pattern that the Lord has used over and over again throughout history, He chose what is insignificant to the world to be significant in bringing His salvation to all peoples.

Martin Luther would have had a difficult time imagining a gathering of confessional Lutheran leaders at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Yet Luther would confess and have the hope that as long as this world exists, the Church of Christ will remain standing against the gates of hell.

The papers presented in this issue of the *Journal of Lutheran Mission* were presented at the second International Conference on Confessional Leadership (ICCL) held in Wittenberg, Germany. The ICCL was held in conjunction with the dedication of the Old Latin School, located across from the *Stadtkirche*, Saint Mary's, the congregation where Martin Luther preached at least 1,000 times. The Old Latin School will be a beacon for

confessional Lutheranism to the entire world. We hope in the coming years that the Old Latin School will host many more conferences where papers of interest to Lutherans worldwide are presented and published.

The ICCL in Wittenberg had representatives from 41 countries, which represented 23 million Lutherans worldwide. The theme of the ICCL conference was "Celebrating the Reformation Rightly: Remembrance, Repentance, Rejoicing." A goal of the conference was to help prepare world Lutheranism for the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. The papers presented in this journal are to contribute to that anniversary celebration.

The Lord has blessed us greatly. Confessional Lutheranism is here for this moment to be Lutheran and

to take the confession of the Lutheran church into the world.

I hope that you enjoy the papers presented in Wittenberg and find them edifying and helpful as you consider the upcoming celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

In Christ,
Matthew C. Harrison
PRESIDENT

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FOREWORD

by Joel Lehenbauer

JUST OVER FIVE YEARS AGO, in June 2010, a group of twenty-five leaders representing a dozen Lutheran churches from around the globe met on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., for what was described as a “Confessional Leadership Conference,” sponsored by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the LCMS. The genesis of this conference was a resolution (3-03) adopted by the 2007 convention of the Synod. This resolution

- rejoiced that “the LCMS has been richly blessed with theological resources including two outstanding seminaries and a rich heritage and history of being confessionally strong,” and that “the LCMS is blessed to work with other confessional Lutheran churches around the world;”
- urged “the CTCR, in consultation with the Office of the President and our seminaries, [to] coordinate fundamentally constructive and intentionally supportive efforts such as theological symposia [and] conferences ... to uphold and nurture confessional Lutheranism;” and
- asked that “members of partner churches, members of the ILC, as well as other church bodies and individuals be invited to participate” in these events for the purpose of “furthering and nurturing confessional Lutheran theology at home and abroad.”

One month later, at its convention in July 2010, the Synod commended the CTCR for its efforts in organizing this conference and essentially said (in Res. 3-02A): “Do it again! Do it even bigger and better!: This led to the September 2012 International Conference on Confessional Leadership held near Atlanta, Ga., which brought together some 120 Lutheran (and also non-Lutheran) leaders from around the world for the purpose of mutual edification and encouragement and for the promotion of the Gospel-centered teachings that stand at the heart of the Lutheran Reformation of the 16th century.

A year later, at its 2013 convention, the Synod said: “Praise God for these efforts! With 2017 approaching, we dare not stop now.” “World Lutheranism,” observed the Synod in Res. 4-04, “is in the process of a seismic realignment, which creates tremendous opportunities and challenges.” “The memory and theology of the Reformation ... is in serious danger of extinction,” even among churches and organizations around the world that bear the name “Lutheran” but have forsaken critical aspects of historic Lutheran theology. “We urge the CTCR and the President’s Office to continue their plans” for another international conference in the year 2015, “to discuss possibilities for collaborative efforts among confessional Lutherans around the world toward the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017” (Res. 4-04).

That led to the May 2015 International Conference on Confessional Leadership held in Wittenberg, Germany, in conjunction with the May 3 dedication of the International Luther Center at the Old Latin School (<http://thewittenbergproject.org/>). Some 125 Lutheran leaders from 41 countries representing 23 Lutherans worldwide gathered together in Wittenberg, the cradle of the Reformation, to reflect on the theme “Celebrating the Reformation Rightly: Remembrance, Repentance, Rejoicing.” This issue of the *Journal of Lutheran Mission* contains presentations and sermons delivered at this historic around that theme. We hope you find them instructive, encouraging and challenging.

As you read and reflect on these essays and sermons, please know and be assured, as conference participants were informed and assured: ***“That we, as a Synod, give thanks for the encouragement of the bold witness and dedication to the Word of God of confessional Lutheran church bodies around the world and urge the members of the Synod to pray for these church bodies ... that God may continue to bless us and them”*** (2013 Res. 4-04).

Rev. Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer
Executive Director
Commission on Theology and Church Relations

A TRIBUTE FOR REV. DR. CHARLES EVANSON

by Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.

Editors' note: The Rev. Dr. Charles Evanson served 15 years overseas, first as a deployed staff from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne and then later after 2010 as a contract worker for the LCMS Office of International Mission in the area of theological education. In May 2015, Dr. Evanson served as the worship planner and chaplain for the International Conference on Confession Leadership (ICCL) in Wittenberg, Germany. This conference is the source of the papers in this issue of the Journal of Lutheran Mission. After assisting with the ICCL in Wittenberg, Dr. Evanson returned to Lithuania to pack his belongings so that he could return to the United States for retirement after many faithful years of service.

IN AN EMAIL OF APRIL 2000, the Rev. Dr. Charles Evanson reported to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW) that he was teaching elementary Hebrew, homiletics, God and creation, eschatology and New Testament theology at the University of Klaipeda in Lithuania. As he noted, "It is quite a mixture, and it makes for an interesting week of classes."

That "interesting week" has now stretched beyond a decade and a half, and Dr. Evanson's ongoing, stellar service has cemented the strong relationship between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Lietuvos Evangelikų Liuteronų Bažnyčia (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania).

Called by CTSFW in 1999 as deployed staff, Evanson brought a unique resumé to the work outlined for him. Undergraduate work at Valparaiso University was followed by seminary and graduate studies at Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary (Maywood, Ill.), Union Theological Seminary (New York City), the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Concordia Seminary (Saint Louis). He was ordained in November 1964 and colloquized into the ministerium of the LCMS through CTSFW, then located in Springfield, Ill. After serving as a missionary and pastor in both Canada and the United States, Dr. Evanson settled into his long and fruitful pastorate at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind. (1975–2000).

It is most rewarding to see a person's unique gifts matched to particular situation with the result that all involved grow and are blessed. That has been the situation with Dr. Evanson and his service in Lithuania. Working with the Rev. Dr. Darius Petkūnis, pastor of the Palanga Lutheran Church, Evanson played a significant role in the development of the Lithuanian hymnal and agenda. In

2012, Bishop Midaugus Sabutis honored Dr. Evanson by counting him among the Lithuanian clergy.

Always aware of the unique moment in which he worked, in 2010 Dr. Evanson noted: "The door which had been closed for so many years is once again open and the church has mobilized itself to learn once again to become a mission-minded church in the highly secularized, post-Soviet, European Union environment."¹

And the Lord has blessed that work. In May 2003, Dr. Evanson could report: "We have good evidence that our work here is bearing good fruit. I think that you too are able to bear testimony to the renewed interest in Confessional Lutheran Theology and its practical application that is evident here. Of course, there is an old saying that were God build His Church, the devil builds a chapel next door ... In short, the Church in Lithuania continues to need our continuing educational work, and the faithful prayers of Lutherans all over the world."

And so even as we give thanks for Dr. Evanson's service, we continue to pray for our fellow Christians and co-workers in Christ's mission in Lithuania.

Lord Jesus Christ, you came to earth to destroy the devil's works. You have conquered sin, death, and hell and have brought life and immortality to light. We give you thanks for the faithful work of your servant, Charles and pray that you will continue to send faithful laborers into your harvest. Grant us conviction and courage to continue the work entrusted to us — daily to struggle against the devil's dominion and daily to strive to extend your kingdom.

The Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast, Jr. is president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

¹ Charles J. Evanson, "Christ's Servants in Lithuania," *For the Life of the World* 14 (November 2010): 10.

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What does Is. 12:1–6 have to tell us about God’s anger and, even more importantly, His love toward us?

SERMON: A SONG OF JOY

by Michael Kumm

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Word of the Lord from Isaiah 12: “I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me.” This is the Word of the Lord.

Having recently walked the 40 days of Lent in joyful anticipation of the glorious return of the Alleluias at the Resurrection of Our Lord and celebrated the appearances of Christ to the world, we now “Sing to the Lord a new song!” We waited for this — sometimes not so patiently — the true salvation of our souls.

The people of Isaiah’s time were waiting — waiting for deliverance from enemies about to overrun them. The Book of Isaiah is full of warnings to the wicked, both Gentiles and the people of Israel. But in the first twelve chapters, Isaiah spends quite a bit of time telling the people they are not forsaken — telling them that the promised Savior will come. He points them to that future coming and tells them that He is their hope, even now.

As chapter 11 draws to a close, as the people fret that they will be wiped off the face of the earth by the Assyrians, Isaiah declares to the people, “And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that remains of His people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt” (Is. 11:16). He points them to the Exodus, when Moses led the people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. And what did they do once they crossed the sea and Pharaoh’s armies were washed away?

They sang a song praise to God, a song that declared, “The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.” They still had a long way to go to the Promised Land, but they stopped and sang along the way. They did so with good reason: Far from the Promised Land in the wilderness, the Lord who had delivered them was present to protect them, and He would not leave His

people. In our text, Isaiah proclaims the same hope to his despairing hearers: Although things look terribly dire, the Lord is faithful. And even though there’s a long time to go before the Lord delivers them, He declares a song of praise for them to sing along the way.

So it is with you and me. We sing this song of joy as we celebrate Easter, but more than that, we know this: It is a time of darkness in a sinful world as we await our resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. In other words, dear friends, this song of joy is for you along the way as you await deliver-

ance to heaven.

So it begins: “I will give thanks to You, O Lord, for though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away, that You might comfort me.” There’s your Gospel right there. God *was* angry with you, and rightly so because of your sin. But God is not angry with you anymore. Why? Because God has turned His anger away from you. But because He is just, He must punish sin: He cannot just turn His anger from you and direct it into outer space. The sinner must face judgment.

That is why this verse gets you to the Gospel: God turned His anger away from *you* and turned it toward His Son, reminding us that, “For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” God made Jesus to be sin for our sake. That’s where God turned His anger for our sin — onto His Son at the cross. Because Christ was the object of God’s wrath and the bearer of our sin, we are now forgiven. We are now righteous and live as the beloved children of God. Rather than condemn us, He comforts us.

In fact, check out the news of the following verse, which echoes the song from the Exodus: “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD God is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.” The verse states the astonishing

God made Jesus to be sin for our sake. That’s where God turned His anger for our sin — onto His Son at the cross.

truth twice. It is not just that “God has caused my salvation” or “God has sent my salvation,” but that “God is my salvation.” He is your salvation because He is the One sacrificed on the cross for you. Where you were powerless against sin and death, the Lord God is your strength, and He has defeated sin and death. He has destroyed the power of all that would leave you unrighteous and corrupted, and He has given you His righteousness and life. He is your salvation, He is your strength and He is your song. In fact, this verse echoes Ps. 118:14, which says, “The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.” And how does that song continue in Psalm 118? It sings out, “I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord” (Ps. 118:17). It declares, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:22–23).

That is the song of joy that you sing. God has turned His anger away from you. He is your salvation, your strength and your song. And therefore, “with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” In keeping with the reference to the Exodus, Isaiah reminds us that this world is the wilderness as we make our way to the Promised Land of heaven. Water is necessary for life. More than once in the wilderness, the people had no water and would have died were it not for the Lord. But the Lord provided water in the wilderness to keep the people alive on the journey to the Promised Land. So also He keeps you alive by His means of grace, as Jesus declares in John 4, “But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

God is not angry with you. He has turned His anger away from you, and now He comforts you. He is your salvation, your strength and your song.

It is no small thing that God is not angry with you. The world still lives under the wrath of God. It is not because God desires it, for He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would have them turn and live. They are under God’s wrath because their sins are still bound to them, because they have not yet repented and been saved.

Deep down inside, sinners know that they are under the wrath of God: it is part of the Law that is written on their hearts, part of what their conscience whispers. There

are those who have reached despair, who are well aware of their guilt and mortality but don’t see any way to redemption: such are very aware of God’s wrath, but not at all of His grace and life.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, C. S. Lewis described the curse of frozen Narnia as “always winter, never Christmas.” For those who sense God’s wrath but do not know His salvation, life is always Lent, never Easter. Always wilderness, never Promised Land. Thirst, not wells of salvation. Only death, not life, awaits. That’s a world in need of Good News.

Thus our text continues: “Give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the peoples, proclaim that His name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, for He has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth.”

This is the privilege given to the Church, to the people of God — to proclaim the glorious deeds of God. We proclaim Christmas to a world

that knows only winter and Easter to people who know only Lent. To those who know only guilt, we declare forgiveness in Christ. To those who see funerals as the end, we proclaim eternal life. For those who fear the wrath of God, we declare that God has turned His wrath away from them onto Christ; and not only that, but now God turns His face to shine upon them, to be gracious unto them.

That is the news that we are given by God to proclaim: freedom in Christ from sin and death. And that is why the devil works overtime to persecute this proclamation, to make confessing the faith seem like a burden instead of a privilege. Satan will try to make us fear the wrath of man more than the wrath of God, to value our lives and livelihoods more than the eternal life of others. That is why confessing the faith is difficult, but we get to proclaim life that raises the dead. That is the new song that we sing.

It is not easy, and the world does not hear the news gladly. We’ll believe the burden heavy, and we’ll need to repent of that often. That is why we sing the song to each other, to encourage each other that God’s wrath is turned away, to comfort one another with God’s strength and salvation. Furthermore, we declare that we are not alone; that is the conclusion of the song of Isaiah 12: “Shout and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.” As it was true for the people of

Because Christ was
the object of God’s
wrath and the bearer
of our sin, we are now
forgiven.



the Exodus, so it is true for you. You are not alone, and you are certainly not forsaken. The Holy One of Israel is great in your midst, but not with mighty acts of power visible to the human eye. Rather, He works the great miracle of resurrection in Baptism, so that eternal life is already yours. He works the great miracle of forgiveness and faith within you by the speaking of His Word, by the singing of the new song of the Gospel. The Holy One comes in the midst of you — body, blood and all — in with and under bread and wine.

The Holy One — Jesus Christ — is in your midst with His song of joy for this life of Lent. He is your comfort, your strength and your song. He is your salvation, because He suffered the wrath for your sin when it was turned upon Him, and He rose again to give you life. That is the song of joy now and forever — that you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Kumm is pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Dakota Dunes, S.D., and chairman of the LCMS Board of Directors.

LUTHER'S TRUTHS: THEN AND NOW

by Robert Kolb

Luther's insights into the Word of the Lord can be translated as he translated Scripture and the tradition of the Church: into our times and our places, as different as they are in our several corners of God's world.

IT IS QUITE AMAZING — it is the rarest of occasions in human history — that people around the world are spending so much time, energy and money to commemorate a simple, ordinary academic exercise. No one five hundred years from now will celebrate or rail against a faculty forum held at Concordia Seminary in 2015. In 1517, Desiderius Erasmus was much more influential than the young Wittenberg professor who simply wanted to explore a question of pastoral care in the normal way academicians explored new ideas in their disciplines, by posing theses for debate. Erasmus' contemporary, Johann Eck, trying to make a career for himself at another new, small university in Ingolstadt, may have been more intelligent than his Wittenberg colleague in terms of his command of scholastic theology, although Martin Luther was no amateur at the scholastic arts.

But with around ninety-five — depending on how the printers divided them — theses on the practice of indulgences, Martin Luther began a Church-changing, world-altering series of events that shaped the world far beyond the little frontier town of Wittenberg. What Thomas Kuhn labeled in 1962 “a paradigm shift,” in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, produced what some call the Copernican revolution in theology: Luther's new characterization of being Christian.¹ When printers pirated Luther's proposals for debate on the issue of

indulgences in 1517, they created the first modern media event, a public relations happening like none previously experienced in European civilization.² This media event initiated a series of events that captured minds and hearts as it produced a fresh redefinition of what it means to be Christian. This new definition transformed the way Christians understand who their God is and who they are. The ripple effect of this redefinition continues to make an impact — often in ways unintended by Luther and contradictory to his intentions — today.

A living and lively historical memory is a great blessing, particularly when it is directed toward God's work of blessing His Church with the Gospel.

Recent Luther scholarship has emphasized the continuities of the Wittenberg reformer's thought with elements of medieval teaching and practice. It certainly is important to recognize these continuities and the roots of much of Luther's thinking in medieval antecedents, both in the scholastic tradition and in the monastic tradition of teaching and practicing the faith. Indeed, it is only when we recognize how Luther took what was familiar to his contemporaries and

reworked the way key medieval terms were defined and key concepts recast that we can appreciate how radically the core of his understanding of being Christian critiqued medieval constructions of the faith and how fundamentally he set the church on new paths.³ It should

¹ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

² “How Luther Went Viral,” *The Economist*, 17 December 2011, 93–95. Luther did recognize the potential of the printing press quickly and imaginatively employed its possibilities for spreading his message.

³ Volker Leppin, “Luther's Transformation of Medieval Thought, Continuity and Discontinuity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Lubomir Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 115–124.

not surprise us that an individual never loses completely all the old forms of thinking into which his mind has been pressed by his instructors. New ideas that catch hold in society always take form within an older way of thinking, so that those who receive these new ways also retain some footing in the old way of thinking. Medieval Christianity was Christian. But Luther recast the framework for reading Scripture and proclaiming its message as he worked within the old system of thinking to come to significantly new foundations for thinking and living in biblical fashion.

A framework used in the discipline of comparative religions or the history of religions may help make clear what Luther accomplished with his new definition of being Christian. Religions have six common elements, according to this theory: doctrine (the fundamental principles governing the perception of reality in the specific religious system of thinking); narratives that are the source and the expression of the doctrine; ritual (including both formal liturgical exercises and the routine pious practices woven into daily life as means of relating to the Ultimate and Absolute); ethics (the ways in which human beings properly relate to other human beings and other creatures); community (how adherents live together and how their polity provides governance for their religious institutions, usually through some kind of sacred hierarchy); and finally the element of personal commitment that binds the first five together (faith for Christians, submission for Muslims, the longing for nirvana for Buddhists).⁴

Medieval, Western European Christianity had been shaped by its missionaries, to be sure, but in much of the Mediterranean world, and quite generally north of the Alps, too few Christians were available at the time of conversion to teach and instill the biblical framework of thinking in the people. The masses took some concepts

from Scripture and placed them within the structures of traditional Germanic, Celtic and Slavic religions. Those religions did not have elaborate doctrinal systems but instead understood the relationship between the gods, their concept of the Ultimate and Absolute, and themselves largely in terms of ritual. The relationship was initiated by and flowed out of human performance of that which pleased the gods, and what pleased the gods was chiefly the execution of sacred religious activities. Proper implementation of ritual depended on priests; the people of Europe had no problem accepting the religious authority of a hierarchy endowed with powers beyond that of

ordinary human beings when Christian priests were introduced into the village. Thus, in 1500, Christianity for most Europeans consisted of proper performance of ritual in the domain of a hierarchy that they experienced in the person of their local priest and that they knew culminated in the supreme pontiff, Christ's vicar in Rome.⁵

Through a combination of factors, the young Wittenberg monk and professor came to a different conclusion. His personality dare not be discounted in assessing how he came to his formulation of the biblical message. Could Luther's thinking, with its clear display of the stringency of God's wrath and the sweetness of His

love in Jesus Christ, have come from the pen of a person who had not experienced the intense emotional highs and lows that Luther himself experienced? Not only his personality, but also his scholastic education molded his theology in profound ways. The presuppositions he learned from instructors schooled in the tradition of William of Ockham, mediated through the teaching of Gabriel Biel, Luther's intellectual grandfather, professor at Tübingen, shaped his thinking. Well-known is his rejection of Biel's understanding that God gives His grace only to those who do their best (*facere quod in se est*), so that they can perform works meritorious of salvation.⁶ Less widely rec-

Luther's understanding that the basic problem of life, our failure to fear, love and trust in God above all things, opens the way to settling anxieties and bringing peace. For it teaches that our core identity — in Luther's language our passive righteousness — is given free of charge and free of condition to the God who speaks to us in Jesus Christ.

⁴ Ninian Smart, *Worldviews. Cross Cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (New York: Scribner's, 1983).

⁵ Scott Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2004), 1–35.

⁶ Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Durham: Labyrinth, 1983), 47–50, 146–184.

ognized is the fact that other elements of Ockham's and Biel's system of thought set in place fundamental insights for the young monk. Ockham's principle was that God's almighty power (*potentia absoluta*) had permitted Him to create the world in any way He wished and established Him as the Creator who creates and re-creates without condition. Luther decided, even without human beings doing their best. Ockham's understanding of the limits of the human creature's ability to grasp God in categories of human reasoning and his perceptions of how human language functions remained with Luther throughout his life.⁷

But it was finally his study of Scripture that led him to his fundamental new insights into who God is and what it means to be human that led him to his redefinition of what it means to be Christian. He had learned bits and pieces of the Bible from childhood on, perhaps initially not being able to distinguish its stories from the stories of the saints in the *Legenda aurea*, the collection of tales of miraculous deeds performed by historical or mythical figures who substituted in the popular imagination for the gods and goddesses banned temporarily from the conception of the world that the missionaries brought with them. In school Luther had memorized Psalms in Latin to be sung by the choir in the church. In the university dormitory he had heard Bible readings at mealtime, a custom taken over from the monastery. Once in the monastery this *lectio continua* continued, as well as the singing of the psalmody in the seven hours of prayer each day.

But Luther truly learned Scripture as he began to teach it in 1513. He began with the Psalms, naturally, not simply because he had learned to love the deep-seated expression of human feelings that arose out of his own inner depths, which the psalmists had captured in graceful poetic fashion, but also because instruction in the Psalms had long since become a standard core of the theological curriculum. He went on to Romans, then Galatians and Hebrews, and returned to the Psalms before political events and social turmoil interrupted his lecturing for half a decade, from 1521 to 1526. Somewhere in the seven or eight years following his inaugural lectures in 1513 he experienced what has been labeled his "Tower experience" or his "evangelical breakthrough," terms scholars are now giving up on, because it becomes ever clearer that like most human beings, Luther's ideas changed slowly, raggedly, without a direct line of progress. Rather than a

"breakthrough" or a magical, single "experience," Luther experienced an "evangelical maturation."

Key to that maturation was his new understanding of what Scripture says about the person of God and the persons created as human in His image. Luther learned from personal experience what it meant to try to deal with the God created by the mix of Scripture and Aristotelian concepts of an Unmoved Mover. He had received his theological instruction in a world where order depended on human conformity to an eternal law, which served as the only guarantee of the security of the world and the individual in the absence of the Creator. His Ockhamist instruction cultivated in him, however, a suspicion of the Aristotelian definition of the human being as *animal rationalis*. Being a living human being involved more than just reason (although Aristotle himself had made clear that the will and emotions with reason constituted being human). The God whom Moses and the prophets introduced to him was not Unmoved but on the move, moving through the passage of time which he had created, always moving as the utterly faithful Creator and conversation partner, in relationship with the human creatures fashioned in his image, with reason, will, and emotions.⁸ Luther had no doctrine of God apart from God in relationship with his human creatures, the *Deus revelatus*. No doctrine of the *Deus absconditus* was possible since there was no reliable basis for wrapping the human mind around God without his own revelation.⁹

God revealed Himself by addressing humankind throughout human history. God made the first evangelism call, asking, "Adam, where are you?" God stormed and cajoled, condemned and consoled, warned and wooed through Israel's entire history and sent His disciples into the world to do the same. God just keeps talking throughout Scripture and throughout the Church's history. He has been present and continues to be present, exercising His power through His use of human language. Luther loved words, and he loved God's Word. The God whom Luther encountered in Scripture showed a full range of emotions, from raging wrath in His disgust over children who would not listen to Him, to tender, gentle, loving, kind comfort and caressing those whom He lifted to cuddle on his lap. The Swedish scholar of German language and

⁸ Notger Slenczka, "Luther's Anthropology," in *Oxford Handbook*, 212–232.

⁹ Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross. Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 69–81.

⁷ Ibid., 30–38.

literature Birgit Stolt points out that Luther's use of the biblical picture of God as Father and His human creatures as His children intensified, both in the frequency of usage and in the drama of the imagery, once his own children came into his life.¹⁰

In an age in which social systems cultivate individual independence and thus foster a loss of community, a deficit of contact and communication, the call to return to the family of origin, gathered around a loving Father, who is longing to talk with His children, and coming together to connect with those whom He has made to be sisters and brothers, can be a powerful way of presenting our God. What Luther saw then in the pages of Scripture speaks volumes now.

For several reasons, defining being human in terms of being God's child fits Luther's understanding of what God did when He took dust from the earth and breathed into it the breath of life. Luther's foundational definition of what it means to be God's human child is that we have been created to fear, love and trust in God above all else. The twentieth-century dogmatician and psychologist Erik Erikson did a better job of capturing a pair of Luther's insights in his psychological theories than he did in sketching the reformer's biography in his *Young Man Luther*. That volume is a less than successful attempt to apply Freudian theory to a person from another culture and another time.¹¹ Erikson came closer, however, to Luther as he taught that trust learned from contact with particularly one's mother determines human personality. Our definitions of our own personhood spring from the trust or mistrust engendered in us in the first two years of life, according to Erikson.¹² Luther did a biblical instead of an experimental analysis of humanity and quickly determined that the faithful God created His people to be faithful, to live by faith, to trust Him in order to find the Shalom necessary for life to function well in relationship to Him and to all other creatures. Luther recognized that trust in God, not performance of good works, is the foundation and framework of our humanity.

What Luther saw
then in the pages
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volumes now.

Erikson is famous also for his concept of identity as the key to how human beings deal with themselves and the reality around them. What he means by identity is not the same as, but closely akin to, Luther's concept of human righteousness, being what God made us to be. Righteousness is an important topic throughout Scripture; Luther's understanding of God's righteousness shifted from depicting Him as the evaluator with the scale in which things were measured according to the standard of His Law to being presented as the person who comes to die and rise for those whom He loves.

Luther also departed radically from medieval perceptions of human righteousness, single-faceted as they were. Righteousness meant, for the spectrum of theological voices from Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas to Ockham and Biel, that human beings in some way met the demands for perfect performance of God's Law in one way or another. That might be possible, as Augustine taught, only through the aid of God's grace and with

His gracious forgiveness. Aquinas, too, taught that prevenient grace had to come before good works but that good works constituted that which makes God take pleasure in His human creatures.

Despite the admission that God's grace is necessary for becoming righteous, this one-dimensional understanding of human identity or righteousness placed Luther continuously under God's judgment until he discovered that human righteousness in God's sight comes alone from God and that there are two facets to human identity. The first aspect or facet of human righteousness is passive, the core identity, the real DNA, which is totally a gift of God, just as the physical DNA that constitutes our person is a gift from our parents, unrequested, unearned, undeserved. The second facet is active, human actions executing human responsibilities, which God our Creator built into our nature. Luther labeled his distinction of these two facets of our identity, or two kinds of human righteousness, "our theology" in his Galatians commentary,¹³ and Philip Melancthon made it the anthropological basis of his presentation of the justification of the sinner by grace through faith in the Apology of the Augsburg

¹⁰ "Martin Luther on God as Father," *Lutheran Quarterly* 8 (1994), 385–95.

¹¹ *Young Man Luther, a Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1958).

¹² See, e.g., Erikson's *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964), esp. 81–107, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968), esp. 91–141, *Life History and the Historical Moment* (New York: Norton, 1975).

¹³ Dr. Martin *Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–) [henceforth WA] 40,I:45,24–27; Luther's Works (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1958–1986) [henceforth LW], 26:7.

burg Confession.¹⁴ Luther initially distinguished *iustitia aliena* — righteousness from outside ourselves — from *iustitia propria* — righteousness that we perform ourselves but later turned to the terminology of passive and active righteousness.¹⁵ Chemnitz wrote in Article III of the Formula of Concord, “In this life believers who have become righteous through faith in Christ have first of all the righteousness of faith that is reckoned to them and then thereafter the righteousness of new obedience or good works that is begun in them. But these two kinds of righteousness dare not be mixed with each other or simultaneously introduced into the article on justification by faith before God.”¹⁶

Luther’s concept of two kinds of righteousness simply builds upon the image of parent and child. Parents give their children their basic identity, described in modern terms with concepts like DNA and genetic make-up. Parents expect their children to perform in the manner the family deems appropriate behavior. You cannot really have one side of the equation — over the long haul — without the other, although the disruption of sin does alter the nature of these two facets or aspects of our humanity. Parents do not ask their children some nine months before birth if the child will be ready to help with household chores and support the parents in their old age as a condition of birth. They give life through conception and birth, free of obligation. But the expectations of performance do follow the free gift of life. No parent hopes that the newborn child will never change. All parents expect that their children will be from Lake Wobegon, performing at least a little bit “above average.” Likewise, Adam and Eve did not have a probation period after being formed from the dust of the earth and taken from the other’s rib, respectively. God did not wait some time to see whether these living beings met His expecta-

tions for being human by behaving properly. He gave the gift of being human without condition.

A simple theological parable may clarify the distinction. Although by the definition of his own theology Thomas Aquinas had sufficient merit to proceed directly to heaven without having to work off temporal punishment in purgatory, the Dominican saint dallied along the way, visiting old friends and doing research among those who still had purgatorial satisfactions to discharge there. He arrived at Saint Peter’s gate some 272 years after his death, on Feb. 18, 1546. After ascertaining his name, Saint Peter asked Thomas, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” “Because of the grace of God,” Thomas answered, ready to explain the concept of prevenient grace, should it be necessary. Peter asked instead, “How do I know you have God’s grace?” Thomas, who had brought a sack of his good deeds with him, was ready with the proof. “Here are the good works of a lifetime,” he explained. “I could have done none of them without God’s

Luther and his students did not hesitate to address guilt as they proclaimed God’s Law, but they more often talked about the anxiety and terror aroused by God’s wrath over human guilt rather than about the feelings of guilt itself.

grace, but in my worship and observation of monastic rules, in my obedience to parents, governors and superiors, in my concern for the physical well-being and property of others, in my chastity and continence, you can see my righteousness — grace-assisted as it may be.” Since a line was forming behind Thomas, Peter waved him in, certain that Thomas would soon receive a clearer understanding of his own righteousness. The next person in line stepped up.

“Name?” “Martin Luther.” “Why should I let you into my heaven?” “Because of the grace of God.” Peter was in a playful mood, so he went on, “How do I know you have God’s grace? Thomas had his works to prove his righteousness, but I don’t see that you have brought any proof along that you are righteous.” “Works?” Luther exclaimed. “Works? I didn’t know I was supposed to bring my works with me! I thought they belonged on earth with my neighbors. I left them down there.” “Well,” said Gatekeeper Peter, “how then am I supposed to know that you really have God’s grace?” Luther pulled a little, well-worn, oft-read scrap of paper out of his pocket and showed it to Peter. On it were the words, “Martin Luther, baptized, Nov. 11, in the year of our Lord 1483.” “You check with Jesus,” Luther said. “He will tell you that I have been born

¹⁴ *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014 [henceforth BSELK]), 272/273–278/279, 286/287–288–289, 552–553, *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 122–125, 128, 234–235.

¹⁵ WA 2:145, 7–10; LW 31:297.

¹⁶ FC, SD III:32, BSELK, 1400/1401, BC, 567–568.

again as a member of the family. He will tell you that he Has given me the gift of righteousness through his own blood and his own resurrection.”¹⁷

In this age the search for identity proceeds largely on the basis of “how I perform:” on my job, with raising my kids, in my relationship with my spouse, in my sports club and on the ball field. At such a time as ours the assertion that our core identity, the one that will last because it lies in God’s regard for us through Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection for us, can give people a whole new vision of life from which to build hope again. In an age in which many mean it when they say, “I wish I were dead,” we are able to say, “I have just the thing for you,” and fit them with the death of the old identity and the garment of resurrection in Christ. This can foster a sense of peace and joy that people have never been able to dream of before. What Luther saw then in the pages of Scripture speaks volumes now.

The Enlightenment tried to return to something of an Aristotelian vision of the human being as a living being who can manage life successfully through reason. But the Enlightenment is coming crashing down all around us. Central and northern Europeans seem to be the only people who are not noticing. It is interesting that the Enlightenment is hanging on longest where Lutheran theology failed to hold onto the popular imagination. In fact, for all the national worries, U. S. Americans still begin by singing, “I did it my way,” thinking that they have established themselves on sure footing with their own decisions, but they go on to sing that they get no satisfaction and end up concluding that freedom is just another name for nothing left to lose. In such a world the mastery of reason seems diminished. Rationality also falls increasingly into conflict with the desire to feel good. But feeling good proves also to be elusive. Around the world optimism is dimming about human capabilities to preserve order and peace, harmony and prosperity, *shalom* in Hebrew terms, the likes of Eden. It is interesting that what the Germans describe with *Zufriedenheit* — being at peace — English-speakers describe as satisfaction — making enough for ourselves, or fulfillment — getting full of what we want. And that is still the goal of all those who live the lifestyle of democratic capitalism, whatever content they may claim.

Nonetheless, more and more people speak of their vulnerability and the frailty and futility of life. Some turn to fatalistic explanations. Others blame someone or some other group. Of the making of scapegoats, there is no end. But casting blame solves nothing. Finally we must conclude, “We have met the enemy, and he is us,” as Pogo, a cartoon figure of my youth, opined. Luther knew that. And Luther knew that evil has deeper roots and sin more profound implications than any casual brush with bad luck or unfortunate accident can drive home for people. Luther experienced that the good that he wanted to do did not get done because without trust in the God, who provides a haven in every need and truly supplies all good, he was inevitably turned in upon himself, relying on creatures rather than Creator to secure his identity, the reality around him and his life.¹⁸

Desperation creeps into the consciousness of those whose perception of their own identity finally ends up wanting more security than can be offered by their own performance of what they think is right for them. Any other creature or creatures that they marshal as their supporting force and foundation fail as well. For such people, Luther’s understanding that the basic problem of life, our failure to fear, love and trust in God above all things, opens the way to settling anxieties and bringing peace. For it teaches that our core identity — in Luther’s language our passive righteousness — is given free of charge and free of condition to the God who speaks to us in Jesus Christ. What Luther saw then in the pages of Scripture speaks volumes now.

The bestowal of passive righteousness takes place, in Luther’s view, when God goes about doing what God does: creating, or in this case re-creating, and accomplishing His new creation through His Word, just as in the beginning He spoke and reality came into existence. Martin Franzmann caught Luther’s sense with poetic precision: God’s strong Word had cleft the darkness, when it was done at His speaking; and so also does His strong Word bespeak us righteous, birthed with His own holiness as a result of the light of His salvation breaking upon those who dwelt in darkness and the depths of death.¹⁹ Re-creation takes place when His word of forgiveness, life and salvation buries sinful identities and raises up new creatures in Christ. Luther called that the restoration

¹⁷ Taken from Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness. Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (1999): 449–466, here 454–455.

¹⁸ Lubomír Batka, “Luther’s Teaching on Sin and Evil,” in *Oxford Handbook*, 233–253.

¹⁹ *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 578.

of righteousness “justification.”

The suggestion that “justification” is a term that has lost its significance for twenty-first century North Americans and Western Europeans — and may never have had much significance for people outside Western cultures — has been repudiated by Oswald Bayer. He argues that most Western Europeans and North Americans spend much of their lives justifying themselves to spouses, parents, children, neighbors, employers, fellow employees, referees on the sports field, traffic police who stop us — we are continually justifying our actions if not our very existence, also to ourselves.²⁰ This need to establish one’s own integrity is not reserved for Europeans and North Americans. Most people feel compelled to present and defend our own merit and value, our own rights to be the person we want to be and the person we are. Usually, what we have accomplished and achieved is the underpinning and substance of our argument. No sixteenth-century Christian was any more insistent on a Pelagian view of human merit than the typical Western European or North American of today. Many of them are just as beset by self-doubt, self-accusation, self-denial or despair as were the super-conscientious monks of whom Luther was one.

God is still calling out to precisely this kind of person, to those who fear that they have not performed to standard, or have not forged the right connections to further their children or snag a promotion. God’s Word still projects itself to light up the darkness of those who turn in upon themselves because they can trust no outward source of support anymore.

Luther’s grasp of God’s reality addresses those who feel themselves in free fall, with nothing to grab onto for support and safety. God creates a new reality for them by filling the hole at the center of their lives, where fear, love and trust in Him had been replaced by fear, love and trust in some unworthy, unworkable substitute for the Creator. God comes to say that He no longer views them with the distaste and disgust that parallels their own distaste and disgust for their former way of life. God comes to bury their sinful identities in Christ’s tomb and raise them up to be justified, righteousness-restored members of His family, so that they can enjoy God’s love and live recklessly in risking all for the neighbor and live with abandon, so that Christ’s love can be broadcast into the world around them. In this, Luther is echoing Paul’s lan-

guage regarding Baptism in Romans 6 and Colossians 2. In fact, Jonathan Trigg suggests that Luther did not derive his understanding of Baptism as the death and burial of the sinner and the resurrection of the new creature through Christ’s death and resurrection, as described in Rom. 6:3–11 and Col. 2:11–15, *from* his doctrine of justification,²¹ but that Luther’s understanding of Baptism *shaped* his teaching on justification. His concept of justification does seem rooted in Romans 6 and Romans 4:25, where Paul asserts that Christ was handed over into death for our sin and was raised to restore our righteousness, to justify sinners.²² In Luther’s German “to justify” referred not only to the judge’s verdict of innocence. *Rechtfertigen* could also mean “to do justice to” a person. Luther’s understanding of the justification of sinners in baptism used this definition.²³ Sinners receive their just deserts in God’s justification. They are buried as sinners so that they may be re-created through the resurrection. The forensic judgment of God kills before it makes alive.

Luther’s forensic understanding of justification has received much criticism in the last quarter century, in part from heirs of the classical liberal critique of Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack, who wanted human righteousness to be understood as upper bourgeois good behavior that could construct the kingdom of God on earth. Therefore, they argued that Luther defined justification in terms of its “effectiveness” in producing people who produce good works.²⁴ Recently, the argument that Luther’s understanding of salvation resembles the Eastern Orthodox understanding of justification as divinization or theosis — advanced by the so-called “Finnish” or “Mannermaa” school — has won credence in some circles as it sought on a radically different metaphysical foundation to emphasize what justification produces in terms of Christian living. The founder of this school, Tuomo Mannermaa, and many of his followers sincerely wanted to cultivate devout Christian living, but they misinterpret Luther both historically and theologically when they

²¹ Jonathan D. Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1–2.

²² Robert Kolb, “Resurrection and Justification. Luther’s Use of Romans 4:25,” *Lutherjahrbuch* 78 (2011), 39–60.

²³ Werner Elert, “Deutschrechtliche Züge in Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre,” in *Ein Lehrer der Kirche, Kirchlich-theologische Aufsätze und Vorträge von Werner Elert*, ed. Max Keller-Hüschemenger (Berlin, Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1967), 23–31; Trigg, *Baptism*, 1–2.

²⁴ James M. Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Saviour. German Evangelical Theological Factions and the Interpretation of Luther* (Montreal: McGill/Queen’s University Press, 2000).

²⁰ “Justification as the Basis and Boundary of Theology,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 15 (2001): 273–292.

ignore what “forensic” justification means within the context of Luther’s thought.²⁵ Gerhard Forde conveyed the true nature of Luther’s understanding of God’s speaking us righteous when he asserted, “The absolutely forensic character of justification renders it effective — justification actually kills and makes alive. It is, to be sure, ‘not only’ forensic but that is the case only because the more forensic it is, the more effective it is!”²⁶ God’s forensic judgment — when He imputes sinners righteous, when He regards them as righteous, when He pronounces His verdict of innocent upon them — that Word of the Lord, like His Word in Genesis 1, determines reality, effectively!²⁷

What Forde meant with his axiomatic quip is that trust in God’s saying that we are righteous moves us to recognize that we are — passively! — righteous in His sight. In faith we cannot do anything else but live out that passive righteousness actively, in the active righteousness of love and service to the rest of God’s creatures. God’s Word makes us alive, not to sin the more that grace may abound (Rom. 6:1), but to demonstrate to the world that our identity bestowed by God’s grace apart from any merit or worthiness of our own, is real. That Word of forgiveness restructures our entire way of thinking and therefore of acting. The new creature it has called into existence produces the fruits of faith, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. If one finds that not to be the case, it is time to hear again the Law that calls to repentance. Luther understood that justification meant that the justified sinner acts like a child of God and combats temptations, killing desires to act against God’s will, in daily repentance.

Some accuse Luther of being fixated on the concept of justification to the exclusion of other biblical descriptions of salvation. Those who say that have not read his catechisms. There and throughout his writings he marshals the richness of biblical descriptors of God’s saving action in Christ.²⁸ The word “justification” does not occur in the

Small Catechism, his primer and confession of faith for German children. What Christ accomplished for us is instead defined as “redemption” — *Erlösung* — the loosening of the bonds that hold us captive, liberation. In fact, his primary treatise on his teaching on justification bears the title *On Christian Freedom* (1520).²⁹

In his explanation of the second article of the Creed in the Small Catechism Luther described the effect of Christ’s death for sinners with the German *erworben*. The usual English translation, “to purchase,” certainly is not incorrect, but “to acquire possession of” would be clearer and more precise. For it is not a monetary purchase — Luther quotes Peter that it is not a gold and silver kind of acquisition — but one with blood, not a price for buying something but rather the visitation of what God’s Law demands.³⁰ The lamb did not give as many drops of blood as Israel required that year to compensate for its sins and then return to frolic in the field. The lamb died on the altar of justification. This “purchasing” with Christ’s sacrificial death has the result, Luther relates a few words later, of our becoming his own, belonging to him, being brought into his realm to live with him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

That is what redemption means also in the Large Catechism, where Christ tears hell apart and drives Satan out of the lives of those whom he had imprisoned. There can be no doubt that Luther taught that Christ’s death is vicarious, as He took our place before the Law and satisfied its demand for death (Rom. 6:21a). It is also clear that Luther emphasized justification through Christ’s victorious resurrection; the Gospel is “the telling of a true David who tussled with sin, death, and the devil, and overcame them, thereby rescuing all those who were captive in sin, afflicted with death, and overpowered by the devil. Without any merit of their own, he made them righteous, gave them life, and saved them, so that they were given peace and brought back to God.”³¹

Luther and his students did not hesitate to address guilt as they proclaimed God’s Law, but they more often talked about the anxiety and terror aroused by God’s wrath over human guilt rather than about the feelings of guilt itself. And they also proclaimed His liberation from fears that had nothing to do with their own responsibility for perpetrating evil but rather from the threat from

²⁵ Risto Saarinen, “Justification by Faith. The View of the Mannermaa School,” in *Oxford Handbook*, 254–263. Cf. the critique of Klaus Schwarzwälder, “Verantwortung des Glaubens. Freiheit und Liebe nach der Dekalogauslegung Martin Luthers,” in Dennis Bielfeldt and Klaus Schwarzwälder, eds., *Freiheit als Liebe bei Martin Luther/Freedom as Love in Martin Luther* (Frankfurt/M: Lang, 1995), 146–148.

²⁶ Gerhard Forde, *Justification by Faith: A Matter of Death and Life* (1982; Ramsey, NJ: Sigler, 1991), 36.

²⁷ Mark Mattes, “Luther on Justification as Forensic and Effective,” in *Oxford Handbook*, 264–273.

²⁸ Ian D. Kingston Siggins, *Martin Luther’s Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); cf. Mathieu Arnold, “Luther on Christ’s Person and Work,” *Oxford Handbook*, 276–293.

²⁹ WA 8:573–669; LW 44:251–400.

³⁰ BSELK, BC.

³¹ WA BD6:4,3–11, LW 35:358.

the world and Satan in all its many forms. The preaching of the Wittenberg instructors and their students aimed at bringing Christ into their hearers' consciousness to liberate them from feelings of estrangement, alienation and abandonment and from their terrors in the face of death. The mention of "justification" in Luther's preaching abolished perverted perceptions of the hearers' own identities that cast them back upon themselves or other idols they had fashioned as replacements for their Creator. Justification was for Luther the restoration of true identity as God's children, righteousness before God and the trust that recognizes that identity in that aspect of who we are and drives us to act out the secondary identities God has given us as those created to praise Him and to serve and love His other creatures.

In a world chasing after false identities and seeking rest and protection in false havens and in false standards for evaluating life, Luther's insight — that we can never find sufficient justification for our existence in our own performance or in any created substituted for God as He has revealed himself in Jesus of Nazareth — restores stability, order and peace to troubled consciences. Everything falls into its proper place when Christ comes to the center of life and our trust in Him embraces all we think and do, the Wittenberg reformer insisted. According to Luther, Christ's justification of sinners restores our righteousness, our Shalom, the fullness of our humanity. What Luther saw then in the pages of Scripture speaks volumes now.

All reality flows from the creative, sustaining, re-creative Word of the Lord, according to Wittenberg theology. Luther's unique understanding of God's Word and how it functions set it apart from the "superstitious" use of words in medieval theology — as the Wittenberg theologians defined it — and the symbolic use of words that arose out of platonic presuppositions among other reform-minded critics of that medieval view. Luther's perception that God actually acts in this world through oral, written and sacramental forms of His Word has caused some difficulties for Lutherans in conversations with other Christians over the past centuries. There is less reason for this issue to continue to be a stumbling block because of the recent discussion among linguists of what is called "performative speech."³² Luther's view goes beyond what linguists have seen as the impact of words governed in large part by social constructions and conventions. Luther asserted

that when God speaks, new realities come into being and that all reality has its origin in God speaking. That means that nothing can be more real than the person whose righteousness has been restored to the Edenic identity enjoyed before the fall by Adam and Eve.

In a world in which we experience that words can hurt us even more than sticks and stones, to know that the Word of the Lord performs what it promises, delivers what it declaims, gives more solid assurance of what is real than an umpire's decisive call, than a judge's determination of innocence. God's re-creative Word gives twenty-first century hearers the solid foundation of the promise ringing out from Calvary and the property of Joseph of Arimathea. What Luther saw then in the pages of Scripture speaks volumes now.

There are any number of elements in Luther's teaching and the teaching of his colleague Philip Melancthon and their students, especially Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus and Jakob Andreae, whose confessional works we accept as our confession, that can speak to our cultures around the world, if properly translated. Among the topics that could be treated are the reformer's theology of the cross, the Lord's Supper and Luther's concept of vocation. But we should also look at the *modus operandi* of the Wittenberg theologians, which can provide vital models for us as we give witness to the biblical message in their train in the twenty-first century.

Luther was a translator. He not only rendered the Bible into the sterling German that helped shape how Germans talk and write to this day, he translated the message of the Bible into the culture of German-speaking people. James Nestingen has pointed out how Yale Divinity School missiologist Lamin Sanneh's recognition of Christianity as a way of life inextricably involved in translation helps elucidate what Luther was doing as he translated Mediterranean expressions of the faith into words and concepts that German-speaking children could grasp.³³ Born a Muslim in the Gambia, Sanneh perceived the contrast between Islam, in which Arabic is the language which all Muslims should learn to read the Koran and to pray properly, and the Christian faith. In Christianity God has translated Himself into human flesh; the gospels translate almost all that Jesus said into Greek from His native tongue; and missionaries immediately set to translating Scripture and other books into native languages when

³² Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 125–138.

³³ "Luther's Cultural Translation of the Catechism," *Lutheran Quarterly* 15 (2001), 440–452. Cf. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message, The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989).

they begin a new mission. Luther recognized that the never-changing, always-moving Creator depicted in the Old Testament is deeply involved in the flow of human history and that on Pentecost He addresses a host of tribes and nations in their own tongues.

Luther thoroughly appreciated this aspect of God's person, who falls into conversation with His human creatures within every cultural context that springs from His creative hand, taking seriously the grand variety of human cultures that reflect not only Babel's fall but also His own ultimate complexity. Therefore, while he stood fast on the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone, Luther was able to express it in a host of ways, applying and formulating the Gospel for specific situations as he encountered them. He was open to a variety of forms of polity for the church, and he did not try to impose uniformity in ritual as Rome did, with more ease than ever, through the agency of the printing press.

In an age in which, within one society, cultures differing in language, customs, worldviews and other factors exist alongside each other, Luther-like trust in the Holy Spirit's governance of the Church demands experimentation within the community to find the proper ways of expressing the Gospel and explaining the Law for the people to whom God sends us, enjoying fellowship with those who express a common confession in a variety of translations. Lutherans have proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ into at least four different cultural situations. In the sixteenth century the Lutheran Church became the establishment church in large parts of central and northern Europe. But also in the sixteenth century Lutherans lived in churches under persecution, particularly in Eastern Europe. Before the end of the sixteenth century, Lutherans had also begun mission churches in northern stretches of Sweden, and soon thereafter brought the Gospel to the Delaware, and in the course of the seventeenth century tried to establish mission churches in western Africa and the Caribbean. By 1706, mission efforts began to establish enduring Lutheran churches in Asia as well. Also in the seventeenth century, immigrants from Europe began establishing immigrant churches, first in the Americas, then in South Africa and Australia. In each of these forms of Church Luther's message spoke to the culture around it.

Luther formulated a way of being Christ's people in whatever society and culture God has placed His chosen. H. Richard Niebuhr dubbed Luther's approach to the church's place in human cultures "Christ and culture in

paradox." It is more aptly described as "Christ's people and culture in two dimensions," two realms. In what seems to be becoming a more hostile world, Luther's twenty-first century followers must resist the temptation to drift into what Niebuhr labeled a "Christ of culture" model or into a "Christ against culture" pattern. The household of faith needs Lutheran witness to Luther's manner of practicing sharp critique of society's sins while affirming God's extravagant gift of the blessings of one's own culture.³⁴ That means that in the immediate future, establishment and immigrant Lutheran churches have more to learn from those in the lands of persecution and mission than to teach our sisters and brothers there. That means that such conversations are necessary to insure proper translation of Luther's insights.

Humanly speaking, Luther's message spread not only because it addressed human perception of needs but also because, more or less by accident, Luther discovered how to use the most effective technology at hand. He did not see the potential of movable type for serving the reform of the church, but printers saw the potential for the marketing of his thoughts on indulgences and then quickly on a host of other subjects. Luther himself did not drag his feet but quickly became a master at combining his words with Lukas Cranach's images, in order to spread the message of Scripture to a wide readership. The cultural appreciation that came naturally to Luther also led to his recognizing the value of other disciplines for aiding theology, including the study of literature and history, and above all of the arts of communication, rhetoric and dialectic. His friend Philip Melancthon drew upon the developing so-called humanistic program to lead a return to ancient sources and to emphasize the necessity of using the skills God implants for the service of proclaiming salvation in Christ.

Luther recognized both the promise and the ambiguity of new technology and new modes of communication. In a world in which God's material blessings flow richly with gifts that can aid our thinking and our communicating, new modes of communicating can also be hijacked by Satan. Further complicating matters, disciplines always carry ideological baggage and need Christ critique. In such a world, Luther's ability to marshal technology as well as an array of colleagues and their teaching across the spectrum of the curriculum of the time should serve

³⁴ Robert Kolb, "Niebuhr's 'Christ and Culture in Paradox' Revisited," *Lutheran Quarterly* 10 (1996): 259–279.

as a model for us. Luther's emphasis on literacy endowed us sociologically with a kind of upward social mobility. As our people assume more and more responsibility in a range of disciplines and societal positions, this emphasis can serve us well as we use these gifts to exercise the responsibilities of leadership and learning which God gives us in Church and society. What Luther saw then in the pages of Scripture speaks volumes now.

Finally, the *modus operandi* of the Wittenberg theologians rested on the fundamental distinction necessary for the proper functioning of God's conversations with His human creatures, the distinction between God's plan for human living and God's re-creative saving activity in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Luther's way of thinking emerged in the poles between God's Word — the Holy Scriptures, the source of truth — and the need to apply that Word in effective pastoral care, which called sinners to repentance and forgave, comforted, and empowered the repentant. In 1532 Luther called this distinction "the noblest skill in the Christian church," for both Law and Gospel are God's Word but both can be lost if they are jumbled together and not correctly distinguished from each other.³⁵ "Whoever knows well how to distinguish the Gospel from the Law should give thanks to God and know that he is a real theologian," he commented in 1532.³⁶ Luther's concept of Law defined it broadly as the whole counsel of God's design for human life but also quite focused on the first commandment as his catechisms in 1529³⁷ and his preface to the prophets of 1532 amply demonstrate.³⁸ What caused people to hurt and harm neighbors and to fail to help and befriend them in every bodily need was their failure to fear and love — and trust — in God, above all that He had made. That means that the crushing force of the Law that produces true repentance, as Luther depicted it with the image of rock and hammer in the Smalcald Articles (Jer. 23:29)³⁹ attacks the hole that lack of true faith makes at the heart of our lives, whether that hole becomes obvious when we are perpetrating sin or suffering it. Our second and pri-

mary use of the Law points people to their sin, above all against the First Commandment — that is, to their failure to fear, love and trust in their Creator and Redeemer over everything else in life — that the Gospel may draw them to Christ. It does that by accusing, to be sure, but it begins the process often by crushing and cracking the false gods in other ways as well.

God's plan for human life continues to crush the pretensions of all the false gods we fashion while it remains God's good design for our lives. We can deal neither with the crushing force of its accusations or with the great potential for its help in charting lives of peace and joy without the Holy Spirit's application of the re-creating power of the Gospel of Christ in our lives. The bestowal of a new identity through Christ's death and resurrection transform the reality of our lives through the Gospel's forgiving, life-restoring, consoling, empowering action in the Word in oral, written and sacramental forms. What Luther saw then in the pages of Scripture speaks volumes now.

Amnesia is a terrible thing, yet far worse are counterfeit memories, changed to fit our predilections, altered to teach history what we wish it could teach us. A living and lively historical memory is a great blessing, particularly when it is directed toward God's work of blessing His Church with the Gospel. That is certainly the case when we reflect on the career and message of Martin Luther. Furthermore, there is no reason to remember if not to get insights for translation into our own culture and to invite Luther's critique of what we are doing. Above all, we need to heed his call to repent as part of our lives as Christians. Neither forgetting nor condemning, neither idolizing nor merely praising, but engaging Luther in earnest dialogue — this should be the goal of our reflection on our own tradition. If he cannot critique what we are doing and offer suggestions for what we might do in the future, our gaze back five hundred years will be no more than entertainment, and little more than basking in our own image. The form of his address was molded within his own culture and experience and bound by sixteenth-century forms. His insights into the Word of the Lord, however, can be translated as he translated Scripture and the tradition of the Church: into our times and our places, as different as they are in our several corners of God's world. What Luther saw then in the pages of Scripture speaks volumes now.

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³⁵ WA 36:8,14–10,18, 25,1–34. Cf. 36:28,12–16, 33–38. Cf. Robert Kolb, "The Noblest Skill in the Christian Church: Luther's Sermons on the Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 71 (2007): 301–318.

³⁶ WA 40, 1:207,3–4; LW 26:115.

³⁷ BSELK 862/863, 930/931, BC 351, 386–392.

³⁸ WA DB11,1:2,1–15,29, LW35:265–273, cf. Maurice E. Schild, *Abendländische Bibelvorreden bis zur Lutherbibel* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1970), 213–233.

³⁹ BSELK 750/751–752/753, BC 312–313.

Is it a miracle that the Lutheran Church is even in existence today? This article takes a look at some of the more radical critics of Luther and Lutheranism.

REFORMATION IN NEW LANDS AND TONGUES

by Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.

Introduction

IT'S A MIRACLE THAT THERE IS A LUTHERAN CHURCH TODAY. In many ways, Lutheranism as a movement is an unlikely success story. It was born in an out of the way place, in a university that was still in its youth, led by an unlikely monk. But God uses out of the way places, youthfulness and unlikely, earthen vessels to accomplish His purposes. If we learn nothing else from the Reformation, it should be just how remarkably gracious God really is.

As we remember what God has done, we also repent over our failings (and we'll recount several of those in the next few minutes) and rejoice over the unfailing promises of the future, which, of course, are in God's hands.

Let us consider our topic, "Reformation in New Lands and Tongues."¹

Luther and emerging Lutheranism

"But now the whole of Germany is in full revolt; nine-tenths raise the war-cry, 'Luther,' while the watchword of the other tenth who are indifferent to Luther, is: 'Death to the Roman Curia.'"² Whether a full 90 percent of Germany was truly supportive of Luther is likely an exaggeration. Yet there is no reason to doubt that Aleander, the Papal

Nuncio who wrote these words, doubted their veracity. As he related his experience to Cardinal De Medici in a letter from Worms dated Feb. 8, 1521, he repeatedly tried to underscore the extent to which Luther's views had permeated German life. Noting that "the Germans have lost all reverence and laugh at excommunications," he complained that "a shower of Lutheran writings in German and Latin comes out daily. There is even a press maintained here, where hitherto this art has been unknown. Nothing else is bought here except Luther's books even in the imperial court." Worst of all, perhaps, Aleander noted

that "a little while ago at Augsburg they were selling Luther's picture with a halo; it as offered without the halo for sale here (in Worms), and all the copies were disposed of in a trice before I could get one." And finally, "If I sent all these shameful writings I should have to load a wagon."³

There is a sense in which, during the first years of the Reformation, especially from the 95 Theses

to the Diet of Worms, Lutheranism extended itself in a remarkable fashion. Starting from Electoral Saxony, Lutheranism first reached Hesse. It then made its way into East Friesland as early as 1519. By 1520 Lutheran communities were in evidence in Treptow, Pommerania (this through the work of the great Johannes Bugenhagen). Breslau followed in 1522, along with Nuremberg under Pastors Besler, Pömer and Osiander, with Mecklenberg, Frankfurt am Main and Strassburg joining the movement in 1523. Amsdorf's work brought Magdeburg and Ulm in during 1524. In Bremen all the churches, with the exception of the cathedral, had Lutheran preachers by 1525. Bugenhagen continued his work in Hamburg and Brunswick in 1528. Anhalt and Westphalia followed in 1532,

It's a miracle that there is a Lutheran Church today. In many ways, Lutheranism as a movement is an unlikely success story.

¹ For a most helpful overview of the extension of Lutheranism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Klaus Detlev Schulz, "Lutheran Missiology in the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 43: 4–53. Also invaluable is Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009). See especially 302–303, "The Spread of Lutheran Mission Work," where Schulz notes that "Lutheran mission work spreads in three basic ways: (1) publications of Gospel literature; (2) missionaries sent by Lutheran rulers, churches, and mission societies; and (3) Lutheran congregations established by immigrants."

² Preserved Smith and Charles M. Jacobs, *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1913), 455. A portion of the letter is also quoted in the fine new biography of the Elector Frederick the Wise. See Sam Wellman, *Frederick the Wise: Seen and Unseen Lives of Martin Luther's Protector* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 204.

³ Smith and Jacobs, *Luther's Correspondence*, 460.

and Württemberg in 1534.

But Lutheranism was to spread into other lands. Lutheranism also began to extend itself beyond Germany: into Brandenburg Prussia, 1525; Sweden, 1527; Denmark and Norway, 1537; Iceland, 1551. In Livonia and Estonia it first appeared in 1520 and had come to dominate by 1539. By 1549 it was in Courland, Russia. It gained a footing in Transylvania in 1557; in Poland in 1573; in Hungary in 1606; in Bohemia and Moravia in 1609.⁴

And Lutheranism was to appear in other tongues. One of the key ways that Luther's teachings spread was through his prolific literary output, as well as that of his colleagues. Students from countries outside of Saxony (both German speaking and otherwise), who came to Wittenberg University to hear, and those who simply read the works of Luther and his coworkers determined to translate these works into their own languages. As Öberg captures it: "The fact that 5,000 foreign students studied the sermons and lectures of Luther and his colleagues in Wittenberg from 1520-1560 contributed to the expansion and consolidation of Lutheranism. The mission dimension that Luther had communicated went forth in this way to his contemporaries and their descendants."⁵ And we should number ourselves among those descendants.

In 1557 Primus Truber translated and published the Gospel of Matthew in the Slavic language of the Croats and Wends. Later he added other resources, including other parts of the New Testament, Luther's catechisms, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, Melancthon's Loci, the Württemberg Church Discipline, and a book of spiritual songs. These were all important tools for mission work. One of the more interesting instances of translation occurred when the Augsburg Confession in Greek was brought to Constantinople in 1559 and again in 1573.⁶

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Implicit in the preceding is the importance of that most popular of Luther's texts — and as a result the one most translated — the Small Catechism. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Small Catechism appeared in various languages in the American Colonies and the United States. Succeeding Reorus Torkillus as pastor in the colony of New Sweden in 1643, Johann Campanius (1601–1683) intentionally engaged the Lenape Indians who lived in the area of New Sweden. Having first learned their language he eventually gained sufficient ability to preach to the Native Americans. In time he was able to transliterate their words, numbers and common phrases. He ultimately gained sufficient facility in their language to translate Luther's Small Catechism into Lenape, notable as one of the first attempts by a European to create a written document in the language of Native Americans.⁷

Two centuries later another Lutheran pastor would engage in a similar endeavor. Friedrich August Crämer, pastor of Saint Lorenz congregation in Frankenmuth, Michigan, began to translate the Small Catechism into the language of the Ojibwa Indians.⁸ His efforts were supplemented by those of missionary Edward Baierlein, who served the Bethany Indian mission for a number of years.⁹ Finally, Arthur Repp has tracked the innumerable editions of Luther's Small Catechism that have appeared in the English language in the American Colonies and United States. His *Luther's Catechism Comes to*

America illustrates the degree to which Luther's Small Catechism served as a means of joining isolated Lutherans together in confession, even while they remained isolated from one another geographically.¹⁰

⁴ This and the previous paragraph are summarized from J. N. Lenker, *Lutherans in All Lands: The Wonderful Works of God*, 4th ed. (Milwaukee: Lutherans in All Lands Company, 1894), 19, 21.

⁵ Indemar Öberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study with Special Reference to Luther's Bible Exposition*, trans. Dean Apel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 494.

⁶ George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982).

⁷ See Nils Magnus Holmer, *John Campanius' Lutheran Catechism in the Delaware Language* (Uppsala: A.-b. Lundequistska bokhandeln, 1946); Israel Acrelius, *History of New Sweden; Or, The Settlement on the River Delaware* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1876).

⁸ Lawrence R. Rast, Jr., "Friedrich August Crämer: Faithful Servant in Christ's Church," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64 (January 2000): 51–53, online at <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/rastcramerservant.pdf>, accessed April 15, 2015.

⁹ Edward R. Baierlein and Harold W. Moll, *In the Wilderness with the Red Indians: German Missionary to the Michigan Indians 1847–1853* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Arthur C. Repp, *Luther's Catechism Comes to America: Theological Effects on the Issues of the Small Catechism Prepared in or for America Prior to 1850* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982).

At the same time, Lutheranism was not received well everywhere. Oliver Olson has chronicled the struggles of Lutherans in several of the European countries outside of Germany.¹¹ While there was not a large number of Lutheran martyrs, their presence is irrefutable. The first martyrs of the Lutheran confession were in Holland in 1523. But others were to follow.

Antonio Corvinus was born on Feb. 27, 1501.¹² Given his uncertain parentage (he may have been a bastard), it is not surprising to find that he entered the Cistercian monastery in Loccum, Lower Saxony, in 1519. Shortly thereafter he became a supporter of Luther and was driven out. He used the opportunity to study at Wittenberg under Luther and Melancthon, and later served pastorates in Goslar and Witzenhausen. He advised Philip of Hesse, drafted a church order and led the Reformation in northern areas of Germany.

In 1548 the Roman Catholic ruler Erich II (of Braunschweig-Calenberg-Göttingen) accepted the Augsburg Interim. Corvinus, along with other Lutheran pastors, protested vigorously against the Interim, which led to his arrest and jailing on Nov. 2, 1549. Happily for Corvinus, his conditions were relatively comfortable, perhaps defeating the purpose of trying to force his acceptance of the Interim. On Oct. 21, 1552, he was released. He re-entered active ministry in Hannover and died shortly thereafter April 11, 1553.

Baldo Lupetino was born into Venetian nobility, though his birthdate is uncertain (either 1492 or 1502). In the mid-1530s he entered a Franciscan monastery in Lower Labin. During Lent in 1541 he openly advocated Lutheran ideas, denying the freedom of the will and arguing that Christ had fully atoned for human sin. He also reportedly addressed the doctrine of predestination. He was arrested in December 1542 and tried in 1543, 1547 and 1556, where he was variously sentenced to life in

prison and death.¹³

Oliver Olson argues that “As long as the Smalcald League remained in power Venice was reluctant to offend the evangelical princes. But on the very day of the League’s defeat, April 24, 1547, Doge Francesco Dona opened his city to the Sant’ Uffizio and appointed three lay representatives of the Council of Ten, Nicola Tiepolo, Francesco Contarmi, and Antonio Venier, to cooperate with the clerical members, the Patriarch, the Father Inquisitor, and Della Casa as Sages on Heresy.”¹⁴

Following the last trial he was officially degraded and executed, likely during the night of Sept. 17–18, 1556. Olson describes the execution as follows:

At the dead hour of midnight the prisoner was taken from his cell and put into a gondola or Venetian boat, attended only, besides the sailors, by a single priest, to act as confessor. He was rowed out into the sea beyond the Two Castles, where another boat was waiting. A plank was then laid across the two gondolas, upon which the prisoner, having his body chained,

and a heavy stone affixed to his feet, was placed; and, on a signal given, the gondolas retiring from one another, he was precipitated into the deep.¹⁵

Tensions also ran high in Sweden and Denmark (for both religious and political reasons). With the support of Pope Leo X, Christian II of Denmark invaded Sweden in

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¹³ Luther himself wrote regarding Lupetino: “We have found out that your country Italy is the location of pious and honest men in sad trouble, the devotees of pure Christian faith. It is said that they are going through hard persecutions only because they embraced the Gospel and because they want to glorify it and spread it everywhere. Therefore we, who carefully try to follow the letter of the Holy Gospel and uphold it in all churches, are overwhelmed with deep and honest sympathy toward those God-loving men; because our Christian hearts understand the great suffering and bitter tears of those who suffer for the evangelical truth. As we have been notified that, by the order of the Roman Pope, among other men Baldo Lupetino has also been charged, a man with noteworthy virtues and profound knowledge, and that he is locked up in prison with his life in danger, we felt that it is our duty to intervene on his behalf and on the behalf of others.” D. Martin Luthers *Briefwechsel*, vol. 10, *Briefe 1542–1544*, Nr. 3884 (pp. 327–328); See also Mirko Breyer, “About the man from Istria, friar Baldo Lupetina (1502–1556),” *Istra* 14/2 (1976): 38. Available at http://www.flacius.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110%3Aluthero-ovismo&catid=57%3AAbaldo-lupetina&Itemid=64&lang=en, accessed April 15, 2015.

¹⁴ Olson, “Baldo Lupetino: Venetian Martyr,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 7 (Spring 1993): 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹ See, for example, Oliver K. Olson, “The Rise and Fall of the Antwerp Martinists,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 1 (1987): 105–111.

¹² Nanne van der Zijpp, “Corvinus, Antonius (1501–1553),” *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/corvinus_antonius_1501_1553, accessed August 4, 2013. I used the examples of Corvinus and Lupetino also in my paper, “A Confessional, Dogmatic View of Martyrdom and the Cross,” which appeared in the *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 2 (September 2014): 36–49.

1519. He succeeded in taking Stockholm in September 1520, and on November 8-9 1520, executed more than eighty Swedish nobles for heresy, the so-called Stockholm Bloodbath. Further executions followed, spreading in both Sweden and Finland. The bloodbath outraged the Swedes and acted as a catalyst for resisting the Danes. By 1522 Gustav I Vasa was able, with the help of the peasants of the Dalarna region and the Hanseatic League, to drive the Danes out of Sweden. Vasa's reign extended from 1523 to 1560, and during his time he was able to secure the translation into Swedish of the *Biblia Thet är All then Helgha Scrifft på Swensko*, in 1540–1541, commonly known as the Gustav Vasa Bible.¹⁶

Even as Lutheranism spread into other lands and was translated into other tongues, in its German homeland it would struggle mightily.

Lutheranism after Luther

The theological and political chaos that followed Luther's death on Feb. 18, 1546, is a story likely well known to us all. The Great Reformer harbored misgivings about the future of the evangelical movement preceding his death; he feared that shortly after his death dissension would overtake the evangelical party with disastrous effects. He was correct — both theologically and politically. In June 1546, roughly four months following Luther's death, Charles V entered into his German War against the Smalcaldic League and soundly defeated the league at the battle of Mühlberg on the Elbe, April 24, 1547.¹⁷ Following his victory at Mühlberg, Charles convened what has come to be known as the "Armored Diet" at Augsburg (due to the presence of Charles' army). Charles, elated with his victory over the German princes, promised that he would "teach the Ger-

mans Spanish" — that would have been a new tongue for Lutherans. The Diet produced the document known as the "Augsburg Interim," written by Julius Pflug, Michael Holding and the Lutheran Johann Agricola, which was pronounced by the emperor May 15, 1548. The purpose of this document was both theological and political in orientation; it sought to regulate outwardly and temporally the affairs of the Church until the Council of Trent would finally settle the religious controversy precipitated by the evangelicals. It reintroduced many of the abolished Roman Catholic practices such as the jurisdiction of bishops, transubstantiation and the seven sacraments. These

emphases led to the characterization that the document was a first step back towards the fully returning the Reformation churches to the Roman Catholic fold.

Following the proclamation of the Interim, Charles V went forth with his army and began to subjugate southern Germany to the Interim. The army was followed by priests who reconsecrated the cathedrals

of the South to the Roman Catholic Church. Cities such as Strassburg, Ulm and Constance were subjected to the Interim and political power was transferred from Protestant families to those loyal to Charles' Habsburg agenda.

Meanwhile, Moritz of Saxony, who had betrayed Ernestine Saxony and usurped the electoral authority to himself by making a treaty with Charles V to the effect that Moritz would fight with the emperor in return for the guarantee of territory and the title of elector, helped the emperor in his efforts to subjugate Elector John Frederick by invading his land while he was away in the Smalcald War. But Moritz was uncomfortable with the provisions of the Interim and sought a Saxon solution that would enable him to gain the support of his evangelical subjects and at the same time keep the emperor from invading Saxony.¹⁸

The Augsburg Interim and its successor, the Leipzig Interim, failed. In time Moritz betrayed Charles V, finally leading to a tenuous peace, which was declared on Sept. 25, 1555. However, while the Religious Peace of Augsburg brought the battles to an end, its solution would have

It is only through
the proclamation of
the Gospel that God
miraculously works
faith when and where it
pleases Him.

¹⁶ For an excellent treatment of Lutheranism in Scandinavia, see Eric Lund, "Nordic and Baltic Lutheranism," in Robert Kolb, ed. *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture 1550–1675* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 411–454.

¹⁷ This war has generally come to be called the "Smalcald War." Let the reader keep in mind the purposes of Charles V in pursuing this tact. He was not simply a power hungry despot, but felt he was serving God and the Church by trying to restore political and religious unity to the Holy Roman Empire. For treatments of the Smalcald League see Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "Phases and Strategies of the Schmalkaldic League: A Perspective after 450 Years," *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 74 (1983), 162–181; Theodore Hoyer, "The Rise and Fall of the Schmalkaldic League: The Treaty of Passau, 1552," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 23 (1952), 401–17 and "The Religious Peace of Augsburg," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 (1955), 820–30.

¹⁸ The fear that motivated Moritz toward this end should not be underestimated; he expected the emperor to invade Saxony at any time and subject it to the same treatment that southern Germany had experienced.

ramifications for the mission of the Church. The commonly-known principle, *cuius regio eius religio* (“whose realm, his religion”) would become the operative principle for allowing the competing Lutheran and Roman Catholic states of the Holy Roman Empire to peacefully (if not happily) coexist (the Reformed would be included after the Peace of Westphalia [1648], but not the Anabaptists). But the price of peace for religious extension was captured in paragraph 23:

§ 23. [Prohibition of Religious Coercion] No estate shall induce another's subjects to accept his religion and abandon the other's, nor shall he take those subjects under his protection or in any way defend them in such actions. This rule, however, is not intended to apply to the obligations of those who have long been subject to their lord's rule, which shall remain undiminished.¹⁹

In time, the linking of the Church with the State under the authority of the prince, would prove to impact of the extension of Lutheranism.²⁰

Lutheran orthodoxy — saying “no” to mission?

One doesn't have to look hard to find criticisms of the lack of mission perspective. For example, James Scherer, in a section titled “Lutheran Orthodoxy: Saying No to Mission,” writes: “Luther's biblically based conviction about the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole creation and his confidence in the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom gave way to dogmatic hairsplitting and ecclesiastical retrenchment.”²¹ Lyle Vander Werff, in describing the challenge to the Orthodox Lutherans to recognize the continuing validity of Matt. 28:19, described their response as follows: “In true orthodox fashion, they rejected his [Erhardt Truchsess's] challenge.”²²

Two assessments have been particularly dominant. In the late nineteenth century, Gustav Warneck wrote, in his long and influential article in the *New Schaff-Herzog* encyclopedia, that among the Orthodox Lutherans

“the missionary idea was lacking because the comprehension of a continuous missionary duty of the Church was limited among the Reformers and their successors by a narrow-minded dogmatism combined with a lack of historical sense.”²³ Further, in his extremely influential *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions*, he states: “We miss in the Reformers not only missionary action, but even the idea of missions, in the sense in which we understand them today Luther did not think of proper missions to the heathen, i.e. of a regular sending of messengers of the Gospel to non-Christian nations, with the view of Christianizing them ... Luther's mission sphere was, if we may so say, the paganized Christian church.”²⁴

More recently, David Bosch has argued that Lutheran Orthodoxy led to “pessimism and passivity in mission.”

Pessimism and passivity had a yet deeper cause: the dark view of history in Lutheran orthodoxy. Nicolai expected the parousia to take place around the year 1670. The urgency of the imminent end of the world still acted as a motivation for mission in his case. In the course of the seventeenth century this would change. The situation in the church became so lamentable, particularly in the eyes of Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), that the focus was no longer on the conviction that Christ and his reign would be triumphant, but on the fearful question whether Christ, when he returned, would find any faith on earth. This question destroyed all possibility of joyfully witnessing to Christ.²⁵

As the preceding quotes show, some lay the fault for this at the feet of Luther himself; others condemn the Lutheran Orthodox. In respect to the latter, they identify the worst expressions of this lack of mission mindedness with the following. First, there is Philip Nicolai's *De Regno Christi* (On the Kingdom of Christ), which “demonstrated that every region [of the world] had encountered the preaching of the Gospel by way of the apostles.”²⁶

¹⁹ “The Religious Peace of Augsburg,” September 25, 1555, online at http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Doc.67-ENG-ReligPeace1555_en.pdf, accessed April 15, 2015.

²⁰ For an exploration of the roots of this thinking in Luther, see Lewis W. Spitz, “Luther's Ecclesiology and His Concept of the Prince as *Notbischof*,” *Church History* 22 (June 1953): 113–141.

²¹ James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 66. See also James A. Scherer, *Mission and Unity in Lutheranism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 13–16.

²² Lyle L. Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims: The Record* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 19.

²³ Gustav Warneck, “Missions to the Heathen,” *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, 404.

²⁴ Gustav Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time, with an Appendix concerning Roman Catholic Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1906, original German edition published in 1881), 9–10. See also Wolfgang Grösel, *Die Stellung der lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands zur Mission im 17. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: O. Schmidt, 1895), 6, 15–16, 27, 30.

²⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 251.

²⁶ Philipp Nicolai, *Commentarii de regno Christi, vaticiniis prophetis et apostolicis accomodate* (Francofurti ad Moenum, 1597). Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 263.

Second, Gerhard reproduced Nicolai and then furthered it by developing theological implications of the work in *Loci Theologici*. Finally, and perhaps most notoriously, was the *gutachten*, or opinion, of the theology faculty of the University of Wittenberg, publicized on April 24, 1652. “This response,” says Schulz, “was submitted as an answer to the queries (scruples) of an Austrian, Reichsgraf Ehrhardt von Wetzhausen from Vienna, who wanted to know how the Orient, Meridian, and Occident could be converted to the salutary faith ‘when he sees no one of the Augsburg Confession go there to preach and to save as much as 100,000 people from damnation.’”²⁷

Several responses to the critiques of the Orthodox Lutherans suggest themselves. First, it has to be recognized that there is some legitimacy to the critiques, as Schulz rightly notes.²⁸ Beyond that, however, many of those who criticized the Orthodox Lutherans seem to have simply taken Warneck’s critique at face value, and Warneck’s critique does suffer from being rather anachronistic, blaming the Orthodox Lutherans for not understanding mission in the manner of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, we need not be threatened by such critiques. The Church’s execution of the mission entrusted to it will always be limited in its application, given the human and fallible people who carry it out. Nevertheless, God is gracious and accomplishes His purposes despite our weaknesses.

Rather, even as we remember this day, we also repent and rejoice. For if the Orthodox Lutherans were as opposed to mission as more radical interpreters claim, it is unlikely that any of us would be gathered here today. Without the extension of the Lutheran confession into other lands and tongues, if it was limited simply to Germany, this would be, at the very least, a significantly smaller gathering this week. Yet here we are, gathered together from the ends of the earth and representing some forty Lutheran church bodies spread throughout the world. A more considered perspective is offered by Öberg, who writes: “Against Warneck and Elert, we must assert that the mission work led and supported by the state and the state church is true and genuine mission.”²⁹ As the litany of expansion shared earlier in this paper shows, many Lutherans were eager to share the Gospel as rediscovered by the Wittenberg Reformation. One exam-

ple of this is the Lutheran experience in Hungary. David P. Daniel’s marvelous treatment, “Lutheranism in the Kingdom of Hungary,” traces in some detail the twists and turns of the reforming movements in Hungary as Lutheranism struggled to germinate, take root, and blossom. It was never an easy matter.³⁰

Individuals also played key roles in extending Lutheranism into other lands and translating it into other tongues. The Gustav Vasa Bible mentioned above was largely a product of the efforts of Laurentius Andreae, Olaus Petri and Laurentius Petri. But perhaps no single person embodies the sense of the title assigned to me more than Peter Heyling. He truly established Lutheranism in other lands and other tongues.³¹

Born into a wealthy family in Lübeck, Germany (his father was a goldsmith) in 1607–1608, Heyling studied law and theology in Paris under the Dutch jurist, historian and theologian, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) from 1628–1632. Grotius engendered in him a desire “to rejuvenate the ancient Churches of the Orient and infuse them with ‘new evangelical life.’” (21). Travels in Italy and France were followed by Heyling’s arrival in Egypt in 1633. His destination was the monastery of Saint Makarios, where he intended both to learn Arabic and to read in its extensive manuscript collection. He later added Syriac to his languages and used both tongues to introduce Lutheran teachings to the Copts and Syrians.

After a period spent in Jerusalem, he received a letter of introduction from the Coptic Patriarch to the Emperor of Ethiopia and, in the late 1634 or early 1635, arrived in Gonder. There he practiced medicine and quickly became an influential minister, teacher and doctor at the court of King Fasilides (1632–1667). He used his influence to reform the Church, particularly by teaching the clergy Greek and Hebrew and instructing them in the finer points of theology. He began to translate the New Testament into Amharic, the common language of the people (the formal, liturgical language was Gêez). The extent of his translation work is not certain, but when Gorgorios visited Gonder in 1647, the Gospel of John was not only available in Amharic, but in great demand.

Accounts of Heyling’s last years leave uncertain

²⁷ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 266.

²⁸ Schulz, “Lutheran Missiology,” 35–37.

²⁹ Öberg, *Luther and World Mission*, 500.

³⁰ David P. Daniel, “Lutheranism in the Kingdom of Hungary,” in Robert Kolb, ed. *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture 1550–1675* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 455–507.

³¹ This section is summarized from Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*, *Studia missionalia Upsaliensia*, 32 (Stockholm: EFS-förl, 1978), 20–22.

whether he was expelled from Gonder or departed with the blessings of the Emperor. What is clear, however, is that while passing through Suakin after having left Ethiopia, the Turkish pasha confronted Heyling and demanded that he deny Christ and convert to Islam. Heyling refused and the pasha beheaded him.

Arén's assessment of Heyling is quite striking.

Heyling's influence must have been considerable. His teaching is said to have been a leaven which compelled the Ethiopian Church to issue a doctrinal statement in Amamrinya (Amharic) to vindicate her own position in face of Lutheran views Felix Rosen a German botanist who visited Gonder in 1905, observed that Heyling was venerated "almost like a saint" There is apparently a direct line from Peter Heyling to the founders of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.³²

Conclusion

It's a miracle that there is a Lutheran Church today. I mean that both facetiously and seriously. Facetiously, in that, if one were to take the remarks of some of the more radical critics of Luther and Lutheranism as cited above, there should not be a Lutheran Church at all — and we would all be thankful for that given the horrible missiology to which they supposedly held.

However, I mean it seriously, because there is a rich missiology that has moved the Reformation into other lands and expressed its confession in other tongues. For it is only through the proclamation of the Gospel that God miraculously works faith when and where it pleases Him. Indeed, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him," as Luther says in his explanation to the Third Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism. "But," as he continues, "the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all

the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life."

"This," my friends, "is most certainly true."³³

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³² Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 21.

³³ <http://bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php#creed>, accessed April 15, 2015.

On May 3, 2015, LCMS President Matthew C. Harrison preached for the dedication of the Old Latin School at St. Mary's Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

THE MESSAGE OF THE REFORMATION

by Matthew C. Harrison

In Jesu Namen! Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren! Oder als wir Amerikanern sagen, "Meine lieben Freunde, und ganz besonders die großzügigen Freunde hier im Stadt und Pfarrkirche St. Marien, unsere Freunde von der Evangelischen Kirche in Mitteldeutschland, und von der Selbständigen Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland: Wir möchten sie herzlich begrüßen und danken Ihnen, daß Sie mit uns diese Einweihung und diesen Gottesdienst feiern. Im Namen der 2.2 Millionen Glieder der Missouri-Synode und vieler anderer weltweit möchten wir unserem Dank dem scheidenden Oberbürgermeister Naumann und dem neugewählten Oberbürgermeister Torsten Zugehör aussprechen, Dank für die Fürsorge und Pflege dieses Schatzes, der Lutherstadt Wittenberg und ihrer Reformationsstätten. Dafür danken wir Gott.

Verzeihen Sie mir mein schwaches Deutsch. Leider muß ich auf Englisch predigen, damit sowohl Sie als auch ich meine Predigt verstehen können!

IN THE NAME OF JESUS. Our Savior said, "I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden this from these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children." Our theme is the theme of this dedication event, and of the conference, which follows. Remember, repent, rejoice. Indeed, as confessional Lutherans celebrated the great anniversaries of the Reformation, this theme was a recurring one. And for good cause. Habakkuk 3 states: "O Lord, I have

heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy."

Luther preached his last sermon in Wittenberg, from the original pulpit just over there. It was Jan. 17, 1546. "In contrast to all the clever heresies, he urged people to have a simple, childlike faith in Christ."

Melancthon prayed as Luther left town with his three sons. It would be his third trip to attempt reconciliation in his hometown, Eisleben. The dukes of Mansfeld were at each other's throats over property and other issues. The copper miners were at odds with the dukes about the confiscation of their property and mining rights, and to top it off, there was great conflict about who had the right to call preachers. It was a "porcupine with more quills

The first of Luther's 95 Theses, written right by the font in this church, states, "When our Lord and master Jesus Christ says 'Repent,' He wills that the entire life of the Christian be one of repentance!"

than a porcupine," Luther complained.

At Halle they could not cross the ice-swollen Salle River. Luther joked that the river Sally was an enormous Anabaptist lady who wanted to re-baptize him! On the 28th, Jonas joined him as they made it across the river to be met by 60 horsemen from Eisleben. He suffered dizziness and pain in his chest and arm along the way. He had described himself as "old, cold, lame and one-eyed" the previous year.

His last letters to Katie are beautiful testimony to his confidence in Christ and love for his wife. He calls her "Madam Sow-meister and Madam Brew-meister" as he encourages her to read the catechism. "At sixty three he considered himself a very old man." "For him, his sense of age came from having seen the devil's ass [rear end] and from being able to testify to his wickedness." The negotiations dragged on for two weeks. He despised the lawyers and got into a heated fight with one of them. He was confident in Christ and ready to die. "If I go back to Wittenberg I'll lie down in a coffin and give the maggots a fat doctor to eat."

Finally there was light. The "porcupine was slaughtered," and agreements were signed February 16. He was too weak to participate on the final sessions on the 17th.

He preached to celebrate the resolution of the conflict.

His text? “I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and revealed it to babes.” The sermon is characteristic Luther and picks up on the same theme he preached in last in Wittenberg.

The Lord here praises and extols his heavenly Father for having hidden these things from the wise and understanding. That is, he did not make his gospel known to the wise and understanding, but to infants and children who cannot speak and preach and are not knowing and wise. Thus he indicates that he is opposed to the wise and understanding and dearly loves those who are not wise and understanding but are rather like young children.

But to the world it is very foolish and offensive that God should be opposed to the wise and condemn them ... For they are always exerting themselves; they do things in the Christian church the way they want to themselves. Everything that God does they must improve, so that there is no poorer, more insignificant and despised disciple on earth than God; he must be everybody’s student, everybody wants to be GOD’s teacher and preceptor. This may be seen in all heretics from the beginning of the world ... ;they are not satisfied with what God has done and instituted

They think they have to do something too, in order that they may be a bit better than other people and be able to boast: This is what I have done; what God has done is too poor and insignificant, even childish and foolish; I must add something to it. This is the nature of the shameful wisdom of the world, especially in the Christian church, where one bishop and one pastor hacks and snaps at another and one obstructs and shoves the other, as we have seen at all times in the government of the church to its great detriment. These are the real wiseacres, of whom Christ is speaking here, who put the cart before the horse and will not stay on the road which God himself has shown us, but always have to have and do something special in order that the people may say: Ah, our pastor or preacher is nothing; there’s the real man, he’ll get things done!

... Things are in a fine state, indeed, when the egg wants to be wiser than the hen.

... Lo, this means that the wise of this world are

rejected, that we may learn not to think ourselves wise and to put away from our eyes all great personages, indeed, to shut our eyes altogether, and cling only to Christ’s Word and come to him, as he so lovingly invites us to do, and say: Thou alone art my beloved Lord and Master, I am thy disciple.

This and much more might be said concerning this Gospel, but I am too weak and we shall let it go at that.¹

At this Luther was overcome with pain and came down from the pulpit. He was taken to a home across the street. On the night of the 17th after supper, he went to the window about 8:00 p.m. to pray, as was his custom. Soon he suffered deep pains in the chest. At 1:00 a.m. he woke with another attack of pain. He was certain of eternal life and repeated John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Jonas asked him if he was ready to die trusting in the Lord Jesus. He said, “Yes.” He said, “Lord, let your servant depart in peace. Amen.” He died on Feb. 18 at 2:45 a.m.

After he died, Aurifaber found a scrap of paper in Luther’s pocket. It was the last thing he ever wrote. “Let no one think he has sufficiently grasped the Scriptures, unless he has governed the church for a hundred years with the prophets.” “We are beggars: This is true.” *Wir sind Bettler: Hoc est verum.*”

Sasse called this *Luthers Vermaechniss on Christenheit*, Luther’s great legacy to Christianity. Under the law, we are beggars. We only receive.

First Commandment: You have idols; you are discontent. Second Commandment: You misuse the name of God. Third Commandment: Your worship and prayers falter. Fourth Commandment: You despise authority. Fifth Commandment: You hate your neighbor. Sixth Commandment: Your sexual thoughts words and deeds are a stench. Seventh Commandment: You steal, and you are miser and lack generosity. Eighth Commandment: You say what ought not be said. Ninth Commandment: You want what is not yours. Tenth Commandment: You desire everything but God.

The first of Luther’s 95 Theses, written right by the

The message of the
Reformation was
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¹ LW 51, Martin Luther, “The Last Sermon, Preached in Eisleben, Matthew 11:25-30,” 15 February 1546. AE 51, 383-392.

font in this church, states, “When our Lord and master Jesus Christ says ‘Repent,’ He wills that the entire life of the Christian be one of repentance!” The message of the Reformation was above all a message of repentance.

Are you repentant? Are you a sinner? Then rejoice. I have good news in a simple message.

Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world for you. Jesus was foretold by the prophets for you. Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary for you. Jesus was born for you. Jesus was circumcised for you. Jesus taught the scholars in the temple for you. Jesus was obedient to His parents for you. Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan for you. Jesus was cast into the wilderness for you. Jesus came preaching, “Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand” for you. Jesus healed the blind, the lame, the demon possessed, for you. Jesus fed the thousands for you! Jesus said, “Come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest” for you. Jesus raised Lazarus for you. Jesus rode into Jerusalem for you. Jesus instituted His supper on the night when He was betrayed for you. Jesus was betrayed

for you. Jesus was tried for you. Jesus was shuffled back and forth between Pilate and Herod for you. Jesus was beaten and mocked, wore a crown of thorns and purple robe for you. Jesus carried His cross to Golgatha for you. Jesus was nailed to the cross for you.

Jesus said, “Forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do” for you. Jesus said, “It is finished for you.” Jesus’ body lay in a tomb for you. Jesus rose on the third day, bodily, for you. Jesus proclaimed victory in hell for you. Jesus appeared to Peter and all the rest for you. Jesus ascended into heaven for you. And Jesus will come again at the last day for you.

This is the simple Christian faith. Jesus rejoiced (*exhomo goui mai soi*) that this has been revealed to the little children and hidden from the wise. And we rejoice this day to be little children with the simple faith of Luther and Jesus. Remember, repent, rejoice. This shall be our message in everything we do in this city and around the world.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Remember, repent,
rejoice. This shall
be our message in
everything we do in
this city and around
the world.

The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison is president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.



REFORMATION JUBILEES: IS THERE CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION IN 2017?

by Werner Klän

WHAT SHOULD WE CELEBRATE in 2017? Should we “celebrate” at all? Would it not be more appropriate to observe a Reformation “commemoration”? That would at least be an indication of the fact that the ongoing division within Western Christianity is no cause for jubilation. But the question that generally arises is whether the objectives laid out by Wolfgang Huber in 2008 for the Luther Decade¹ go far and deep enough, or rather whether the more deeply rooted and ultimately biblical-theological motifs can actually be received into Church and society. The former President of the Evangelical Church in Germany names the Lutheran- themes as being those of “hopelessnesses of life,” “afflictions of faith,” “God’s hiddenness” and “the theology of the cross.” He points out that, according to Martin Luther, “man is in and of himself unfree, a prisoner of sin” and that freedom should, above all, be understood to be “a departure from the inversion of human existence, as salvation from the disorientations of life, as deliverance from the shackles of sin and death.” According to Huber, the basis of this freedom lies in that “God bestows on every human the ability to walk upright” so that, consequentially, “every human is able to bow his knees.” The soteriological focal point of biblical Lutheran theology reflects this aspect with its assertion that “it is only God who, through the belief in Christ, awards freedom and dignity to every human,” consequently deducing an unmediated equality of all humankind before God that is experienced on an individual basis. This Church concept is reduced to the “metaphor of a Christian fellowship,” a “fellowship of equals” that “also provides socio-political impetus.”

This conglomeration of ideas gives the Luther Decade project the additional appearance of a political project that requires Luther to serve as a prompting source of

inspiration to pose the question of meaning, to reclaim an educational-historical relevance,² which admittedly points to Melancthon rather than Luther,³ as well as an impact on scientific history, which does not remain undisputed,⁴ or indeed a cultural-historical relevance and to proclaim an ethicizing Christianity; such a disposition

² Nevertheless, and at least since World War II, it has been said about both German states, albeit amidst different parameters, differing conceptions and diverging consequences on both sides, that the education sector has reached a point of “an almost complete loss of a historically meaningful structure,” with “confessionality” being taken as such; cf. Heinz-Elmar Tenorth: *Konfessionalität in Bildungspolitik, Bildungssystem und pädagogischer Reflexion in beiden deutschen Staaten nach 1945. Oder: Der Bedeutungsverlust einer historisch bedeutsamen Struktur*, in: *Reformationsgeschichtliche Sozietät der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg* (Ed.): *Spurenlese. Wirkungen der Reformation auf Wissenschaft und Bildung, Universität und Schule*, (= LStRLO 22), Leipzig 2014, 241–245. Nevertheless, a “cautious, yet in cases of uncertainty nonetheless constantly vigilant, democracy-oriented mindfulness” can for instance be discerned regarding the debates of religious education in the Federal Republic of Germany; it would, however, require further evidence for the derivation to be made that “the Evangelical Church can be described as being an institutional, impetus–initialising factor for German democracy”, cf. Thomas Schlag: *Protestantische Bildungsprogramme in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zwischen 1949 und 1990*, *ibid.*, 255–279, here 278. As far as the former GDR is concerned, particular mention should be made of the singularity of Evangelical adult education in the sense of a “church as learning community” with its specific approaches, cf. Aribert Rothe: *Herausforderungen: protestantische Bildung und Atheismus seit 1945. Protestantische Erwachsenenbildung in der DDR*, *ibid.*, 281–294.

³ Cf. *Die Reformation als Bildungskatastrophe. Luthers Pädagogik zwischen Mangel und Utopie*, in: *Spurenlese. Wirkungen der Reformation auf Wissenschaft und Bildung*, Universität und Schule (FN 2), 69–89; Konrad Fees: *Protestantische Wertekonzepte in Bildung und Wissenschaft*, *ibid.*, 307–329. Friedrich Schweizer draws attention to the tensions between the implications of a “Protestant educational heritage” for the present, amid a difficult mix of a “religious and ideological pluralism” to which “Reformation thinking” was “not attuned” in *Protestantisches Bildungserbe? Fragen evangelischer Bildungsverantwortung heute*, in: *Spurenlese. Wirkungen der Reformation auf Wissenschaft und Bildung, Universität und Schule* (FN 2), 331–347.

⁴ Cf. the aggravated stance taken towards Protestant monopoly claims on modernism: “The thesis of a ‘protestant principle’ having founded modern science and education faces the same dilemma as Max Weber’s thesis on Calvinism or rather a specific Calvinistic school of thought having founded Capitalism. It can, in certain respects, lay claim to a historically selective plausibility, but is, on the whole, certainly not convincing.” Weber, *Protestantismus, Universität und Wissenschaft* (see Comment XX), 38.

¹ Wolfgang Huber: *Festrede zur Eröffnung der Lutherdekade in der Schlosskirche zu Wittenberg*, 21.09.2008.

could — in a derivative way — be called “Modern Culture Protestantism.”⁵ It is also questionable whether the rather sweeping claim “of the Reformation” for “enlightenment and democracy, individuality and human dignity, religious plurality and tolerance”⁶ can be brought in line with historical reality.⁷ This gives rise to justified criticism as far as the implications of this observance regarding tourism policy are concerned.⁸

It is, however, not surprising that during the run-up to the commemoration of the Reformation that has been scheduled for 2017, in spite of the problematic nature of the historical facts, their historiographic classification as well as their interpretation;⁹ this date is bound up with greatly diverging expectations.¹⁰ In any event, and in view of the Luther celebrations through the centuries, the undeniable conclusion can, on the whole, be reached that: “All previous Luther jubilees during the

past centuries were highly politicised.”¹¹ And it is indeed necessary to point out that the Reformation is not merely

Enlightenment turned its intrinsically theological motifs into those of anthropology and psychology, thus executing a “secularisation of the image of Luther,” during which central theological concepts of — but not only — Luther are being lost.

an event of Protestant Church history and German history in general, but rather a process of Christianity, therefore elevating it to an event of world-historical significance.¹² From a Roman Catholic point of view, and even with greater ecumenical open-mindedness and “approaches to the person of Martin Luther,” the “fact” of the “schism within the Western Church” remains, posing an ecumenical challenge.¹³ Nevertheless, in the context of more recent Roman Catholic Luther and Reformation research, it seems possible to locate “Luther’s reform objective in the historically more encompassing

domain of Lutheran confessionalisation,” opening up the possibility of “revisiting Martin Luther and the Reformation in a new, Catholic way,”¹⁴ and even of an “ecumenical reception” of Luther.¹⁵

In my opinion the very strong reactions that the document of the Evangelical Church in Germany on “Justification and Freedom”¹⁶ has elicited from some Roman Catholic quarters suggest that, as far as the question as to what should be commemorated or even “celebrated” is concerned, it is apparent that there remain a number of larger ecumenical stumbling blocks that still need to be processed, if not removed altogether. The statement alone that “this jubilee is, for the first time, being jointly prepared by all Protestant Churches in Germany” is a rather bold one, but can be explained by a conception of “Evangelical Church,” based on the Leuenberg Agreement, which holds out Church unity as a possibility.¹⁷ It is there-

⁵ Cf. the deliberations by Volkhard Krech: *Wie lebt ein Kulturprotestant? Beobachtungen zu Habitusformationen eines protestantischen Milieus*, in: *Reformationsgeschichtliche Sozietät der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg* (Ed.): *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (= LStRLO 20), Leipzig 2013, 121–132, according to which such a milieu is characterised by a co-existence of “secularists” and “religious elements,” ambivalence, keeping a “sympathising distance towards the institutional Church,” an affirmation of “social differentiation and structural individualism” as well as an orientation towards “Kunstreligion” (Art-as-religion).

⁶ President Nikolaus Schneider. “Am Anfang war das Wort.” *Dachmarkenkampagne Luther 2017 heute in Berlin vorgestellt*; 27 October 2011; http://www.ekd.de/presse/pm247_2011_dachmarkenkampagne.html (accessed 24. 03. 2014)

⁷ Hartmut Lehmann: *Fragen zur Halbzeit der Lutherdekade*, KZG/CHH 26 (2013), 447–454, here 451; cf. also Lehmann’s extremely critical, partly justified inquiries concerning the history of Lutheranism since 1517, as well as his conclusion: “500 years of Lutheranism is certainly not an outright success story that one could point to in 2017 with a sense of pride.” Ibid., 452. Instead, Lehmann would rather refer to a “success story of Protestantism” and, in this context, poses the question as to whether the latter “can still be brought into close association with Luther at all.” Ibid., 453. The critical questions Lehmann directs at Lutheranism can, with equal if not greater justification, be directed at “Protestantism.”

⁸ Gerhard Besier: *Human Images, Myth Creation and Projections: From the Luther Myth to the Luther Campaign*, KZG/CCH 26 (/2013), 422–436.

⁹ Hartmut Lehmann. *Fragen zur Halbzeit der Lutherdekade* (FN 7), 453.

¹⁰ Hartmut Lehmann. *Unterschiedliche Erwartungen an das Reformationsjubiläum 2017* in idem: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (= Refo 500, vol. 8), Göttingen 2012, 305–314.

¹¹ Lehmann, *Die Deutschen und ihr Luther*, in: idem: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 299.

¹² Hartmut Lehmann: *Rückblick und Ausblick*, in: idem: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 9–16; idem: *Die Deutschen und ihr Luther* (FN), 303; idem, *Unterschiedliche Erwartungen*, ibid., 311f.

¹³ Wolfgang Thönissen: *Katholische Perspektiven zum Thema »Reformationsjubiläum«*, KZG/CCH 26 (2013), 437f.

¹⁴ Ibid. (FN 13), 442.

¹⁵ Ibid. (FN 13), 441.

¹⁶ *Rechtfertigung und Freiheit. 500 Jahre Reformation 2017. Ein Grundlagentext des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD), Gütersloh³ 2014.

¹⁷ Ibid., preface, 8.

fore not surprising that the jubilee of 1817 is interpreted as being the date of a “rapprochement of the two great confessional wings of the Reformation.”¹⁸ These days, references are made under the heading of a “legitimate pluralisation due to its Scriptural conformity”¹⁹ in order to counter the term “schism.”²⁰

Many aspects of the attempts of this fundamental text to revisit the “central theme of the Reformation” for modern contemporaries can be described as being successful; for instance, the emphasis on the exclusive particles (*solus Christus, solo verbo, sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide*) and the interpretation of these with the aid of the keywords “‘love,’ ‘recognition and appreciation,’ ‘forgiveness’ and ‘freedom.’”²¹ It has to be stated nonetheless, that the repression of the motif of sacrifice in the description of Christ’s work is cause for concern.²² The concept of freedom, even given the differences in perception of this concept between Reformation and modern times,²³ is still understood to be freedom toward the other and is consequently used in an equivocal sense.²⁴ Accordingly, and despite protestations to the contrary, Luther’s appearance in Worms is being invoked for the “fundamental value of universal freedom of conscience” so that “Luther’s fundamental belief” corresponds to “the modern framework of the constitution of the democratic state.”²⁵ Then it may also be expected that “the jubilee ... should become a celebration of society as a whole, and of the secular state.”²⁶ Furthermore, defining the relationship between congregation\church and ecclesiastical ministry appears to be particularly questionable to me, seeing that the latter should apparently only exist “for the sake of order.”²⁷

Wolfgang Thönissen, the executive director of the Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute in Paderborn, has — albeit with unusual vehemence but with some justifi-

Humanity and ideal,
nation and people are
the guiding interests
that supersede theology
and church.

cation — described “this Protestant programme” as not being compatible “with the ecumenical programme.”²⁸ Thomas Söding, a Roman Catholic New Testament scholar in Bochum, has, from his critique that the fundamental text also fell short of offering “a base for a serious discussion with Catholic theology,” concluded that an “ecumenism of profiles,” as called for in 2005 by Wolfgang Huber, the former president of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), should rather be replaced with the model of an “ecumenism of strengths.”²⁹ The Erfurt Luther Symposium, hosted by the Johan-Adam-Möhler Institute and the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Erfurt, paid tribute to Martin Luther as being a “Reform Catholic.”³⁰ It seems to me that here, too, lie the beginnings for a Reformation commemoration with Concord-Lutheran ecumenical intent.

Originally a denotation imposed by others, the term “Lutheran” becomes one of self-designation, also in the sense of an inter-Christian differentiation. But what is the greatness of “Lutheranism”? During the confessionalisation processes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,³¹ an emergence of varying church-institutional forms can already be discerned, despite the homogenisation tendencies effected by the Formula of Concord,³² if one only looks at the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in various territorial church developments.³³ Standing outside of this are national churches in Scandinavia, for instance, but also groups and minorities of Lutheran orientation that are

¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

Ibid., 21f.

²¹ Ibid., 29, cf. the implementation, 44–93, also 98.

²² Ibid., 37; 62.

²³ Ibid., 13, 33.

²⁴ Ibid., 65.

²⁵ Ibid., 102.

²⁶ Ibid., 105.

²⁷ Ibid., 91.

²⁸ *Ökumenische Information* 28, 8. July 2014, 3.

²⁹ Thomas Söding: 500 Jahre Reformation—der Versuch einer Rechtfertigung, in: *Christ in der Gegenwart* 31/ 3. August 2014, 353f.

³⁰ *Ökumenische Information* 37, 9. September 2014, 3.

³¹ Cf. Heinz Schilling: (Ed.): *Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland – Das Problem der »Zweiten Reformation«* (= SVRG 195), Gütersloh 1986; Hans-Christoph Rublack (Ed.): *Die lutherische Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland. Wissenschaftliches Symposium des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte* (= SVRG 197), Gütersloh 1992; where the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, cf. Heinz Schilling (Ed.) *Katholische Konfessionalisierung. Wissenschaftliches Symposium der Gesellschaft zur Herausgabe des Corpus Catholicorum und des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte*, (= SVRG 198), Gütersloh/Münster 1995.

³² Cf. Robert Kolb: *Die Konkordienformel. Eine Einführung in ihre Geschichte und Theologie* (= OUHE 8), Göttingen 2011.

³³ Martin Heckel: *Deutschland im konfessionellen Zeitalter (Deutsche Geschichte 5)*, Göttingen 1983; Ernst Koch: *Das konfessionelle Zeitalter—Katholizismus, Luthertum, Calvinismus (1563–1675)* (= KGE II/8), Leipzig 2000.

under pressure.

The notion that “Protestantism” has brought forth the formation of the modern-day scientific approach or has affected it in a particular way has come under fire of late as being “a Protestant-Lutheran master narrative.”³⁴ It should anyway be borne in mind that the term “Protestantism” carries with it the risk of a hasty unification where differences as to theology, confession, denomination or types of devotion are concerned.³⁵ By contrast, claims as to the impact on scientific history in the sphere of influence of Calvin and Calvinism continue to be made,³⁶ not least for the early period of the Netherlands.³⁷ The “Protestant Reformation” has been used in order to serve at least as a general framework for the development of natural philosophy, medicine and astronomy.³⁸

Amongst the “ingrained interpretive paradigms of European history” is also the assertion “that Calvinism is said to have effected the promotion of democracy, while Lutheranism is said to have strengthened the belief in authority.”³⁹ This view needs

In 1934 and 1936 ... Hermann Sasse cautioned against three misconstructions of the Lutheran Reformation: “Lutheranism itself ... does not respond (sc. to the question: What is Lutheran?). It is unable to give an answer to those who inquire after its essence; it is a mute concept. It is a different matter, however, if we inquire after the Lutheran Church. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is not an idea, it is a reality. It is not mute, it speaks.”

to be modified at the very least, since the “doctrine of the three estates” (*Drei-Stände-Lehre*) of Lutheranism led to the restriction of authority, and the “resistance debate” in the Reich “did not break off”⁴⁰ after the Peace of Augsburg. It has been proven for quite some time that particular subservience to authority does not apply to the Lutheran court chaplains, at least not to those of the first few generations.⁴¹ It must be emphasised in this regard that “the more recent right to resist was ‘invented’ and first propagated by Lutheranism in the middle of the 16th

century” so that Lutheranism cannot simply be defamed as being a “doctrine of subservient subordination.”⁴²

The question as to whether more valuable insights can be gained with the concept of a “Lutheran Confession Culture” might be raised;⁴³ the concept does at least achieve the identification of “confession as [being] Lutheran” practise, thereby representing an open process. However, the determination of a Lutheran identity does thereby tend to remain underexposed. One can nonetheless discern a specific impact of Reformation theology on the fine arts,

for instance the thematisation around the Lutheran basic formula of “Law and Gospel.”⁴⁴ It is and remains undisputed that the Bible and hymnal, in the way that they

³⁴ Wolfgang E. J. Weber: *Protestantismus, Universität und Wissenschaft. Kritische Bemerkungen zu einer historischen Aneignung*, in: *Spurenlese. Wirkungen der Reformation auf Wissenschaft und Bildung, Universität und Schule* (FN 2), 19–38, here 36.

³⁵ Hans Joas: *Modernisierung als kulturprotestantische Metaerzählung*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (FN 5), 485–496, here 490; a section of the cited literature below is most definitely lacking in this regard; it is for this reason that I regularly put the term in inverted commas.

³⁶ Jon Balserak: *Science in Early Modern Calvinist Countries. Considering one of the Sources for its Flourishing*, in: *Reformationsgeschichtliche Sozietät der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg* (Ed.): *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (FN 5) 2013, 91–103.

³⁷ For the Netherlands cf. Willem Frijhoff: A watchful symbiosis. Protestantisms, scholarship and higher education as (inter)national assets of the Dutch Republic, in: *Spurenlese. Wirkungen der Reformation auf Wissenschaft und Bildung, Universität und Schule* (FN 2), 107–129.

³⁸ Ole Peter Grell: The Significance of the Reformation for natural philosophy, medicine, and astronomy, in: *Spurenlese. Wirkungen der Reformation auf Wissenschaft und Bildung, Universität und Schule* (FN 2), 193–208, here 208.

³⁹ Luise Schorn-Schütte: *Religion und Politik. Grundzüge einer christlichen Herrschaftslehre im 16. Jahrhundert*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (FN 5), 17–40, here 17.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁴¹ Cf. Wolfgang Sommer: *Gottesfurcht und Fürstenherrschaft. Studien zum Obrigkeitsverständnis Johann Arndts und lutherischer Hoffprediger zur Zeit der altprotestantischen Orthodoxie*, Göttingen 1988; idem: *Politik, Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Luthertum der Frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 1999.

⁴² Joas, *Modernisierung als kulturprotestantische Metaerzählung*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (FN 5), 492, with reference to Wolfgang Reinhard: *Historiker, »Modernisierung« und Modernisierung. Erfahrungen mit dem Konzept »Modernisierung« in der neueren Geschichte* in Walter Haug / Burghart Wachinger ((Ed.): *Innovation und Originalität*, Tübingen 1993, 53–69; cf. idem.: Freiburg 2004.

⁴³ Thomas Kaufmann, *Konfession und Kultur. Lutherischer Protestantismus in der 2. Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts*, Tübingen 2006, 9.

⁴⁴ Heimo Reinitzer: *Gesetz und Evangelium. Über ein reformatorisches Bildthema, seine Tradition, Funktion und Wirkungsgeschichte*, 2 vols, Hamburg 2006.

have become determinants for piety and worship during the Lutheran Reformation, have, “during the subsequent period, defined Christian culture as a whole, and across all confessional boundaries at that,” this is exemplified by the names of Paul Gerhardt and Johann Sebastian Bach.⁴⁵

Where constitutional law pertaining to the Church and State is concerned, the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, constituting the first large-scale attempt at a European framework for peace,⁴⁶ initially safeguarded the unity of the Reich, characterised by the dissimulation which codified the relative legal validity of multi-confessionality.⁴⁷ During the further course of European history,⁴⁸ but especially in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and its territories, this religious plurality played a determining role in the shaping of diverse and also collective mentalities and regional identities.⁴⁹

Luther interpretations up to the twentieth century — an outline

Early historical receptions of Luther in the sixteenth century already reflect historical-theological interpretations, for instance when Luther is portrayed as being a prophet, teacher or hero,⁵⁰ partly in a mythological mold, partly in a kind of confessional canonisation as witnessed in the Corpora Doctrinae, and absolutely in competition with

Phillip Melanchthon.⁵¹ Luther’s authority is defended in the Apology of the Formula of Concord (1584) over objections from Crypto-Philippistic quarters; for their part, the Calvinists accordingly dispute Martin Luther’s prophetic and apostolic “office.” Such stylisations result in a development of tendencies towards a monumentalisation and stereotyping of Martin Luther, which super-elevate and paralyze the historical Luther.⁵² Pietism and Enlightenment are, for the most part, not interested in Martin Luther as teacher of the Church in terms of a Lutheranism informed by the Formula of Concord, even though Philipp Jakob Spener and the first-generation Lutheran Pietists laid legitimacy claim to Luther.⁵³

For the self-assurance of the Lutheran territories, their elites and — at least in parts — their people, and even before the Thirty Years’ War as well as after it, significance was afforded to the Reformation jubilees; they reveal in each case the church and religious position(s) that were in need of legitimacy strengthening. The centenary of the Reformation was interpreted in the light of “*Heilsgeschichte*.”⁵⁴ Luther is assigned a “salvific over-dimensional quality,” by virtue of which the Reformer from Wittenberg is said to have rehabilitated Scriptures, brought the Doctrine of Justification to light again and corrected sacramental theology.⁵⁵ By way of response to the Roman Catholic Church’s contestation of Luther’s legitimisation, a virtually direct calling to the position of Reformer was assigned to him by the opposite side,⁵⁶ since it was not least a matter of “safeguarding the dogmatic claim to truth of German Protestantism.”⁵⁷ As the Wittenberg speeches and sermons of 1617 show, it was about nothing less than the “legitimisation through history,” in which Wittenberg styles itself as being “Salem,”⁵⁸ or Strasbourg

⁴⁵ Christoph Wolff: *Musik aus dem Geist der Reformation. Bibel und Gesangbuch in der Musik Johann Sebastian Bachs*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (FN 5), 350–362, here 350.

⁴⁶ Klaus Bußmann / Heinz Schilling: *1648 – Krieg und Frieden in Europa, Katalogband und zwei Textbände, [Dokumentation der Europaratsausstellung zum 350-jährigen Jubiläum des Westfälischen Friedens in Münster und Osnabrück]* Münster / Osnabrück 1998; Fritz Dickmann: *Der Westfälische Frieden*. Münster, Münster 1997.

⁴⁷ Koch, *Das konfessionelle Zeitalter* (FN 33), 328–332.

⁴⁸ Not taken into account in this portrayal is the impact of the Wittenberg Reformation beyond Europe’s borders, and the development of Lutheranism in Africa, say, or Asia and Latin America; cf. however Frieder Ludwig: *Luther–Wahrnehmungen in Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (see Comment XX), 279–307; Ludwig draws attention to the question as to “when and by way of which transmission belts certain Lutheran images were imparted, and how these were transformed via various processes of appropriation and interaction”, *ibid.*, 282; for North America cf. Hermann Wellenreuther: *Zivilisation, Mission und Kirchenverständnis. Europäische protestantische und indigene Kirchen in Nordamerika*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (see Comment XX), 309–330.

⁴⁹ Heinz Schilling: *Die neue Zeit. Vom Christenheitseuropa zum Europa der Staaten. 1250 bis 1750* (= *Siedler Geschichte Europas*, vol. 3) Berlin 1999; *idem*: *Konfessionalisierung und Staatsinteressen. Internationale Beziehungen 1559–1660* (= *Handbuch der Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen*, publ. by Heinz Duchhardt and Franz Knipping, vol. 2), Paderborn 2007.

⁵⁰ Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher and Hero: Images of the Reformer, 1520–1620*, Grand Rapids, 1999. Paderborn 2007.

⁵¹ Koch, *Das konfessionelle Zeitalter* (FN 33), 211–218.

⁵² Kolb, *Martin Luther* (see Comment X), 114f.

⁵³ Martin Brecht: *Philipp Jakob Spener, sein Programm und dessen Auswirkungen*, in: *idem* (Ed.): *Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum frühen achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (= *idem*. / Klaus Deppermann / Ulrich Gäbler [Ed.]: *Geschichte des Pietismus* vol. 1), 281–389, here 293, 373; *idem*: *August Hermann Francke und der Hallesche Pietismus*, *ibid.*, 439–539, here 469.

⁵⁴ Hans-Jürgen Schönstadt: *Antichrist, Weltheilsgeschehen und Gottes Werkzeug. Römische Kirche, Reformation und Luther im Spiegel des Reformationsjubiläums 1617* (= *VIEG*, 80), Wiesbaden 1978; slightly abridged, *idem*: *Das Reformationsjubiläum 1617*, ZKG 93 (1982), 5–57.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 47–49.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁸ Annina Ligniez: *Legitimation durch Geschichte. Das erste Reformationsjubiläum 1617 in Wittenberg*, in: Klaus Tanner (ed.), *Konstruktion von Geschichte. Jubelrede–Predigt–protestantische*

where — contrary to its own Reformation history and by way of profiling itself against the newly-founded and imperially privileged Jesuit College in Molsheim — expedited “its solidarity with Saxon Lutheranism.”⁵⁹

One to one-and-a-half centuries later the historical-theological interpretation of the Reformation was still very present in its objection of and opposition to the papacy, which was still being portrayed as the “apocalyptic world tyrant,” as well as partly in a coalition with Lutheran-Enlightened elements,⁶⁰ the image of Luther was in accordance with this, where his person was interpreted as being the fulfilment of the prophesy in Revelation,⁶¹ or rather as being the “sun” of “religious enlightenment.”⁶²

Within the ranks of the last representatives of Lutheran Orthodoxy, the Reformation Jubilee of 1717 was utilised to once again “demonstrate the unity of Lutheranism.”⁶³ However, one also comes across laments about “a desolate condition of the Evangelical Church,” especially in Electoral Saxony, together with this contradicting appeal to adhere to the traditional Lutheran faith; the latter were to no small degree topical, since the Elector had converted to Catholicism twenty years previously, and the Electoral Prince had changed his confession very recently.⁶⁴

Christianity is thereby under an obligation to be critical of contemporaneity. The Church and its members can, after all, not escape contemporaneity, neither can it be denied that its members are influenced and imperceptibly governed by “trends” and tendencies of a world and society that is not only “all around them,” but in which they live themselves and that consequently also has an effect on their being.

Pietism “historicises” Luther “as well as his doctrine” and predominantly perceives him as being “homo religious,” who was “undoubtedly one of a kind,” beyond whom history admittedly extended and who, in the consciousness of the development of piety, “is recording something new and seminal into the annals of history.”⁶⁵ By referring to Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans, by emphasising the priesthood of all believers or by referring to Luther’s preface to the German Mass, the Lutheran Pietists were, at least in the beginning, admittedly striving to maintain continuity with the Wittenberg Reformation, especially where the Doctrine of Justification was concerned; however, the theological

cal-existential concern shifted towards a “regeneration of the justified,” or rather than toward implementing and safeguarding the existential turning point.⁶⁶ Studies were now geared toward practical relevance “within the framework of a holistic practise of piety.”⁶⁷

Enlightenment turned its intrinsically theological motifs into those of anthropology and psychology,⁶⁸ thus executing a “secularisation of the image of Luther,” during which central theological concepts of — but not only — Luther are being lost; humanity and ideal, nation and people are the guiding interests that supersede theology and church.⁶⁹ Accompanying this is a change of the view of Luther toward

Historiographie (LStRLO 18), Leipzig 2013, 53–66.

⁵⁹ Silvio Reichelt: *Die Akademische Reformationsjubelfeier in Straßburg 1617*, in: Tanner, *Konstruktion von Geschichte* (FN 58), 67–87, here 87.

⁶⁰ Hans-Jürgen Schönstädt: *Das Reformationsjubiläum 1717*, ZKG 93 (1982), 58–118, here 108; cf. concerning the anti-Roman Catholic positionings in 1755 cf. Stefan W. Römmelt: *Kalter Konfessions-Krieg auf Kanzel und Katheder? Die 200-Jahrfeiern des Augsburger Religionsfriedens von 1755 an den Universitäten Wittenberg, Leipzig und Halle*, in: Tanner, *Konstruktion von Geschichte* (FN 58), 141–177.

⁶¹ Schönstädt, 1717 (FN 60), 114.

⁶² Römmelt, *Kalter Konfessions-Krieg?* (FN 60), 174.

⁶³ Harm Cordes: *Cyprian als Chronist des Reformationsjubiläums von 1717*, in: Tanner, *Konstruktion von Geschichte* (FN 58), 89–103.

⁶⁴ Annina Ligniez: »[...] BEY IETZIGEN GEFÄHRlichen UND BETRÜBTEN ZEITEN [...]«. *Zeitdiagnosen in Reformationsjubiläumspredigten 1717 in Wittenberg*, in: Klaus Tanner / Jörg Ulrich (Ed.): *Spurenlese. Reformationsvergegenwärtigung als Standortbestimmung (1717–1983)*, (= LStRLO 17), Leipzig 2012, 37–70, here 42f.

⁶⁵ Claudia Drese: *Zur Geschichtsschreibung im kirchlichen Pietismus*, in: Tanner, *Konstruktion von Geschichte* (FN 58), 105–116, here 114f.

⁶⁶ Brecht, Spener (see Comment XX), 374–378; id., Francke (see Comment XX), 463.

⁶⁷ Wischmeyer, *Leitbilder des protestantischen Theologiestudiums* (see Comment XX), 50–58, here 50.

⁶⁸ Hartmut Lehmann: *Die Deutschen und ihr Luther. Im Jahr 2017 jährt sich zum fünfhundertsten Mal der Beginn der Reformation. Jubiläum wurde schon oft*, in: id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 297–304, here 297f.

⁶⁹ Dieter Hensing: *Der Bilder eigener Geist. Das schwierige Verhältnis der Lutherbilder zu ihrem Gegenstand*, in: Ferdinand van Ingen / Gerd Labrousse (Ed.): *Luther-Bilder im 20. Jahrhundert*, (= *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik*, vol. 19), Amsterdam 1984, 1–25, here 2–4.

“the interdenominational.” A paradigm shift occurred in the writing of Church history that now had a “science specific association with the past,” inasmuch as the “Protestant theologians were compelled, to some extent, to develop new legitimisation interpretations for the Reformation which had to prevail before the judgement seat of reason.”⁷⁰ Enlightenment is, according to the “teleology of progress,” consequently “the driving force behind an improvement of religion and science that extends beyond the Reformation.”⁷¹ This was consistent with an increased emphasis on practical relevance in progressive concepts of theological studies, albeit — as opposed to Pietism — sustained by a “solid, intellectual education.”⁷² These concepts comprise “a stronger individualisation, subjectivisation and above all hermeneutical humility in the sense of religious tolerance,” while simultaneously exceeding “former confessional self-limitation.” A separation of Christian and “secular educationnal contexts” subsequently tends to occur.⁷³

In North America, during the eighteenth century, the Lutherans were mostly in the minority but were facing greater difficulties where the (re-)organisation of the church was concerned, not least because of the new geographical, societal, governmental and religion-political contexts. On the one hand, the North American pathos of liberty and a new beginning served them as a guiding principle for a new contextualisation; its legitimacy was however underpinned by its close historical ties to Luther and the Reformation.⁷⁴ For the Lutherans of predominantly German origin the Reformation jubilee of 1817, a “minority phenomenon” in the United States,⁷⁵ acted as

an orientation within the new context, but with varying outcomes. It became either an expression of the ability to connect “with other Protestants,” or emphasis was placed on “Lutheranism as an autonomous denomination in a Protestant environment” while “simultaneously stressing linguistic and religious autonomy.”⁷⁶ The latter still applied in the middle of the nineteenth century to the Saxon emigrants who subsequently formed the Missouri Synod.⁷⁷

In the nineteenth century,⁷⁸ and originating from Herder, the “German Luther”⁷⁹ increasingly turns into an icon of not only national but nationalistic self-assurance, the incense of which is burnt as offering to this idol in 1817, 1883, 1917 and 1933. Thus Leopold von Ranke portrays Luther “as an organ of a higher office and executor of a transpersonal mandate;”⁸⁰ he becomes “the embodiment of national mission and national spirit.”⁸¹ This “ideologisation of the image of Luther”⁸² is consolidated by linking it to the commemoration of the Battle of Nations and the posting of the theses (1817) and, with Luther’s 400th birthday in 1883, by interpreting the Reformation as being the pivotal factor in setting the course for the founding of the German Empire in 1871, according to Heinrich von Treitschke, who extols Luther as being the “leader of the nation.”⁸³ Some of the Reformation sermons held at the 300-year anniversary celebrations at the beginning of the nineteenth century already bear the signature of at least posited “liberty,” “progress” and “tolerance,” but also “free will,” “civic virtue” and “immortality,” so that this kind of “Protestant” theology regresses, especially theologically,

⁷⁰ Dirk Fleischer: *Protestantische Kirchengeschichtsschreibung in der Aufklärung in: Tanner, Konstruktion von Geschichte* (FN 58), 117–139, here 125f.

⁷¹ Fleischer *Protestantische Kirchengeschichtsschreibung* (see Comment XX), 137f.

⁷² Johannes Wischmeyer: *Leitbilder des protestantischen Theologiestudiums. Programmatische Diskussion und institutioneller Wandel vom 16. Bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, in: *Spurenlese. Wirkungen der Reformation auf Wissenschaft und Bildung, Universität und Schule* (FN 2), 59–63, here 59.

⁷³ Markus Wriedt: *Erleuchtete Pietas—fromme Erudition. Zum Wandel des theologischen Bildungsverständnisses im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, in: *Spurenlese. Wirkungen der Reformation auf Wissenschaft und Bildung, Universität und Schule* (FN 2), 159–191, here 167, 189.

⁷⁴ Wolfgang Flügel: *Das Beste aus zwei Welten. Geschichtskonstrukte lutherischer Pastoren im Pennsylvania des 18. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Tanner, Konstruktion von Geschichte* (FN 58), 179–211; similar sentiments were still held in the nineteenth century by the Saxon emigrants, who went on to form the Missouri Synod;

⁷⁵ Wolfgang Flügel: *Deutsche Lutheraner? Amerikanische Protestanten? Die Selbstdarstellung deutscher Einwanderer im Reformationsjubiläum*

1817, in: *Tanner / Ulrich, Spurenlese. Reformationsvergegenwärtigung als Standortbestimmung* (FN 64), 71–99, here 71.

⁷⁶ Wolfgang Flügel, *Deutsche Lutheraner? Amerikanische Protestanten? Die Selbstdarstellung deutscher Einwanderer im Reformationsjubiläum 1817*, in: *Spurenlese. Vergewegenwärtigung als Standortbestimmung* (FN 64), 99.

⁷⁷ Cf. the historicising and assuring title of a portrayal dating from the middle of the twentieth century, Walter O. Forster: *Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri 1839–1841*, St. Louis 1953, but also the instructive study by Christoph Barnbrock: *Die Predigten C. F. W. Walthers im Kontext deutscher Auswanderergemeinden in den USA. Hintergründe–Analysen–Perspektiven*, Hamburg 2003.

⁷⁸ Dorothea Wendebourg: *Die Reformationsjubiläen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, *ZThK* 108 (2011), 270–335.

⁷⁹ Hensing, *Lutherbilder* (FN 69), 7–9.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Hensing, *Der Bilder eigner Geist* (FN 69), 8.

⁸³ Ibid., 9.

to pre-Reformation positions.⁸⁴ On the Roman Catholic side, by contrast, the Reformation was, despite certain ecumenical attunements, “on the whole, due to its divisive nature, not perceived as being beneficial.”⁸⁵ It is noteworthy that in Frankfurt/Main, for instance, there is a predominance of “patriotic and domestic virtues” in prayers.⁸⁶ A new “Protestant” self-awareness also began arising within this context. The third secular celebration of the Reformation already has national overtones, not least due to a suggestion by Goethe to observe this commemoration as a feast “of all Germans;” even so, and probably as far as the state was concerned, “confession-political facilitation was still advised in 1817.”⁸⁷

Moreover, a pluralistic reference to and utilisation of Luther, depending on the theological position, can now be discerned.⁸⁸ The secular celebration of the *Confessio Augustana* in 1830 effected the already existing respective theological orientations — the “post-Kantian rationalism” but also the “revivalist movement and Neo-Lutheranism” — to “experience a culminating intensification,” but always with “legitimising back reference” — be it that they viewed Luther as being the “archetype of Enlightenment” or that they regarded the theology of the Augsburg Confession as legitimisation for the “experience of sin and grace” of the revival movement, or that they utilised him in his “confessional identity-giving role” for “Neo-Lutheranism.”⁸⁹ In 1883 and by imperial decree,

Even in the rejection of contemporary developments where the Church or its individual members, based on their Christian responsibility, are of the opinion that they ought to be met with disapproval, such positioning proves itself to be contemporary in nature.

all Evangelical Churches were compelled to hold Luther celebrations; however, the jubilee, “with its attempt at elevating Luther to the great integration and identification figure of all Germans [remained] full of uncertainties and ambiguities.”⁹⁰ As far as Heinrich von Treitschke was concerned, Luther constituted “the eternal German.”⁹¹ In 1883 in North America, on the other hand, Luther was, transdenominationally speaking, rather considered to be a trailblazer for the modern age, a viewpoint that should change radically before 1917.⁹² Towards the end of the nineteenth century and “within a ‘saturated nation,’”⁹³ Luther serves as the “classical representation

of the German spirit and German morality,” where his religiosity is viewed as being a genuine expression of just such Germanness, which is, as such, absolutely in competition with Catholicism and celebrated by a more “Protestant bourgeoisie,” despite the inherent tensions in this milieu.⁹⁴ The Luther Jubilee of 1917 took place amid the seemingly unending and undecided First World War.⁹⁵ These celebrations were marked by an emphasis on nationality and by championing an ethos orientated towards a “German Luther,” imbued with heroism.⁹⁶ Being almost naturally different,

⁸⁴ Wichmann von Meding: *Jubel ohne Glauben? Das Reformationsjubiläum 1817 in Württemberg*, in ZKG 93 (1982), 119–160, here 144f.

⁸⁵ Hans Wolter: *Das Reformationsjubiläum von 1817 in der Freien Stadt Frankfurt am Main*, in: ZKG 93 (1982), 161–176, here 173.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 171.

⁸⁷ Hartmut Lehmann: *Martin Luther und der 31. Oktober 1517*, in id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 17–34, here 23.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 24; on Karl von Hase and the “historical image of a Reformation open to modernism” cf. Johannes Wischmeyer: *Reformation als Epoche und Strukturmoment. Protestantismustheorie und Historismus bei Karl von Hase und der Jenaer freisinnigen Theologie*, in: Tanner, *Konstruktion von Geschichte* (FN 58), 277–306, here 304.

⁸⁹ Johannes Hund: *Das Augustana-Jubiläum von 1830 als Kulminationspunkt der Ausbildung moderner theologischer Positionen während der Vormärzzeit*, in: Tanner, *Konstruktion von Geschichte* (FN 58), 105–116, 237–253, here 252f.

⁹⁰ Hartmut Lehmann: *Das Lutherjubiläum 1883*, in: id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 59–77, here 76.

⁹¹ Cf. Hartmut Lehmann: „Er ist wir selber: der ewige Deutsche. Zur langanhaltenden Wirkung der Lutherdeutung von Henrich von Treitschke”, in id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 126–137.

⁹² Hartmut Lehmann: *Die Lutherjubiläen 1883 und 1917 in Amerika*, “, in id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 78–93; cf. id.: “The Luther Statues in Washington D.C., and Baltimore” in id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 94–109.

⁹³ Sebastian Kranich: *Das Dresdner Lutherjubiläum 1883*, in: Tanner / Ulrich, *Spurenlese. Reformationsvergegenwärtigung als Standortbestimmung* (FN 64), 101–143, here 143.

⁹⁴ Cf. Werner Klän: *Von der Reichsgründung bis zu den Reformationsjubiläen 1883*, in: Helmut Edelmann / Niels Hasselmann (Ed.): *Nation im Widerspruch. Aspekte und Perspektiven aus lutherischer Sicht heute. Eine Studie des Ökumenischen Studienausschusses der VELKD und des DNK/LWB*, Gütersloh 1999, 145–151; cf. for the local history of Dresden, the summary in Kranich, *Das Dresdner Lutherjubiläum 1883* (see Comment XX), 140f.

⁹⁵ Gottfried Maron: *Luther 1917. Beobachtungen zur Literatur des 400. Reformationsjubiläums*, ZKG 93 (1982), 1–46.

⁹⁶ Cf. for instance Ralph Hennings: *Die Reformationsjubiläen 1817 und 1917 in Oldenburg (Oldb.)*, KZG/CCH 26 (2013), 217–237.

that is to say not focused on nationalism, the Reformation commemoration of the Reformed Church took place during the penultimate year of the War.⁹⁷

Luther Renaissance and Luther jubilees during the first half of the twentieth century

A new academic reflection on the Reformer from Wittenberg only begins with the “Luther Renaissance,” justifiably assessed as being “the other departure” after the First World War, alongside the dialectic theology.⁹⁸ Contrasting as yet with cultural Protestant interpretations⁹⁹ that, like Ernst Troeltsch,¹⁰⁰ emphasize Martin Luther’s “championing of the individual,” or, like Reinhold Seeberg, interpret the relationship with God as being “personal, spiritual, divine,” accordingly, the “Reformation is ... the German understanding of Christianity,”¹⁰¹ the Luther Renaissance begins to develop new approaches. According to Karl Holl, “religion,” as taught by Luther, turns into “conscience religion in the most pronounced sense of the word rooted in God’s actions of love and wrath, which “are inaccessible to human reason”¹⁰² but which are consolidated in the “encounter with God.”¹⁰³ Holl significantly views the experience of Germany’s defeat in the First World War as being a judgement of God.¹⁰⁴ According to Rudolf Herrmann, justification is articulated by faith as basis for its certainty, which is being expressed as *simul iustus et peccator* within the context of self-awareness. He takes up the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel or rather between person and conduct in such a way that the believer’s feelings of inadequacy concerning his or her own conduct under the threat of the Law is converted into the lamentation that remains focused on God.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ Hans-Georg Ulrichs: *Eine »Gelegenheit, mit den unbekannten Vätern der reformierten Kirche bekannt zu machen«*. *Das Reformationsjubiläum 1917 in Emden und bei den Reformierten in Deutschland*, KZG/CCH 26 (2013), 238–261.

⁹⁸ Heinrich Assel: *Der andere Aufbruch. Die Lutherrenaissance*, Göttingen 1994.

⁹⁹ Cf. Ulrich Gäßler: *Drei Typen theologischer Lutherdeutung um 1920: Ernst Troeltsch, Reinhold Seeberg, Karl Holl*, in: van Ingen / Labrousse, *Luther-Bilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (FN 69), 187–197.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 189.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 193.

¹⁰² Ibid., 195.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 196.

¹⁰⁴ Christine Svinth-Væge Pöder: *Die Lutherrenaissance im Kontext des Reformationsjubiläums. Gericht und Rechtfertigung bei Karl Holl, 1917–1921*, KZG/CCH 26 (2013), 191–200.

¹⁰⁵ Assel, *Der andere Aufbruch* (FN 98), 483–486.

The Swedish Luther Renaissance constitutes its own “encompassing awakening,” “similar to the dialectic theology on the continent, but without being as radical in its renunciation of problems pertaining to previous epochs.”¹⁰⁶ A rejection of a “nationalistic Luther interpretation”¹⁰⁷ can be observed, coupled with a “national church” (*Volkskirche*) model, admittedly with national connotations. Nathan Söderblom famously gained relevance with his concept of “evangelical catholicity” to which he deemed Lutheranism to be particularly obligated,¹⁰⁸ and at the core of which he regards “the indefensible personal relation to God,” by which he admittedly risks voicing his opposition to “the non-institutional mediation of the Church.”¹⁰⁹ The impact of Billing and Söderblom on Swedish theology cannot be underestimated; the common feature of this Luther interpretation and reception is the “dualistic” reading of Luther’s theology.¹¹⁰ In Norway, a prime example of a critical, resistant reclamation of Luther’s “Two Kingdom doctrine” is finally provided by Eivind Berggrav, who affirms the safeguarding of the sanctity of the Law against the demonic distortion of political power, thereby making it seem possible to “save the honour of the political theology of Lutheranism.”¹¹¹ It cannot be overlooked, however, that in Sweden, too, the various Reformation jubilees were exploited for the purpose of a Swedish “separate path,” to wit, with regards to ecumenical as well as political objectives.¹¹²

That this occurred after the onset of National Socialist rule in Germany under the sign “*Deutscher Luthertag 1933*” (German Luther Day) constituted a deliberate orchestration, but did ultimately not prevent the failure of this venture to send out the “signal of an Evangelical awakening and solidarity,” the *Sportpalast*-rally under the motto: “*Die völkische Sendung Luthers*” (Luther’s national mission) virtually drove ecclesiastical conflicts in the struggle between church and state in Germany.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Dietz Lange: *Eine andere Luther-Renaissance*, in: Notger Slenczka / Walter Sparr (Ed.): *Luthers Erben. Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der reformatorischen Theologie Luthers. Festschrift für Jörg Baur zum 75. Geburtstag*, Tübingen 2005, 245–274, here 246.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 264.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 265.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 268.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 270f.

¹¹¹ Quoted from Lange, *Luther-Renaissance* (see Comment XX), 273.

¹¹² Anders Jarlert: *Politische Inszenierung und Instrumentalisierung von Hundertjahrfeier zur Reformation im 20. Jahrhundert in Schweden*, KZG/CCH 26 (2013), 262–271.

¹¹³ Hansjörg Buss: *Der Deutsche Luthertag 1933 und die Deutschen*

The Luther Day in Dresden¹¹⁴ may serve as a good example: it was initially postponed due to upcoming elections in order to avoid any confession-political prevalence where the Evangelical section of the population was concerned; it was adjourned yet again as a reaction to the *Sportpalast*-rally and downgraded to serve merely as a platform for the inauguration of the new bishop. The event nevertheless availed itself of Luther for National Socialist purposes.¹¹⁵ A blending takes place of “national consciousness and ethnic thinking,” order of creation theology and race theory, as well as a theological legitimisation of war.¹¹⁶

It is interesting to note that the Lutheran publication organs in the United States of America, both of German and Scandinavian provenance, were clearly inclined to defend the National Socialist state against attacks from the “liberal press” in the United States.¹¹⁷ By contrast, reactions from Roman Catholic quarters remained the exception.¹¹⁸

At the University of Halle-Wittenberg, in the context of the Reformation celebrations that were held annually between 1927 and 1941, and under the terms of the Weimar Republic, Luther Renaissance and Max Weber’s theses of economic theory are reflected, whereas a prevalence of German Christian mediation attempts during the first years of National Socialist rule and anti-Roman Catholic and nationalist tones in the later years can be discerned.¹¹⁹ A similar exploitation of Luther was also involved in the name-giving for the University of Hal-

le-Wittenberg, not least against the background of the “Dehn case;”¹²⁰ in this instance Luther’s name was used “for a German-national, ethnic, anti-Western and at the same time anti-democratic tradition.”¹²¹ This also includes an attempt by the Church to legitimise the National Socialist accession to power with a comparison of “Luther and Hitler,”¹²² or, up to the annexations of 1938/39 and the start of World War II, to utilise the Reformer as the “crown witness for Hitler.”¹²³

The Luther image in the literature of the twentieth century

It would be highly interesting to trace the Luther-image in the German literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹²⁴ Suffice it to say that Nietzsche’s Luther image is ambivalent; on the one hand the Reformer from Wittenberg appears as a “representative of German culture,”¹²⁵ but on the other as a “reactionary revolutionary,”¹²⁶ since the Reformation has apparently “destroyed the precious elements of the Renaissance.”¹²⁷ In later years Nietzsche rejects Martin Luther as being a “dogmatist who does not share a scepticism in finding the truth, something that is of crucial value to Nietzsche;”¹²⁸ it is merely Luther’s achievement in translating the Bible that he still regards as being exemplary.¹²⁹ A long-term effect of this approach

Christen, *KZG/CCH* 26 (2013), 272–288.

¹¹⁴ Nicola Willenberg: »Mit Luther und Hitler für Glauben und Volkstum«. *Der Luthertag 1933 in Dresden*, in: Tanner / Ulrich, *Spurenlese. Reformationsvergegenwärtigung als Standortbestimmung* (FN 64), 195–237.

¹¹⁵ Hartmut Lehmann: »Muss Luther nach Nürnberg?«. *Deutsche Schuld im Lichte der Lutherliteratur 1946/47*, in: id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 176–188.

¹¹⁶ Gotthard Jasper: *Vom christlichen Obrigkeitsstaat zur säkularen Demokratie. Von den Schwierigkeiten der deutschen Lutheraner im 20. Jahrhundert, die Politik zu verstehen*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (FN 5), 379–396, here 383, 385f.

¹¹⁷ Robert P. Ericksen: *The Luther Anniversary and the Year 1933 in the Mirror of U.S. Church Press Reports*, *KZG/CCH* 26 (2013), 319–334.

¹¹⁸ Josef Pilvousek: *Katholische Reaktionen auf das Luthergedenken im Jahr der Machtergreifung*, *KZG/CCH* 26 (2013), 335–346.

¹¹⁹ Silvio Reichelt: *Martin Luther als evangelischer Schutzheiliger. Die Reformationsfeiern an der Universität Halle-Wittenberg 1927–1941, Teil 1: Die Feiern*, in: Tanner / Ulrich, *Spurenlese. Reformationsvergegenwärtigung als Standortbestimmung* (FN 64), 145–169; Sebastian Kranich: *Martin Luther als evangelischer Schutzheiliger. Die Reformationsfeiern an der Universität Halle-Wittenberg 1927–1941, Teil 2: Redner und Reden*, *ibid.*, 171–193.

¹²⁰ Raimund Hoenen: *Günther Dehn (1882–1970)–Außenseiter für Frieden*, in: Arno Sames (Ed.): *500 Jahre Theologie in Wittenberg und Halle 1502–2002. Beiträge aus der Theologischen Fakultät der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg zum Universitätsjubiläum 2002*. *LStRLO* 6, Leipzig 2003, 161–180.

¹²¹ Friedemann Stengel: *Die Universität und ihr Name–Martin Luther. Kontexte der Verleihung 1933*, *KZG/CCH* 26 (2013), 289–318; this is being disputed by Reichelt, *Martin Luther als evangelischer Schutzheiliger* 1 (FN 119), 154–158, 168.

¹²² Hans Preuß: *Luther und Hitler*. And, as covermount: *Luther und die Frauen, Erlangen 1933*; on that point Hartmut Lehmann: *Hans Preuß 1933 über “Luther und Hitler”*, in: *ibid.*: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 151–159.

¹²³ Hartmut Lehmann: *Luther als Kronzeuge für Hitler. Anmerkungen zu Otto Scheels Lutherverständnis in den 1930er Jahren*, in: *ibid.*: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 160–175; cf. the critical analysis of the hypothesis that Luther paved the way for Hitler, see Uwe Siemon-Netto: *Luther Als Wegbereiter Hitlers? Zur Geschichte eines Vorurteils*, Gütersloh 1993.

¹²⁴ Cf. Kurt Aland: *Martin Luther in der modernen Literatur*, Witten 1973; Hartmut Laufhütte: *Martin Luther in der deutschen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: van Ingen / Labrousse, *Luther–Bilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (FN 69), 27–57.

¹²⁵ Elrud Ibsch: *Nietzsches Luther–Bild*, in: van Ingen / Labrousse, *Luther–Bilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (FN 69), 79–90, here 80.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

can be detected, amongst others, in the work of Stefan Zweig and Thomas Mann. Where Zweig is concerned, Luther is the “fantastic man of action,” totally caught up in his black-and-white thinking, almost a “werewolf, possessed by a tremendous fury, uninhibited by deference or righteousness,”¹³⁰ a kind of “blood and soil Luther”¹³¹ as it were. According to Zweig’s self-identification, Luther’s antitype is Erasmus, who is a “representative of the intellectual in an era characterised by mass hysteria,” by comparison Martin Luther is being attributed with downright “Hitlerian” traits.¹³² With regard to Thomas Mann, who rejects this antithesis, the Luther-image does however remain an ambivalent one; he is the embodiment of Mann’s beloved “German” after all, the progenitor of “German inwardness”¹³³ towards which he makes a virtual “declaration of love,” while he does precisely not discern a (German) alternative in an Erasmus-oriented humanism¹³⁴ even though he does observe, within the “Lutheran” features of German history — albeit not necessarily so — the existence of “the pathogen” that leads to perdition,¹³⁵ that is to say misdirected special gifts, since a connection from Luther to the western European idea of freedom in the political sense could not be attained.¹³⁶ A more radical stance is taken by the critics of the twentieth century who consider Martin Luther to be the forerunner of German fascism, like Erich Fromm for instance, who misconstrues Luther’s concept of faith as having “much in common ... with the principle of complete submission by the individual to state and ‘Führer.’”¹³⁷

From a Marxist point of view¹³⁸ the Reformer was, for an extended period of time, construed as being a “prince’s servant” who had betrayed the peasants and their revolution. Only in the late phase of the GDR and in the context of the “heritage” discussion was Luther reintegrated as

one of the “traditions that shaped national identity;” in doing so, Luther’s Reformation was viewed as a “platform” which allowed the “pre-Reformation popular movements, insurrections and conspiracies ... to consolidate into a broad movement.”¹³⁹ The “popular movement” did, however, take on a life of its own, even though “Luther’s Reformation” had laid the “key foundations.”¹⁴⁰ Thus the Reformation becomes the catalyst for an “epoch of early bourgeois revolution”¹⁴¹ with a definite religious base; a “new understanding of the relationship between God and Man”¹⁴² was said to have “initiated a progressive development.”¹⁴³ In view of the Marxist Luther-image one can thus justifiably speak of a “dual, grotesque exploitation of Luther.”¹⁴⁴

Luther jubilees during the second half of the twentieth century

A distinct feature of the 450th Reformation Jubilee in 1967 was that it “reclaimed and reinterpreted Luther as heritage,” admittedly without “political actualisation” for the most part and at least where “the voices of the Church in East and West” were concerned, and can, at the same time, be regarded “as a huge media event,” as an “ecumenical reminder due to the Catholic discovery of Luther” and “as a German-German jubilee” and even as “celebrations of church and state in the GDR.”¹⁴⁵ A genuine encounter between church historians and Marxist historical research did however not take place.¹⁴⁶ The latter did, however, begin to appreciate the “global significance” of Luther’s Reformation, which constituted “an important contribution by the German people towards the history of Europe and mankind.”¹⁴⁷ The SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) and churches in the GDR “pursued

¹³⁰ Ferdinand van Ingen: *Die Erasmus–Luther–Konstellation bei Stefan Zweig und Thomas Mann*, in: van Ingen / Labrousse, *Luther–Bilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (FN 69), 91–118, here 101.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, FN 130, 99.

¹³² *Ibid.*, FN 69, 95; cf. Lehmann, *Luther Statues* (see Comment XX), 100–109.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, FN 69, 105.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, FN 69, 108.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, FN 69, 106.

¹³⁶ Eberhard Mannack: *Luther–ein „geistiger Ahnherr Hitlers“?*, in: van Ingen / Labrousse, *Luther–Bilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (FN 69), 167–185, here 170.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, FN 135, 179.

¹³⁸ Hartmut Lehmann: *Das marxistische Lutherbild von Engels bis Honecker*, in: id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 257–270

¹³⁹ Adolf Laube: *Martin Luthers Reformation–Teil der deutschen frühbürgerlichen Revolution*, in: *Martin Luther und seine Zeit, Sonderausstellung des Museums für Deutsche Geschichte / Martin Luther Ehrung 1983 der DDR*, 2–5, here 4.

¹⁴⁰ Laube, *Martin Luthers Reformation* (see Comment XX), 5.

¹⁴¹ Cornelis Augustijn: *Das marxistische Lutherbild 1983*, in: van Ingen / Labrousse, *Luther–Bilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (wie Anm. XX), 223–23238, here 225.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 227.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 268; cf. Hartmut Lehmann: *Das marxistische Lutherbild von Engels bis Honecker*, in: Peer Schmidt: (ed.) *Luther zwischen den Kulturen Zeitgenossenschaft – Weltwirkung*, Göttingen 2004, 501–514.

¹⁴⁵ Gerhard Ringshausen: *Das 450. Reformationsjubiläum in West und Ost*, *KZG/CCH* 26 (2013), 373–399, here 373.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 385.

¹⁴⁷ Quotations cf. *Ibid.*, 450. 394.

opposing, sometimes conflicting objectives concerning the Reformation Jubilee;¹⁴⁸ the same held true for “interpretational sovereignty” and “organisational sovereignty” with regards to events, particularly in view of the fact that the commemoration of the Reformation was approximately at the same time as the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution.¹⁴⁹ From a theological point of view the failure to reformulate the theological core message of justification during the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation cast a shadow on the festivities.¹⁵⁰ The theme of renewal pervaded many comments, reflecting the respective mood, especially in sections of West German society on the eve of 1968.¹⁵¹ For the Federal Republic of Germany (before 1989) it can be argued that, after World War II, an endorsement of democratic principles prevailed amongst Lutheran theologians, too, who had knowledge of the boundaries of the state, the significance of the separation of powers and the political responsibility of Christians, even though they were still hoping for a “re-Christianisation of German society” during the first post-war years.¹⁵² It was only later, with the paradigm of the Church’s “public contract,” that a change in position towards society and state took place.¹⁵³ As far as the GDR was concerned, system-critical concepts and those that transcended practical politics wrestled with one another in defining the Church’s position, to the point of the “repudiation of the institutional self-interest of the Church.”¹⁵⁴

Special attention should be awarded to the fact that the Roman Catholic public and media studies now also began to pay tribute to Luther, something which would admittedly have been “inconceivable without the (Second Vatican) Council.”¹⁵⁵ Thus Hubert Jedin was able to

“acknowledge all that is great in Luther,” even though he still considered the Reformation of the sixteenth century to be “illegitimate.”¹⁵⁶ Others, however, sought to understand him as a Reform Catholic¹⁵⁷ and, even more so in the light of the (Second Vatican) Council, to “closely align the desire for renewal with efforts towards church unity.”¹⁵⁸ Thus, within the context of Martin Luther’s 500th birthday, this led to first beginnings towards an “ecumenical interpretation” of the Reformer from Wittenberg: Luther was “an immensely strong impetus to be experienced, and ecumenical stagnation to be overcome in key areas.”¹⁵⁹ The fundamental confession of the Lutheran Reformation, the *Confessio Augustana* from 1530, had previously been acknowledged in Lutheran/Roman Catholic discussions as being the “confession of the one faith”¹⁶⁰ and, as a consequence, Pope John Paul II spoke of a “consensus in central fundamental truths.”¹⁶¹ Peter Manns even dared to refer to Luther as a “father in faith” even though he played Luther off against Melancthon and the confessionalisation in his wake.¹⁶² This is merely an indication of the fact that it was not only the Roman Catholics who had changed their view on Martin Luther, at least amongst a section of those who had studied theology,¹⁶³ but rather that, as documented by the study *Lehrverurteilungen–kirchentrennend* (The Condemnations of the Reformation Era, Do They Still Divide?),¹⁶⁴ an entirely “new hermeneutic method: differentiated consensus” emerged.¹⁶⁵

On the Protestant side, the Luther celebrations of 1983

¹⁴⁸ Wolfgang Flügel: *Konkurrenz um Reformation und Luther. Die Konfessionsjubiläen der Kirchen und der SED in den Jahren 1967 und 1983*, in: Tanner / Ulrich, *Spurenlese. Reformationsvergegenwärtigung als Standortbestimmung* (FN 64), 239–285, here 249.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 257f.

¹⁵⁰ Ringshausen, (FN 145), 380–382.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 385–389.

¹⁵² Jasper, *Vom christlichen Obrigkeitsstaat zur säkularen Demokratie* (FN 116), 388–393.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 394f.

¹⁵⁴ Detlef Pollack / Hedwig Richter: *Widerstand und Ergebung. Theologische Wurzeln politischer Standortbestimmungen in den evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (see Comment XX), 397–427, here 406.

¹⁵⁵ Barbara Henze: *Ohne das Konzil undenkbar. Das Reformationsgedenken 1967 in den katholischen Bistumszeitungen*, *KZG/CCH* 26 (2013), 347–372.

¹⁵⁶ Quotations see *ibid.*, 353f.

¹⁵⁷ Lehmann, *Martin Luther und der 31. Oktober 1517* (FN 87), 30–32.

¹⁵⁸ Henze, *Ohne das Konzil nicht denkbar* (FN 155), 371, cf. 358.

¹⁵⁹ Peter Manns / Harding Meyer: *Ökumenische Erschließung Martin Luthers. Referate und Ergebnisse einer internationalen Theologenkonsultation*, Paderborn / Frankfurt/M., 1983, here 13.

¹⁶⁰ Harding Meyer and Heinz Schütte (Hg.): *Confessio Augustana. Bekenntnis des einen Glaubens. Gemeinsame Untersuchung lutherischer und katholischer Theologen*, Paderborn–Frankfurt/M. 1980.

¹⁶¹ Quotation see Johanna Rahner: *Luther ’83 und die Folgen. Eine römisch-katholische Perspektive*, *KZG/CCH* 26 (2013), 400–411.

¹⁶² Peter Manns: *Martin Luther, Ketzer oder Vater im Glauben?* Hannover 1980; Peter Manns (text); Helmuth Nils Loose (photos): *Martin Luther, Freiburg im Breisgau / Basel / Wien / Lahr 1982*, 219; Peter Manns: *Martin Luther: der unbekannte Reformator; ein Lebensbild. Freiburg im Breisgau / Basel / Wien 1985*; cf. Thönnissen, *Katholische Perspektiven* (FN 13), 437–446, here 442.

¹⁶³ Cf. Otto Hermann Pesch: *Martin Luther im katholischen Urteil. Zwischen Verteufelung und dankbarer Aneignung*, in: *Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation* (FN 5), 449–483.

¹⁶⁴ Karl Lehmann / Wolfhart Pannenberg: *Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend?*, vol. 1: *Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute*, Freiburg 1988.

¹⁶⁵ Johanna Rahner: *Luther ’83 und die Folgen* (FN 161), 404.

were characterised by an all-Protestant, even all-German state of mind; the relatively high attention afforded by the political sector to ecclesiastical processes in East and West and the cooperation of state- and church representatives is remarkable. In a sense the churches acted as a “Protestant fellowship of remembrance.”¹⁶⁶ This occurred, despite efforts by the SED to prevent schedule conflicts of party and Church events,¹⁶⁷ in some cases also against the “historical-political” intentions of the GDR leadership, which busied itself with an “almost martial exploitation of Luther in the domestic and foreign policy objectives of the GDR ... in order to gain international recognition for the GDR, especially in the countries of the Western world;”¹⁶⁸ these ambitions did however, for the most part, end in “failure,” since even the transformed image of the Reformation was accepted neither by the people of the GDR nor by the SED cadres.¹⁶⁹ The churches in the GDR, on the other hand, strove for “establishing identity and strengthening the faith of the congregations;” they were obliged, however, to endure the “balancing act between a battle for self-preservation against the usurpation attempts by the State party ... and a struggle for their own authenticity.”¹⁷⁰ They did not always succeed, seeing that there existed an “increasing willingness to adapt on behalf of the Evangelical Churches” in view of the power structures and decline in membership that seemed to suggest this, and seeing that Karl Barth — admittedly not necessarily a Lutheran — had, with his “Letter to a Pastor in the GDR” in 1958, bestowed a virtually theological consecration on the minority situation.¹⁷¹ This was accompanied by a “socialism-related” positioning within many member churches of the World Council of Churches,¹⁷² which favoured a climate in which the churches in the Soviet domain were able to function with a certain latitude.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁶ Claudia Lepp: *Luther in »besonderer Gemeinschaft«. Die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, der Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR und das Lutherjubiläum 1983*, KZG 26 (2013), 412–421.

¹⁶⁷ Flügel, *Konkurrenz um Reformation und Luther* (FN 148), 267.

¹⁶⁸ Hartmut Lehmann: *Zur Entstehung der 15 Thesen über Martin Luther in der DDR im Jahre 1983*, in: id.: *Luthergedächtnis 1817–2017* (FN 10), 232–256; id.: *The Rehabilitation of Martin Luther in the GDR; or, why Thomas Müntzer failed to stabilize the moorings of socialist ideology*, *ibid.*, 271–280.

¹⁶⁹ Flügel, *Konkurrenz um Reformation und Luther* (FN 148), 284.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 268, 275.

¹⁷¹ Pollack and Richter: *Widerstand und Ergebung* (FN 154), 418f.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 423.

¹⁷³ Robert F. Goeckel: *Political and Institutional Issues of Lutheran churches in Communist Systems. The Legacy of Luther with Particular Reference to the GDR Churches*, in: *reformationsgeschichtliche Sozietät*

What is Lutheranism’s viability in the light of modern issues?

The “*Morphologie des Luthertums*” by Werner Elert¹⁷⁴ probably constitutes the most consequential — if not entirely unproblematic — attempt to “advance from the periphery of impact to a theological approach to church organisations” in an interconfessional manner; he executes this by making a fundamental “distinction between dynamis and form.”¹⁷⁵ For Elert, Lutheranism is not “a once-configured and concluded variable, but rather one that finds itself living out its history.”¹⁷⁶ Interdenominationally, the “confessional dynamis” is in “independent competition with ‘extracanonical motifs’” which, “in the course of enlightenment,” is threatened by the “loss of the Evangelical approach.”¹⁷⁷ He goes on to say that it was only in the nineteenth century that a “Lutheran restoration” occurred, inducing the “Evangelical approach” to “generate entirely new forms of expression,” right up to “sociology and ideology.”¹⁷⁸ Notger Slenczka has concluded that, “for Elert, it is not only a question of depicting Lutheranism’s dogmatic, Lutheran, ideological and social forms of realisation emanating from its religious centre, but rather that this depiction is shared by an interest to reach the Modern Era by means of a positive determination of the relationship between Lutheranism and its centre, the Doctrine of Justification, in such a way that this centre itself becomes an entity of critique of the Modern Era.”¹⁷⁹ According to Elert, an “indissoluble fusion of the historical form of Lutheranism with German culture” initially occurs, but also “with other nationalities,”¹⁸⁰ as he tries to demonstrate with Hungary,¹⁸¹ the Slavonic¹⁸² and Baltic¹⁸³ peoples,

der Martin–Luther–Universität Halle–Wittenberg: Spurenlese. Kulturelle Wirkungen der Reformation (FN 5) 429–445.

¹⁷⁴ Werner Elert: *Morphologie des Luthertums. Theologie und Weltanschauung des Luthertums hauptsächlich im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*; München 1931 (19653); vol. 2: *Soziallehren u. Sozialwirkungen des Luthertums*; München 1932 (19653); [English: *The Shaping of Lutheranism*]; the quotations follow the German edition.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, V.

¹⁷⁶ Notger Slenczka, *Selbstkonstitution und Gotteserfahrung. W. Elerts Deutung der neuzeitlichen Subjektivität im Kontext der Erlanger Theologie. Studien zur Erlanger Theologie II*, Göttingen 1999, 148.

¹⁷⁷ Slenczka, Elert, 149.

¹⁷⁸ Elert, in Slenczka, Elert, 150.

¹⁷⁹ Slenczka, Elert, 153.

¹⁸⁰ Elert, *Morphologie 2* (FN 174), 131.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 169–189.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 190–208.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 208–214.

Finland¹⁸⁴ and the Scandinavian nations.¹⁸⁵ In this context even the “development of German Enlightenment towards German Idealism via the German national literature” should be seen as “a phase in the history of Lutheranism. It is the history of its secularisation.”¹⁸⁶ This point of view culminates in the statement that “Germany’s intellectual history is, on the whole, a long-distance effect of Lutheranism.”¹⁸⁷ According to Elert, the Doctrine of Justification thus fulfils a “generative function ... for the worldview of Lutheranism”¹⁸⁸ in which the “facts” of what Elert calls “natural knowledge of the world are [sc. not] negated,”¹⁸⁹ but in such a way that “natural world orientation is affirmed by objecting to it”¹⁹⁰ seeing that it is defined as being the “antithesis of the God-experience of the Gospel.”¹⁹¹ An inconsistency in Elert’s concept can thereby neither be overlooked nor cleared up, namely that “the construal of mankind’s natural situation within the inescapable antithetics of the ... claim to liberty and heteronomy as an experience of God is only made possible by the Gospel.”¹⁹² This, according to Elert, also applies to the field of social ethics, seeing that the Church, “in being faithful to its mission, proclaims the Gospel in antithesis to all worldliness and all ethical contentedness.”¹⁹³

In 1934 and 1936, and in clear contrast to his colleague in Erlangen, Hermann Sasse cautioned against three misconstructions of the Lutheran Reformation:¹⁹⁴ “Lutheranism itself ... does not respond (sc. to the question: What is Lutheran?). It is unable to give an answer to those who inquire after its essence; it is a mute concept. It is a different matter, however, if we inquire after the Lutheran Church. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is not an idea, it is a reality. It is not mute, it speaks.”¹⁹⁵ He further states that the heroic misconstruance culminates in hero-worship and apotheosis of Luther, which does indeed extend right into the Luther Renaissance and during which a personalistic view of the Reforma-

tion prevails. The person of Luther does, however, recede into the background soon after the first generation, only to be heroically exaggerated in the nineteenth century as being the “hero from Worms” or “God’s man-at-arms.”¹⁹⁶ According to Goethe, who understood the Reformation to be a liberation and advancement of culture, historical-cultural misunderstanding construes the Reformation as constituting a date of intellectual history in general. Luther on the other hand, according to Sasse, poses an obstacle to the “modern” sense of self.¹⁹⁷ This national misconstruance apparently sees Martin Luther as being the “protest of Nordic man against the piety and the ecclesiastical system of Roman Catholicism” and aims at a German national church, which had arisen during the “Third Reich.” To Sasse this is one of “the most dangerous heterodoxies.”¹⁹⁸ In this respect the Reformation and the theology of Martin Luther are deemed to be universally and ecumenically relevant, even where resistance of his doctrine is concerned. The latter, in the form of the Doctrine of Justification, constituted “the renewal of the Church through rediscovery and renewed proclamation of the pure doctrine of the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.”¹⁹⁹

Notger Slenczka, in his critical reception of Elert and others, has attempted to determine the relationship of “Lutheranism and the Modern Era.” In doing so, he identifies “Justification” as constituting “an imposition on a new understanding of self.” This included “the profiling of this Lutheran understanding of subjectivity against the modern concept of the subject,”²⁰⁰ since it was a matter of nothing less than “a new determination of identity and the subject’s understanding of self.” Slenczka calls this the “modern foreignness of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification;”²⁰¹ the connective according to Slenczka lies “in understanding the subject’s indefensibility pertaining to its prevailing certainty of truth on the one hand, and in embracing and acquiring salvation on the other.”²⁰² Slenczka thereby ascribes enduring validity to “Justification”

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 214–223.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 226–250.

¹⁸⁶ Elert, in Slenczka, Elert (FN 176) 227.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 227.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 244.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 244.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 246.

¹⁹² Ibid., 351.

¹⁹³ Elert, *Morphologie 2* (FN 174), 465.

¹⁹⁴ Hermann Sasse, *Was heißt lutherisch?*, München 1934, 21936.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 31–36.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 36–48.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 49–60, here 49.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 71.

²⁰⁰ Notger Slenczka: *Luthertum und Neuzeit. Bemerkungen zum ambivalenten Verhältnis von Rechtfertigungsglauben und neuzeitlicher Subjektivität*, in: Reinhard Rittner (Ed.): *Was heißt hier lutherisch!, Aktuelle Perspektiven aus Theologie und Kirche*, Hannover 2004, 164–192, here 188.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 190.

²⁰² Ibid., 181.

as being “a purely external declaration of righteousness of man before God that remains external,” in the sense of an “imputative doctrine of reconciliation and justification”²⁰³ but admittedly also, in this interpretation, to the basic difference of the Reformation’s “fundamental insights ... from the Modern Era.”²⁰⁴

In relation and relevance to the modern day generation, and in my assessment, Oswald Bayer’s view of Luther and Lutheran Reformation lends itself to be sketched into this relationship picture that is filled with such tension.²⁰⁵ In his view Luther remains the theologian who, “in the light of his own indigence,” proceeds to “gain open space” from the “inexhaustible abundance of Scripture.”²⁰⁶ The Word of God, consolidated in the assurance of absolution, embarks on a “course of church- and world-history,”²⁰⁷ not without being challenged but ultimately triumphant. For therein lies the presence of God, who looks after us and administers to our needs, so that we are “constituted” in the Word of God.²⁰⁸ God the Holy Spirit has sovereignly bound Himself thereto and, to wit, to “the spoken language and literal Word in the book” of Holy Scripture.²⁰⁹ We are therefore being expounded in our existence, and precisely therein lies the “idiosyncratic passivity of our experience of faith,”²¹⁰ which culminates in the Christ-experience *pro me*: “the communicative Being of Jesus Christ itself, in which the Triune God assigns and gives Himself in the ‘incarnate Word’ with the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, as well as with every sermon that is in accord with these sacraments,”²¹¹ creating an “excentric way of being” for a Christian because the Gospel, as “the second, decisive, conclusive Word of God,” speaks “for me.”²¹² Bayer dodges the subject of freedom in its temporal dimensionality in such a way that he conceives of that which is specifically Christian in the concept of freedom as being the “liberation from the iniquities of the past and the fear of the future;”²¹³ he

presumes a characteristic of modernism to be “the coherent subject that is in control of itself” and that can escalate itself to a “pathos of individuality and omnipotence.”²¹⁴ He identifies “the feeling of a dissipated individuality” as a characteristic of postmodernism, combined with the risk of a “misrecognition and relinquishment of responsibility and accountability.”²¹⁵ He does nonetheless refrain from accusing modernism of an ill-considered identification of subjectivity and self-assuredness, and from hastily accusing postmodernism of “relativistic arbitrariness.”²¹⁶ Ultimately, however, he is of the opinion that “the individualistic antinomism of modernism and postmodernism will, in turn, find a canonical conclusion.”²¹⁷ And “The generally asserted Gospel of Freedom compels a person, due to his innate characteristic, to redeem and actualise it himself.” Thus (post)modern man is “condemned to freedom.”²¹⁸

By contrast, Bayer understands and posits the Gospel from a Lutheran perspective, and strictly as a “categorical gift” for which there exists “no human disposition:” “Gospel means: God speaks for me in the fragmentation of the time and dissipation of identities.”²¹⁹ Christologically formulated this means that only “on the strength of the incarnation of Jesus Christ my identity is reassigned to me,” which I have while existing “within a persistent stranger.” Bayer perceives this to be in fundamental contradiction not only with “modern metaphysics of substance but also with modern metaphysics of subject;” he thereby identifies the “crucial point of contention in the conflict between Reformation theology and modern and postmodern thought.”²²⁰ On the other hand, he considers an attitude whereby “one receives a new — excentric — identity,” which occurs “in faith that is founded on the authoritative Word of the Gospel” to be helpful and salutary.²²¹

²⁰³ Ibid., 183f.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 192.

²⁰⁵ Oswald Bayer: *Martin Luthers Theologie. Eine Vergegenwärtigung*, Tübingen 2004.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 66.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 69.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 77.

²⁰⁹ Quotation *ibid.*, 84.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 150.

²¹¹ Ibid., 151.

²¹² Ibid., 152.

²¹³ Oswald Bayer: *Mit Luther in der Gegenwart. Die diagnostische Kraft*

reformatorischer Theologie, in: Notger Slenczka / Walther Sparr (ed.): *Luthers Erben. Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der reformatorischen Theologie. Festschrift Jörg Baur*, Tübingen 2005, 297–310, here 297.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 299.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 300.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 303.

²¹⁸ Alluding to Jean-Paul Sartre, *ibid.*, 304.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 307.

²²⁰ Ibid., 308.

²²¹ Ibid., 309.

Culturally influential or critical of contemporaneity — an (apparent) alternative?

What fundamental insights can Lutheran theology and Church provide as genuine contribution toward ecumenical Christianity, and how can these insights be communicated to our time?²²² Appertaining to this, absolutely and unconditionally, is the theme of (Christian) freedom, as put back on the agenda by Luther in 1520. Spelled out in the Lutheran way it appears as response to the question as to how I can exist before God, thus constituting the “key question of our existence.”²²³

Christianity is thereby under an obligation to be critical of contemporaneity. The Church and its members can, after all, not escape contemporaneity, neither can it be denied that its members are influenced and imperceptibly governed by “trends” and tendencies of a world and society that is not only “all around them,” but in which they live themselves and that consequently also has an effect on their being. And even in the rejection of contemporary developments where the Church or its individual members, based on their Christian responsibility, are of the opinion that they ought to be met with disapproval, such positioning proves itself to be contemporary in nature.

For the Church to manage its contemporaneity in a critical manner therefore means, first and foremost, that it becomes aware of its own interwovenness with the times in which it exists. It will therefore first take to heart that which it voices in a critical manner to the world outside itself, if it wants to ensure the credibility of its declaration and message. Thus the Church itself will always have to answer to the question as to whether and to what extent the Church, together with its members, holds itself to those divine standards that it feels compelled to address. And it will be obliged to confess and admit to many a transgression against divine standards, both on behalf of its members and also of itself in its aggregate. But it is exactly this stance that will not affect its credibility but rather strengthen it, provided that it is spoken, not from a position of hubris, but from one of befitting humility and informed by the knowledge of its own failings with regards to the divine standard when it speaks from its

conscience in this manner. In that case a confession of guilt by the Church does have its place and is meaningful.

The insight of an unchurched contemporary has possibly been obstructed so that he, when he seeks the source of freedom, not in God but within himself — as do all those for whom God does not constitute the origin of their freedom, is condemned to actualise it in a frantic and pathological manner. However, in Man’s attempt to assert his freedom he simultaneously forfeits it. Into and against this situation of what is still “modern” man, the call of God and the Church goes out towards freedom,²²⁴ but what freedom?²²⁵

An ecclesiastical “canonical” Luther

In this context it should be noted²²⁶ that, where the authors of the Lutheran Confessions are concerned, Luther is regarded as being the authoritative, hermeneutic frame of reference for the proper understanding of especially the *Confessio Augustana*.²²⁷ They explicitly follow this Luther in determining the relation between the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures and the subordinate Confessions of the early Church as well as the Lutheran Reformation, so that Holy Scripture alone is the “one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated.”²²⁸ Holy Scripture is and remains exclusively canon, whereas the Confessions take up a witness function,²²⁹ admittedly with the claim to truth.²³⁰ By contrast, the theologians of one’s own camp are at least on principle not denied the capability to err.²³¹ During the second half of the sixteenth century and with this “canonisation” of Luther, Melancthon’s scholars, who understood themselves to be Luther’s heirs, have attempted to reconstitute and safeguard the tension-filled unity and polar harmony of Lutheran theology and Church.

²²⁴ Oswald Bayer: *Freiheit als Antwort. Zur theologischen Ethik*, Tübingen 1995, 89–93.

²²⁵ Martin Brecht: *Die Rezeption von Luthers Freiheitsverständnis in der frühen Neuzeit*, LJ 62 (1995), 121–151.

²²⁶ Cf. Werner Klän: *Was machen wir aus Luther?*, in: Karl-Hermann Kandler (Ed.): *Das Bekenntnis der Kirche zu Fragen von Ehe und Kirche. Die Vorträge der lutherischen Tage 2009 und 2010*, (= *Lutherisch glauben* 6), Neuendettelsau 2011, 90–117, esp. 113–117.

²²⁷ FC SD VII 41, in Robert Kolb / Timothy Wengert (ed.): *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000, 601.

²²⁸ FC SD, Binding Summary 3, Kolb/Wengert, 527.

FC SD, Binding Summary 12, Kolb/Wengert, 529.

²³⁰ FC SD, Binding Summary, Ibid.

²³¹ FC SD, Antitheses 19, Kolb/Wengert, 529–531.

²²² Joachim Track: *Die lutherische Stimme in der Ökumene*, in: Reinhard Rittner (ed.): *Was heißt hier Lutherisch!. Aktuelle Perspektiven aus Theologie und kirche*, Hannover 2004, 234–275.

²²³ Michael Beintker: *Freiheit aus Glauben – Freiheitssuche des Menschen von heute. Gemeinsamkeiten und Konflikte*, in: *ibid.*: *Rechtfertigung in der neuzeitlichen Lebenswelt. Theologische Erkundungen*, Tübingen 1998, 66–79.

For the Lutheran Church, it is that Luther who became instrumental, with his catechisms, in presenting the Christian community with an introduction to a life guided by God.²³² He thereby points out that Holy Baptism is God's salutary self-communication, which brings to us "God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Ghost with his gifts;"²³³ just as the Sacrament of the Altar, which he views as "this great a treasure, which is daily administered and distributed among Christians," provides the new human being with constant fortification in his battle against Satan, death and sin;²³⁴ and just as the Lord's Prayer invokes God's irrefutable willingness for mercy in just such a battle, a battle that becomes inevitable for a Christian precisely by partaking in God's self-giving and self-revelation, a Christian who, in the battle of the Gospel for the Gospel, takes on his enemies.²³⁵ Luther is perceived and presumed as being the one who construes the Credo for us, thereby gratefully accepting "what God does for us and gives to us"²³⁶ and the implementation thereof in the reality of Christ's liberation act, since Christ "has brought us from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and keeps us there."²³⁷ It is that Luther who substantiates the identity of Christianity and Church as being Trinitarian, and who identifies the Christocentric aspect as being a distinctive feature of Christendom and Christianity, compared to all other forms of religiosity (and a-religiosity) that are not based on Christ or inspired by the Holy Spirit.²³⁸ It is the Luther who is able to discern Law and Gospel as being God's immanent manner of speaking and acting²³⁹ in which the gradient from the "extrinsic" to the "actual" work of God proceeds in such a way²⁴⁰ that the Church must never be found wanting in proclaiming the declaration of forgiveness and the salvation in Christ, seeing that it is a matter of "comforting and consoling" those that are frightened and "fainthearted."²⁴¹

²³² Cf. Werner Klän: *Anleitung zu einem Gott-gelenkten Leben. Die innere Systematik der Katechismen Luthers*, LuThK 29 (2005), 18–35.

²³³ Large Catechism, Holy Baptism 41, Kolb/Wengert, 461.

²³⁴ Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar 39, Kolb/Wengert, 470f.

²³⁵ Large Catechism, The Lord's Prayer, Third Petition, 65–67, Kolb/Wengert, 448f.; Fourth Petition, 80–81, Kolb/Wengert, 451.

²³⁶ Large Catechism, The Creed, Third Article 67, Kolb/Wengert, 440.

²³⁷ Large Catechism, The Creed, Third Article 31, Kolb/Wengert, 434.

²³⁸ Large Catechism, The Creed, Third Article 66, Kolb/Wengert, 440.

²³⁹ Cf. the citations from Luther's exegesis of Luke 5, 1–11 in the summer homily of 1544, in FC SD V 12, Kolb/Wengert, 583f.

²⁴⁰ FC SD V 23, Kolb/Wengert, 585f..

²⁴¹ FC SD V, 12, Kolb/Wengert, 584.

It is precisely this Luther who delineates God's Commandments in the context of faith as a directive for everyone to make them "a matter of daily practice in all circumstances, in all activities and dealings"²⁴² and to serve as an instruction manual for a Christian life of human sympathy that is pleasing to God. It is this Luther who places the Gospel in its forms of implementation, proclamation, baptism, Eucharist and confessional penitence as the "third sacrament,"²⁴³ at the centre of an encompassing Christian understanding of a worship service.²⁴⁴ It is the Luther for whom the wording of the Sacrament's Words of Institution in their literal sense was so immovably fixed that he could not back down in this regard whenever the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the celebratory worship of precisely this testament of Christ was called into question²⁴⁵ and is therefore being invoked against the Crypto-Philippistic deviances of the second-generation theologians in Wittenberg.²⁴⁶ It is the Luther who, with his Christological deliberations on the conceptual conceivability of the universal presence of the human nature in Christ even after Easter and Ascension, as well as on the promised sacramental presence of Christ sacrificed, has played a crucial role in the formation of the Lutheran profile concerning Eucharistic doctrine and Christology during the internal reformatory disputes of the sixteenth century.²⁴⁷ It is the Luther who, by the differentiation of the two realms,²⁴⁸ the release of secularism from clerical paternalism, as well as the theological facilitation of the differentiation between "penultimate" and "ultimate" (D. Bonhoeffer), thereby paving the way for the separation of Church and State (even if the Reformation churches in the Reich existed as state churches for centuries); yet without ever having relinquished God's reign of power over all ages, nations, people and spheres of life.²⁴⁹ It is the Luther who urged the Christian community of solidarity to bear in mind that we "must all indeed help us

²⁴² Large Catechism, 332, Kolb/Wengert, 431.

²⁴³ Large Catechism, Holy Baptism 74, Kolb/Wengert, 465.

²⁴⁴ Smalcald Articles III, 4, Concerning the Gospel, Kolb/Wengert, 319.

²⁴⁵ Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar, 8–14, Kolb/Wengert, 467f.

²⁴⁶ Cf. e.g. FC SD VIII 41–43, Kolb/Wengert, 623f..

²⁴⁷ Cf. the citations from Luther, Large Confession concerning the Holy Supper (1528) in FC SD VII 92–103, Kolb/Wengert, 609f.

²⁴⁸ Large Catechism, Fourth Commandment, 150ff; 158ff, Kolb/Wengert, 407f.

²⁴⁹ Large Catechism, First Commandment 26, Kolb/Wengert, 389; Large Catechism, The Lord's Prayer, Fourth Petition 76–79, Kolb/Wengert, 451.

to believe, to love, to pray, and to fight against the devil,”²⁵⁰ meaning the elementary and fundamental day-to-day life of a Christian existence, advising us to engage in the life-long practice of being a Christian.

Would it not be prudent to place the emphasis — also ecumenically — in such a way that the various churches try to call people back into the fellowship that God grants with Himself and, in doing so, into the freedom that God bestows on those that believe? In this sense the biblical-reformatory Doctrine of Justification is at the same time “the doctrine of Christian freedom” and as such the “chief article of the Gospel,” the preservation of which is paramount.²⁵¹ In the context of the reality and effectiveness of the Gospel, the believers subsequently live in a liberated self-circumscribed environment, albeit by means of the Will of God, the “law.”²⁵² In this sense, human freedom in the context of Christian faith and thus Church proclamation means response,²⁵³ the grateful response of the human being who has been liberated towards freedom by God Himself through the sacrificial, death-defying commitment of His Son (Gal. 5:1). The call to return to God, the call to responsibility before God that it is the duty of a Christian to convey is indeed nothing but the call to freedom, the freedom of the children of God.

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²⁵⁰ Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar, 87, Kolb/Wengert, 476.

²⁵¹ “For it is necessary to retain the teaching of Christian freedom in the churches ... It is necessary to retain the chief article of the Gospel / *Necesse est enim in ecclesiis retineri doctrinam de libertate christiana ... Necesse est retineri praecipuum evangelii locum*” (AC XXVIII 51f., Kolb/Wengert 99).

²⁵² In this context Peters speaks of the “breathing space of Christ’s everlasting grace” cf. Albrecht Peters, *Gesetz und Evangelium* (= HST 2). Gütersloh 1981, 1994², 54.

²⁵³ Bayer, *Freiheit als Antwort* (FN 224), 74.

As Lutherans, we have a history that dates back to Wittenberg and long before; as preachers, teachers and evangelists, we are called to bear witness in the present.

DECLINE IN AMERICAN LUTHERANISM: A STUDY

by James Arne Nestigen

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for the delightful invitation and the welcome that has gone along with it. It is a joy to actually be in Wittenberg.

Before beginning, I would like to make a couple of comments about my method. There are wide spread perceptions of a decline in American Lutheranism. But perception isn't necessarily reality. The question is how to measure or document the losses.

When I was working on my doctoral dissertation some years ago, I became convinced that the health of the Church could be measured by its use of the Book of Romans. Paul's letter has driven several major reforms, such as the Lutheran. In times of decline, his letter disappears into the background. So between 1225 and 1275, the high medieval reform, there were five or six major commentaries on Romans, including that of Thomas Aquinas. Between 1275 and 1450, there was one and that was derivative, a collection of the comments of the fathers.

Evaluating the vitality of American Lutheranism, instead of using Romans, I am going to look at the way the churches have treated Luther. The Confessions have a prior authority; Luther's authority is less formal, giving a wider range of possibility. He has enough standing to demand a reading by Lutherans, but subscription to Luther's theology is not formally required. Consequently, there is a little more range of interpretation.

Secondly, like Hermann Sasse, I believe that the Church's good health requires a balance between the past and the present. As Lutherans, we have a history that dates back to Wittenberg and long before; as preachers, teachers and evangelists, we are called to bear witness in the present. This sets up a dialectic in which fidelity to our heritage expresses itself in the willingness to engage present cultural challenges.

The melting pot

From the beginning of trans-Atlantic migration, as Europeans began settling in North America, the Christian Church has faced a particular challenge. In Europe, whether Roman Catholic, Protestant or even radical or left wing, the Church had been able to rely on the coercive power of the State. As Sidney Earl Mead¹ pointed out in

a classic essay some years ago, conditions in America undermined the use of coercion, forcing the Church to rely on persuasion. The frontier was always close enough to hand so that dissenters faced with coercion simply moved, evading attempts to silence them. The disestablishment clause of the American Constitution, which prohibits the use of legal coercion to maintain the Church, simply ratified the reality geography had imposed.

Adapting to this new circumstance, the Church was forced to market itself, developing appeals that would encourage voluntary association, the condition of membership. Already in the early eighteenth century, preachers such as Jonathan Edwards — a strict Calvinist — were promoting awakenings, vivid styles of preaching and other strategies that sought to move hearers to an emotional pitch in which they would make commitments to the congregations. George Whitfield, one of the great Methodist preachers of this new style, stopped in Philadelphia and visited with Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who had been sent from Halle to minister to Lutheran immigrants to the new land. The Great Awakening, as it came to be called, swept across the eastern third of the country, originally in the eighteenth, then again in the early nineteenth century. Not being able to rely on the

The ELCA's problem has been its left wing; Missouri's challenge has come from its right, which pounces on suggestions of variance as proof positive of corruption, to be dealt with coercively, with tar and feathers.

¹ Sidney Earl Mead, *The Lively Experiment* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

State to perpetuate itself, the Church used the awakenings to fill its pews. In the process, it developed a peculiarly American structure, the denomination, to organize and affect its mission, relying on revivalism to stir people to commitment.

The Calvinists were the first to give evidence of the impact of this shift. The early Calvinists arrived with vivid memories of the Synod of Dort in 1618-19, which had been convened in the Netherlands to deal with Arminianism, a movement that emphasized the role of the human will in conversion. The new American situation, promoting free association as a basis for membership, shifted the emphasis back in the direction that Dort had just repudiated. Free assent, a decision for Jesus, became the hallmark of awakened faith. Calvinists broke into conflict, the Old Lights seeking to maintain historic characteristics of their faith; the New Lights, favoring the methods of the awakenings, sought to give more credit to the will.

Lutheran immigrants faced the same challenge that the Calvinists had encountered before them, the forces of the American melting pot. It is a loose sociological structure developed over the years to temper ethnic, political and theological differences among the new arrivals, mitigating potential conflicts by softening the edges, moving traditions toward a more acceptable middle. Doctrines such as predestination and the bondage of the will, for example, have sharp theological elbows, generating conflicts with a religiosity shaped by free association. The real presence of Christ in the Sacrament was also found provocative. The corrosive forces of the melting pot cooked down the differences. So Lutherans who had adapted to American public life, such as Samuel Simon Schmucker of Gettysburg Seminary, proposed what he termed an “American Lutheranism,” shorn of the offensive doctrines, more amenable to the Methodism that had come to dominate nineteenth century American religious life. Schmucker’s proposal, in fact, recognized what was already happening in the congregations. Lutheran identity was being displaced by American identity.

Another problem the immigrants faced was linguistic. Arriving in the new land, they generally settled among those who shared their language. In these linguistic communities, as small as neighborhoods in the larger cities, but among Lutherans more commonly rural villages and towns, the settlers attempted to replicate what they had known at home. Often they were poor and underprivileged, migrating in hopes of economic and social improvements. But as the immigration grew, whole vil-

lages left Germany and the Scandinavian counties seeking new opportunities. Sometimes, like the Saxon migration to Missouri, they brought their pastors with them; commonly the immigrants came first and then began seeking Lutheran pastors who could serve them.

As they settled, the immigrants recoiled against the denatured or neutered American Lutheranism proposed by Schmucker and earlier settlers. There were some old Lutheran holdouts who had held the confessions dear. But as the nineteenth century moved into its second third, the immigrants arrived from Lutheran churches in the old countries that had recently become more aware of their confessional heritage. The Prussian Union, remembered in the United States as “the evil Prussian Union,” had contributed to a confessional revival, particularly in Germany but with influence in Norway and other Scandinavian nations. The immigration that produced The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod came out of these sources. They arrived hoping to find a place where they could be Lutherans in America, maintaining their heritage intact.

From the beginning of large-scale immigration, the Lutheran Confessions had a critically important function for new American Lutherans. There were confessionally committed Lutherans left in America from earlier immigrations. For example, the Tennessee Synod was born fighting the acculturation of the North Carolina Synod. David Henkel, one of its founders, worked with his brothers to publish the first American edition of the Book of Concord. But the recently arrived immigrants turned the tide against acculturation, at least for the time being. In addition to the Small Catechism, they commonly arrived with three books in hand, the Bible, the Concordia and a hymnal, all in their mother tongue. Sometimes, commonly enough, they also brought copies of Luther’s Galatians Commentary. They were determined to keep the faith they had brought with them.

Because they spoke the language of the nations they had left behind, the newly settled Americans drew their scholarly resources from Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Using such sources, the immigrant churches produced a rich deposit of confessional studies. C. F. W. Walther led the way, particularly with his lectures on Law and Gospel. Charles Porterfield Krauth in Pennsylvania took up the matter of confessional authority. Others, such as Matthias Loy in Ohio, wrote extended studies on individual confessions. Later generations continued the work. George J. Fritschel’s study of the Formula of Concord, produced in Dubuque, Iowa, still sets a benchmark

as does J. Michael Reu's study of the catechisms.

For the immigrant churches, the language transition began where it usually does among arriving language groups, between the original generation, eager to preserve contact with what had been left behind, and their children, equally eager to speak the languages of schools and playgrounds. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod had a resource to deploy in this conflict: the parochial schools. Even into the 1960s, long after English had become the language of the Church, Missouri's educational system was strongly Germanic.

But the Scandinavians weren't always so careful. As their children became more and more at home in English, they gradually pushed a transition to English for the family, the school and the church. Still, it took a long time. In 1949, King Haakon of Norway traveled from the eastern to the western border of North Dakota, stopping at virtually every crossing to greet Norwegian Americans who had supported Norway during World War II. Those who traveled with him reported hearing virtually every dialect of Norwegian from the people who came to greet the king. But within a year, in 1950, Norwegian as a public language had virtually disappeared in public circles. Fresh memories of the war made Yankees of every stripe hostile to Germanic sounding languages.

Luther comes to North America

North American Luther research began with the language transition, as originally European Lutherans translated to help their children and grandchildren face the pressures of the theological melting pot. There were remaining instances of purely Germanic scholarship. When it was published in St. Louis, Johann Georg Walch's edition of Luther's works made them widely available in America in the original languages for the first time.

The first priority for American Luther scholarship was translating Luther into English. Originally, it was not an organized process, but hit or miss, with individuals or small groups of individuals publishing various volumes. Matthias Loy published a translation of one of Luther's postils in 1869. J.N. Lenker, associated with a group called "Luther in All Lands," translated others of the postils, publishing them as "Luther's Sermons on the Gospels" and "Luther's Sermons on the Epistles." He dedicated

these publications to the "Luther readers," remembering individuals and small groups in Scandinavia who learned to know Luther through his published sermons, clearly hoping people would follow their precedent on the American side of the Atlantic.

A more systematic approach to Luther translation was undertaken in Pennsylvania by pastors and professors whose families remembered Charles Porterfield Krauth and the earlier American Lutheran controversy with Schmucker. His legacy was concentrated at what is now the Lutheran School of Theology in Philadelphia. Charles M. Jacobs gathered a small group of translators who provided six volumes worth of Luther's occasional writings, now remembered as the Philadelphia Edition. Many of these translations were carried over, with some revision, into the American Edition of *Luther's Works*, now the main source of Luther's works in English.

The American Edition, originally 55 volumes now being supplemented with further translations, was developed cooperatively by publishers that had previously been active in bringing Lutheran books to English speakers. One was Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis — it published the first 30 volumes, devoted to Luther's exegetical work, including the Genesis, Psalms and Galatians

commentaries. Fortress Press, originally Muhlenberg and the heir to the Philadelphia Edition, published volumes 31–55, Luther's occasional and polemical writings, including the *Bondage of the Will*. Helmut Lehman, originally from the Canadian prairies in Saskatchewan, finished a doctorate at Erlangen in 1939. He was one of the general editors along with Jaroslav Pelikan, a student of Wilhelm Pauck's who after early prominence in the field, left Luther scholarship and eventually left the Lutheran Church for Eastern Orthodoxy.

In addition to his work with the American Edition, Helmut Lehmann led the way in commissioning translations of German and Scandinavian Luther scholarship, publishing a significant number of important texts in Philadelphia, at what was then Muhlenberg Press. Paul Athaus' *Theology of Martin Luther* and Lennart Pinomaa's *Faith Victorious* became particularly important. They were joined by works of Gerhard Ebeling, Regin Prenter and Gustaf Wingren. Following in the same tradition, Augsburg Fortress Press — succeeding out of Muhlenberg

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and then Fortress Press — in 1999 published Bernhard Lohse's masterful introduction to Luther studies, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historic and Systematic Development*. Though some of the earlier publications were published jointly with SCM and other English publishers, using translators from England, there were enough of the Scandinavian language speakers left into the 1960s and 1970s to find American translators. So J.M. Jensen, a Danish immigrant who served in both Canada and the United States, translated Prenter; a Finnish American, Walter J. Kokkenen, translated Pinomaa.

When common usage of languages spoken in Europe by Lutherans began to die off in America, in the aftermath of World War II, American Lutheran seminaries continued to produce people capable of reading Luther's Latin and German. Commonly, these scholars did their graduate studies in Germany or Scandinavia and kept up close relationships with their teachers and other scholars with whom they had studied. The faculty at Erlangen welcomed a number of American candidates. Paul Althaus, Werner Elert and Herman Sasse, who eventually immigrated to Australia, all maintained strong influence in the United States. Sasse was closely interested in Lutheranism in America and kept up an extensive correspondence with, among others, Herman Preus at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. But he left his legacy primarily in the LCMS, with faculty members and now the president of the church.

Edgar M. Carlson, the long time president of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, led the way in bringing Swedish Luther research to American students. The son of Swedish immigrants to Wisconsin, he grew up speaking his mother tongue. Though he did his academic degree in Chicago, he used his family's language to become closely familiar with the work of the theologians at Lund, in Sweden, where Anders Nygren, Gustaf Aulen and Ragnar Bring had established one of the centers of Luther research. Carlson's book, *Luther Reinterpreted*, opened up the scholarly connections that gave Gustaf Wingren and his Danish co-worker Regin Prenter strong influence with an emerging generation of American Lutheran theologians.

The International Luther Congresses, meeting every five or six years in Europe as well as occasionally, the United States, has fostered direct working relationships between European and American Luther scholars. One of the congresses met at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; later, one assembled at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. In the

1960s, the congresses welcomed American Roman Catholic scholars, such as Jared Wicks and Harry McSorley, a close associate of Heinz Otto Pesch, who led the way in Germany.

Several German Luther scholars immigrated to the United States, leaving a rich legacy of doctoral students to carry on the research. Wilhelm Pauck was perhaps the most influential. Born in Westphalia, trained by Karl Holl and Ernst Troeltsch at Berlin, Pauck began his teaching career in Chicago, but served on several other faculties, most notably Union Seminary in New York. There he became doctor father to a number of important American Luther scholars, such as Pelikan, Lewis Spitz, Hans Hillerbrand and William G. Lazareth, who worked in Luther's ethics. George Wolfgang Forell, originally from Breslau, spent his academic life at the University of Iowa. He made a deep impression at a Luther Congress in Erfurt, before the fall of the wall that separated Germany, setting out the freedom of the Gospel. Heiko Oberman left the Netherlands to teach at Harvard University in the 1960s. When he left Harvard for Tübingen, several of his doctoral students became prominent in American Luther studies, including Scott Hendrix of Princeton and Kenneth Hagen, who taught at Marquette in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Oberman returned to the United States toward the end of his vocation, teaching in Tucson, Arizona, where his wife enjoyed better health. Gerhard Forde, who did his doctoral work at Harvard, has sometimes been associated with Oberman but didn't actually study with him. He was more closely related to scholarship from Lund, Gustaf Wingren and Lauri Haikola originally, and in his later years, Leif Grane at Copenhagen.

In recent years, the most influential German Luther scholar in America has been Oswald Bayer, now retired from the Tübingen faculty. Forde's students, such as Steven Paulson of the Luther faculty in St. Paul and Mark Mattes of Grandview College in Des Moines, Iowa, have been particularly drawn to him.

There were several fine Luther scholars identified with the LCMS, particularly Lewis Spitz, who came from one of the outstanding families of Synod. He taught at Stanford, where he served as doctor father to a number of other American Lutheran scholars, including James Kittelson, who finished his career teaching at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, and Robert Rosin at Concordia, St. Louis. In more recent years, Robert Kolb has through extensive publications been a leader in American Luther scholarship. Kolb has also been very interested in Melancthon

research, working with Timothy Wengert, a student of Forde's who taught at the Lutheran School of Theology in Philadelphia. Kolb and Wengert together led the team of translators who produced a recent, authoritative translation of the Book of Concord. The faculty at Concordia, Fort Wayne, has also included some fine Luther scholars, including Naomichi Masaki and John Pless.

Arthur Carl Piepkorn of the Concordia faculty in St. Louis was also identified with Luther studies. But he made a sharp distinction between the theology of the Lutheran Confessions, which he taught as authoritative, and the theology of Luther, which he treated more distantly. He was also strongly committed to liturgical reform. Consequently, his legacy has appeared more in ecumenical work, particularly in relation to Catholicism. Ecumenical scholars, such as George Lindbeck of Yale, Robert W. Jenson, now retired and living in Princeton, New Jersey, and Carl Braaten, also retired and living in Arizona, have taken an approach to Luther something like Piepkorn's, de-emphasizing his theological contributions to stress ecumenical reconciliation. Jenson and Braaten have been particularly interested in the work of Tuomo Mannermaa, who carried on Pinomaa's legacy at the University of Helsinki. Mannermaa died this spring.

In recent years, American Luther scholarship has fallen on difficult times. The generation that mediated the findings of Luther scholars in Germany and Scandinavia, who led the way with their own research, has by and large died or gone into retirement. There are still some strong scholars scattered among various seminary and college faculties. Their work can be found in such publications as the *Lutheran Quarterly* and the *Luther Digest*, an Annual Abridgement of Luther Studies. But the prestigious American universities whose graduate schools were so important to developing the next generations of Lutheran seminary faculties have by and large pushed theological education into the sidelights, dropping or marginalizing Luther studies along the way. Denominational seminaries, according to authoritative surveys, have in recent years suffered dramatic enrollment losses; with rare exception the schools are virtually all in financial crisis.

While LCMS faculties have continued to produce graduate students, the seminaries of the Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are no longer productive. There the forces of acculturation are particularly evident. Confessional course work has been significantly reduced, pushed to the margins or eliminated; where Luther scholarship survives, it is in heavy contention. As

a recent survey of American Luther studies demonstrates, the primary remaining interest is not so much Luther and his theology but what might be called "clientele studies,"² Luther's possible implications for the particular group with whom the scholar identifies, such as feminists or gay liberationists. Some scholarly disciplines may be still evident in these studies, some insight might be gained, but the value of such studies for the Church or the community outside of the selected target group is an open question. Using Luther

studies as a indicator, the decline of much of American Lutheranism is indisputable.

Assessing the decline

Working through the history of American Lutheranism, two different approaches to the relationship of the Church and culture can be distinguished. They may be more differences of degree than of substance; American Lutherans, like their European forebears, share a generally positive view of the culture, valuing images of critical participation in public life. Still, American Lutherans have differed on the particulars. One tradition has maintained a more critical distance from the culture, seeking to preserve its theological heritage over and against forces that might dilute it; the other has sought more convergence between its heritage and the culture, welcoming a more open-ended conversation.

The outlines of the division between these two approaches already emerged in the Predestination Controversy, dating back to the late nineteenth century. The Prussian Union, enforcing Calvinism in self-consciously Lutheran communities in Germany, had produced more skepticism about public culture among the Saxon immigrants that, with some few others, made up The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Their deeper loyalties to the

Can [the LCMS] be faithful to both its own theological heritage and the cultures in which it serves without falling into a separatism that would isolate it? Can it actually be close without becoming closed?

² Christine Helmer, "The American Luther," *Dialog* 47:2 (Summer, 2008).

Formula of Concord — with its doctrine of predestination in Article XI — clashed with American assertions of free will, reinforcing cultural suspicions. Carefully preserving their own distinctiveness, the Missourians joined with the Wisconsin Synod and a smaller group of Norwegians loyal to Formula of Concord X to form the Synodical Conference. These churches did not merge, among themselves or with others, but set in place mechanisms to prevent dilution of their witness.

C. F. W. Walther's careful exposition of the doctrine of predestination set off a storm of controversy among the Norwegian immigrant churches in the late nineteenth century. Philippist advisors to the Danish king in the sixteenth century had sabotaged his subscription to the Formula; consequently, it had less practical value among the Norwegians and Danes who immigrated. Other German speaking churches more adapted to American visions of personal freedom joined in the opposition to Walther and the predestinarians. Significantly, one of the Norwegian synods called itself "the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood."

Among the churches that opposed the conference on predestination, a century of mergers began. At first, they took place along ethnic lines — in 1917, for instance, the three Norwegian church bodies merged to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, agreeing to disagree on predestination. Mergers across ethnic lines followed among several others. The United Lutheran Church, for example, brought together Germans and Swedes. Finally, in 1989, invoking images familiar from European folk church Lutheranism, the one great merger long hoped for took place in the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The merging churches spoke the folk church language of inclusiveness in its American political form and immediately set in a place a system of quotas which sought to give all and sundry opportunities for full participation in its governance.

The coercive forces of the American melting pot have proven their power on both sides of the divide over approaches to public culture. To begin with, the numbers are down across the boards. In the past decade, Missouri is said to have lost a half million members, down to 2.2 million, percentage-wise a loss almost as large as that in the ELCA. With greater numbers at its origin, roughly some five and a half million, the ELCA has had the greater numerical losses. Attrition and departures induced by church conflicts have combined to reduce the membership to about three and a half million. By one reliable

report, church officials in the headquarters at Chicago recently discussed the possibility of ELCA membership bottoming out at about a million.

Further, evidence of theological acculturation has also accumulated on both sides of the historic division. The LCMS went through a period in the late 1950s and 1960s when in one apt description, it was not sufficiently Missouri. The faculty at Concordia in St. Louis spoke the language of the Church in public, but in the classroom taught practices perceived as undermining it. When Missouri drifted, the Synodical Conference broke apart, the Wisconsin Synod and the ELS going their separate ways. The remainders of the St. Louis faculty that turned up on the doorstep of the ELCA turned out as problematic there as they had been in the LCMS. As much as the self-styled "exiles" despised J.A.O. Preus, in the end they proved his point.

The prominence of the church growth movement in Missouri points in the same direction. When institutional growth claims pre-eminence over the Church's heritage, free will theologies multiply and the Church declines, even if it succeeds enough to be able to rejoice in its crowds. The melting pot does not respect synod boundaries.

Valuing openness and the rhetoric of tolerance, the ELCA has had a substantially greater problem theologically. The trouble appeared before the church began. A well-placed feminist on the Committee for a New Lutheran Church, which negotiated the merger, argued that the doctrine of the Trinity is inherently sexist and brought it up for a vote. Reportedly, for all of the ecumenical significance of the doctrine of the Trinity, it barely survived.

One of the commonly argued grounds for the merger was that the combined numbers would give Lutherans more influence in public life and culture. The size of the church lost some of its magic when church officials, setting up offices in that city, discovered that it was about the same size as the Roman Catholic diocese of Chicago. But there were still any number of advocates eager to capture the perceived influence for their ends. Ecumenists took the first swing at it, urging Roman Catholic consensus against prized characteristics of the Lutheran heritage. But there were more troublesome issues to come. Social advocates, who commonly devalued the church's theological heritage in favor of claims to peace and justice, joined forces to push the gay agenda. Church officials lent a hand, changing the rules, until finally in 2009 a national church assembly ratified the ordination of practicing

homosexuals. Bishops quickly assured congregations that they were not compelled to comply in their parishes. But the die was cast.

The ecumenical consequences of the 2009 vote have unfolded slowly, with only occasional drama. Clearly, however, the ELCA and with it the Lutheran World Federation, have broken out of a prevailing standard on sexual practice that has held since the days of the New Testament, isolating themselves from the formal policies of both Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, together the overwhelming majority of the world's Christians. The decision has also led to a break with national churches in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world that continue to hold with the authority of the biblical Word. Not surprisingly, American church officials have invoked a variety of cultural images familiar from the melting pot to support its decisions — the myth of progress, advances in human knowledge, the cultural relativism of the Scriptures themselves, and so forth. To no one's great surprise, these appeals have been joined with naked power plays involving western funds. Imperialism can take several identities.

Thus the first quarter century of the ELCA's history presses a question. In all the talk of openness and tolerance that it has generated, welcoming everyone, can this church — so called by its own officials — tolerate the tradition that historically brought it into being? Can it accept itself? Is there any room within it? — in its offices, on its faculties, in its parishes — for those who identify themselves biblically with Luther and the confessions? In fact, there are significant numbers of pastors and congregations remaining within the ELCA tucked away in pockets where they can maintain traditional loyalties. But the continuing decline of Lutheran seminary faculties, the election of successive presiding bishops with little or no formal theological education in either the Confessions or Luther, combined with the similarly declining quality of synod bishops, all come together to render doubtful the survival of such pockets for long. Consequently, some four hundred congregations have left the ELCA to form the North American Lutheran Church; more than double that number have affiliated with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ. Enthusiastically in and also of the world, the ELCA appears to be salt that has lost its sting.

While both the ELCA and the LCMS have had their troubles with the coercive forces of the American melting pot, Missouri has in a couple of instances demonstrated its capacity to regenerate its tradition. Each of them has been

controversial, bringing complaints with the accolades.

When Jacob A. O. Preus, who took some considerable pride in his Norwegian heritage, took over as president of the Missouri Synod in the late 1960s, he brought the forces of the melting pot down upon himself and his alliance. Vituperated by his opponents within the Synod and the public press alike, he was described as a “fundamentalist” bent on enforcing an antique form of Lutheran orthodoxy far out of touch with contemporary life. In fact, “Jack” — as he was commonly called — was like his brother, Robert, deeply anchored in the theology that marked Missouri in its origins. Well after his critics lost interest, he was still busy rebuilding the Concordia, St. Louis faculty and the Church. Though the controversy remains, he has been vindicated historically. His opponents, who left the Synod posturing as harbingers of a new order, proved as divisive in their new home. Missouri recovered its balance.

Matthew Harrison, who has led a second recovery as the current president of the LCMS, has attracted the same kind of criticism. Opponents within the Synod and outside of it have portrayed his administration pejoratively as power driven and exclusive. But like Preus, Harrison has been shaped theologically by the forces that have moved Missouri throughout its history. Herman Sasse, whose three volumes of letters to American church leaders, edited by Harrison, were distributed to participants, was an extraordinarily perceptive observer of the American church at the same time that he was a closely disciplined theologian. While serving on the faculty at Erlangen, he recognized the threat of Nazism as early as 1934, far before others. From his later position in Adelaide, he served the proclamation of the Gospel in Australia by his teaching and in the United States with his letters. Harrison's use of Sasse lays the groundwork for a creative engagement between the Church's theological heritage and the cultures in which it serves.

To be sure, there are elements within the LCMS that show evidence of enclosure. The ELCA's problem has been its left wing; Missouri's challenge has come from its right, which pounces on suggestions of variance as proof positive of corruption, to be dealt with coercively, with tar and feathers. It is as though the Eighth Commandment has been suspended for theological discussion. The outsider becomes an enemy to be overcome rather than a neighbor to be engaged.

Thus there are questions that remain. Given the course of the ELCA, can the LCMS exercise the theological lead-

ership that Lutherans in America and across the globe so desperately need? Can it be faithful to both its own theological heritage and the cultures in which it serves without falling into a separatism that would isolate it? Can it actually be close without becoming closed? Can it maintain sound doctrine without falling into a doctrinalism in which the doctrine displaces Christ Jesus as the agent of justification?

These are challenging questions. This conference, like its predecessor a few years ago in Atlanta, provides evidence that they can all be answered positively. Carrying on from here is the mission to which all of us, from the corners of the earth, are called.

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THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION'S CONTINUING IMPORTANCE FOR THE CHURCH TODAY: CELEBRATING THE REFORMATION RIGHTLY — REPENTANCE — AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

by Joseph Ochola Omolo

Does the theology of the Lutheran Church today still differ from all other churches' theologies because she is the Church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments? Has the Lutheran Church today ignored her symbols, or does she hold fast to them as a norm and standard of her entire life? These and other questions will lay the foundation upon which we shall evaluate our missionary methods in the twenty-first century, particularly in Africa.

Introduction

THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION that took place in the sixteenth century remains relevant for the mission of the Church of Christ in all decades due to its clear articulations of the Christian doctrines. By and large, God used His servant Martin Luther to correct the abuses that had invaded the Roman Catholic Church during medieval period. Unlike other earlier reformation attempts, Dr. Luther's Reformation was unique in that it was more concerned with the *doctrine of the Church* rather than with the *moral life* of the individuals. Although Luther sought to also reform various abuses of morals in the Roman Catholic Church, at the heart of his work Luther became more articulate with sound biblical teaching. During a discussion in one his table talks, Dr. Luther asserted:

Without Luther's Reformation, there would have been no clear articulation of salvation, for the Gospel would have remained largely hidden.

Doctrine and life are to be distinguished. Life is as bad among us as among the papists. Hence we do not fight and damn them because of their bad lives. Wyclif and Hus, who fought over the moral quality of life, failed to understand this ... When the Word of God, remains pure, even if the quality of life fails us, life is placed in a position to be what it ought to be. That is why everything hinges on the purity of the Word. I have succeeded only if I have taught correctly.¹

Looking into our theme for this conference, and attempting to bring the Lutheran theology into the con-

text, African context in this particular case, the following questions will direct our presentation: (1) Does the theology of the Lutheran Church today still *differ* from all other churches' theologies because she is the Church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments? (2) Has the Lutheran Church today *ignored* her symbols, or does she hold fast to them as a norm and standard of her entire life? (3) Is the Lutheran Church as represented in this conference, prepared to *repent* of her failure to adhere faithfully to the pure Gospel and all of its articles and to return both to confess faithfully and to continue in study of this confessional treasure bequeathed to us? These and other questions will lay the foundation upon which we shall evaluate our missionary methods in the twenty-first century, particularly in Africa.

1: The African concept of sin in relation to Lutheran Reformation theology for the mission of the Church in Africa in the twenty-first century

Does the Lutheran Church today still *differ* from all other churches because she is the church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments? Positively put, this question rightly presupposes that at her inception the Lutheran Church differed with other churches due to her clear articulations of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments. In terms of doctrine and practice, apparently the Lutheran Church stands unique due to her proper doctrinal expressions. In other words, right theology leads to right missiology. But, the big question for us here in this conference is this: Has the Lutheran Church, the Church

¹ WA TR 1:624; LW 54:110. Quoted by Dr. Richard P. Bucher: <http://www.orlutheran.com/html/whatwas.html>,

of pure Gospel and unadulterated Sacraments, lived up to the expectations of her Confessions?

The Lutheran Confessions stipulate that Dr. Luther's conviction was rightly guided by God's relationship to his creation — especially how a *righteous* God could relate to and save a *sinful human being*. That struggle led Martin Luther to discover the main teaching of God's Word — that man is declared righteous (*justified*) by faith in the cross of Jesus Christ. Luther discovered that it is *not* human righteousness (human works, efforts or obeying God's laws) that saves him. Rather it is Christ's *righteousness* that saves; for God is pleased only with Christ, His Son (Matt. 3:17). At the heart of Luther's Reformation was the rediscovery of the Gospel that saves a poor miserable sinner. This Gospel is stocked in the Scripture, for it is only this Gospel that can reform the Church. Does Lutheran Reformation theology continue to be important and relevant for the mission of the Church today, especially when we celebrate the Lutheran Reformation in the twenty-first century? How would an African understand that God is *righteous* and that the *human being is sinful* and thus needs *salvation*? In other words, how does an African understand sin? What is sin and what are the causes and the consequences of sin to the individual or a society at large?

Sin, justification and reconciliation in the African context: Are they just words?

By and large, Lutheran Reformation theology still differs with other churches and offers a unique approach to missiology due to its clear and accurate articulation of biblical doctrine, especially the doctrine of justification. The doctrine of justification cannot properly be conceived without proper understanding of the nature of God and the essence of sin when dealing with the relationship between God and man. This is why it is necessary to briefly present the traditional African concept of sin as a base for contextual reflection before briefly highlighting Luther's teaching on justification from an anthropological perspective.

Sin in the African context

Comparatively, the study of sin as a doctrine in African Traditional Religion (ATR) has not been undertaken extensively. As observed by Awolalu, it is justifiable that ATR scholars have not systematically done a thorough

study on the subject of sin.² Awolalu points out that sin (as a subject) has been briefly referred to in various literature, suggesting that these few references may easily mislead researchers to biased conclusions, particularly while comparing the biblical and the African traditional religious concepts of sin.³

In 1964, Sawyerr made a great contribution to African religious studies by publishing an article on the African traditional concept of sin and forgiveness.⁴ Interestingly, Sawyerr's research lead him to conclude that hardly ever is there a single term for sin in African languages that would correspond exactly to the biblical concept of sin. This makes it hard to draw any general conclusions when it comes to the point of comparing the Jewish and African concepts of sin.⁵ How does ATR describe sin?

A renowned ATR scholar, John Mbiti, has developed a profound and clear definition and concept of sin, expanding its essence and aspect to embrace its determinative, cosmological function and its relational aspect within the ATR society.⁶ He points out that the concept of sin in African society guides and controls individuals to comply and maintain their positions. According to Mbiti, sin is determined by any behavior that goes against the rules laid down by a community. The behavioral rules guide how people in a society relate to one another and keep their positional boundaries. In a communal society, life is in order when everyone knows and controls their positions properly and respectively.⁷ What then is sin in ATR society?

² Omosade J. Awolalu, "Sin and its Removal in African Traditional Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44: 2 (2001): 275–287.

³ Ibid., 276. Apart from the inspired Word of God (the Old Testament which God gave to the Jews), it is undeniable that the Jews of the first century A.D. shared some aspects of worldview with followers of ATR (i.e., honor and shame cultural components). Nevertheless, it is overstating to strongly conclude, as Awolalu does, that "Africans are as conscious of sin as the Jews of the Old Testament" (Awolalu, "Sin and its Removal"). Such a statement gives the implication that ATR has a special revelation like that of the Old Testament (OT). The OT account is unique and cannot be compared with any worldly religious beliefs, for it is a special revelation from God. What some comparative religious scholars fail to notice is the nature of a Jew living at the time of the OT as an ordinary human being, who apart from the OT Scriptures is just an ordinary religious person. The OT is a forensic revelation from God to the Jews with a special purpose — salvation.

⁴ Harry Sawyerr, "Sin and Forgiveness in Africa," *Frontier* 7 (September 1964): 60–63.

⁵ See: John Mbiti, "Peace and Reconciliation," 16–32; and Awolalu, "Sin and its Removal," 276–278.

⁶ John Mbiti, "African Concept of Sin," *Frontier* 7 (August 1964): 182–184.

⁷ Ibid.

Awolalu defines the ATR's concept of sin in relation to the existence of man in a society. He expresses that, according to African mentality, man is the center of creation, standing between the deities and the society, and is created for the purpose of maintaining the moral standards of the society. Awolalu remarks:

In African communities, there are sanctions recognized as the approved standard of social and religious conduct on the part of the individual in the society and of the community as a whole. A breach of, or failure to adhere to the sanctions is sin and this incurs the displeasure of the deity and his functionaries. Sin is, therefore, doing that which is contrary to the will of the directions of the deity. It includes any immoral behavior, ritual mistakes, any offences against god or man, breach of covenant, breaking of taboos and doing anything regarded as abominable and polluting ... To disregard god, the divinities and the ancestral spirits is to commit sin. Likewise to disregard the norms and taboos of the society is to commit sin.⁸

Traditionally, people believe that ancestral spirits control the moral standards or codes as they guide the community. To rebel against the laws guiding moral standards in a community is to rebel against the community, which is comprised of the living individuals, the dead ancestors and those who are yet to be born. Such rebellion causes sin and is severely punishable.

In an African society, people explain a crisis that befalls an individual or a group in relation to an act that was committed or omitted. It is generally maintained that nothing bad befalls a person without a cause and effect. Awolalu observes that the sin committed destroys relationships not only within the society, but also between god and man, and between man and spirits.⁹ When sin occurs among the people, it takes away honor and brings disgrace and shame. Sin committed contaminates, pollutes and brings fear and shame to the person who commits it. Evans-Pritchard contends that sin in a man changes his

spiritual status, making him unclean and thus unacceptable within the society — not only among the living, but also in the world of spirits.¹⁰ This is the real state of shame. Shame torments a person and makes a person worthless — a state that is equivalent to death. It is in this status that an individual or group needs ritualistic cleansing. In ATR, ritualistic cleansing deals with sin and provides a remedy for the polluted person. How does ATR deal with sin and its effects?

In the African community, sin is explained as the cause of evil in a society. This causes people to engage in hatred, quarrels, fighting, illness and war in a society. In some circumstances, sin will manifest itself through sickness, psychological disturbances or other forms of misfortune. This causes people to begin tracing the effect of sin back to its cause so that they may deal with it. The cause might be attributed either to witchcraft or to a breach of behavior

(e.g., breaking a taboo, ignoring a totem, etc). In order to treat such a person, an intermediary is needed, who not only intercedes for the transgressor but also performs the rituals necessary for the treatment. This explains why mission to Africa should take very seriously the study of the concept *and* the act of reconciliation when dealing with the issue of contextualization in African context.

Luther's anthropological aspect in the doctrine of justification/reconciliation

When we celebrate the Reformation, we are celebrating this rediscovery of the Gospel that we believe, teach and confess; we are celebrating our salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

While for Luther, the doctrine of justification is theocentric and Christocentric, there is — in and within this doctrine — an anthropological aspect. The anthropological nature of Luther's theology of justification is found in his famous expression *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously righteous and sinful). This wonderful and unique description of a Christian explains the truth in humanity. According to this expression, the righteousness a person has after being justified is not his or her own, but the righteousness of Christ. This eventually provides the basis for forensic justification or external justification. In other words, while the justified sinner receives the righteousness of God from outside, namely from Christ,

⁸ Awolalu, "Sin and its Removal," 279.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Evans-Pritchard in Awolalu, "Sin and its Removal," 279.

this person at the same time remains a human being as was created — a sinner. The person is, in the real sense, righteous — and at the same time a sinner. That is why a Christian needs the preaching of Law and Gospel. In the state of *simul iustus et peccator*, the justified sinful person enjoys the ultimate relationship with God, while at the same time the justified person is a sinner who needs the forgiveness of his sins. In this state, a justified person enjoys a personal relationship with the triune God who forgives and justifies for the sake of Christ. He is not only a forgiven sinner, but also has been made heir to that which God has prepared for His beloved children in heaven. The work done by justification is more evident in the Lutheran teaching of *simul iustus et peccator*. This is unique in the Lutheran theology, and this is why Lutheran theology differs from other theologies.

Justification and reconciliation: Are they just words?

Although the Reformers and the Lutheran Confessions employ the terms reconciliation and justification interchangeably, these terms actually portray differing contextual realities. That is, justification portrays a legal context in which punishment due a sinner is dealt with and forgiven, and the culprit is pronounced innocent because another person has suffered the penalty. On the other hand, reconciliation is connected more to the relational context, whereby a ritualistic sacrifice is offered and sins are forgiven. Now the person/people happily live together, eat together and drink together as they live a new life. In the relational state, the warring individuals start a new life together, eating together, sharing the gift of life together.¹¹ These people, therefore, become members of one household — the communion of saints. This is what happens when a Christian is baptized and given a new life to begin feeding at the Lord's Table.

Having said this, it has to be made clear here that there is no reconciliation without justification. Reconciliation

is possible because justification has taken place.¹² While the two terminologies (words) are not one and the same (contextually), they are connected and intertwined as far as their base, foundation and effect are concerned. They are not just words! They are legalities of God's action to his beloved creation. The problem is that when one hears the word *reconciliation*, what comes quickly into one's mind is the man-to-man relationship. Overduin is correct in remarking:

One of the major problems for us Christians is the understanding of the meaning of the doctrine of reconciliation. Human relationships have become almost all important at the expense of man's relationship with his God Reconciliation in terms of humanistic thinking leaves no room for Luther's *homo theologicus*.¹³

In the state of *simul iustus et peccator*, the justified sinful person enjoys the ultimate relationship with God, while at the same time the justified person is a sinner who needs the forgiveness of his sins. In this state, a justified person enjoys a personal relationship with the triune God who forgives and justifies for the sake of Christ.

In Luther's theology, man's relationship is based on that which God has established in justification through the death of his Son on the cross. The Lutheran theology of reconciliation therefore grounds human relationships on the work of God, which then explains human relational responsibility in society. God has established it, has given it to His people and has commissioned them to take and proclaim it to others for the sake of their relationship with Him and with their neighbor. Luther's theology of justification/reconciliation stands in contrast to the medieval theology of merit. He felt that the theology of merit robs God of His honor and gives it to the

human being. This is exactly what is embedded in the ATR's concept and ritualistic practice of sin.

The Lutheran Church is the church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments.

Back to our initial question in this section: Does the Lutheran Church today still differ from all other churches because she is the Church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments? This is a question of great necessity

¹¹ For more information of just words, see Jacob A. O. Preus, *Just Words: Understanding the Fullness of the Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 137–143.

¹² Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 83.

¹³ Daniel A. Overduin, "Reconciliation: Proclamation of New Reality," in *Theologia Crucis*, ed. Henry P. Hamann (Adelaide, Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1975), 121.

and demands a strict accounting. As the Lutheran Church has come to the beginning of the twenty-first century, we see especially in Europe and North America a liberalizing tendency, as the desire to be a player on the stage of global Christianity often moves the Church to positions that just a decade or two ago would have been unthinkable. Now the unthinkable and unbiblical has become commonplace. Even within the more orthodox churches in America and Europe, there is an ongoing struggle to remain faithful. One brief example will suffice. Here is a direct quotation from our brother in Christ, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, the president (bishop) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. His words offer clarity in this dilemma without getting into personalities:

When a public teacher on the roster (*means a public teacher of the Church*) of Synod (*The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod*) can without consequence publicly advocate the ordination of women (even participate vested in the installation of an ELCA clergy person), homosexuality, the errancy of the Bible, the historical-critical method, open communion, communion with the Reformed, evolution, and more, then the public confession of the Synod is meaningless. I am

saying that if my Synod does not change its inability to call such a person to repentance and remove such a teacher where there is no repentance, then we are liars and our confession is meaningless. I do not want to belong to such a synod, much less lead it. I have no intention of walking away from my vocation. I shall rather use it and, by the grace of God, use all the energy I have to call this Synod to fidelity to correct this situation.¹⁴

Satan, of course, will use every tool to lead the Church to ruin. He has and will continue to attack the Church that confesses the Gospel in its truth and purity. This was true in the time of Elijah in the Old Testament, in the time of Paul and the apostles in the New Testament and in the times of Luther, and still is true in our day as well. While in many parts of Europe and America some people would

not want to call sin by its name, in Africa and other parts of the world, some people and religious groups would want to deal with sin in a more traditional way to avoid the grips and real essence of sin and its consequences in human lives.

What shall we say to our own age and our culture? Many do not care about the true Gospel at all; many even in the churches represented here may look only to their own rewards or the rewards of men. Sad to say, many in developing nations relying on the support of Western nations quite often find themselves in such a confessional dilemma. Even among Lutherans who desire to be faithful, the temptation to compromise just a little on biblical teachings so that the funding continues to flow is at the

least challenging, and at the worst apostasy. I remember that the archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, Dr. Walter Obare, was expelled from the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) council as its theological advisor simply because he did not accept compromising the Gospel so that his church body could get and enjoy privileges from the LWF. For the developing nations, standing strong against Western churches' abuses comes with some consequences. Praise be to God if some younger churches

from the developing countries would be estranged due to their doctrinal stand! That is what Lutheranism means; we can then sing with Luther in his wonderful hymn of *The Mighty Fortress*.

2: Theology in context

Has the Lutheran Church today *ignored* her symbols, or does she hold fast to them as a norm and standard of her entire life? This question is equally important, especially when we prepare to celebrate the five hundred years since Lutheran Reformation took place. When we talk about Reformation theology for today's Church's mission, we intrinsically and or extrinsically talk about the Lutheran Confessions' relevance to us today, particularly in Africa. The development of diverse theologies, so to speak, in the twenty-first century is coupled with a lot of challenging ideologies and practices, both locally and internationally, that need to critically be examined.

In the African context, the challenge begins with the

Time and again, in the mission of the apostles, godless culture was transformed ... by the good news that God justifies the ungodly by His grace alone through faith alone for the sake of the atonement of Christ alone.

¹⁴ Witness, Mercy, Life Together. <http://wmltblog.org/>. Italicized bracketed terms are offered for clarification and are not part of the original text.

enculturation of the Roman Catholic Church as a mission paradigm; it then moves to the *health and wealth* theology of the Pentecostal churches as a missionary model on the one hand. On the other hand we find the sporadic *syncretistic teachings* of sects and cults in the African Initiated Churches (AICs). Still another big challenge, which cannot be left unchallenged, is the influence of Islam. All of these religious groups pose a real and great challenge to Christianity in Africa, despite the fact that Christianity is rapidly growing in the southern part of the world. Before getting back to our question in this section, let me briefly present some of these religious groups which not only cause serious challenges to African Christianity, but also seriously jeopardize the future of Christianity in Africa.

Inculturation¹⁵ theology and theological education

With Africa's long history and acquaintance with the traditional religiosities, Africans are open and ready to receive the Gospel. It is claimed that Roman Catholics have been very successful in many parts of Africa due to their ritualistic type of worship and their teachings on the doctrine of saints. As indicated in the first section of this paper, the ritualistic practices and worship and the doctrine of ancestral/saints have several affinities with the African religio-cultural rituals, coupled with the veneration of ancestors in the African traditional religious beliefs and rituals.

While Protestants have used the term “contextualization” as a model for bringing theology into the context, the Roman Catholics have opted to use the term *enculturation/acculturation* for the same. For the Roman Catholic, “*enculturation/inculturation* is the logical consequence of effective evangelization.” They strongly maintain that “[t]he Good News of Jesus Christ is not addressed to the iso-

lated individuals, but to people for whom culture is part of the human phenomenon.” With this kind of evangelistic model in practice, the Roman Catholics view culture as the starting point from which the effective evangelization starts. While they have the *Text* (Scripture), the *Context* (Culture) becomes the starting point in which culture (the context) dialogues with the text of Scripture. In such a scenario, both the text and the context stay at the same level while doing evangelism, as neither judges the other. This becomes the cause of syncretism.

Sects and cults

In Africa today, the spread of sects and cults is alarming. With the expansion of Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Legio Maria, Akorino¹⁶ and other religious groups, such movements are increasingly gaining strongholds across many parts in Africa. Many reasons can be given as to how and why these sects/cults emerge. While some may split because they lack some fulfilment on their spiritual needs, as Ogutu¹⁷ observes, others may opt to start their churches after being disciplined or defrocked by their mainline churches. Still others will split due to leadership struggles. Oddly

enough, the majority of those leading sects/cults in Africa have very limited theological education. Several African self-proclaimed prophets mingle elements of Christianity with African Traditional religiosities and claim the leadership of these sects. Disappointingly enough, such prophets gather significant number of followers whom they mislead. Because of their lack of proper theological education is coupled with distorted Christian ethics, their teachings are misleading — others more dangerous — even to the point of misleading their followers willingly to

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to repentance for our
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such repentant sinners.

¹⁵ “The term ‘inculturation’ was first coined by Joseph Masson in 1962. It was used by Pedro Arrupe during the 1977 Synod of Roman Catholic Bishops and was the subject of a letter which he addressed to the Society of Jesus in 1978. It was first adopted officially by John Paul II in the synodal document *Catechesi Tradendae* of 1979, and has since entered into theological currency. It is a term popular with African Christian theologians who see African Theology as the foremost instance of inculturation and a means to combat cultural alienation in the African Church.” African Traditional Religion and Inculturation, written and posted by Aylward Shorter in <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-10/CH2.htm>.

¹⁶ Although many AIC accept the use of modern medicines, schools, education and even modern technology, the Akorino Church and other AICs preach against such things. While some of these sects/cults originate in Africa, others come from outside, namely Europe, America and Asia.

¹⁷ “There's a feeling of being shut out” in the mainstream church, says Ogutu Agnes Masitsa, who attended a Catholic Church before she moved to Nairobi in 1988. One Kenyan movement, called Thaa, preaches a “back to Africa” idea that aims to keep “white” ideas out of Africa. “Christianity has never helped us or our countrymen,” says Maina Karanja, a 77-year-old doctor. “All that it has done is taken our culture backwards.” Posted by MSNBC News, March 28, 2000, by Stefan Lovgren (Cult Education Institute).

take death as part of their commitment to their religion. Stefan Lovgren observes:

Hundreds of members of the small sect, The Movement of the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, including 78 children, died in a fire in a church in Kanungu, 220 miles southwest of the capital, Kampala Two cult leaders, Joseph Kibwetere, a defrocked Catholic priest, and Cledonia Mwerinde, a former prostitute, may have fled before the fire as the cult grew increasingly divided after the world did not end Dec. 31, as church leaders had predicted.¹⁸

Healing rituals form the major part of the spiritual life of many sects/cults. Scholars have pointed out some similarities between the African traditional healing system¹⁹ and the healing practiced by many African Initiated Churches (AIC).²⁰ The so-called “healing ministry” attracts many people, especially in the developing countries because of the economic difficulties and widespread health problems. In the AICs, fighting demonic spirits is a common phenomenon; the worship is not complete until the demon is exorcised. This type of ‘spiritual warfare’ worship grounds its power around a “self-proclaimed prophet” or the sect’s or cult’s leader. In times of crisis (deaths, burial rituals, prolonged diseases, disasters caused by natural calamities, etc.) people, even the so called “Christians,” would go to such prophets/leaders seeking answers, prayers or healing, etc., from them.

The Lutheran mission in Africa should not under-rate such sects and or cultic movements. How should the Lutheran Church in Africa seriously address such situations? To the African Church leaders and seminary professors gathered here today, what steps are we collectively or individually taking to address such challenges? Three or four years ago, I remember we had a provocative conference in Ghana where we discussed some of such challenges. A follow up meeting is needed again and the papers presented should be published and some of those papers used in our seminaries.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision* (Elva, Scotland: Robert Canigham & Sons Ltd., 1963). According to Taylor, classroom religion refers to the practice by which religious belief is only practiced in the church or within the bounds of the missionary’s reach.

²⁰ Bengt Sundkler, *Christian Ministry in Africa* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 14. Anssi Simojoki, “The Ministry of the Church and the Call of Mission: Africa Reflection,” in *The Office of the Ministry*, ed. John R. Fehrmann and Daniel Preus (Crestwood, MO: Luther Academy, 1996).

Islam

As it was during the sixteenth century Reformation period, the spread of Islam “is perhaps the most serious” threat in Africa today. All of Northern Africa, West Africa, Central Africa and the East Coast of Africa have been dominated by Muslims. Where Muslims dominate, violence becomes the order of the day. In Kenya today some Christian pastors have been ruthlessly killed, churches burned down and all sorts of violence experienced. The most threatening situation is that Muslims are moving even to the inter-lands in East Africa, building mosques and schools and offering scholarships as they gain more converts. At the same time Muslim merchants are financing huge projects, as many of the petrol stations owned by Muslims all across Africa. Pastor Richard Bucher rightly observes: “It is most alarming to see Muslim “missionaries” intentionally at work in Africa, building mosques in remote villages and openly proselytizing in public places.” How can the Lutheran mission in Africa challenge the spread of Islam in Africa? How do we incorporate such challenges into our seminary programs? As seminary leaders and church leaders, how do we continue equipping parish pastors, evangelists and deaconesses, even the Church elders and Christians at large, in the local congregations, on how to deal with such challenges?

3: The Lutheran Church is a catechetical church.

As confessional Lutherans, it is time to go back to our Confessions to collectively and individually start thinking and acting rightly. It is so disappointing to see some major church bodies, Christian organizations and some wealthy individuals, etc., seriously working so hard to convince younger growing churches to accept the ordination of women; others are working hard to spread lies about some younger church leadership, thinking that they have right answers for such churches, thinking that they must teach those churches how to lead their churches rightly. Sadly enough, other major churches in the West, church institutions and some individual congregations work so hard with their monies, sponsoring individual splinter groups, empowering them to split the churches in Africa. In reality the Christian Church needs to concentrate on the Great Commission, walking with each other towards maintaining our treasured heritage by evangelizing the un-evangelized and pastoring the established churches. Evidently the Lutheran Confessions are rich enough to enrich and equip confessional Lutheran churches in Africa to deal with all such challenging religious groups

in proper catechetical classes. Properly speaking, Islam is not a peaceful religion as the Muslims themselves tend to sometimes claim. Their target is to conquer all of Africa, if not the whole world, at this decade.

In doing Lutheran Missiology in Africa in the twenty-first century, one needs to take seriously into consideration the functional cultural elements in that particular culture. However, in this process, the confessional Lutheran mission has to carefully guard itself against what Gene Veith calls, “a merely cultural religion,” that which has been fueled by “accommodationists,” “synthesists” and “separatists,” who tend to down-play the transcendental aspect of religion at the expense of divinizing culture.²¹ In other words, what is needed is not acculturation/enculturation, or health and wealth promises or contextual accommodationism models, but a true preaching of the Law and Gospel, coupled with proper administration of unadulterated Sacraments of our Lord Jesus Christ. For where the Gospel of Christ is taught in its truth and purity, and people are rooted and grounded in Christ, there the saints grow in the culture of Christ’s love and render services of mercy to their neighbors. This actually happened in the pagan cultures of Greece and Rome of the early Church, as well as to the nomism of Saul of Tarsus and to those who had perverted the promise of the Old Testament and made of it a means for self-justification before God.

Time and again, in the mission of the apostles, godless culture was transformed — not by cultural accommodation, or inculturational practices or promising a utopian world, a world free of problems of health and wealth — but by the good news that God justifies the ungodly by His grace alone through faith alone for the sake of the atonement of Christ alone.

Is the Lutheran Church still a catechetical church as Luther intended it to be?

When looking closely at our second question, I am much reminded that in many ways we are living in a time that the Church has seen before. Many a time Lutherans may give the appearance of a great lake. Not only are Lutheran Christians beset by corruption imposed upon them such as has been seen in the pollution of the Kavirondo Gulf near my home in Kisumu at Lake Victoria, but the Confessing Church often times is ignorant of her own confession. I am reasonably certain that your experience

with seminary students mirrors my own, in that students come to the seminary ignorant of the laymen’s Bible, *Luther’s Small Catechism*. The rich and deep well that is the Lutheran Confession is often abandoned for more modern theological faiths (pop theologies) that appear wide and vast but are, in reality, only an inch deep. Such shallow faith cannot sustain in times of crisis or temptation, nor answer the questions posed by this age. Is this because we have ignored our Confessional heritage?

Perhaps we are in a period of time not unlike 1525–1527, when Martin Luther and others were involved in parish visitations. Listen again to Dr. Luther:

The deplorable, miserable condition that I discovered recently when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. ²Mercy! Dear God, what great misery I beheld! The common person, especially in the villages, has no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine. And unfortunately, many pastors are completely unable and unqualified to teach. ³This is so much so, that one is ashamed to speak of it. Yet, everyone says that they are Christians, have been baptized, and receive the holy Sacraments, even though they cannot even recite the Lord’s Prayer or the Creed or the Ten Commandments.²²

It is time to ask serious questions of all Lutheran teachers and Lutheran pastors in Africa: Have we been faithful from the smallest parish through to seminary training and beyond? Have the leaders of the Lutheran Church faithfully carried out their vocations to supervise the teaching of those whom they oversee? Or has it been just too easy to go along to get along? After all, no one wants to be a leader of a declining church.

Today we are reminded that the confessing Church is always the repenting Church and the catechetical Church. For where there is repentance, there is forgiveness, and where there is forgiveness administered and admonished through the Holy Sacraments, the gates of heaven are opened. Such a Church continues in a catechetical ocean. That is the confessing Lutheran Church we seek to have in Africa, especially in this twenty-first century.

Is the Lutheran Church, as represented in this conference, prepared this day to repent of her failures to adhere faithfully to the pure Gospel and all its articles, and to return both to confess faithfully and continue steadfastly

²¹ In Angus J. L. Menuge, ed. *Christ and Culture in Dialogue* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1999), 18.

²² P. T. McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 313.

in study of this Confession — a treasure bequeathed to us? When we are turned by our gracious God to repentance for our failures to adhere faithfully and confess the pure Gospel and all its articles, then God will continue to shower His mercy and grace upon such repentant sinners. Only in the certainty of His mercy and grace toward sinners alone, can you place your hope, your faith and your confidence toward the future. Such Spirit-created faith in the pure Gospel and the blessed Sacraments will move each of us to proclaim Christ joyfully. Such faith in Christ will move repentant sinners to confess Christ joyfully. The pure Gospel will create and sustain such faith that joyfully continues to encourage the teachers of this faith to be again and again grounded in this apostolic and confessional treasure we call the Lutheran Confessions.

This pure Gospel will enlighten pastors and teachers of the faith to catechize the Church in this Gospel teaching that is so clearly given to the Church in the Small Catechism of Dr. Luther. Then faithfully armed with the Gospel rightly taught and confessed, the Lutheran Church will, by the grace of God alone, continue to nurture the faith of the next generation. When the confessing Church is firmly grounded in the pure Gospel, the Sacraments will be administered in a manner that is in harmony with that Gospel.

Finally, in response to the theme of this conference and the theme of this day, namely, “Repentance,” allow me to conclude with this extensive quote from G. Friedrich Bente, in his preface to *The Concordia Triglotta*, first published almost one hundred years ago, in 1921:

The Lutheran Church differs from all other churches in being essentially the Church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments. Not the great number of her adherents, not her organizations, not her charitable and other institutions, not her beautiful customs and liturgical forms, and so forth, but the precious truths confessed by her symbols in perfect agreement with the Holy Scriptures constitute the true beauty and rich treasures of our Church, as well as the never-failing source of her vitality and power. Wherever the Lutheran Church ignored her symbols or rejected all or some of them, there she always fell an easy prey to her enemies. But wherever she held fast to her God-given crown, esteemed and studied her Confessions, and actually made them a norm and standard of her entire life and practice, there the Lutheran Church flourished and confounded all her enemies.

Accordingly, if Lutherans truly love their Church, and desire and seek her welfare, they must be faithful to her Confessions and constantly be on their guard lest anyone rob her of her treasure.²³

This quotation speaks to all Lutherans who without reservation continue to stand in the teaching of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in our day and in whatever culture, continent or clime they may belong. It is so evident that the Lutheran Reformation, and in particular the Lutheran Confessions, remain relevant at all times to all cultures, challenging all that the changing cultures or any religious ideology or practice may bring forth. Without Luther’s Reformation, there would have been no clear articulation of salvation, for the Gospel would have remained largely hidden. When we celebrate the Reformation, we are celebrating this rediscovery of the Gospel that we believe, teach and confess; we are celebrating our salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. This is why we confidently speak of the relevance of the Lutheran Reformation, even in Africa today.

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²³ *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, xxiii–xxiv. Such is the object also of this Jubilee Edition, the *Triglot Concordia* (Triglot is to be understood as three languages: German, Latin and English). F. Bente Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., July 4, 1921.

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THE REFORMATION AND ASIA: ANOTHER BATTLEGROUND OF CONFESSION AND LITURGY

by Naomichi Masaki

The minority Lutherans

LUTHERANS DO NOT USUALLY THINK OF ASIA when they think of world Lutheranism. Nowadays, they perhaps begin to think of Africa or perhaps even of South America. For instance, a scholarly society, such as the International Congress on Luther Research, went to the Southern Hemisphere, Porto Alegre in Brazil, for the first time in 2012. The Ethiopian and Tanzanian Lutheran Churches are fast growing. Wonderful things are happening in Russia and in Latin America. In Scandinavia, the faithful remnants of Lutherans are daily and heroically battling the good fight of the faith. But what about Lutheranism in Asia? We don't hear very much about it.

The fact is, Lutherans in Asia struggle. The Christian population in general is very small there, and the Lutherans make up only a tiny bit of that minority. For example, my home country, Japan, is only less than 1 percent Christian, and the membership of all Lutheran church bodies there is only about 30,000; that is, 3 percent of that 1 percent. I was born and raised in Japan. I was baptized as an infant through a Norwegian missionary. My parents had been converted from Buddhism by that time, and from all other traditional religions. I know that all the missionaries I knew had been hard workers. Japanese pastors, too, together with the members of their congregations, have been witnessing to the Lord with all of their strengths and with all of their talents. I know that we need to recognize them with deepest gratitude for all of their truly dedicated and selfless services. And yet the Lutheran churches in Asia are not numerically growing as they are in Africa. Why? I don't know. And I'm not, of course, in a position to provide any humble suggestions for church growth. We know from the Scripture that the result of missionary and evan-

gelistic work is not given to us to control. It belongs to the promise of the Lord and not to human calculations. We don't instruct the Lord to do what, when and how, as if He needed from us some latest mission paradigms, programs and strategies. Our Lord justifies sinners when and where it pleases Him in those who hear the Gospel (AC V). It

is all His doing from the beginning to the end. Therefore, freed from having to worry about "the desired outcomes," we are given to consider whether we have been faithful to the Lord and whether or not we want the Reformation to impact Asia today.

We recognize that the confession and liturgy are the battleground for the Lutheran churches in Asia as well. If the Reformation makes an impact on Lutheranism in Asia, it should be found in preaching and in the Sacraments.

The challenging environment

Before we proceed further, let us identify a few more facts about Lutheranism in Asia. First, we need to be aware that the Lutheran churches in Asia are relatively young.

Although some Lutheran congregations existed in the early eighteenth century in India, and several others in the nineteenth century in Japan and arguably in Indonesia, the majority of the Lutheran churches in Asia started in the twentieth century, particularly after the war. Second, what is most striking about Asia is that the minority of Christians are surrounded by tremendous religious pluralism.¹ In India, 2.5 percent of the people are Christians; 78 percent are Hindus and 15 percent are Muslims (2011 census). In Japan, there are 3,000 religions and over 20,000 idols that are regularly worshipped. Out of its population of about 120 million, roughly 80 million belong to Buddhism, another 80 million belong to Shintoism,

¹ Vitor Westhelle, "Saint, Servant, Prophet: A Theological Reflection on the Church in Asia," in *Between Vision and Reality: Lutheran Churches in Transition*, Lutheran World Federation Documentation No. 47, ed. Wolfgang Greive (Geneva, Switzerland: The Lutheran World Federation, 2001), 66.

and all of them belong to Confucianism. It is not uncommon in Japan for a single person to hold more than one religion. Third, while Asia as a whole is rapidly changing with its modernization of industry and technology, every part of Asia still firmly retains its long and deep-rooted traditions with cultural specificities and characteristics.²

Under such circumstances, ecclesiastically speaking, that is, in doctrine and practice, churches in Asia, including the Lutheran churches, are found in a situation not unlike one in nineteenth century Germany under the Prussian Union. There is general religious tolerance among the churches. The confessional differences have been diminished or even ignored. Pulpit exchanges are observed across denominations. Open Communion is a common practice almost everywhere. Lay church workers who have been trained by non-Lutheran institutions are regularly welcomed into Lutheran congregations without question. Pentecostalism is strong, and it is often accompanied with many church growth techniques. Liturgy is weak, so is Lutheran hymnody. Concerning the Office of the Holy Ministry, sadly, most Lutheran churches are either in favor of the ordination of women or have it in place. Also, Lutheran seminaries which actually teach the Lutheran Confessions are nearly absent. An old Enlightenment motif, that each denomination complements the others so as to make one harmonious Christian Church, is prevailing. It seems that the ecumenical slogan from the Lutheran World Federation, *From Conflict to Communion*, is the general direction of the Lutheranism in Asia. The visible unity of the churches is desired and pursued.³

Sociological explanations

Why do the Lutherans in Asia look this way? Why isn't there a distinct Lutheran character there overall? One

way to explain this is the fact of particular Asian context. Because the dominant religious and cultural forces are so enormously strong, and because the Christian churches are in such a minority, Christians feel a closer bond to one another, not only within various Lutheran church bodies but also across all Christian denominations. The confessional difference among the Christians is viewed as rather trivial compared to the more gigantic common enemies. Many Asian Christians feel that a divided Christianity can only send a negative message to the non-Christians.⁴ Obviously, this is something which commonly takes place in every foreign mission field.⁵ But what is unique about Asia is the overwhelming diversity of religions and world views, the historical deep-seated-ness of local cultural traditions, and the emotional character of spirituality that dismisses rationalistic thinking. After all, what the Western societies have come to know as post-modernism with its accents of ambiguity, healing, taste, progress and choice, has existed in Asian soil for centuries. Many religions in Asia aim at empowering your own heart and letting you feel a god within you.⁶

Another way of explaining the situation in Asia is that the antagonism against the paternalism and the colonialism of the missionaries still hasn't disappeared.⁷ In many Asian countries, poverty, violence, war, racism, sexism, economic and political oppression, etc., are still real issues. The missionaries have also helped with those problems. But as the national churches grew stronger, they became tired of being treated as small children. Precisely in order to react against the paternalism and colonialism of the western mission societies, Henry Venn (1796–1873), the head of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, and

Without evangelical Lutheran chorales, it is impossible to have a confessional Lutheran Church. Liturgy and hymnody, as well as catechism, play a big role in the life of the Lutheran Church.

² Yoshikazu Tokuzen, "Lutheran Identity and Communion in the Multicultural Context of Asia," in Heinrich Holze ed., *The Church as Communion: Lutheran Contributions to Ecclesiology*, LWF Documentation No. 42, 1997 (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1997), 400.

³ Ibid., 404–405. See also *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*, Report of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013).

⁴ Yoshiro Ishida, "Asia," in *Church in Fellowship*, vol. 2: *Pulpit and Altar Fellowship among Lutheran Minority and Younger Churches*, eds. Paul E. Hoffman and Harding Meyer (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 40.

⁵ E. J. Bergt, "Inter-Lutheran Seminaries," in *All-Asia Conference on Theological Training*, ed. Herman H. Koppelman (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1964), 71.

⁶ Naomichi Masaki, "The Quest for Experiencing the Divine: the Rise and effect of Eastern Religions," *For the Life of the World* 11 (January 2007): 8–10.

⁷ Hermann Sasse, "The Lutheran Church and World Mission," trans. Andrew Smith, in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, volume 2, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 319.

Rufus Anderson (1796–1880), the head of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, developed the so-called “three-self” formula. There are several implications of the adoption of this model to consider. First, a critique of old mission strategies ran together with a challenge against the confessional approach to missions at the same time. James Scherer, then the Dean of School of Missions of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, reported that in 1961 the East Asia Christian Conference proceeded to attack the existence of world confessional bodies as detrimental to the interests of Asian churches. “The very vitality of the confessional loyalties often creates serious obstacles in the life of the younger churches” because it “reinforces patterns of paternalism and continued exercise of control.”⁸ Secondly, the principles of self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing have led the mother churches of the West to theologically disengage themselves from the young churches. As a consequence, the “three-self” turned into the “four-self,” as self-theologizing was added into the mix. And thirdly, because this self-theologizing was based on the realization that theologies which the young churches had received from the missionaries were conditioned by the particular European and North American development, a need was felt to devise indigenous theologies.⁹ Japan needs to develop a Japanese theology to make Christ more relevant, and so on. Ironically, however, in most cases such contextualized theologies were merely fancy names for the prevailing liberal theology of the West.¹⁰ In the place of traditional theologies, the Asian

The Reformation and Asia — there is much to rejoice in and praise. There is much to repent about. And there is much to look forward to.

pastors who received an advanced theological education in the West brought back with them what they learned there and introduced it to the home country by renaming it to suit their own culture. In other words, the theological vacuum that had been created by the disengagement of the mother churches was filled only by ecumenical relationships and organizations.¹¹

Theological questions

While these socio-missiological concerns have a place in our diagnosis, there is still another factor that explains the Asian situation of the Lutheran churches — a theological question. Here, Hermann Sasse is quite helpful to guide our thinking. In his “Worldwide Lutheranism on the Way to Hanover,” he observed that the Lutheran Church has always struggled for self-understanding, that is, there has always been disagreement inside of Lutheranism itself about what the Lutheran Church is. During the six-

teenth century there was a struggle regarding Philippism. Then, syncretism followed in the seventeenth century, unionism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and ecumenism in the twentieth century. At issue was always the question: To what extent do the rejection formulas in the Augsburg Confession build an ecclesiastical boundary over against other Protestant denomina-

tions? Sasse wrote:

The struggle in the 16th century ended with the victory of Gnesio Lutheranism in the Formula of Concord. In the 17th century, orthodoxy overcame syncretism, whose concerns were successfully taken up by Pietism. Unionism, rooted in Pietism and demanded by the Enlightenment, was still rejected at the beginning of the 18th century, but came into power one hundred years later in large areas of German Lutheranism. The reaction of the Lutheran Awakening and the Lutheranism of the American Midwest, which was bound up with this Awakening,

China, developed his own theology on the basis of liberation theology, process theology, and especially theology of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The prosperity theology of David Yong-gi Cho is rooted in the healing revivals of the 1950s in America.

¹¹ Darin Storkson, the regional director of Asia of the Office of International Mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, recognizes this problem. I am indebted to him for his many helpful observations of Asian Lutheranism.

⁸ James Scherer, “The Confessions in the Younger Churches with Particular Reference to the Problem of Christian Unity in Asia,” in *The Church and the Confessions: The Role of the Confessions in the Life and Doctrine of the Lutheran Churches*, eds. Vilmos Vajta and Hans Weissgerber (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 149–50.

⁹ Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur, “Evangelical Declarations on Contextualization,” in *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*, eds. Bong Rin Ro and Eshenaur (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 3–27; Bon Rin Ro, “Contextualization: Asian Theology,” in *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts*, 63–77. Yoshikazu Tokuzen, “Wither Lutheranism?: An Asian Perspective,” *Word & World* 11 (Summer 1991): 265–68.

¹⁰ For example, the Third-Eye Theology of Choan Seng Song of Taiwan who earned his Ph.D from Union Theological Seminary in New York developed his theology partly on the basis of Zen Buddhism of Japan and partly on the basis of liberation theology. Bishop K. H. Ting (or Ding Guangxun), the theological pillar of the Three-Self Church in

enabled the existence of the Lutheran Church to be rescued in those places in which it had not yet been swallowed up by the union. But unionism, which in Germany came to the church, remained unconquered, inasmuch as no union was actually reversed. Unionism allied itself with ecumenism, which was rooted in the 19th century (mission) and in the 20th century organized itself powerfully. By “ecumenism” we understand a certain perversion of the Ecumenical Movement, which not only works toward a reordering of mutual relations of the Christian churches and toward their cooperation while yet respecting the different confessions, but rather which strives to ignore and remove confessional differences, exactly as unionism wants unification while setting aside the question of truth, instead of the true union, which is a unification in the truth.¹²

Sasse’s observation here is very weighty because he was not only a mere observer of the ecumenical movement but was a participant and practitioner. If there is a lack of Lutheran distinctiveness in Asia today, it is because of the unresolved unionism which was only reinforced by the modern ecumenism. Simply put, Asian Lutherans continue to be left within the ecclesiastical environment where Reformed theology triumphs over Lutheran confessions.

Asia as another battleground of confession and liturgy

Such an observation with Sasse takes us back to our critical question: Do the Lutheran churches in Asia today really want to be confessional Lutheran churches? Do we want the Reformation to impact in Asia? If the answer is in the affirmative, we must make sure that we have answered another more fundamental question: What is the Lutheran Church? What does it mean when a church is called Lutheran?¹³

¹² Hermann Sasse, “Worldwide Lutheranism on the Way to Hanover,” trans. Andrew Smith, in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, volume 1, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 418–19.

¹³ Luther himself never approved his name to be attached to the Church. WA 10/2: 39.26–49; AE 36: 265–66. Jesus atoned for the sin of the whole world, and Luther didn’t. Jesus preaches Law and Gospel, while the office into which Luther was put merely served as a mouth

We continue to hold that the Lutheran Church is the Church of the Augsburg Confession, the Church of *concordia*, the entire Book of Concord. This means that just as St. Paul wrote to Titus (1:9), if we want the churches in Asia to bear the name Lutheran, we are to be serious about confessing Christ and His doctrine and rejecting false Christ and false doctrine.¹⁴ The history of the Church since the sixteenth century has indicated that the battleground has always been the preaching and the sacraments, the very means of grace through which the Augustana VII defined *the* Church.

In terms of preaching, we are reminded of the sermons and orations by Luther’s closest colleagues at his death in 1546. Melancthon, Bugenhagen and Jonas all agreed to point out that Luther’s enduring legacy is to be found in the proper distinction between the preaching of the Law and the preaching of the Gospel.¹⁵ The papacy, the enthusiasts, the sacramentarians, and antinomians all reduced the Law to a mere command, a rule, a system,

a structure; a neat little package that lacks the proper office of the Law to threaten and to kill. For this reason they understood neither sin nor Jesus the Savior.

The weakness of preaching diminishes the Lord’s Supper. Sasse discussed that the changed attitude toward the Sacrament was the deepest cause for the lack of understanding of Lutheran identity, starting with the Philippism, through pietism and rationalism, and all the way to unionism and ecumenism.¹⁶ The Lutherans’ battleground against unionism and false ecumenism is the doctrine of *unio sacramentalis* and *genus maijesticum* (SD VII, SD VIII). When there is a hesitation to confess *unio sacramentalis*, we are swallowed up by the Augustinian *signum* theory. Conversely, when the *signum* theory is overcome, there was the Reformation.¹⁷

of Jesus. Jesus forgives sinners; Luther didn’t. Jesus baptizes and administers the sacrament. Again, Luther didn’t. He simply rendered his mouth and hands as the Lord’s instruments. Jesus builds His Church, and Luther didn’t. The Church is Christ’s and not Luther’s.

¹⁴ Sasse, “The Worldwide Lutheranism,” 405.

¹⁵ See my “Hearing the Voice of Jesus Together: Luther–Memoria in His Funeral Sermons” and “Luther on Law and Gospel in his Lectures on Galatians 1531/35,” both of which are scheduled to be published within a year.

¹⁶ Sasse, “The Worldwide Lutheranism,” 419.

¹⁷ Oswald Bayer, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, *Martin Luther’s Theology: A*

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The consecrated bread that a pastor holds in his hands and puts on the lips of the communicants is the body of Christ. The consecrated cup that a pastor holds in his hands and distributes to the communicants is the blood of Christ. The Lord's Supper is a particular location where Jesus seeks to find His people in order to comfort them. In Him the fullness of deity dwells bodily (Col. 2:9). Apart from this man Jesus in His Body and Blood there is no God. The Formula of Concord emphasizes that in this way, Jesus wants to be with us, dwell, work and be effective in us in the Lord's Supper (SD VIII, 76–79). We are given no other God than Jesus who forgives our sin in the *externum verbum* (AC V, SA III, VIII). The Lord's Supper is at the center of the life of His Church. Lutherans cannot live without it, simply because the Holy Communion is the Gospel. Doctrine and liturgy belong inseparably together. When the great mis-
 siologist, Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf of Blackmar mission said: “*Lutherische Kirche treibt Lutherische Mission*,” or “The Lutheran Church can only do Lutheran mission, and Lutheran mission can be done only by a Lutheran Church,” he meant that the Lutheran Church that results from the Lutheran mission is precisely the place where Jesus deals with us by preaching Law and Gospel and by bestowing His body and blood for us to eat and to drink.¹⁸ The Lutheran Church is the means of grace church. The Lutheran mission is the means of grace mission. Lutheran pastors are the means of grace pastors.

What does this all mean for Asian Lutheranism? It

means that we recognize that the confession and liturgy are the battleground for the Lutheran churches in Asia as well. If the Reformation makes an impact on Lutheranism in Asia, it should be found in preaching and in the Sacraments. Without evangelical Lutheran chorales, it is impossible to have a confessional Lutheran Church. Liturgy and hymnody, as well as catechism, play a big role in the life of the Lutheran Church.

Lutherans struggle in Asia. They are a minority in society. They are also surrounded by incredibly strong anti-Christian religious and cultural forces. Despite these challenges, the Lord's promise never changes.

The Reformation and Asia — there is much to rejoice in and praise. There is much to repent about. And there is much to look forward to. Asian Lutheranism can only live on in the company of true *koinonia* of the global Lutheranism, because we need strong confessional bond with each other. Lutherans struggle in Asia. They are a minority in society. They are also surrounded by incredibly strong anti-Christian religious and

cultural forces. Despite these challenges, the Lord's promise never changes. Jesus will be with the Church today, tomorrow and forever, precisely in the means of grace!

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Contemporary Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 52. Signum theory was prominent not only in sacramentarians of Luther's life time, but also in the second sacramentarian controversy of the Formula of Concord Era through the Consensus Tigrinus of 1549. How this theory is useful to obscure what is concrete in doctrine is demonstrated by Minna Hietamäki in her ecumenical understanding of church and ministry. Minna Hietamäki, “The Ecumenical relevance of the Marks of the Church,” in *One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church: Some Lutheran and Ecumenical Perspectives*, LWF Studies 2009, ed. Hans-Peter Grosshans (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2009), 49–64.

¹⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, “*Lutherische Kirche treibt Lutherische Mission*,” in *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission: Festschrift zum 75 jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission, 1982, 14 Juni, 1967*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (Blackmar über Soltau [Hannover]: Mission Evangelisch–Lutherischer Freikirchen, 1967), 13–47. This essay was recently translated by Rachel Mumme with Matthew C. Harrison and published in *Journal of Lutheran Mission* (April 2015), 6–28.

EUROPE: DEFECTION FROM THE CONFESSIONAL BASE AND NEW SIGNS OF ITS VITALITY

by Darius Petkunas

How have the major Lutheran churches in Europe defected from the Lutheran Confessions? And what does the future hold for European Christianity at present?

EUROPE DIFFERS FROM OTHER CONTINENTS in that it bears a very special relationship to the Lutheran Reformation. It was in Europe that the Lutheran Reformation was born, and it was from Europe that it spread to other continents. However, the Lutheran Church in this continent is very different from the Lutheran Church in the days of the Reformation. One may in fact declare that modern Europe seems to have almost completely lost its connection with the Reformation.

Europe has become secularized and the Lutheran churches in Europe have in general lost their connection with the confessional treasures they had been permitted to deliver to so many generations. While the churches still claim to hold to the Scriptures and the central truths of the Reformation, the Lutheran Confessions no longer play any role as standard and norm of teaching and life in many of these churches. This

defection has opened the door to all sorts of heterodoxy, as is clearly observable today. It is the intention of this address to delve into the question of how it has happened that the major Lutheran churches in Europe have defected from the classical Lutheran Confessions and also to offer some observations concerning the present European situation, putting primary attention on the territorial churches (*Landeskirchen*) — churches that have traditionally claimed an absolute majority of the people of the land as their members.

1. Adherence to the confessional norms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Both in the preface to the Augsburg Confession and again in the words introducing the second part of that document, the confessors clearly stated that their churches had

introduced no novelties in doctrine or ceremony but had steadfastly maintained the ancient faith, casting aside only what had been introduced contrary to the Word of God. That a church is confessional is a clear statement that the unity of that church is not built upon earthly orders, foundations and structures but upon the clear confession of the apostolic faith, as set down in accordance to words of the inspired prophets and apostles and Christ Himself and set down in the Church's Creeds and Confessions.

As Richard John Neuhaus, a social critic once prominent within the Lutheran Church, wisely stated: "Once orthodoxy is made optional, it is sooner or later excluded."

Accordingly, the Word of God is understood to be the definitive norm of all that is believed, taught and confessed in the Church (*norma normans*) and the Lutheran Confessions are confessed to be the clear statement of that norm of faith, confession and teaching (*norma normata*). The confession of the Church intends to articulate unchanging truth. Although these Confessions were articulated in particular times

and places, the Lutheran Church declares that its confessional statements are neither time nor place conditioned. They are unchangeable and non-negotiable and in this the Lutheran Church differs from every other Protestant Church. The Reformed and Anglican Churches also have confessional documents, but they understand their Confessions to be time conditioned historical documents that represent the position taken by the church at a particular time and in a particular situation.

Throughout the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, Lutheran churches sought to remain united and firm in their common faith, confession and teaching. They understood their Reformation truth to be firmly established and on this basis it was possible for them to recognize each other as sister churches and allow altar and pulpit fellowship. There appears to have been no instances of closed

Communion between Lutheran churches, which would bar faithful Lutherans from receiving the Sacrament from Lutheran altars.

2. Defection from the norms in the eighteenth century

Clear defections from norms set by the Lutheran Confessions became evident in the second half of the eighteenth century with the rise of Enlightenment Rationalism. Even though the Halle-type Pietism of August Hermann Francke had introduced new and strange teachings that separated regeneration from Holy Baptism — a clear departure from the Church's doctrinal norm — the Pietists still claimed to be adhering to the Lutheran Confessions. The Rationalists who followed them could make no such claims. Their departures from the Church's norms were both comprehensive and thoroughgoing. They treated the Scriptures as human documents, questioned the doctrinal norms derived from them and introduced higher biblical criticism in academic circles. Before the end of the eighteenth century, many Lutheran ecclesiastical leaders and academicians in Europe had become adherents of the Enlightenment Rationalism and its dependence on human reason alone.

Weakened by Pietism and deprived of its objective norms by Rationalism, the Church was not able to defend her doctrinal positions. In some Lutheran territories, it was from secular governments rather than church leaders that the strongest reaction against Rationalism and heterodoxies were sounded. Examples of this include Wöllner's Edict of 1788 in Prussia and similar *ukase* issued in the Russian Empire by Tsar Alexander I in 1819.

Only in Russia was the Church successfully returned to its scriptural and confessional norms. The tsar made it clear to the Lutherans in his empire that they were an immigrant people, whose lawful existence as a church depended upon their faithful adherence to their Church's Confessions. As a result of his declaration, the faculty of theology at the University of Dorpat was cleansed and its liberal, rationalist professors were retired. Dorpat would soon become the premier Lutheran confessional faculty in Europe. Critics refer to it as "ultra-confessional."

In the Prussian Church, the largest Lutheran Church

in Europe, the outcome of attempts by the government in the closing decades of the eighteenth century to re-establish Lutheran confessional norms were unsuccessful. The reaction against the censorship of religious literature was strong and the purging of the Lutheran faculties of theology was derided as governmental oppression. Those who implemented these programs were called "Protestant inquisitors." Even the eminent Professor Immanuel Kant came under close scrutiny when his fourth critique of reason, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, was published. He was officially reprimanded and chose to resign his position in the University of Königsberg.

Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III devised his own program to meet the challenge of Enlightenment Rationalism. He planned to revitalize Christianity by introducing new liturgies, the first of which appeared in 1816. He

Concerning the future of confessional Lutheranism in Europe one cannot speak with certainty. It has known hard times, but it has never altogether disappeared.

envisioned the adoption of a united Agenda and liturgy in both Lutheran and Reformed Churches. To his mind, the union of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches and the adoption of his Prussian Union liturgy were inseparably linked together. He thought that beautiful liturgy rather than the confessional norms would defeat Rationalism and revitalize the church. The efforts of Wöllner and his 1788 decree to restore confessional integrity were cast aside

and replaced by the imposition of a Church Union inaugurated on the 300th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 1817.

3. The reemergence of confessionalism in Germany

Confessionalism, however, was not dead. In soon reemerged primarily as a reaction against the Prussian Union and similar union efforts in other German lands. Strong negative reactions to the Prussian Union appeared first of all in Prussia itself under the leadership of Professor Johann Gottfried Scheibel in the city of Breslau in Silesia. It was here that, for what appears to be the first time, the policy of closed Communion was introduced, dividing Lutherans in the Union Church from Lutheran confessionists who soon came to be called "Old Lutherans." They understood that the Union Church had separated itself from pure Lutheran doctrine, and this made fellowship together with it impossible. Henceforth,

Lutheran altars would be closed to members of the Union Church. The Old Lutherans pledged themselves to remain faithful to the Church's Confessions even when faced with imprisonment.

Within the Union Church as well, some Lutherans came to a new appreciation of their confessional heritage and initiated an attempt to re-establish the Lutheran Church as *de jure* church body in Prussia. However, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV strictly forbid this, stating that it was not his intention to destroy his father's Union. Lutheran confessionalism survived in the Prussian Church only as an undercurrent, in a Church which had largely become estranged from its confessional heritage. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, this confessional resurgence had almost completely dissipated.

It is not clear to what extent confessionalism was able to re-establish itself in other Lutheran territorial churches in Germany. One can speak with some certainty about the Bavarian Church, which had earlier established a union but soon rejected it on confessional grounds. This Bavarian church became more than ever determined to adhere to its confessional position. It is also clear that the Hanoverian Church was able to maintain its confessional integrity. To the chagrin of the king of Prussia, the Hanoverians expressed no interest in joining the Prussian Union when Hanover was annexed to Prussia in 1866.

4. The decline of confessionalism in the closing years of the nineteenth century

The resurgence of Lutheran confessionalism waned once again by the end of the nineteenth century. Theological education was in the hands of university academic faculties in which the voice of the Church was less clear and less distinct. This signaled the return of theological liberalism as a potent force. Now the battleground in Prussia shifted from a battle between confessionists and unionists to the struggle between conservatives and liberals. An example of this can be seen in the inability of the leaders

of the Prussian Union Church to make any clear and definite statements in support of a literal acceptance of the Apostles' Creed in all its statements over against Adolf Harnack's vague interpretation of the creed and its significance for the Church. The ancient norms receded into the background and the doors were opened to heterodoxy. In fact the heterodox now proudly proclaimed that they

were a group to be reckoned with in the Prussian Church and should be regarded as a legitimate faction in the Church alongside the Lutherans and the Reformed. The same tendencies could also be seen to have been at work in Scandinavia, the second major Lutheran area in Europe. In fact, Lutheranism in Europe might well be termed German and Scandinavian Lutheranism, since it was only in these regions that whole local populations had accepted the Lutheran Reformation and territorial churches had been established.

5. The struggle between Lutheran conservatism and liberalism in the twentieth century

Confessionalism was not sufficiently strong to become a potent force in the territorial churches in the twentieth century. Instead, Lutheran territorial churches moved steadily into the camp of theological liberalism. What tension has remained has

been the tension between theological conservatives and liberals. However, theological conservatism has lacked a single cohesive and definitive norm, such as the Confessions would provide, and for that reason it has gradually declined.

Lutheran churches in Germany faced a uniquely perilous situation from the Third Reich. In the 1930s, the Nazi government sought to take complete control of the Lutheran, Reformed and Union churches and make them instruments for the spread of its national socialist ideology. This strategy became evident in the state-supported *Deutsche Christen* movement. The Prussian Union Church and other union churches which had lost their confessional grounding were highly susceptible to the inroads of this movement. In the parish council

The Church is called to be faithful and to abide in hope. One should recall that half a century ago it appeared that the organized Christian Church had been completely eradicated in the Soviet Union, and the Soviets declared that within a few decades Christianity would be altogether a thing of the past. Today confessional Lutheran churches have re-emerged in what was formerly Soviet territory.

elections in 1933 the *Deutsche Christen* swept into control of all the Lutheran churches, excepting only in Bavaria, Württemberg and Hanover. Reaction against the *Deutsche Christen* within the German territorial churches led to the creation of the *Bekennende Kirche*, the confessing church. This movement, however, made no reference to the restoration of the Lutheran Confessions. It was instead concerned only with the preservation of what it termed the essentials of the Christian faith, as agreed to in the Barmen Declaration by the Lutheran, Reformed and Union Church representatives who formulated the declaration.

A further defection from the doctrinal norms of the Lutheran Confessions can be seen in the decision of the European Lutheran churches to ordain women to the Holy Ministry, first in Germany and later in Scandinavia and in other smaller European Lutheran churches. The decision was seen by many to be simply a socio-political matter that recognized the rights of women to hold high office in the Church. This was perhaps a most clear sign of defection from the Lutheran Confessions and the Word of God. It indicated that the Confessions no longer played any decisive role in the doctrine and life of major European Lutheran churches and that the Scriptures could be interpreted to support any one of a number of position which one chose to assert. In the wake of this decision astonishing new positions have been taken by major Western European Lutheran churches concerning human sexuality, marriage and reproduction. Indeed the decision to ordain women brought with it an earthshaking change in those churches that had traditionally claimed to be heirs of the Lutheran Reformation.

6. The present-day situation in Europe

In the closing years of the twentieth century and the opening decades of the twenty-first century, one sees almost complete submergence of conservatism in the mainline churches and at the same time a resurgence of Lutheran confessionalism. The German and Scandinavian territorial churches have surrendered to the forces of liberalism, and there appears to be for them no way back to the Confessions. The single exception to this is the case of the former territorial Church in Latvia, which since the early 1990s has ceased to ordain women and has sought

to establish and maintain a confessional stance in doctrine and practice.

In Eastern Europe, confessionalism is emerging in those Lutheran churches, which had been isolated from the West during the Soviet era. A sign of this is the clear rejection in these churches of calls to ordain women and the rejection of liberal statements concerning marriage, sexuality and abortion. Also elsewhere in Europe one can see the emergence of small Lutheran bodies, which seek to be faithful to the Confessions, some of which are now completely independent from their national churches and others of which still seek some accommodation with the national churches in their lands, while at the same time striving to establish and maintain confession integrity. One is reminded of the Lutheran associations,

which sought to maintain themselves within the structure of the Prussian Union Church in the nineteenth century.

The year 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Reformation jubilees have more than once given rise to alarming surprises. At the first

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centenary the Lutheran Hohenzollern family of Brandenburg-Prussia announced its conversion to Calvinism. Beginning at that time the electors and kings began their relentless efforts to estrange Lutherans from their confessional identity, even forbidding theological students to attend the University of Wittenberg, stating that it was unacceptable on theological grounds. They interfered in the internal life of the Lutheran Church and even banned subscription to the Formula of Concord. The second centenary saw the beginning of state-supported Pietism in Prussia. Elsewhere, the advocates of Pietism met with strong resistance in the churches, but in Prussia Pietism was established and granted legal status by King Friedrich Wilhelm I. The third centenary brought with it the inauguration of the Prussian Union and forced marriage of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. As Hermann Sasse once noted, such was the spirit in German lands in those jubilee days that other Lutheran churches would have gladly established ecclesiastical unions as well, but could not do so because there were simply not enough Reformed in their areas to do so.

Now the fifth centenary lies just ahead. Lutherans a hundred years ago could hardly envision the situation of the Lutheran Church in Europe today. No one could have

imagined the changes in the Holy Ministry and in a host of ethical issues, which are now considered so normal that those who speak out against them on biblical grounds face summary discipline for doing so. All previous promises concerning respect for consciences were soon rescinded. As Richard John Neuhaus, a social critic once prominent within the Lutheran Church, wisely stated: “Once orthodoxy is made optional, it is sooner or later excluded.”

Concerning the future of confessional Lutheranism in Europe one cannot speak with certainty. It has known hard times, but it has never altogether disappeared. The Church is called to be faithful and to abide in hope. One should recall that half a century ago it appeared that the organized Christian Church had been completely eradicated in the Soviet Union, and the Soviets declared that within a few decades Christianity would be altogether a thing of the past. Today confessional Lutheran churches have re-emerged in what was formerly Soviet territory. Indeed, adherence to the Lutheran Confessions is essential to the Church at all times and at all places. To abandon them or ignore them is to court heterodoxy and its potent challenges to the truth of the biblical message upon which the Lutheran Reformation has been built.

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REFORMATION TRUTH IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH: LATIN AMERICA

by Ricardo Rieth

THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION was established permanently in Latin America three centuries after Martin Luther's times. Lutheran ecclesiastical, educational, cultural, social and assistential institutions were established and focused on immigrant minority groups of the population, especially Germanic descendants. The Lutheran churches tried to present themselves as missionary institutions for other population groups, especially after the second half of the twentieth century. Some changes related to their characteristics of ethnic minority churches happened thereafter. However, Lutherans never had an insertion in the context of Latin American populations like other non-Catholic Christian groups, such as Baptists, for example, or especially Pentecostals in the last 50 years.

If we ask about the Lutherans' own charisma in Latin America, certainly it was and is not related to promoting the conversion of multitudes to the Gospel, at least if we consider the number of Lutherans and their congregations today. After several decades the number of Lutherans remains the same or decreases. If we were to ask to representatives of other Reformation-related church bodies their opinion about the Lutheran historical contribution in Latin America, they generally highlight the very qualified theological training offered by them. That is not perceived as an exclusive benefit for Lutherans, but means also theological education offered to theological and ecclesiastical leaders from other Christian groups.

Another consideration is that, until today, the preaching of the Reformation heirs in Latin America — I mean the Protestants — is only partially identified with the message of justification by grace and faith. From the outside, the faith of the *evangélicos* is often realized as a form

of religion concerned especially with "what is allowed and what is not allowed." That means that the center of evangelical faith is apprehended by outside observers as a kind of moralism which is almost exclusively focused on prescribing rules and codes to determine the believers' behavior. Actually, the intention of preaching the Gospel of God's grace and liberation from the oppression of the work righteousness very often is not being witnessed through words and deeds, so that this testimony

many times is not realized by outside observers in the perspective of justification by grace and faith, as we know it from Scripture and from the Lutheran Confessions.

This perception about the historical presence of the Reformation's heirs in Latin America, especially Lutherans, cannot simply close itself to a critical review. It should be seen as a challenge, an opportunity, a commitment delivered by God to

His Latin American Lutheran people in order to carry on His mission. The outside acknowledgement that Lutherans contribute to a qualified and necessary theological education for all who are involved in the mission of God is very important. In the center of this theological education must be the Reformation truth for the people in Latin America and worldwide. All over the world, in different times and contexts, this challenge moved Lutheran leaders in order to identify ways of confessing, interpreting, preaching, teaching and living in accordance to the Reformation truth. Helmar Junghans, my memorable professor in Leipzig, has shown me how significant the question on the Reformation truth was in the context of a European, unrighteous, socialist country, where the cross manifested itself to Christians in other ways, if compared with my unrighteous, capitalist country, Brazil. The way he wrote about the Reformation truth, describing the theme of

For Luther, life in its future form is not only a consequence of the final judgement. From now on, every day, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, believers are made holy.

Luther's theology, will help me to speak about our commitment to the Reformation truth in Latin America in the twenty-first century.

Interpreting Ps. 51:2 (1532), Luther says that the knowledge of God and the human being is the true and divine theological wisdom. That means the knowledge about God and the human being as it is related to the God who justifies and to the sinful human being. Therefore, the object of theology is the guilty and condemned person and God the Redeemer, who justifies (WA 40 II, 328, 1s). Thus, Luther places the guilty person in front of the justifying God. That means that for him the real issue, the key concern, the main interest of theology, is God, who acts, works and does His work. It is God who turns His attention to people and searches for them in their terrible condition. All this has to do with the Word of God. God works speaking His Word. God's Word creates everything from nothing and originates life where no life exists. Through His power, God does all things based on His Word in a dialogical process for the sinner's salvation.

Regarding Luke 1:49: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me," Luther said in his Magnificat interpretation (1521) that this statement means that nobody does anything, but only God operates everything. He works all things. All the works of creatures are works of God. The word "almighty" from the Apostolic Creed should be understood in this context. God is "almighty" because in all, through all and above all, everything is worked exclusively by His power. This is also the reason why God is worshiped.

Very soon in his career Luther came to that understanding. It is also present in the so-called "Reformation discovery." Luther tortured himself in order to discover the meaning of the expression, "God's righteousness," in the Scripture. According to his prior learning, God's righteousness was the righteousness that has to be fulfilled by the person through his own will and strength. Although he spent all his effort and ability to fulfill God's righteousness, Luther fell into despair. This led him to hate God. He hated God, because God required of him something he never would fulfill through his will and strength. Luther, however, did not remain in despair. He struggled to understand what St. Paul calls "God's righteousness."

Interpreting Rom. 1:16ff, Luther concluded that for Paul, "God's righteousness" is that righteousness which God gives, which God works in the believer by His mercy, calling him and making him righteous by faith. Simultaneously he understood other expressions of the Scripture: "God's power," the power by which God makes his people powerful, "God's wisdom," by which He makes His people wise, and the same in relation to other expressions. In all these cases it is God who gives these qualities to people. And what can human beings do? They can only let the work of God happen to them, enduring it, suffering it. That is why Luther later called this righteousness "passive righteousness," since we do not call it forth, but experience it upon ourselves.

Therefore, what we call "justification by grace and faith" is primarily related to Luther's understanding according to which God makes all things. The reformer always attached great importance to the work of Jesus Christ. However, we cannot conclude that for him God's

action happens exclusively through Jesus Christ. For Luther describes God's action broadly. God continually creates (*creatio continua*). He operates in the saving work of Jesus Christ and sanctifies permanently through the Holy Spirit. We cannot ever forget this comprehensiveness of God's action.

Here arises another question: if God does all things, then is He ultimately responsible for all the evil that

is done? According to Luther, that question would never help, because it is speculative, a metaphysical question. This question belongs to an inappropriate way of thinking theologically about God's action. What matters is to understand and emphasize the relationship between God and human beings, in which God acts only for the salvation of mankind and in which the human beings have no ability to produce their salvation by themselves. This theological reflection is enough to support the preaching of the liberating Gospel. It may seem very simple and nothing new to say that a theology has to put God and His action in the middle. However, at that time this message was not so common. I ask the same question facing 500 years of Christian presence in Latin America in regard to the preaching of the Gospel promoted by various Christian churches, including Lutherans. To what extent do the churches and Christian theology in Latin America have a

God's salvation happens now. The Holy Spirit creates the faith, makes it bear fruit and strengthens it to live in circumstances of suffering and death.

clear understanding that God is the one who acts in the first place?

In his time, Luther asked: How can I have a gracious God? In the practical spirituality of his time, the main emphasis corresponded to the search for God through the most different works. That spirituality had its main reference in human action (anthropocentric) and not in what God himself operates (theocentric). In the “Reformation discovery,” the realization that God makes all things is fundamental. Luther’s First Commandment explanation in the Small Catechism puts it with clarity: “We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.”

Besides positioning God and His work in the center of preaching, it is also important to say something about how God operates. For Luther, God alone is the origin and the one who speaks His Word. God is still speaking.

He speaks to all people. It means that no one deserves the Word of God. God is the one who speaks to people. Luther identifies in the Scripture two models related to God’s speaking, when he makes a distinction between the Latin verbs *loqui* (talk) and *dicere* (say). There is a way when God speaks His Word (*loqui*) that does not use any pressure, which does not force the person to anything. Moreover, there is the model of the creative Word of God (*dicere*), when what God says happens the same way He says it. Luther understood the Word broadly. The Word has to do with Creation, with Redemption through Jesus Christ and with their continuous updating and contextualization by the Holy Spirit. And it has to do with God’s action through His creatures. The external Word of God (*loqui*) is a divine interpellation, which does not always cause an effect. To the external Word belongs God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ and the preaching of the witnesses of God’s will — Moses, the prophets and the apostles. The Scripture is the witness of the external Word and is the decisive source by which to experience God’s speaking. God acts primarily through preaching. For Luther, the Word of God spoken, preached and practiced has a prominent position. When the Word is preached and materially practiced, it is then updated, contextualized and embodied in people’s reality. God employs as His instrument the exterior Word, expressed by people, to bring the Holy Spirit to hearts

Sanctification has a fundamental significance for the believer, the Church and the human community. The Holy Spirit kills selfishness, greed, the desire for revenge and the lust for power in the believer.

and put them in movement. The God who speaks corresponds the human being who hears. To the human being, God is the one who should be heard. The sequence of the God-human relationship is determined. First, God speaks His Word to the human being, who can only hear and respond to the interpellation of God. God attaches His action with His Word. Outside the Word there is no possibility to know God. There is no room to speculate about God. The source of knowledge about God and His work is only God’s action through His Word, Jesus Christ (John 1). All theological statements, everything that is proposed for the life and mission of the Church has to be tested in correspondence with Scripture. The Church is a creature of God’s Word (*creature verbi*).

For Luther it is also important to recognize that God works through His Word in a process. His theology is characterized by pairs of opposing concepts: spirit/letter, Law/Gospel, hidden God/revealed God, freedom/oppression. These are pairs of concepts to describe the action of God. The theme of Luther’s theology is God’s relationship with the human being. That relationship is a process, that is, it is historic, dynamic and directed toward an end.

God’s action is dialectical. Through the Law, God shows to the human being that he or she is a sinner. Through the Gospel, He promises forgiveness, faith and justice to him or her. But it is not a single deed. The human being such as Luther needs to be healed and God wants to heal. God’s action is often incomprehensible, hidden and contradictory regarding what believers expect from God. So the reformer writes that God often acts unexpectedly, contrary to everything believers used to await from Him. God allows the evil, the temptation, and breaks the pride of the superbs. Those who suffer that fail in the understanding of God’s action. There are times when God works things outside, contrary to the way He usually acts. He does it to operate what is truly and properly His work. More than dialectic, God’s mode of action is dialogical. Through its stance, human beings respond to the interpellation of God, the Word of God. After the reaction of the human being in his life, God speaks again. God’s action is a process, a dialogic process.

The end intended by God through this process, in

which the human being is challenged by God's Word, is salvation. The definition of theology presented earlier said that its object is the human being, guilty and condemned, and the God who justifies and is the Redeemer. Luther does not mean that all theology ends in the doctrine of justification by grace and faith. The same reformer, inspired by various biblical texts has dealt with issues such as creation, education, politics and economics. However, this is what he wants to emphasize as the center of his theology: the living God who acts for the salvation of the human being who is away from God through the sin.

How are we to understand the salvation that the justifying God wants to bring to the human being? In 1536, Luther defined the human being as "matter of God for life in its future form." "Future form" means the eternal glory. For Luther, life in its future form is not only a consequence of the final judgement. From now on, every day, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier,

The salvation of the human being that God operates by the Holy Spirit is, indeed, directed toward its fulfillment in eternal life. Simultaneously, it is also salvation now, for believers and unbelievers, in the two dimensions of divine action, the spiritual and the secular.

believers are made holy. God's salvation happens now. The Holy Spirit creates the faith, makes it bear fruit and strengthens it to live in circumstances of suffering and death. Sanctification has a fundamental significance for the believer, the Church and the human community. The Holy Spirit kills selfishness, greed, the desire for revenge and the lust for power in the believer. Therefore, according to Luther, the believers could and should act, inspired

by God the Holy Spirit, in the secular government without being moved by self-interest or for the purpose of obtaining benefits privately. The salvation of the human being that God operates by the Holy Spirit is, indeed, directed toward its fulfillment in eternal life. Simultaneously, it is also salvation now, for believers and unbelievers, in the two dimensions of divine action, the spiritual and the secular.

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The message of the Reformation
is not one merely for half a
millennium, but one for all time.

THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION AND THE NORTH AMERICAN INHERITANCE

by Gerhard Bode

Introduction

HISTORIANS RECORD THAT, at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Native American princes were in attendance. They were guests — if not newly conquered subjects — of Emperor Charles V. Perhaps they were witnesses of Luther's famous stand and heard his declaration before the illustrious gathering at the Diet. History does not record what, if anything, the Native Americans thought of Martin Luther. For his part, Luther seems not to have noticed them. He knew the so-called New World existed, but he didn't think much about it, referring to it only a few times in his writings. Yet, the New World has not neglected Martin Luther and his Reformation.¹

The question of Lutheran identity in America

Lutherans have been in North America for four hundred years now, and the expectations of a future presence are optimistic. Given the past-and-present dedication of Lutheran churches in America to evangelical teaching, mission, and service, the future should be bright, at least in some centers. Yet the questions of Lutheran identity and the consequences of that identity remain key for Lutherans in the North American context. What does it mean to be a Lutheran Church in America? What is our identity as heirs of the Lutheran Reformation? These questions matter because they give us clues as to how new generations become heirs of Luther's Reformation message. Yet the nature of this heritage and the dedication to Luther's message has not always been certain. Perhaps a story will illustrate this point.

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In the spring of 1931, a young German theologian traveling across the United States came to St. Louis, Missouri. While he was in town, he visited the campus of Concordia Seminary. He strolled among the buildings, explored the quadrangles and took in all the sights. Concordia Seminary made an impression on him; in fact, he wrote about it in the report of his travels to the folks back in Germany. Reflecting more broadly on the state of Lutheranism in America, and German Lutheranism

in particular, he drew some definite conclusions, for example: "There is no pure, German church ... as far as I know, anywhere in America." He noted that in some churches preaching was still in German, but in his experience, these sermons were pretty dismal. "The pastors generally do not have a good training." As far as Concordia Seminary was concerned (which he noted was of the Missouri Synod), the pastors it

produced were "in their exclusive orthodoxy, insufferable; and although the Missouri Synod has made the greatest financial sacrifice [in building the campus of Concordia Seminary], it is, without question, on its way to collapse." He noticed that in the worship services in the German Lutheran churches only a few old people came — hardly any young people. That was because the preaching wasn't any good. He concluded his report by observing: "[O]f a particular understanding of the Reformation heritage in these German churches I found not a trace."²

This young theologian may be excused; he was what his circumstances had made him. Sure, he thought we

¹ Cf. Lewis W. Spitz, "Luther in America: Reformation History Since Philip Schaff," in *Luther in der Neuzeit: Wissenschaftliches Symposion des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte*. Herausgegeben von Bernd Moeller. *Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte*, Band 1929 Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1983), 177.

² Quotations translated from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Barcelona, Berlin, Amerika 1928–1931*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Band 10 (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1991), 275. For a fictional story along a similar vein, cf. Brother John [W. N. Harley], *Little Journeys with Martin Luther* (Columbus, OH: [s.n.], 1916), 227.

were losers, and that our seminary and our Synod were going belly up. Perhaps he was right about the lousy preaching, but I find it particularly irritating that he assumed we didn't get the Reformation, let alone follow its teachings. But we can understand him. He didn't know us very well, and he didn't understand our history. He wasn't from the North America after all, in fact, he was from Berlin, Germany, and his name was Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Lutherans in America likely would have been disappointed in Bonhoeffer's assessment of them in 1931. I suppose some Lutherans today might agree that Bonhoeffer's assessment of American Lutheranism is truer now than when he first arrived at it. Still, this story may be helpful because it prompts the important question: Just what is our understanding of the Reformation heritage? This takes us back to the problem of Lutheran identity and the question of what it means to be a Lutheran Church in America.

The religious and cultural context in North America

Every generation of Lutherans in America has been confronted with these questions. And the question, "What does it mean to be Lutheran there?" remains an important one, especially as new Lutheran immigrants come to live in cities and towns of North America. Here the problem of Lutheran identity is often combined with ethnic identity, both of which are of critical importance. What does it mean to be an Ethiopian Lutheran in America? What does it mean to be a Lutheran from India living there, a Chinese Lutheran, a Lutheran speaking Spanish, a French-speaking West African in America? How does the Reformation message of freedom in Christ translate? These questions of Lutheran identity in the American context are key, given the complexity and diversity of its religious landscape.

The Lutheran Church in America exists in a context that is increasingly pluralistic. The influences of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism — especially American Evangelicalism — have confronted Lutheran churches for centuries. And for years now they also have been encountering Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and a long list of other religious traditions and movements, all of which

are staking a claim in the American religious and cultural landscape.

In the pluralistic culture of America, religion is privatized. It is classified as a voluntary activity and may be picked up or discarded at an individual's discretion. It is sometimes hard for Lutherans to compete in this "free market" religious environment, since the environment requires dealing with other religious groups with forbearance, charity and mutual respect. In this tolerant context, doctrinal positions are often deemphasized, individual belief is diminished, and the churches gradually accept the ethical standards and values of the broader culture. For many in this culture there is no fear of God because there is no God to fear, let alone a God to fear, love and trust.

In this American religious and cultural context, Lutherans face a number of significant challenges. Some of these challenges result from a failure to think critically about the past and all of them result from a failure to think theologically. Christian churches — some of them Lutheran — are often ignorant of their own

history and do not know what their churches have confessed in the past and why they have confessed it. They do not know their own theological history, their own theological identity and distinctness, and so have little bearing on the way forward. Moreover, their denominational ambivalence leads to an uncertainty about the content of the church's mission as well as its goals. Finally, Christian churches in America, some of them Lutheran, identify themselves less and less with traditional theological teachings. Lutheran churches rooted in a clear historical, confessional tradition may feel pressure to become more like those that do not because it is uncomfortable to be outside the norm. It is difficult to take a stand where very few others are standing. Then again, aren't Lutherans supposed to take a stand for God's Word and its truth? Everything depends upon what Lutherans stand.

Historically, the American Lutheran churches were largely comprised of European immigrants and their descendants. Perhaps it is inevitable that what will happen to the new immigrants is what happened to those that came before them. They will become new Americans,

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bringing with them their unique traditions, perspectives and insights, and add their own contributions to what it means to be a Lutheran Church in America. Once again history and theology become present partners informing all of us about the way forward.

The key to Lutheran identity: past, present and future

Traditionally, questions of Lutheran identity have been informed by our confessional basis, our commitments to the Scripture and to the ecumenical creeds and the other Lutheran confessional documents. The Confessions guide the work of the Church; they inform what we believe and how we practice the Christian life. They do these things because they faithfully reiterate what God's Word says. Although the Church believes, teaches and confesses the entire Word of God in Scripture, what is at the heart of the Scripture makes all the difference: Christ is at the heart. The purpose of the whole Scripture is to proclaim Christ, to proclaim the Gospel of Christ for the salvation of sinners, the Christ-given freedom from sin, death and the devil. The Lutheran Confessions are centered in the Gospel and the concern to comfort sinful human beings. Broader still, we see that God's Word is a living, creative instrument through which God cares for and preserves His Church.

The Lutheran Confessions reveal how the first generations of Lutherans in the Wittenberg tradition understood the truth of Luther's Reformation message and provide the key for us to understand this truth today and in the future. Lutherans must be concerned about the Church's fidelity to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions even as they are concerned about the Church's mission. Faithful confession of God's Word, and outreach with that Word to the world, belong together. Without both, the Church will not stand.

What is the Reformation heritage? Who are we today as Lutherans?

It is helpful to remember that our faith is determined not by the personal reassurance we may have as Lutherans. Our confession is not decided by what others think of us or even what we think of ourselves. Our faith is defined

and formed by Jesus Christ crucified for us. The Gospel: That is the message Martin Luther proclaimed and that is what we claim as our own as Lutherans.

In John 8, Jesus says: "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ... if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

In this text, Jesus is speaking to Jews who had believed in Him. They didn't need to be freed from anything, they think, because they have Abraham as their ancestor. Makes no difference, Jesus says, because everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Slaves have no permanent place in the household, but a son remains forever. Who is a son? One set free by the Son — all those abiding in His Word, true disciples who know the truth and are set free.

Sin doesn't care who our favorite reformer is. Sin and death don't care what church we go to, what hymns we sing or with whom we have fellowship. Sin, death and the devil only care about who our master is. Whom do we obey; whom do we follow? In whose way are we going?

Being justified by faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone is not our inalienable right, not a personal privilege handed down. Our freedom is

not inherited from our Lutheran ancestors. Only Christ gives this freedom to those abiding in His Word.

Why are we free? Because we are in Christ, we are in His Word, we are His disciples. We have the truth, we have Him who is the Truth. We are free because Christ alone is the object of our faith, not ourselves, not our heritage, not Luther, nor any saints, but Christ alone. We are free because of His glorious suffering, His glorious death, His glorious resurrection — to save wretched sinners. He has set us free from sin and death and the devil, and we are free indeed. As free sons and daughters, we dwell in the Word. We take up permanent residence in Christ. As true sons and daughters, we abide in God's saving presence among us. This is our identity, who we truly are. And it is this Christ that we proclaim to the world, to the culture in which we live.

Why do we follow Christ? Because Christ calls us. The way may be hard, but we follow Christ! As Luther proclaimed in the last two of his 95 Theses: "Christians should be exhorted to be zealous to follow Christ, their

As true sons and daughters, we abide in God's saving presence among us. This is our identity, who we truly are. And it is this Christ that we proclaim to the world, to the culture in which we live.

Head, through penalties, deaths, and hells; And let them thus be more confident of entering heaven through many tribulations rather than through a false assurance of peace.” Where Christ bids us follow may shake our confidence to its very foundation, but we follow Christ! Remaining in Christ’s Word we are free. And that is who we are.

Conclusion

The message of the Reformation is not one merely for half a millennium, but one for all time. The message of the Lutheran Reformation — centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ — is by no means a message merely for Wittenberg, but for all places, for the world. And it is into the world that this message has been proclaimed and will, by God’s grace, continue to be proclaimed.

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FROM REPENTANCE TO REJOICING

by Albert B. Collver III

Introduction

WITH THE APPROACH of the 500th anniversary of the publication of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, the entire Lutheran world as well as a significant portion of the Christian world, including the Roman Catholic Church, has pondered how to celebrate, commemorate or at least acknowledge this milestone Reformation anniversary. Not without justification, the Reformation has been associated with Martin Luther, which at times has caused the Reformation to be portrayed as nearly indistinct from the person of Martin Luther. In the polemical battles between the Protestants and Roman Catholics, the image of Martin Luther often determined how the Reformation itself was viewed. For instance, in 1529, Hans Brosamer created an engraving of a seven-headed Luther to identify Martin Luther as the seven-headed beast prophesied in the Revelation

13. If Luther were a servant of the devil who rose up from the sea as a false prophet to lead people astray, then his movement, the Reformation, also must be from the devil. Each age has held a view of Martin Luther and of the Reformation that reflected the *zeitgeist* of that period. The rationalist, the age of Enlightenment, the Marxist, the Communist, the Nazis, the nationalist and just about every other *-ism* has viewed the Reformation through its own lens. The Reformation celebration of 1617, the first significant celebration of the Reformation, led to the execution of the 24 nobles in Prague who followed the Reformation and began the Thirty Years War.¹ The Reformation of 1817 instituted the Prussian Union, which was commemorated by the Luther statue here in Wittenberg. The 1817 Reformation was the birth of the

union church and the loss of the Lutheran confession and Lutheran identity, a reality that still plagues the Lutheran churches in Germany and most of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) today.

The Reformation celebration of 2017 will be the first "ecumenical Reformation." The Luther Garden here in Wittenberg memorializes this ecumenical Reformation by having the five central trees around the cross of the Luther rose held by the Roman Catholic Church, the

Orthodox Church, the Anglican Communion, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Methodist Council.² Churches from all denominations are participating in this Reformation celebration.³ Yet ecumenism that does not acknowledge distinctive confessions of faith as it works toward unity is nothing other than a modern enthusiasm that slowly extinguishes the Holy

Scriptures as the ultimate authority.⁴ In light of the often tragic history of Reformation celebrations, we should ponder how to celebrate the 500th Reformation anniversary rightly.

The remembrance
of the Lord's Church
shows us the times
of reformation where
the Gospel flourishes
because repentance
abounds.

² German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation. "Luthergarten: List of All Trees," 2015. <http://luthergarten.de/list.html>

³ Luther 2017 International. "The Luther Garden in Wittenberg." *Luther 2017 500 Years of Reformation*, 2015. <http://www.luther2017.de/en/orte/luther-garden-in-wittenberg>. "Churches of all denominations from all over the world are invited to become 'godparents' for one of the 500 trees in Wittenberg and to plant a second tree in the area of their home parish."

⁴ Hermann Sasse, "Ecumenical Anniversary: Ecumenical Enthusiasm," in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, trans. Peter Petzling, vol. 3. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015). Kindle location: 5749. "But this enthusiasm slowly extinguishes what is still left over of the churches of the Reformation ... For all these churches Holy Scripture served as the ultimate authority. This is being lost through modern enthusiasm. Together with the authority of the Confessions, the authority of Scripture is in decline"

¹ Albert B. Collver, "Theological Observer: A Vision for Lutheranism in Central Europe," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 78 (2014): 2.

A helpful guide toward celebrating the Reformation rightly comes from a sermon from 1630 for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. Hoe van Hoenegg, the senior court preacher of Dresden, provided the definition for a Reformation celebration in his sermon:

[F]irst as a “remembrance festival,” at which we remember a great historical event; second, as a “praise and thanksgiving festival;” third, as a “miracle festival” concerning God’s miracles; fourth, a “prayer festival” at which we “desire to pray for the preservation of the divine Word;” and fifth, as a “festival of repentance,” at which we pray for the forgiveness of our sins in the despising of the Word of God, “and that we should begin and strive for a new life with greater zeal for and devotion to his preached Word as doers of the same.” Then the festival becomes a “festival of rejoicing and jubilation in heaven” [Luke 15:10].⁵

The Reformation celebration “remembers” the great historical event when the Lord delivered His people. The Reformation celebration “repents” of our sin of despising the Word of God. The Reformation celebration rejoices and gives thanks over the sinner who repents. The International Conference on Confessional Leadership in the 21st Century hopes to encourage, “Celebrating the Reformation Rightly” by remembrance, repentance and rejoicing.

From repentance to rejoicing

In 1524, in “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools,” Dr. Martin Luther wrote, “For you should know that God’s word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been.”⁶ Martin Luther’s prophecy about the Gospel passing away from one land and going to another appears to have come true

for Germany, Europe and North America. A 2009 article from *Christianity Today* about Christianity in Germany reported, “The Protestant state church is fairly dead. The percent of committed Christians in Germany is maybe at 3 or 4 percent.”⁷ In North America, mainline Protestantism is in steep decline, even hemorrhaging.⁸ The *New York Times* in a 2012 article noted, “This decline is the latest chapter in a story dating to the 1960s. The trends unleashed in that era — not only the sexual revolution, but also consumerism and materialism, multiculturalism and relativism — threw all of American Christianity into crisis, and ushered in decades of debate over how to keep the nation’s churches relevant and vital ... Practically every denomination — Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian — that has tried to adapt itself to contemporary liberal values has seen an Episcopal-style plunge in church attendance.”⁹

The Church grows and expands by the proclamation of the Gospel, yet in this world it exists under the cross where our own sin and the attacks of Satan and the world can hinder it.

In the 1960s, two-thirds of Americans considered themselves Protestant. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, less than 50 percent of Americans called themselves Protestant. In the twenty-first-century United States, the largest religious group after the Roman Catholics are the “nones,” or those who identify with no particular religious group. The sustenance and growth of Roman Catholicism within the United States has not been driven

by either births or conversions, but rather by the immigration of Roman Catholics from Latin America. Despite the alarming statistics about the state of religion in the United States, North Americans are still twice as likely to be affiliated with a religious group than Europeans.

⁵ Hermann Sasse, “Thoughts at the Eve of the Reformation Anniversary of 1967,” in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, trans. Charles Schaum, vol. 3. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015).

⁶ Martin Luther, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, *Luther’s Works: The Christian in Society II*, vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 352.

⁷ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Germany’s ‘Cold Religion,’” *Christianity Today* (November 2009). <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/novemberweb-only/145-11.0.html>.

⁸ Ed Stetzer, “3 Important Church Trends in the Next 10 Years: Christianity in the United States May Look Very Different in 10 Years,” *Christianity Today* (April 2015). <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/april/3-important-trends-in-church-in-next-ten-years.html>. Mainline Protestant churches are defined as United Methodist Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), American Baptist Churches, United Church of Christ (UCC) and The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). “Trend #1: The Hemorrhaging of Mainline Protestantism ... Mainline Protestantism is in trouble and in substantive decline.”

⁹ Ross Douthat, “Can Liberal Christianity Be Saved?” *New York Times*, July 15, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/opinion/sunday/douthat-can-liberal-christianity-be-saved.html>.

In comparison to Europe, the United States is still a religious nation. If the demographic trends continue, North America will catch up to Europe regarding religious attitudes within a few decades. Meanwhile, as Protestant Christianity declines both in North America and Europe, Islam increases. Some demographic projections look exceedingly bleak for the Christian church, particularly Protestantism, in the West.

Christopher Wright notes, “More Christians worship in Anglican churches in Nigeria each week than in all the Episcopal and Anglican churches of Britain, Europe, and North America combined. There are more Baptists in Congo than in Britain. More people are in church every Sunday in communist China than in all of Western Europe.”¹⁰ According to “Missiometrics 2008: Reality Checks for the Christian World Communions,” 91 percent of all new Christians can be found in Africa, Asia or Latin America.¹¹ Perhaps even more alarming is how evangelism has been conducted in the West, primarily in the United States and Europe. “91% of all Christian outreach/evangelism does not target non-Christians but targets other Christians, many in wealthy World C countries and cities.”¹² What this means in practical terms is that many to most of the congregations whose membership is increasing within the United States are simply taking members from other congregations and/or denominations. This is particularly apparent in the mega-church movement within the United States, whose members largely come from the membership of other congregations or lapsed Christians rather than from new baptisms or conversions. One might say that evangelism in western Protestant Christianity is akin to the reshuffling of the deck chairs on a sinking ship.

Significant amounts of ink have been spilled over the past couple of decades, attempting to explain the shifting tides of world Christianity and highlighting demographic and social changes. A common theme attributes this shift as a post-Constantinian time when the Church, as in the Early Church, did not have the institutional and legal support of Caesar or the government. This theme

also highlights a distrust of institutions, including church denominations and seminaries. It tends to emphasize how doctrine supplanted practice. One suggested cure is to return to how the Church operated in the Early Church before the Constantinian era, before the Church became institutionalized. Some books suggest that the Church needs to reclaim the gifts the Early Church possessed. The tremendous growth of the Church in places like Africa, Asia and Latin America is attributed to how these churches follow the pattern of the Early Church. If western churches could rediscover this formula or pattern of the Early Church and of those rapidly growing churches in the global south,¹³ it is suggested that they, too, could grow again.

Alan Hirsch, one such author who seeks to transform the twenty-first century Church, argues that the decline of the western Church (apart from external factors) is a problem of ecclesiology. He states that the failure of western churches to be missional can be found in ecclesiology. He writes:

Clearly one of the biggest issues in the church today is the discussion about what it means to be missional. We believe that how we deal with this will determine the future viability of the Church in the West. But we fear that so many of these vital conversations are doomed to frustration because the people in them are unwilling or unable to reconfigure ministry to suit the missional context. Although many buy into the concept, they are unwilling to recalibrate the ecclesiology. Christendom has been run on a largely shepherd-teacher model, and because it has had a privileged position in society, it has been inclined to dispense with the more missional or evangelistic ministry types (apostle, prophet, and evangelist).¹⁴

Hirsch essentially argues that the western Church went off the rails after Constantine embraced the Church and gave it a favored position with the state. He claims that at that time the Church became institutionalized, which locked the Church into a “shepherd-teacher” model to the detriment of the other spiritual offices established by Christ. Hirsch bases his view on the interpretation that

¹⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, “An Upside-Down World: Distinguishing between Home and Mission Field No Longer Makes Sense,” *Christianity Today*, January 2007. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/january/30.42.html>.

¹¹ David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson and Peter F. Crossing, “Missiometrics 2008: Reality Checks for Christian World Communions,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32:1 (January 2008): 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³ Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012). Kindle location: 685. “The early church, various movements over the centuries, and the developing world now (especially India and China) have displayed this same vitality. These are all great expressions of the apostolic movement.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Kindle location: 1048.

in Ephesians 4, St. Paul mandates a five-fold ministry for the Church called APEST (apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd (pastor), teacher). Hirsch states, “All five are needed if we are to be the authentically missional church as Jesus intended us to be.”¹⁵ He developed a method using sociology and psychology to identify if a person is an apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd or teacher. Not only is Hirsch’s conception of the Holy Ministry against the teachings of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, particularly Articles V and XIV of the Augsburg Confession, but neither ecclesiology or the ministry, or returning to an imagined conception of the Church as it might have existed before the time of Constantine, will save the Church or cause it to grow. The kingdom of God grows and expands as the Augsburg Confession, Article V, confesses: “He works faith, when and where it pleases God in those who hears the good news.”

The Church grows and expands by the proclamation of the Gospel, yet in this world it exists under the cross where our own sin and the attacks of Satan and the world can hinder it. This indeed is the great mystery of Luther’s *Bondage of the Will*, that the all-powerful and eternal Lord allows His Church to suffer in this world and His Gospel to be hindered by sinful men. For this reason, as Luther taught, when the people of God no longer have gratitude for the Gospel and fail to repent, the Gospel moves to another place as a passing rain shower. As the first thesis of the 95 Theses states, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”¹⁶

Often times it is said that 50 years ago no one predicted the decline of the western Church.¹⁷ This observation is not correct. On the Reformation in 1960, fifty

Church history demonstrates that both gratitude for the Lord’s gifts and repentance are lost when dogma is lost.

years after the Edinburgh mission conference, Hermann Sasse noted, “Entire churches that once played a role in the world are disappearing ‘... One needs to ask, however, what has taken place of these ecclesiastical communions? The answer is union churches.’”¹⁸ He also noted that the creed would become interpreted in a liberal way and even the name of the Holy Trinity would only become a liturgical formula for some. Although perhaps it is true that no one could have predicted precisely what exact configurations the decline of western churches would have taken, the seeds for their decline had already been planted by the end of the nineteenth century.

A portion of this conference theme is “remembrance.” It would do us well to remember the salvation history of God’s people. Throughout the Holy Scriptures, the Church has had a pattern of orthodoxy, decline, error and reformation.¹⁹ For Melanchthon, and most of the Lutherans who followed him, the history of the world was “sacred history,” which told the story of how the Lord pre-

served the Church on earth, from the creation of the world until the end of the world when Christ would return. The history of the world shows those who were the Lord’s witnesses to the truth throughout time, but also how the Lutheran Church is the continuation of the Lord’s ancient Church.²⁰ One of the most significant purposes or applications of Church history is

for the Church to learn how the Church in the past fell into sin so that the Church today can repent of her own sins and give thanks for the forgiveness given in Christ Jesus.

Church history demonstrates that both gratitude for the Lord’s gifts and repentance are lost when dogma is lost. Hermann Sasse notes:

The modern Ecumenical Movement is the child of an undogmatic Protestantism. The condition of our churches should be a serious warning for us to

¹⁵ Ibid., Kindle location: 1066.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, *Luther’s Works: Career of the Reformer I*, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 25.

¹⁷ Timothy Tennent, “Megatrends That Are Shaping Twenty-First Century Missions From Moratorium and Malaise to Selah and Rebirth,” in *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*, Invitation to Theological Studies Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2010), 15–51. Kindle location: 92. “None of these developments were predicted fifty years ago. Today, as I survey the landscape of contemporary missions and missiological reflection, it is clear that those who live in the West are facing a serious crisis concerning missions and Christian identity within the larger global Christian movement.”

¹⁸ Sasse, “Ecumenical Anniversary: Ecumenical Enthusiasm.” Kindle location: 5856.

¹⁹ Phillip Melanchthon noted this pattern, as elaborated by Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum; the Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Philip Melanchthon* (Genève: E. Droz, 1961).

²⁰ Alexandra Kess, *Johann Sleidan and the Protestant Vision of History* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 132. “Two decades after Frank and Melanchthon elaborated on the idea of a chain of God’s true witnesses throughout the centuries, culminating in the Protestant Church, this concept was taken up by Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–75).”

examine ourselves in the depth of our conscience as to whether we have perhaps lost, with the dogma of our church, also the ability to think dogmatically. And it could be that one can no longer understand the Gospel if one no longer understands its dogmatic content.²¹

When the teachings of the faith are lost, so, too, is the Gospel itself.

The western churches that have forgotten the history of the Lord's people and who have ceased to repent, not only are in danger of being in the wilderness for forty additional years but are in danger of total apostasy and the final judgment of the Lord. The western churches, which led the missionary drive at the beginning of the twentieth century to reach every people group with Christ, today in many cases have departed from the faith once delivered to the now rapidly growing churches of the global South. Nearly every western church that accepted the ordination of women against the teachings of the Holy Scriptures today accepts not only the blessing and/or marriage of same-sex couples but also are now in the process of accepting the ordination of practicing homosexuals. The hermeneutical connection between these two positions is well established but almost entirely denied, hidden behind the cloak of social justice.²² The western Church faces a great danger that the wilderness will become Gehenna. Yet even in the wilderness, the Lord preserves a remnant who lament and repent.

“Let the bones that you have broken rejoice.”

In the history of the Church, a Reformation from apostasy flowed from repentance. The message of the Reformation is one of repentance. As the Psalmist says, “Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight ... Let the bones that you have broken rejoice” (Ps. 51:4, 8). Rejoicing comes from being restored in the forgiveness won by Christ on the cross. The remnant of the Church of Christ in the West rejoices in the forgiveness of sins and in seeing the working of Christ in the churches of the global South. In the western churches, where the sight of baptisms are relatively uncommon in compari-

son to some places in the world, the broken bones rejoice when they see the baptism of several hundred to a thousand people at one time in Africa. Among those from the western churches, where many magnificent church buildings go relatively to entirely empty Sunday morning, the broken bones rejoice when they see hundreds and thousands of people worshiping for three hours in the global South. In the West, where few unbelievers are converted and where most church growth comes from transfers or sheep stealing, the broken bones rejoice to see new congregations appearing on a weekly basis in the global South. The witness of the Church's vitality in other places provides for mutual encouragement of the brethren. It bears witness to the words of Jesus that the gates of hell will not prevail against the truth. Perhaps those in the West could be tempted by a theology of glory or those in the global South be tempted to triumphalism, which is why the entire life of the believer must be one of repentance.

In the history of the Lord's Church (both that of the old Israel and the new Israel), a pattern of apostasy, reformation and orthodoxy can be seen. This is the passing of the rain shower from one place to another. The remembrance of the Lord's Church shows us the times of reformation where the Gospel flourishes because repentance abounds. It also shows us apostasy and extended times of wandering in the wilderness. Perhaps in the past the Church at large, separated by vast distances, was not aware of simultaneous moments of apostasy of the Church in one place while a great flourishing, growth and reformation occurred in others. Yet today we live in a time when the people of God — who are entering into the wilderness because of their sin, lack of gratitude for the Gospel and failure to repent — can seek the mutual consolation of the brethren from the churches experiencing orthodoxy, vitality and reformation. As the Body of Christ, we bear one another's burdens. As the western Church enters the wilderness, the remnant receives joy, seeing the rains of the Gospel pour on the churches of the global South. Meanwhile, the churches of the global South can see their brothers and sisters in Christ passing on the horizon into the wilderness. Remember us in prayer and pray for our repentance, so that “the bones you have broken may rejoice.”

²¹ Hermann Sasse, “Fifty-Five: From New Delhi to Helsinki—Lutheranism in the Chaos of the Ecumenical Movement,” in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, trans. Holgar Sonntag, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015). Kindle location: 7373.

²² See John T. Pless, “The Ordination of Women and Ecclesial Endorsement of Homosexuality: Are They Related?” in *Women Pastors?* 3rd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014).

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ENDURING HOPE: THE WEST AND BEYOND

by Roland Gustafsson

Our heavenly Father addresses us in His Word through different perspectives and circumstances, even in times of hardship.

FOR YEARS I HAVE BEEN REFLECTING upon the tragic development in Sweden, Europe and the Western world at large, as far as the spiritual development is concerned. Christianity is on a decline, and we are deeply influenced by secularization. Nobody is unaffected by this phenomenon. From a missiological point of view, I am thankful to God; He addresses us in His Word through different perspectives and circumstances, even in times of hardship. For example, in epistles like 2 Peter, Jude and 1, 2 and 3 John, we learn about the preservation of orthodoxy. Furthermore, in books like Hebrews, 1 Peter and Revelation, we learn about adorning the Gospel in the midst of adversity.

Lately I have studied and felt at home in 2 Corinthians, an epistle where the apostle Paul opens up his heart and his ministry in an extraordinary way. He is mistreated and misunderstood but is defending himself in a very open way with a focus on the ministry of reconciliation (chapter 5). Let me share some perspectives from his experiences. I am sure we need this encouragement, in order to endure in hope, in the West and beyond.

Paul starts by sharing God's pedagogical wisdom: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Cor. 1:3–4). Troubles seem to be unavoidable, but God is a comforter in such situations. We somehow see a glance of the theology of the cross; one of the true marks of Christianity is certainly the cross — sufferings, hardship, etc. However, the message of victory and glory are present as well. "But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere" (2:14). It is an aroma of salvation and

damnation, of life and death is at hand. From this context we certainly acknowledge that the ministry of reconciliation is a wonderful ministry, a God-given ministry! It is not based upon man, but upon God. "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (3:6).

Humanly speaking, there would be enough discouragement in order to lose heart. However, Paul is full of confidence: "Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart" (4:1). Then the apostle shares his personal experience, which I do think is most important in a context like ours as well: "We have

renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God" (4:2). Transparency is at hand.

Faith and good conscience are in focus! The agenda is to set forth the truth plainly by commending yourself to every man's conscience. This matter is certainly not self-evident in the Western world of today. On the contrary, there is a given agenda of accommodation. Little by little, step by step, you are forced to adjust your conviction received from the Word of God. Society and church must be ruled, not by God-given orders according to His revelation, but by democracy.

For its convention in 2005, the Church of Sweden published a book named *Democracy as a Successive Revelation*. Horrible reading, I must say! The given revelation of God's Word is "emptied," and instead human efforts are in progress to determine faith and life in society and Church. In Sweden we know the results. For example, same-sex relationships and marriages have been legitimate from 2009 onwards. Such a program is most contradictory to the given agenda of the apostle Paul. He

Troubles seem to be unavoidable, but God is a comforter in such situations.

is bound to the given revelation of God; woe to him if he does not preach the Gospel! “We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God” (4:2).

In Romans, Paul gives an admonition as far as this matter is concerned: “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:1–2).

It is evident that this is not only a human affair, but that there is a spiritual battle going on. “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). And again it is emphasized concerning the given ministry: “What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (4:5).

Meanwhile, there is not much of human boasting as far as this ministry is concerned: “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (4:7). And furthermore, the apostle shares a most contradictory and paradoxical experience — a catalogue of contradictions: pressed, not crushed; perplexed, not in despair; persecuted, not abandoned; struck down, not destroyed. It is a death and life relationship and agenda as far as the God-given ministry is concerned! Other catalogues of paradoxes are listed in 6:4–10 and 11:21–31.

How do you approach such a difficult context when Christian doctrines and ethics are questioned? Well, Paul addresses such a situation in the following way: “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete” (10:4–6).

In other words, a clear conviction and confession of the Word of God! And in accordance with our Lutheran Confession we teach and condemn in a similar way, as the apostle Paul puts it to his son Titus, concerning the ministry of an elder/overseer: “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9).

Along with this God-given authority based upon Scripture, the apostle Paul also includes a sense of humbleness: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test? ... For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth” (13:5, 9). Somehow, 2 Corinthians is like a manual for church workers in times of hardship and persecution. It is not only a defense marked by apologetic rhetoric, but it is filled with an attitude on the offense — the proclamation of the Gospel. In chapter 5 we have a wonderful

passage about the ministry of reconciliation: “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died ... All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

We somehow see a glance of the theology of the cross; one of the true marks of Christianity is certainly the cross — sufferings, hardship, etc. However, the message of victory and glory are present as well.

We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (5:14, 18–21).

We endure in hope in the West and beyond, as far as the ministry is concerned, by following in the footsteps of the apostle Paul. Let me summarize what we have touched upon concerning the ministry:

1. God the Comforter comforts us in order that we will comfort others.
2. Christ’s triumphal procession continues, although the ministry is full of paradoxes.
3. Our competence comes from God, ministering a new covenant.

4. We carry out a transparent ministry in true faith and good conscience, without accommodation.
5. A spiritual war is at hand. The victory is given when Jesus Christ is proclaimed as Lord and every thought is made captive to the obedience of Christ.
6. Humbleness and self-examination are healthy signs of ministers.
7. All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

“Therefore we do not lose heart” (4:1, 16). May God grant us to be faithful in the given ministry until Jesus Christ comes in glory! Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

The Right Rev. Roland Gustafsson is presiding bishop of the Mission Province in Sweden.

CELEBRATING THE REFORMATION RIGHTLY: REMEMBRANCE, REPENTANCE AND REJOICING

by Joseph Makala

WE HAVE REASONS for the Lutheran Church to rejoice in the Reformation. These reasons are the Church's fast growth, Divine Service, harmony with the government and diaconal work. On the other hand, the Lutheran Church in Africa today is not what it used to be. In so many areas the traditional divine service is changing: technologically, educationally, politically and culturally. The development of these areas compels changes to the traditional ways the Lutheran Church functions. For this reason we have differences in responding to the joy from our Lord, Jesus Christ.

1. Baptism and Witness

The Christian Church in Africa is seeking to evangelize and disciple large multitudes of people in Africa today. A case study can be taken from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, South East of Lake Victoria Diocese, where the Church increases with thousands of new Christians per year. We are full of joy, the joy that comes from God (the means of grace). True joy comes through Baptism. This results in the rapid growth of the Church in Africa, specifically in Shinyanga, Tanzania. This rapid growth is an amazing act of God, making heaven and earth joyful. The most joy of all comes from our Lord, as it is written in Luke: "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven'" (Luke 10:17–20).

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mankind in need.

2. The Lord's Supper and Koinonia

Christian worship is attended strongly by children, youth and adults. This is different from the other parts of the globe. The number of divine service participants is increasing day by day. This joy of the first Church and the Church of Reformation results in the same joy day by day: "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46–47).

3. The Word of God and Confession and Absolution

It is correct here to stress that the Word of God and Confession and Absolution are valued as God's gifts for Africa.

All truth and error must be judged by the written Word of God through faith, as Paul writes in Romans: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom. 15:13). The Gospel in its context is preached and taught every day in many ways. The Gospel is relevant to men and women in every society in Africa because

God's message is addressed to mankind in need. The people who receive the Word receive it with joy, singing and dancing. There is giant growth of the Gospel and the Church in Africa.

4. Harmony with the state

The churches are working in harmony with the State. In some areas there are religious conflicts and so they have challenges when the State is so closely associated with traditional religion. This brings big problems between the

Church and the State. An example is the practice by some members of sorcery in parliament meetings. The good news is that most of the leaders in Africa accept the Good News that the Savior and King of Kings was born for all people, as the angel said: “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10-12).

5. The response to our joy is diaconal work.

Inevitably churches in Africa accept the charge to serve the needy in their homes as an extended family. Christian families extend this service as a joy in serving Christ through works of mercy to their neighbors. The clear hope and motivation for works of mercy has its origin from the Scripture itself, which gives clear hope and promise: “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you. Or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me”’ (Matt. 25:34–40).

In this joyful moment there are things that make it difficult for Africa and Tanzania to rejoice the Reformation celebration properly:

• African traditional religions

Missionaries who work in Africa almost inevitably hear, and some see, the practice of traditional religions. Some of them very recently saw a situation where newly converted Christians were wrestling with issues of charm after baptism. Witchcraft and sorcery are great temptations to African societies. Reliance upon the ancestors is a felt need during times of crisis. There are endless stories,

told by young and old, of the effects of this unseen force. Examples of this are the killing of albinos to achieve riches and success, and the killing of older women with red eyes, in the belief that the red eyes are a sign of a witch. Africa is a part of the world that experiences the mystical powers of unseen forces. Pagan religious belief has been hard to eliminate in lands where the Gospel has been preached for centuries. These are examples from every part of Africa. African churches are still looking for these brothers who are still in the darkness, like lost sheep. As far as rejoicing is concerned, we need to look for these brothers and sisters who are lost so that our rejoicing can be in full. A vivid example Luke gives is Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulder,

rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost. Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15: 4–7).

The Word of God
and Confession and
Absolution are valued
as God’s gifts for
Africa.

• Pentecostalism and false teaching

Today there is a cry throughout Africa for a genuine Divine Service, which is truly rooted in the lives of the indigenous people and in the roots of our Lutheran Fathers. The problems of Pentecostalism are essentially the same all over Africa. The churches in Africa receive the gifts of Jesus with physical joy, through singing and dancing. However, many of them use the extremes of Pentecostalism, clinging to the Scriptures as the reason for doing so: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22–23). Apart from the grace of God found in Jesus Christ our Lord there is no hope, even though we sacrifice ourselves in a physical joy.

• Terrorists

The practice of terrorism is widespread all over the world, and this creates fear in African churches. The killing of pastors and those who witness to Jesus’ name has become more frequent throughout the world. Christians in Africa

still have no other word from anyone other than the Word of God, which, however, looks like a passive response: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:14-15), and from John: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy” (John 16:20).

• Diseases

The HIV pandemic, malaria and ebola are some of the diseases that afflict Africa. They affect many of the Christians in our churches. The Church needs prayer and support to rescue some of our friends in Africa. We keep asking God’s mercy in Africa so as to rescue them from diseases, and we take comfort from the Scriptures: “So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:22–24).

• Homosexuality

Homosexuality is a trial in Africa. It is still illegal to put talking about homosexuality into an agenda in societies and especially in the Church. It is shame to mention it. We are very sorry to tell you that this is a difficult agenda to take to Africa. But it is a trial encroaching some of the churches in Africa. Peter writes: “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perished though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:6–9). The situation began to change in Africa in this last decade, as laws and public policies that discriminated on the basis of sexual preference were successfully challenged in the courts by gay-rights advocates and not from the Church itself. This is a difficult issue for the churches, to allow gay and lesbian rights in the churches in Africa. The stress of this comes from many directions, including money, power, different views and

opinions, leaders and different interpretations of what the Bible says. This issue will take a long time to resolve.

We believe that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church in Africa need to identify the best work that can be contributed to Lutheran African churches so they may rejoice in this time of the need for another Reformation. Thank you for your attention.

The Rev. Emmanuel Joseph Makala is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, South East of Lake Victoria Diocese.

LUTHERAN WITNESS IN TURKEY

by Ville Typpö

How are we supposed to rejoice, if the churches in Asia and many other places are in ruins? How are we going to celebrate the Reformation if the message spreading everywhere is anti-Christian?

I WANT TO BEGIN WITH THE WORDS that St. Paul has included in his first epistle to the Corinthians: “The churches in Asia greet you” (1 Cor. 16:19). The churches in Asia St. Paul was talking about were located in today’s Turkey. The same churches were addressed and also admonished in the Book of Revelation by the Lord, Jesus Christ. Some of you may have visited the places of those churches and found nothing but ruins. It seems that the Lord really removed the lamp stand of unrepentant churches.

In our days, the same region is 99 percent Muslim. Once the great center of the Christendom, the marvelous Hagia Sophia Church of Constantinople, has served for centuries as a mosque, and nowadays it’s a museum. History teaches us that the glorious heritage of the past or the great ministry of today may lose its value if we don’t have the blessing of our Lord for tomorrow, if we cease to hear how the

Word of God calls us to repentance and faith on a daily basis. That’s why it is good to come together under the theme of “Celebrating the Reformation Rightly: Remembrance, Repentance and Rejoicing.”

Today, we are focusing on “rejoicing.” But how are we supposed to rejoice if the churches in Asia and many other places are in ruins? How are we going to celebrate the Reformation if the message spreading everywhere is anti-Christian? At least in the Western countries and media, Islam is presented to us, for the most part, in two ways. We see videos about violent warriors in black outfits, ready to torture and murder anyone they meet. We hear the news about Islamic armies rolling over villages and towns, spreading terror and death. That’s the horrifying reality for some of our African and Middle Eastern

brothers and sisters, the pain shared by the whole Body of Christ.

On the other hand, we are presented with a very different picture — the modern civilized Islam, a religion of peace and prosperity, high ethical values, tight family bonds and a society with networks of mutual support and help. How should we place ourselves in this scenario as Lutherans and as churchmen? Should we stay and live in peace with the peaceful version of Islam? The majority of individual Muslims really do want to live in peace with their neighbors regardless of their religion. Or should we fight against those who are willing to go to war?

We are saints in Christ, but we know that we are constantly sinners in ourselves, and we are not going to be anything else in this world.

During the Reformation, same questions were on the agenda. Germany was under the threat of a Turkish invasion. Ottoman armies were twice at the gates of Vienna. The war was there. While Luther was clearly against Crusades motivated as religious campaigns by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, he encouraged the emperor to carry out his responsibility of defending the country militarily.

But how would Luther advice the churchmen? Speaking about the pope, Luther states: “The pope curses those who supply Turks and Saracens with iron and wood so that one would think that he honestly desires to do good for Christendom. If he, however, were Christ’s vicar, then he would get moving, go there, and preach the Gospel to the Turks, being committed to it with body and soul. That would be a Christian way to challenge the Turks and to increase and defend Christendom.”¹

¹ WA 8:708.27–209.8. Volker Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 67. While speaking about Turks, Luther is usually referring to them as

The Christian way would be to get moving, to go there and preach the Gospel, being committed to it with body and soul. Preaching the Gospel is also the only way of bringing true peace for the people, who since the Fall are in a hopeless war against their Creator and against each other. Preaching the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ and praying the same also for the hostile enemies has always been the way of Christian witness.

History of the Lutheran witness

What, then, have the Lutherans done? Despite the teachings of Luther and the eager attempts of some of his followers at the sixteenth century, not very much success has been reported.² The first Lutheran pastor that I am aware of was sent to Turkey from Sweden at 1709. He and subsequent pastors were serving mostly the Scandinavian community in Constantinople up until the last quarter of the nineteenth century.³

During the nineteenth century, the majority of the Protestants in Turkey were involved in the so-called "Great Experiment." This mission strategy aimed to reach the Muslim majority through vitalizing the Christian minorities, the Greek and Armenian Orthodox Churches, which were existing in the Ottoman Empire. This was a ministry on a large scale, consisting, for example, of 465 schools in 1905. The Great Experiment managed to empower Christian minorities and form some Protestant Churches consisting of Orthodox converts, but generally the Muslims were not reached with Gospel. Rather ironically, the Muslim majority was insulted and humiliated through the support directed to the Christian minorities.⁴

Peter Pikkert, a long-term Baptist missionary to the region, criticizes this approach: "When the missionary community sought to exercise a Christian influence on society by establishing educational and medical facilities,

it lost sight of the fact that missions had to emerge directly from the church itself. They forgot that missions is a task which God gave to the church and for which He uniquely equipped it. It is the church, and not various and sundry para-church ministries, which is the God-ordained means through which the Great Commission was expected to be fulfilled."⁵ One rare exception of that era was the Lutheran Orient Mission Society, which reached the local majority people with their own language and focused on establishing Lutheran congregations among them. Unfortunately this ministry lasted only five years and was wiped away by World War I. While the years of war and years between the wars reshaped the world, the Christian witness was almost non-existent in Turkey.

The situation today

Luther, in his own time, complained that the Turkish government "does not allow Christians to come together

in public, and no one can openly confess Christ or preach or teach against Mohammed."⁶ This was the case for a long time, and remains so in many Muslim countries. In Turkey, however, at least for the time being, it is possible for Christians to come together in public; it is possible to openly confess Christ and preach the Gospel.

This is a considerably new development. The modern Turkish State was founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923. Since that time the state has been basically secular. Muslim people were governed by a secular state, which defined the limits and controlled the religion. During last 12 years, however, Turkey has changed a lot. Under the current regime, secularism has been torn down step-by-step and religion has gained more space in the society. This means, of course, that Islam is doing better.

Even if we may not welcome all of these developments with joy, the increasing freedom of religion has actually meant more freedom for Christians too. Turkey has become increasingly tolerant towards other religions. Two recent examples: a couple of months ago the Syrian community in Istanbul was given permission to build a new church. Such a thing has not happened in the era of the modern Turkey. In the beginning of this year a Christian TV-channel started to broadcast 24/7 through a government-controlled satellite. This means that any citizen

We all are sinners.
We all need Jesus.
Not just once but
constantly.

a religious entity, not so much as an ethnic group of people. For our discussion, it would be appropriate to read "Turks and Saracens" to mean Islam.

² Ingemar Öberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematical Study* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 498–499.

³ Sture Theolin, *The Swedish Palace in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, 2000), 156.

⁴ P. Pikkert, *Protestant Missionaries to the Middle East: Ambassadors of Christ or Culture?* (Hamilton, Ontario: WEC Canada, 2008), 54. *The Journal of Lutheran Mission* 2 (2014) has published a concise review on Pikkert's book by Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver.

⁵ Pikkert, 264.

⁶ *AE* 46:175; Stolle, 68.

surfing channels on his receiver may end up to a Christian channel by change. (She does not need to go turn her antenna and tune her receiver for a different satellite.) Most people are also open and willing to engage in openly confessional discussions about religion. In a barber shop, in a taxi, in a café — any place — you don't need to search for an opportunity to share the Gospel. When meeting new people, the first or second question I face is usually about my occupation. "I'm a pastor." And that's enough. "I have never met a pastor before." "Can you tell me about your faith?" "Finally I have an opportunity to ask someone how really knows about Christianity!" "Where is your church?" "May I come to church even if I'm a Muslim?"

For me, these questions tell about the huge need for witness. We know that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can people call on someone they have not believed? And how can they believe in someone they have not heard about? And how can they hear without someone preaching? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:13–15).

The percentage of the Christians in Turkey is about 0.2 percent. Among the population of 75 million, there are about 150,000 Christians. Around 95 percent of these Christians consist of ethnic minorities speaking and worshipping in the Greek, Armenian and Syrian languages, which makes the Church and the Gospel practically inaccessible for the Turkish-speaking majority. There is only a handful of Christians worshipping in Turkish language, a variety of Protestants and some Roman Catholics (around 0.007 percent percent of total population). Turkey has been correctly described as the largest unreached nation in the world.⁷

Since 2002 there has been a Turkish speaking Lutheran congregation in Istanbul. Istanbul Lutheran Church was officially founded in 2004. Today the church body consists of four Turkish-speaking congregations located in Turkey and in Bulgaria. This church body follows a locally adapted three-year lectionary and Turkish liturgy, produces and translates Lutheran literature and hymns and aims to witness to Christ through each member of the

church according to their various vocations.

What can we do as Lutherans? One may ask, why should Lutherans should engage Islam? If so many others have tried and often failed, and we are so few, why should we waste time and resources for such a fruitless endeavor?

I think that as confessional Lutherans, we have been given so much to rejoice about, we have been given so much that we, too, certainly have something to offer. Most importantly, we have the inspired Word of God. We have the firm ground that never fails. We have the clear confession that correctly expresses the teaching of the Bible. And we don't just have it. We know it, we trust it, we live with it. We don't need to invent it. It's there already.

As Lutherans, we have Jesus Christ, who is present in the Word and the Sacraments, in the very center of our faith and congregational life. That's why we don't need to depend on ourselves, on our own strength or lack of it,

on our own faith or lack of it, on our own love or lack of it. As Lutherans, we have the distinction between Law and Gospel as a key rule for proclaiming the Word of God. This is really something that we should not underestimate. A number of Muslims have left their religion just to become followers of another law carrying some name of Christianity. A number of Turkish-speaking Christians today live in congregations where they are not nurtured with Gospel but burdened with their own works or lack of them. Why wouldn't we share the clear preaching of Gospel with them?

As Lutherans, we also have the rich traditional liturgy. Liturgy is

something that everyone in a Muslim country is able to understand. If you have been to a mosque, you know that prayer and worship is very physical act comprising the whole body. Each and every movement has a specific meaning, even to the point that an outward act becomes more important than inward faith. In Turkey, the people are also aware of the old traditional churches, all of which have rich liturgy.

It's not one or two people who have come and stayed in the Church because of the liturgy. Liturgy extensively uses the Word of God in prayers and hymns. Liturgy expresses God's holiness, and in front of Him we confess our sins and sing our praises. Liturgy conveys His overwhelming

We are saved by Christ and given all these treasures in Christ, so that we can freely use them, rejoice about them and also in order that we may generously share them, both with our next door neighbors and with those who are far away.

⁷ Pikkert, 243.

grace, personally delivered to us in Absolution and Holy Communion. Liturgy teaches and guards the faith from generation to generation and binds us together with the saints across time and place.

Even if some may not feel the following as an advantage, I want to list that as Lutherans, we are sinners. We may never impress a pious Muslim with our highly ethical life, by expressing love or hospitality. Rather, he may exceed our expectations with his highly appreciable conduct of life. We are saints in Christ, but we know that we are constantly sinners in ourselves, and we are not going to be anything else in this world. That's the position we share deeply with every Muslim. We all are sinners. We all need Jesus. Not just once but constantly. The opportunity to confess my sins and shortcomings and be forgiven by God makes the difference.

We are saved by Christ and given all these treasures in Christ, so that we can freely use them, rejoice about them

and also in order that we may generously share them, both with our next door neighbors and with those who are far away. We are not going to run out of Gospel by sharing it.

Now that we are celebrating the Reformation rightly through remembrance, repentance and rejoicing, I want to conclude with a quote from Luther: "Everyone must truly rejoice if someone could lead people from the Turkish faith and from the devil to God, from sin to righteousness. It would truly be the highest and most costly work."⁸ We are looking forward to the day when we will be rejoicing with our Lord, Jesus Christ and all the saints from every nation, tribe, people and language — including Turkish.

We are not going to
run out of Gospel by
sharing it.

The Rev. Ville Typpö is the head of the Istanbul Lutheran Church and pastor of Istanbul Lutheran Congregation in Turkey.

⁸ Öberg, 485.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AFRICA: THIRTY YEARS OF GROWTH

by Mike Rodewald

The Lutheran church bodies that form the collectively named Lutheran Church in Africa have as a whole experienced rapid growth in the last thirty years, not only as widely acknowledged in numbers, but also capacity in mission effort and theological acumen. The emergence of Africa-initiated Lutheran church bodies brings a new growth addition to those planted primarily through western mission societies.

Introduction

WHEN ONE SPEAKS OF GROWTH, the primary focus may be assumed to be that of numerical growth. That is certainly important, as its opposite is decline. Africa now has some of the numerically largest Lutheran church bodies in the world. However, growth may occur in other ways that are not as readily quantifiable but also contribute to the overall growth picture of those who identify as both African and Lutheran on the continent.

It must be noted that reference to the Lutheran Church in Africa does not refer to a single entity or unified structure. Lutheran church bodies on the continent were each formed through national and ethnic histories, the motivations and methods of founders and influences of church bodies outside of Africa. The result is a multitude of forms for church polity and governance, as well as practice and approaches to theology that resist categorizing.

Looking at the larger picture of growth among Lutherans in Africa, the author's own limited perspective is acknowledged. Africa as a geographical whole is three and a half times the area of the continental United States divided into 54 nations and containing over 3,000 ethnic groups. No matter how long or where one lives and serves on the continent, there is much that one will not know and data that is not widely available. Thus any discussion

on growth will tend to be exploratory rather than definitive. The author apologizes to those church bodies, groups and institutions whose growth realities may be equally important as those mentioned but are not discussed in this paper. This was not by intention rather by limitation.

The growth of Lutheran church bodies and membership in Africa is astounding and can only be understood in light of previous generations of Lutheran Christians around the world participating in God's mission.

God's mission

The growth of Lutheran church bodies and membership in Africa is astounding and can only be understood in light of previous generations of Lutheran Christians around the world participating in God's mission. This understanding of mission sees God as the initiator of mission — the Father sends the Son;¹ Father and Son send the Spirit;² Father, Son and Spirit send the people of God, or the Church, into the world.³ It is reflected in the term *missio dei*. We acknowledge that any accomplishment in mission is God's,

not ours, a theological concept foundational to the formation of the Lutheran Church. Luther wrote, "For God has always been accustomed to collect a church for Himself even among the heathen,"⁴ and, "Therefore God gathered a church in the world not only from the one family of the

Mission occurs where the Word is faithfully proclaimed and God calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies through the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹ John 10:15; 17:18, 21.

² John 14:26; 15:26, Luke 24:49.

³ John 17:18–23; 20:21.

⁴ *Luther's Works (American Edition)*, ed. J. Pelikan and H. Lehman, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955ff), 8:135, hereafter referred to as *AE*.

patriarchs but from all nations to which the Word made its way.”⁵ While the Church as the people of God may be the instrument, mission occurs where the Word makes its way. This is certainly the case in Africa where the details of each church body vary through different timelines and relationships. Ultimately, where the Word is faithfully proclaimed, God calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The role of mother tongue Bible translation

Translation of the Bible and other materials into mother tongues has created a foundation and played a huge role in the growth of the Lutheran Church in Africa. African mission thinker and theologian Kwame Bediako claimed, “There is probably no more important single explanation for the massive presence of Christianity on the African continent than the availability of the Scriptures in many African languages. By rejecting the notion of a sacred language for the Bible, Christianity makes every translation of its Scriptures substantially and equally the Word of God.”⁶

Leaders of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) acknowledge the translation effort of such partners as the Summer Institute of Linguistics as foundational to outreach of the Church and write, “The Church [EECMY] believes that every person and every community have [sic] the grace to hear the message of the gospel in the language of their heart and cultural context.”⁷ The EECMY currently facilitates thirteen different mother tongue projects with its partners.

New and emerging Lutheran church bodies find themselves earlier in the mother tongue evangelism process. Pastor John Bundor of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone (where the completed Kisi Bible was dedicated in 2014) writes, “People that depended on others to read the Scriptures for them have now become independent readers. They are now reading scriptures in their mother tongue and they are also preaching to others in the mother tongue.”⁸ One notes that the availability of

Scripture in one’s language opens up a whole new audience for the Word.

Translation of Scripture into the mother tongues of African peoples not only has facilitated numerical growth of the Church in Africa, it has inhibited the growth of such as Islam. Islam spreads on the basis of its untranslatable Scripture⁹ and where God’s Word is not available through one’s mother tongue, local beliefs, including Christianity, are easily subsumed. The engulfing by Islam of the once vibrant early Church in northern Africa is often attributed to a lack of Scripture in the mother tongue (Berber) of those in churches where leadership and church life was accomplished in Latin. Where translations exist — Ge’ez in Ethiopia and Coptic in Egypt — the Church remains to this day.¹⁰ Such remains the situation where God’s Word, translatable and purposeful in meaning, reaches out to Africans through their own languages and related conceptual constructs.

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as the people of
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Thirty years of growing

When one looks at the journeys of each Lutheran church body in Africa from beginning to end, the details threaten to overwhelm. National history, ethnic history, mission history and numbers interact to form widely varying forms of Lutheran Christianity in formation, practice and theological identity.

To explore the growth of the last three decades, it is tempting to think primarily of numbers. That is certainly one aspect but Lutheran church bodies in Africa are growing in other ways, most especially in the ability to provide training for church leaders and in the manner in which churches are initiated. Thus this paper additionally looks at growth apart from membership numbers.

Assessing growth

It is helpful to understand the context within which Lutheran churches in Africa are growing if one wishes to assess growth and its meanings. An initial approach toward assessing the growth and maturity of foreign

⁵ AE 6:227.

⁶ Kwame Bediako. *Christianity in Africa*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 62.

⁷ *The EECMY Department for Mission and Theology Annual Report 2014*, CMCRC meeting in Addis Ababa, Feb. 2014, 23.

⁸ John Bundor, “Zealous for Evangelism,” *LBT Literacy Report* (September 2013).

⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel beyond the West*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 120.

¹⁰ Mike Rodewald, “Islam and Christian Mission in Africa” *LBT e-Journal of Mission Studies* Vol. 3 #3 (Sep, 2008), 32. Also Philip Noss, “Bible Translation in History and into the Future” *Lausanne World Pulse Archives* (Sept. 2009), <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles-php/1197/09-2009>, accessed on 11 March 2015.

mission results is attributed to Henry Venn, head of the Anglican Church Mission Society from 1841–1872, and Rufus Anderson, head of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions from 1832–1866. These nineteenth-century mission administrators saw the weaknesses of dependence resulting from western mission method of the times. Though not living in close to proximity to either each other or the foreign mission context, they came to mutual conclusions and proposed criteria toward assessing an independent indigenous church as the goal of church-planting. The results became known as the three-self principles, i.e., that a true indigenous church should be self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting.¹¹ These early criteria both informed and reflected the worldview of Western mission thinkers of the time and allowed them to assess their mission-daughter church bodies.

The “three-selves” quickly come into question in the light of today’s context in Africa. Indigenous independence itself is an expectation assigned from abroad. Western mission societies of the past tended to transplant the familiar forms of their own more resource-rich contexts into Africa. Imported forms and structures required more to maintain than available in the local context. This created an expectation toward *self-support* while at the same time subtly encouraged the emerging church to depend upon others to maintain the inherited structures. *Self-propagation* is an important marker but not necessarily a sign of independence when one notes indigenous churches in other parts of the world in decline and debatably in need of assistance from others to revive. *Self-governance* as applied on the African continent is not solely of local mandate. Even as individual church bodies may operate within systems mandated by government, constitution and by-laws, functional governance is shared among church leaders of different bodies in a consultation and consensus process.

In the end, Venn and Anderson’s approach and resulting expectation for indigenous independence clashes with African values where reliance on community is valued and independence is discouraged.¹² Exclusivity and inde-

pendence is not the objective of most individual church bodies or their members. Mutually beneficial relationships are expected to continue as long as relationships are conducive to both. The overall result in Africa is that of interdependence between Lutheran church bodies as partners in governance, propagation and support rather than that of self-reliance. However, the principles themselves remain important markers through which to observe the collective growth of Lutherans on the continent in the last thirty years.

It can be noted that another marker, self-theologizing,¹³ has made its appearance in the years after Venn and Anderson. Similar to the previous three-self principle markers, it is not helpful with independence as its object, but its ability illustrates the growing capacity of Lutherans in Africa and will be discussed later in this paper.

Where the Word is
faithfully proclaimed,
God calls, gathers,
enlightens and
sanctifies through
the power of the
Holy Spirit.

Growing in numbers

It is difficult to provide exact numbers in the African context where numbers often don’t matter as much as presence. Newer church bodies do not have the management capacity to count membership — the need for numbers many times overwhelmed by other priorities. Results from self-reporting can depend upon who is being asked. Thus for many

of the new and emerging church bodies, there are only estimates that may have wide variance. The data available in Wikipedia makes an attempt and provides a count of 20,752,232¹⁴ Lutherans for Africa. However, the specific country numbers in the same data differ in other sources exhibiting that even arriving at such a precise number is the result of varying entries. What is clear is that many Lutheran bodies on the continent are trending upward in membership growth.

The importance of each individual mission effort cannot be over-emphasized. Four of the largest Lutheran Church bodies in the world now are on the continent of Africa. The EECMY (Ethiopia) grew from an estimated 20,000 in 1959 to 7,280,622 in 2014.¹⁵ The Evangelical

¹¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1991), 331

¹² Philip Ntsimane, “The fragile identity of being Lutheran and African,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, (Oct. 2010): 5–6.

¹³ Bosch, 451–452.

¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheranism_by_region, accessed on March 15, 2015.

¹⁵ The EECMY reported 7,280,622 members from *The EECMY Department for Mission and Theology Annual Report 2014*, presented at CMCRC meeting in Addis Ababa, Feb. 2014.

Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) reported membership of 6,139,879 in 2012 compared to 5,825,312 in 2011 and 5,601,217 in 2010.¹⁶ The FLM (Madagascar) established in 1950 with 180,000 members, now has an estimated 3–4,000,000.¹⁷ The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria reports 2.2 million.¹⁸ Others are collectively impressive. The result of each mission effort forms a numerical piece of the big picture, some smaller and some larger¹⁹ and feeds the overall number.

Growing in mission

How and where new church bodies are formed provides another marker to growth.

When those from Western Lutheran churches think about African mission, many picture churches planted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by foreign missionaries sent from the mission boards/societies of Western church bodies. This is certainly one way through which many in Africa trace their histories. But advancements in the last three decades in communication and ease of travel have encouraged different methods of Christian witness into Africa. New ways of relationship for mission have developed.

First, it is easier for Western church members who have never lived in the African context to directly discover and define mission opportunity from their own contexts. This has resulted in a bloom of visitors on what have been called short-term mission trips.

From the introduction of the Gospel message to the ability to wrestle with identity as Lutheran Christians in Africa, the process toward creating theological acumen does not come without outside assistance.

Second, it is easier for African immigrants or those who study abroad to maintain closer relationship and ties in their homelands than in the past. Many find homes in Lutheran church bodies in their new homes and present direct-mission opportunities outside of previously established church structures, mission boards and societies.

The result has been widely varying relationships and methods for mission in Africa, diffuse rather than focused, with those identifying themselves as Lutheran and African having a wide perception of what that might mean. Many understand themselves as Lutheran through their history with other Lutherans rather than because of an intentional theological identity. Church bodies have been formed in multiple ways that for the purposes of this paper are broadly categorized into three: Western mission-daughter, Africa-initiated and direct-mission short-term method.

Western mission-daughter Lutheran church bodies

Many Lutheran church bodies in Africa, especially the older ones, point to their beginnings as the result of missionaries sent from mission boards/societies in Europe or North America.²⁰ The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus²¹ is a good example. The EECMY formed in 1959 through a merger of Western mission society efforts into four semi-autonomous synods with a membership of

around 20,000²² and adopted Scripture and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as their doctrinal basis in the constitution.²³ In 2014, the EECMY reported an 8 percent

¹⁶ “ELCT Press Release,” (Feb. 2013) accessed at <http://www.elct.org/news/2013.02.005.html> on March 11, 2013.

¹⁷ The LWF page reports 3,000,000 at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/malagasy-lutheran-church>; Wikipedia reports 4,000,000 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malagasy_Lutheran_Church both accessed on March 14, 2015.

¹⁸ <http://www.lutheranworld.org/country/nigeria>, accessed on March 14, 2015.

¹⁹ For example the estimated membership of mission-daughter churches of the LCMS synodical mission church-planting efforts in Africa are as follows: Lutheran Church of Nigeria (est. 100–150,000), Ev. Lutheran Church of Ghana (est. 35–40,000), Ev. Lutheran Church (and Synod) in Liberia (est. 10–12,000), Eglise Ev. Lutherienne au Guinea (est. 2,000), Eglise Ev. Lutherienne du Benin (est. 600), Eglise Lutherienne du Togo (7–8,000), Evangelique Lutherienne Synode au Cote d’Ivoire (est. 3–4,000), Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sierra Leone (est. 3–4,000).

²⁰ Some African Lutheran church bodies can point to being Africa-initiated by virtue of extending invitations to western Lutheran mission boards or societies to send missionaries to plant churches on the continent. This in contrast to those discussed later as Africa-initiated formed primarily through local African effort.

²¹ During discussion by the Founding Assembly, “Lutheran” was left out of the new name for the merged church, the agreement being that Luther had warned against such practice. This caused those congregations planted by the SBVM (Swedish Lutheran Mission — Bible True Friends) to pull out of the agreement and establish an independent church body in Dire Dawa, now consisting of [an estimated 20,000 members in] six synods collectively known as the Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church. <http://www.ethiopianevangelicallutheran.org>, accessed on March 11, 2015.

²² Magarsaa Gutaa. *From a Humble Beginning to Advanced Standing: A History of Mekane Yesus Seminary* [1960–2010], Addis Ababa: Mekane Yesus Seminary (2011), 10–19.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

overall growth rate in their 28 synods consisting of 8,093 congregations; 3,703 preaching places; 3,226 pastors and 7,280,622 members, figures that make it a candidate for the largest Lutheran church body in the world. Such growth is attributed to the spiritual life of its members rather than programs and strategy and one must note that even within the EECMY, growth is uneven with some synods reporting negative growth while one synod reported a 33 percent increase in members.²⁴

Other large church bodies in east and central Africa have similar beginnings found in the merger of the results of western mission societies. These include the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), and the Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM) in Madagascar. They are organized similarly and have experienced tremendous growth in the past few years.

Others, smaller and too many to list exhaustively (see appendix A), also trace their beginnings to the coming of western missionaries. Individually they continue to develop within various stages of growth or stagnation, but the overall picture of western mission-daughter church bodies on the African continent is one of membership growth.

Africa-initiated Lutheran church bodies (AiLCs)

In recent years, a number of emerging Lutheran church bodies can be identified as Africa-initiated. AiLCs are newer generation Lutheran churches established primarily through the efforts of Africans rather than foreign missionaries sent through western mission boards. The Commanaute Evangelique Lutherienne au Congo-est (CELCE), the Eglise Lutherienne du Kivu (ELKI), and Eglise Chretienne Evangelique Lutherienne du Congo (EELCo, formerly Church of Congo) were each founded by men who studied Lutheran theology in Tanzania and then returned to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The founding of the CELCE is typical, its founder ordained by a bishop of the ELCT in Tanzania. Upon returning to the DRC in 1977, this pastor registered a church and mentored and ordained nine additional pastors. By 2010, there were ten Lutheran congregations with an estimated 10,000 members and headquarters near Luvungi.²⁵

²⁴ The EECMY Department for Mission and Theology Annual Report 2014. Presented at CMCR meeting in Addis Ababa (Feb. 2014), 41.

²⁵ <https://lcmsinafrica.wordpress.com/central-africa>, accessed on 8 March 2015. Also “Pastoral Education Update — Africa,” (*The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Office of International Mission Africa*

Another new and emerging Lutheran church body, the Eglise Evangelique Lutherienne au Burundi (EELBu), was initiated by the bishop of the The Eglise Evangelique Luthérienne du Congo (EELCo) — Kivu-Maniema diocese, circa 2008. The bishop visited across the border and gathered members in the early 2000s. In 2010, there were three preaching stations with 1800 members led by ten lay evangelists. These evangelists were ordained in 2011.²⁶

Another example of an emerging church body is the Lutheran Church of Uganda (previously the Lutheran Church Mission in Uganda). This body was initiated in 1993 when five lay leaders met a pastor from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ghana studying in Kenya. The bishop of the ELCG visited Uganda and later sent two evangelists supported by the ELCG and LCMS²⁷ World Mission funding. Currently there are 16 pastors, 128 congregations with about 20,000 members. Only about 10 percent of members speak languages of wider communication in rural areas. Ground-breaking for a new seminary occurred in February 2014.²⁸

The stories of the formation of Africa-initiated Lutheran church bodies are as varied as they are numerous — the common thread being that they were established primarily by African Lutherans with minimal outside assistance.

Direct mission²⁹ — short-term method

Again in recent years, a number of Lutheran church bodies have been formed from opportunities met by those who do not live on the continent. This includes returning refugees and sometimes immigrants who became a part of Lutheran congregations in other countries before returning to their homes on visits. It also includes foreign visitors on short-term trips.

As conflict or economic hardship dispersed peoples from Africa, refugees and/or immigrants settled and incorporated into Lutheran church bodies in their new homes off the African continent. They sometimes found interest and presented new friends with needs from their homelands. Those returning used their ethnic relation-

Management Team Report, June 2011), 5.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

²⁸ Mike Rodewald, “Uganda Brief,” (*LCMS Office of International Mission*, March 2014).

²⁹ *Direct-mission* is defined as mission effort that occurs outside of previously existing mission structures either by virtue of individual efforts or the forming of a new organization with specific mission purpose.

ships as a natural bridge to provide development and/or proclaim the Gospel. The objects of these mission efforts may or may not have been previously introduced to Christianity but often there has been the introduction of a Lutheran church into the community through those visiting.

A second form of direct-mission effort occurs when members of Lutheran churches in the West are presented with opportunity in the African context by African visitors to their context. This may also happen as a response to Internet pleas for assistance. As relationships are formed and needs presented, Lutherans have formed themselves into direct-mission efforts, including visits to Africa. Eventually a Lutheran church may be formed where previously there was none, sometimes in an unreached area but also sometimes resulting in a change of identity for a non-Lutheran church.

An example of a mix of methods can be found in South Sudan. The beginnings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan/South Sudan (ELCS/SS) occurred when an Anglican priest directly contacted LCMS Lutherans and was introduced to Lutheran theology through short-term visitors. Together they established a center in Yambio among the Zande ethnic group. Around the same time, refugee immigrants within the LCMS in Nebraska in the United States formed the Sudanese Lutheran Mission Society. They returned on short-term visits, establishing Lutheran activity among the Nuer people. Eventually the results of the two groups agreed to merge with the former Anglican pastor serving as the first bishop until he passed away in 2009. The Archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria consecrated a new bishop in 2011. The new bishop of the ELCS/SS had been ordained after studying Lutheran theology in Tanzania as a refugee. Membership of the ELCS/SS at the time was claimed as an estimated 15–20,000 members with 27 ordained pastors trained through varying institutions and/or methods and 80 evangelists.³⁰

Summary

A complete list of bodies and/or groups of Lutherans who have been formed through the various mission efforts in Africa is elusive and such groups continue to emerge to audiences of wider communication. Wikipedia lists twenty-one separate Lutheran church bodies within the Lutheran World Federation, the International Lutheran

Council or as unaffiliated. However, anyone conversant with the continent and Lutheran mission as a whole, can bring others to mind. Appendix A provides a list of 86 different Lutheran church bodies/groups that have emerged, and this author acknowledges that there may be any number that did not make the list.

Growing in theological capacity

The ability for self-theologizing³¹ is an important marker when one observes capacity growth on the content. Self-theologizing can be defined as working out the theological truths of God's unchanging Word as applied to one's own context. This capacity is highly desired if African Lutherans are to wrestle with the questions formed by the African context rather than adopting the formulations of others without thought. For example, Africans have been challenged to respond biblically to western Lutheran church bodies' resolutions on same-sex issues.³² Ntsimane notes that confessional African Lutherans find themselves struggling with closed altar practice in a context where "barring a hungry person from partaking of a meal goes against the core values of African hospitality."³³ While the results of such self-theologizing will be debated, the emerging of such debate onto the wider world stage is the result of the growing number of avenues that prepare church workers to wrestle with the questions of being Lutheran. From the introduction of the Gospel message to the ability to wrestle with identity as Lutheran Christians in Africa, the process toward creating theological acumen does not come without outside assistance — such assistance tending to "retreat up the ladder" as the local church and institutions gain their own capacity.

This is illustrated in the following diagram noting growth in theological acumen. Outside assistance, whether from foreign missionaries, study abroad or short-term visits, results in new local capacity. Local capacity then takes over roles previously accomplished through outside assistance, making the need for that assistance less critical (i.e., it "retreats up the ladder"). While foreign assistance may continue at all levels, the actual need becomes no longer critical. The end result is a growing ability to engage in theology and practice consistent within Lutheran identity.

³¹ Bosch, 451–452.

³² See such as the Dodoma Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (2010) <http://www.elct.org/news/2010.04.004.html>, accessed on March 12, 2015.

³³ Ntsimane, 15.

³⁰ "Pastoral Education Update," 7.

With this as our understanding, we can see that tremendous growth toward such self-theologizing has occurred, indicated by the number of emerging Lutheran theological training efforts on the continent. Again they are as varied as their histories, ages and relationships with others. Examples of the varied efforts toward theological formation are as follows:

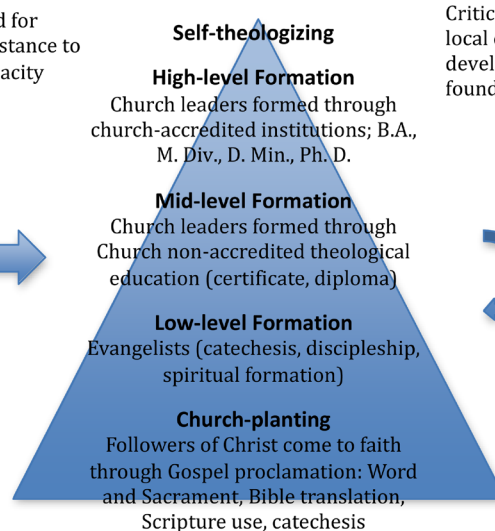
The Commanaute Evangelique Lutherienne au Congo-Est (CELCE) in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo prepares its pastors through a mentoring system. As of 2011, nine pastors had been ordained with a further 15 planned for 2012.³⁴

The Jonathan Ekong Memorial Lutheran Seminary in Nigeria is owned and operated by the Lutheran Church of Nigeria. Seminary completion is an eight-year process, the first two years qualifying as an evangelist. After a three-year service, an additional three years of class are taken followed by a two-year probationary status and ordination. As of 2011, JEMLS had 63 students and was seeking accreditation with the government.³⁵ A Lutheran university is planned.³⁶

Tshwane Lutheran Seminary in South Africa is a semi-independent Lutheran seminary jointly owned by the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa, and the Mission of Lutheran Churches (Germany) through a shareholding agreement. The seminary is not accredited but degrees are granted to qualifying students through an arrangement with nearby University of Pretoria (UP) through its Department of Theology. In 2011 there were eleven students in pastoral preparation classes at the seminary and four in higher studies at UP.³⁷

The Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia was formed as an entity of the EECMY in 1960 and is accredited by the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA).³⁸ In addition to the main seminary, the EECMY Department of Mission and Theology reports 51 functioning Bible schools, including mobile Bible

Critical need for outside assistance to develop capacity



Critical need for local capacity to develop foundational levels

schools and five regional seminaries offering bachelor degrees in theology. In 2014 the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa initiated a partnership with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for an M.A. in Theology for almost 40 local students with the eventual goal of granting a Ph.D. in Theology. All EECMY institutions together with TEE and Distance Education graduated 1,434 at different levels of qualification.³⁹

The list of avenues through which Lutheran church bodies and their associated theological institutions are providing training for African church leaders is as varied as their individual histories. It's not useful to provide a list since available data would not fairly or accurately represent the avenues in which theological acumen is being gained. While currently only those such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania's Tumaini University Makumire (TUMA)⁴⁰ through its faculty of theology are able to provide up to a PhD in Theology, it is the goal of each church body to build its capacity toward self-theologizing and practice as Lutheran Christians.

Conclusion

The multitude of Lutherans who proclaim the Gospel in Africa results in surface forms as varied as the individual founders. However, our overall understanding of God's mission sees God at work through these many efforts. God's Word is being proclaimed and wherever the Word

³⁴ "Pastoral Education Update," 5.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ <http://www.lutheranchurchnigeria.org>, accessed on March 20, 2105.

³⁷ "Pastoral Education Update," 5.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ EECMY Dept of Mission and Theology Annual Report 2014, presented at CMCR Meeting in Addis Ababa, (Feb. 2014), 11–13.

⁴⁰ <http://www.makumira.ac.tz/index.php/programmes/phd>, accessed on March 15, 2015.

makes its way through His people in Africa, the Word comes back with fruit.

The Lutheran Church in Africa has grown in three distinct ways in the last thirty years — numerically, in its capacity for training its members in Lutheran theology and in its methods toward establishing new church bodies.

It has been an exciting three decades for me personally, seeing how God uses His people so others are called to Him through His Word. Together, we observe with joy the many who participate in His mission on the continent that others might also hear and be called through the Word wherever they may be in Africa.

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The Rev. Dr. Mike Rodewald is executive director of Lutheran Bible Translators.

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COUNTRY	NAME	METHOD OF FORMATION
ANGOLA	Igreja Ev Luterana de Angola Igreja Luterana Confessional em Anglola	Mission-daughter Africa-initiated
BENIN	Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Benin Eglise Luthérienne Afrique–Synode du Benin	Mission-daughter Africa-initiated
BOTSWANA	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Botswana Lutheran Church in Southern Africa Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Africa	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter
BURKINA FASO	Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Burkina Faso	Africa-initiated
BURUNDI	Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne au Burundi	Africa-initiated
CAMEROON	L’Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne au Cameroun Lutheran Church of Cameroon Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic	Mission-daughter

COUNTRY	NAME	METHOD OF FORMATION
CHAD	Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Chad	Mission-daughter
CONGO	Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne au Congo	Mission-daughter
COTE D'IVOIRE	Evangélique Luthérienne Synod au Cote d'Ivoire	Mission-daughter
DEM. REPUBLIC OF CONGO	Ev. Eglise Luthérienne au Congo Commanaute Eglise Luthérienne du Congo-Est Eglise Luthérienne du Kivu Lutheran Evangelical Church in Africa Eglise Chretienne Evangelique Luthérienne du Congo Eglise Luthérienne de Confession du Congo Eglise International Evangelique Luthérienne du Congo	Mission-daughter Africa-initiated Africa-initiated Africa-initiated Africa-initiated Mission-daughter Africa-initiated
ERITREA	Evangelical Church of Eritrea	Mission-daughter
ETHIOPIA	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Ethiopia Evangelical Lutheran Church Lutheran Church of Ethiopia	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Africa-initiated
GAMBIA	Ev. Lutheran Church of Gambia Lutheran Church of Gambia	Africa-initiated Africa-initiated
GHANA	Ev. Lutheran Church of Ghana Apostolic Lutheran Church of Ghana	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter
GUINEA	Ev. Eglise Luthérienne de Guinée	Mission-daughter
KENYA	Ev. Lutheran Church of Kenya Kenya Ev. Lutheran Church Apostolic Lutheran –Kenya	Mission-daughter Africa-initiated Direct-mission
LESOTHO	Ev. Lutheran Church in Lesotho Lutheran Church in Southern Africa Basotho Lutheran Church	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter/Africa-initiated Mission-daughter/Africa-initiated
LIBERIA	Lutheran Church of Liberia Ev. Lutheran Church of Liberia Ev. Lutheran Church–Liberia Synod Apostolic Lutheran Church in Liberia	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter/Africa-initiated Mission-daughter/Africa-initiated Direct-mission
MADAGASCAR	Ev. Lutheran Church of Malawi Lutheran Church of Central Africa Confessional Lutheran Church–Malawi Synod	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Africa-initiated
MALAWI	Ev. Lutheran Church of Malawi Lutheran Church of Central Africa Confessional Lutheran Church–Malawi Synod	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Africa-initiated
MOZAMBIQUE	Igreja Ev Luterana de Moçambique Igreja Luterana da Concordia em Moçambique Igreja Livre Luterana de Mozambique	Africa-initiated Africa-initiated/Direct-mission Unknown
NAMIBIA	Ev. Lutheran Church in Namibia Ev. Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia Ev. Lutheran Church in Namibia–German Ev. Lutheran Church	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter
NIGERIA	Lutheran Church of Nigeria All Saints Lutheran Church Christ the King Lutheran Church Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Apostolic Lutheran Church–Nigeria	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Direct-mission
RWANDA	Lutheran Church of Rwanda Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda	Africa-initiated Africa-initiated

COUNTRY	NAME	METHOD OF FORMATION
SENEGAL	L'Église Luthérienne au Sénégal	Mission-daughter
SIERRA LEONE	Christ Ev. Lutheran Church of Sierra Leone Ev. Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone	Mission-daughter Africa-initiated
SOUTH AFRICA	Ev. Lutheran Church of South Africa Ev. Lutheran Church of South Africa (NT) Ev. Lutheran Church of South Africa (Cape) Lutheran Church in Southern Africa Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa Moravian Church in S. Africa United Lutheran Church of South Africa Basotho Lutheran Church Ethiopian Ev. Church Mekane Yesus–South Africa Confessional Lutheran Church of South Africa Lutheran Bapedi Church	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Mission-daughter Africa-initiated Mission-daughter Africa-initiated Africa-initiated Africa-initiated
SOUTH SUDAN	Ev. Lutheran Church of Sudan/South Sudan Lutheran Church of South Sudan United Sudanese Lutheran Church	Africa-initiated/Direct-mission Direct-mission Direct-mission
SWAZILAND	Ev. Lutheran Church of South Africa Lutheran Church in Southern Africa	Mission-daughter Mission-daughter
TANZANIA	Ev. Lutheran Church of Tanzania Lutheran Church in East Africa	Mission-daughter Africa-initiated
TOGO	Eglise Luthérienne du Togo Ev Lutheran Church of Christ	Mission-daughter Direct-mission
UGANDA	Lutheran Church of Uganda (formerly Lutheran Church Mission of Uganda) Ev. Lutheran Church of Uganda Uganda Lutheran Church (formerly Lutheran Church Foundation) Ev Lutheran Church ECA Kampala Lutheran Church	Africa-initiated Africa-initiated Africa-initiated Africa-initiated Africa-initiated
ZAMBIA	Ev. Lutheran Church of Zambia Lutheran Church of Central Africa Lutheran Ev. Church of Africa	Africa-initiated Mission-daughter Mission-daughter
ZIMBABWE	Ev. Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe	Mission-daughter

BOOK REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

Learn Alan Hirsch's definition of Church and whether or not it's worth believing.

***The Forgotten Ways — Reactivating the Missional Church* by Alan Hirsch. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006.**

***The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* by Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2012.**

by Albert B. Collver III

NEARLY ANYONE FOLLOWING the missional church movement has heard of Alan Hirsch, who has been called one of the foremost missional thinkers of our day. Hirsch studied business and marketing in the university before matriculating to Australia where he studied seminary at the Australian College of Theology. After graduating, Hirsch became the pastor at the South Melbourne Church of Christ in 1989. For the next 15 years, Hirsch served as the pastor. He worked with the marginalized and poor in Melbourne. From this experience, Hirsch developed his missional theory. He has written “a library of missional books.”¹ However, two of his books in particular define his mission paradigm: *The Forgotten Ways*, first published in 2006, and *The Permanent Revolution*, published in 2012. Hirsch considers *The Forgotten Ways* to be his “magnum opus” and a “phenomenology of apostolic movement.”² Hirsch’s book *The Permanent Revolution* focuses “on the nature of ministry and leadership within (and for) apostolic movements ... but it does so within the broader context of fivefold gifting complex set out by Paul in his foundational work on ecclesiology ... Ephesians.”³ Hirsch describes *The Permanent Revolution* as correlating to the “mDNA of apostolic environment in *The Forgotten Ways*.”⁴ In slightly more “traditional” ecclesial vocabulary, if *The Forgotten Ways* is “church,” then *The Permanent*

Revolution is “ministry.” Since Hirsch ascribes the loss of the apostolic missional energy to the contemporary church’s loss or misunderstanding of the biblical view of Christ’s Church and of apostolic and Pauline ministry or leadership, these two books are significant and worth the time to consider his arguments.

In his book *The Forgotten Ways*, Hirsch develops and explains significant aspects of his missional theory. He believes that his book demonstrates a more authentic expression of *ecclesia* and that in light of the 21st century challenges that “the inherited formulas” will no longer work (pg. 16). Hirsch identifies his book as belonging to the category of “missional ecclesiology.” Hirsch’s primary thesis is that once the Church became institutionalized after Constantine and the legalization of Christianity, she departed from the Scriptural foundations of what it means to be church and missional. Hirsch seeks to discover how the Church grew from an estimated 25,000 people in 100

For Hirsch
the irreducible
minimal definition
of the Church is
“a covenanted
community” and
that it is “centered
on Jesus.”

A.D. to 20,000,000 people by 310 A.D. He asks, “So, how *did* [sic] the early church do it? In answering the question, we can perhaps find the answer to the question for the church and mission in our day and in our context. For herein lies the powerful mystery of the church in its most authentic form” (pgs. 18–19).

Hirsch juxtaposes or compares the “Apostolic Genius” of the Early Church’s growth with the growth of the Christian Church (Three-Self Church) in China after the Communist revolution. Hirsch states, “In the Chinese phenomenon we are witnessing the most significant transformational Christian movement in the history

¹ See more at <http://www.theforgottenways.org/alan-hirsch.aspx>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

of the church” (pg. 19). He compares the growth of the Chinese church to the Early Church, “And remember, not unlike the early church, these people had very few Bibles (at times they shared only one page to a house church and then swapped that page with another house group). They had no professional clergy, no official leadership structure, no central organization, no mass meetings, and yet they grew like mad. How is this possible? How did they do it?” (pg. 19). He provides two other historical examples of Early Church like growth from recent history. He cites the growth of Methodism from less than 2 percent of the population in America in 1776 to more than 34 percent of the population by 1850. His other example is the growth of Pentecostalism, which grew from humble beginnings at the turn of the 20th century to more than 400 million by the end of the 20th century with projections of exceeding more than 1 billion by the mid-21st century. Hirsch asks, “How did they do it?” (pg. 19).

Hirsch calls these examples of rapid church growth “dangerous stories” because they challenge the established church. He states that the goal of his book is “to try and give a name to this phenomena and to try to identify the elements that constitutes it” (pg. 19). Hirsch calls the “phenomena” of rapid church growth “Apostolic Genius,” and the elements that constitute it “mDNA” (missional DNA). In both the growth of the Early Church and that of the Chinese church, Hirsch identifies persecution as key factor. “Persecution forced them away from any possible reliance on any form of centralized religious institution and caused them to live closer to, and more consistently with their primal message of the gospel It purified them from the dross and any unnecessary churchly paraphernalia. It was by *being true* to the gospel that they unleashed the power of Apostolic Genius” (pg. 20). Hirsch maintains that all of God’s people “carry within themselves the same potencies that energize the early Christian movement and that are currently manifest in the underground Chinese church. Apostolic Genius (the primal missional potencies of the gospel and of God’s people) lies dormant in you, me, and every local church that seeks to follow Jesus faithfully in any time. We have simply forgotten how to access

and trigger it” (pg. 21). Hirsch’s book claims to help the reader access this Apostolic Genius so that the Church can be revitalized once again.

Hirsch notes that his book provides a consistent critique of “religious institutionalism.” He wants to clarify that he does not think “institutionalism” is bad per se, but that simply in his analysis of the early Christian community and of the Chinese Christian community (and other growing churches) that “God’s people are more potent by far when they have little of what we would recognize as church institution in their life together” (pg. 23).

Hirsch recognizes that this critique will be challenging to most Western religious leaders because they are a product of religious institutionalism. Yet he encourages the reader to hear out his presentation. He divides his book into Section 1 and Section 2. Section 1 is narrative in style describing some of Hirsch’s experiences. Section 2 describes Apostolic Genius and the elements of mDNA.

Section 1 describes Hirsch’s experience at South Melbourne Church of Christ right after he completed his seminary training. Tracking with his critique of institutionalism, Hirsch begins by offering a critique of seminary education, “I have to say that nothing in my seminary training had

prepared me for the experience of those years. Everything in my education was geared toward maintaining the established, more institutional forms of the church. The vast majority of the subjects on offer were theoretical and were taught by theoreticians, not practitioners. So we had to learn on the run” (pg. 30). Later in the book, Hirsch states that “leadership, or the lack of it, is a significant key to either the renewal or the decline of the church” (pg. 120). Hirsch believes that this leadership malaise has been caused by “the agencies and people that have been responsible for the training and endorsing of leadership” (Ibid.). Hirsch calls for the reader to question how church leaders have been trained for the past few centuries. He believes that a significant problem of seminary education is that it removes a would-be leader from “the context of ordinary life and ministry in order to study in a somewhat cloistered environment” (pg. 120). Hirsch maintains that this is not how Jesus trained leaders and disciples. He also

Hirsch essentially claims for 1,700 years the Church has been following a less than or even unbiblical model. He wants to revitalize the Church by returning to and contextualizing the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” of the church for the present age.

states that Jesus was well aware of the Greek “academy” model but that Jesus did not use that model to teach.

In Hirsch’s *The Permanent Revolution* written in 2012, he further expands his critique of seminary education. He writes:

The denominational seminary is a classic case in point. If one organization is set apart to handle all the ideas and leadership training, then the local church no longer believes it has to do the hard work of these itself. As a result, it becomes lazy and dependent on the external organization. If we are not careful, creating external training and licensing bodies can be a death knell to a movement and cultivate a propensity toward institutionalism” (Kindle location: 6505).

Complaints about seminary education are nothing new and frequently circulate in various denominations. Hirsch identifies how seminary education is done as a hindrance to developing church leaders and an instrument that leads to the institutionalization of the Church. Hirsch seems to favor ministry and leadership training inside the local congregation over formal, academic seminary training. It is ironic to note that Hirsch wrote this about seminary education before he, himself, became part of the academy. As of 2015, Hirsch serves as a professor at Wheaton College in the Missional Church Movement program.

The heart of Hirsch’s book *The Forgotten Ways* centers on ecclesiology and church leadership (church and ministry, using Lutheran terminology). For Hirsch the irreducible minimal definition of the Church is “a covenanted community” and that it is “centered on Jesus.” Hirsch further states that a meaningful encounter with Jesus results in “worship, defined as offering our lives back to God through Jesus; Discipleship, defined as following Jesus and becoming increasingly like him; Mission, defined as extending the mission of God through the activities of his people” (pg. 40). Hirsch states, “Each informs the other to create a complex phenomenon called ‘church’” (Ibid.). Contrast Hirsch’s definition of the Church with that of the Augsburg Confession, Article VII: “Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever. The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered.” Although the “Word” (and perhaps “Sacraments”) might be able to exist or be found

within Hirsch’s definition, they are not primary as in the Augsburg Confession. Hirsch defines “worship” as “offering our lives back to God,” in contrast to the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, 33/154: “The woman came with the opinion that forgiveness of sins should be sought in Christ. **This worship is the highest worship of Christ.** She would think of nothing greater about Christ. To seek forgiveness of sins from Him was truly to acknowledge the Messiah.” Hirsch’s ecclesiology and definition of worship are significantly, if not fundamentally different, then what is confessed in the Lutheran Confessions. In fact, Hirsch’s view of ecclesiology is not compatible with the Lutheran Confessions. Hirsch even states, “People accustomed to ‘being fed’ are generally loath to move from passivity to activity” (pg. 47). Yet Lutheran theology focuses on Christ’s people being fed on Christ’s Word and Sacraments. Considering that Hirsch’s thesis is that a fundamental problem with the Church today is that it has departed from the New Testament conception of the Church and that his view of the Church does not agree with the Lutheran Confessions must cause Lutherans to question not only Hirsch’s thesis but also his proposed solution.

Hirsch’s fundamental thesis is that the Church existed in the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” between 32–313 A.D. From 313 A.D. until the 21st century, the Church has existed in what he calls the “Christendom Mode.” Hirsch’s “Christendom Mode” is similar in concept to what others refer to as the Constantinian Church, which is a church that has favor with the government and society in general. Finally, he describes the past decade or so as the “Emerging Missional Mode” (pg. 64). Hirsch argues that the “Christendom mode” church is not the original biblical church and should not mourned.⁵ According to Hirsch’s paradigm, the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” of church has more similarities with the “Emerging Missional mode” than it does with the “Christendom mode” which has dominated throughout most of the history of the Church. For instance, both the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” and “Emerging Missional mode” of church does not have dedicated

For Hirsch, the word “church” is linked to buildings, clergy and rituals.

⁵ “If you are feeling uncomfortable at this point, let me reiterate that Christendom in fact is not the original biblical mode of the early church, and so we do not need to feel too touchy about it. It’s all right ... God’s not going to strike us if we seek to find a better way to be faithful as well as missional. Progress is cool” (*The Forgotten Ways*, 64).

church buildings, whereas the “Christendom mode” supposedly holds that “buildings become central to the notion and experience of church” (pg. 64). The “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” and “Emerging Missional mode” of church has a five-fold ministry-leadership based on Ephesians 4 (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher), whereas the “Christendom mode” of church has “leadership by institutionally ordained clergy, thus creating a professional guild operating primarily in a pastor-teacher mode” (Ibid.). The five-fold minister-leadership model based on Ephesians 4 where ministry-leadership is expressed as APEPT (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) is a major component of Hirsch’s paradigm and will be discussed in more detail below. The “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” of church according to Hirsch celebrates communion as a sacramentalized community meal and Baptism done by all while the “Emerging Missional mode” resacramentalizes and ritualizes new symbols and events including the meal. For Hirsch this stands in contrast to the “Christendom mode” of the church, which has institutionalized grace through the Sacraments experienced only in church. The “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” and “Emerging Missional mode” according to Hirsch are both on the fringes of society, marginalized, and perhaps underground. In contrast the “Christendom mode” of the church is perceived as central to society and culture. In terms of mission, Hirsch sees the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” and “Emerging Missional mode” as an incarnational and sending church. In contrast, the “Christendom mode” of the church is what Hirsch calls “attractional,” which means that people gather to come and see rather than going out into the world or sending. Hirsch essentially claims for 1,700 years the Church has been following a less than or even unbiblical model. He wants to revitalize the Church by returning to and contextualizing the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” of the church for the present age.

Hirsch claims for the Church to be successful today we need to “invoke and access the power of Apostolic Genius.” (Pg. 65). He summarizes that “the truly liberating thing to realize is that Christendom was not the original mode of the church, and hopefully it will not be

Although Hirsch offers some helpful critiques on Western culture in the twenty-first century, his solution to solving the decline of the Western church requires a reinterpretation both of the Church and of the ministry.

the final one. It is high time for us to dethrone Constantine; as far as matters of church go, it seems he is still the emperor of our imaginations. The church now faces the challenge of discovering mission in a new paradigm while struggling to free itself from the Christendom mindset”

(Ibid.). In Section 2, Hirsch also developed a definition of a missional church. “So a working definition of missional church is a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world. In other words, the church’s true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church” (pg. 81). Hirsch develops a formula for engaging in mission for post-Christian culture: “Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology” (Ibid., 142). He calls this “missional ecclesiology.” Contrast

Hirsch’s definition of the true church with Augsburg Confession VII, which finds the Church gathered around the Word and the Sacraments.

In *The Forgotten Ways*, Hirsch discusses his minister-leader model APEPT (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) based on Eph. 4:7–11 (pg. 158). However, it is the book he wrote six years later, *The Permanent Revolution*, where he develops the model more fully and replaces the term “pastor” with that of “shepherd.” In *The Permanent Revolution*, Hirsch calls Eph. 4:1–16 an almost silver bullet, “a simple, guaranteed solution for a difficult problem” (Kindle location: 992). Hirsch claims that applying the Ephesians 4 typology “will unleash enormous energies that will awaken now-dormant potentials in the church that Jesus built” (Ibid.). Hirsch states that Ephesians 4 typology — that is, the fivefold ministry he calls APEST: apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher — is a major component of Pauline ecclesiology. He notes that in the millions of books written about the church the APEST model has never been discussed.

Yet in the many millions of theological books that have ever been written, we cannot find serious explorations of the topic of fivefold ministry as a living and vital piece of the church’s genetic coding. In theological libraries, you will find hundreds of thousands of books that explore some

of the most obscure concepts conceivable ... not to mention countless contemporary books of theological bubblegum, and yet there is no open-minded and focused thinking on Ephesians 4 even though it contains a concentrated piece of deeply foundational Pauline ecclesiology (Kindle location: 1024).

Hirsch makes the bold claim that the reason the Church has ignored the Ephesians 4 typology for nearly 1,700 years is because “the Devil wanted to strike a blow against our capacity to be the church that Jesus intended us to be” (Ibid.). Hirsch argues that the foundational ministry of the Church, that is, the Ephesians 4 typology has been divided. This division or tearing apart of the Ephesians 4 typology has “completely delegitimize[d]” some areas of the ministry, while over legitimizing others “by institutionalizing them.” The result of this loss of the Ephesians 4 typology is that “the ministry of the church, along with its leadership, is thus rendered largely ineffective” (Kindle location: 1038). Hirsch says that the Church today needs a “missional ministry for a missional church.” The way to do this according to Hirsch is to follow the Ephesians 4 typology.

For Hirsch a missional ministry requires the restoration of the apostle, prophet and evangelist roles to the Church. Hirsch believes being missional depends upon this and recognizes that many will be challenged by his assertions. He writes:

But we fear that so many of these vital conversations are doomed to frustration because the people in them are unwilling or unable to reconfigure ministry to suit the missional context. Although many buy into the concept, they are unwilling to recalibrate the ecclesiology. Christendom church has been run largely shepherd-teacher model, and because it has had a privileged position in society, it has been inclined to dispense with the more missional or evangelistic ministry types (apostle, prophet, and evangelist). These inherited forms of the church are not equipped for the missional challenge because they refuse to recalibrate their ministry along the lines suggested in Ephesians 4 (Kindle location: 1054).

Hirsch's Ephesians 4 typology holds that the ministry / leadership of the Church is based on what he calls APEST. APEST is his acronym for apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. He bases this paradigm on Eph. 4:11–12, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets,

the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” In Lutheran circles for the past few decades, the discussion on Eph. 4:11–12 has focused on if the one pastoral office (consisting of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers) is to equip the saints by doing the work of the ministry (preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments) or if the one pastoral office “equips the saints” to do ministry. Hirsch, of course, holds the view that the ministry of apostle, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers is to “equip the saints” to “do the work of the ministry.” But Hirsch's interpretation is far more reaching in that it creates a fivefold ministry rather than one Office of the Ministry. Lutherans have typically understood Eph.s 4:11 as descriptive about the one pastoral office. Hirsch understands Eph. 4:11 as prescriptive. Where Hirsch takes St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians as defining the ministry, Lutherans have looked to the texts where Christ institutes institutes the Office of the Holy Ministry found in Matt. 28:18–20 and John 20:21–23. (See *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, pg. 162). Lutherans have found Eph. 4:11–12 as descriptive of the responsibilities of the office of the Holy Ministry. (See *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, pg. 163).

According to Hirsch, the Ephesians 4 typology requires a fivefold Office of Ministry. Hirsch's fivefold office, although using similar language, is not the same as the Anglican or Roman threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. Hirsch maintains that for the Church to be a missional church, it needs to have a missional ministry that is fivefold in nature and consists of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. He goes so far as to suggest that the APEST ministry is part of the order of creation (as part of the general human experience ... In other words, these apply in some ways to all people, not just Christians” (Kindle location: 1087). This means that when Eph. 4:11 says, “And he gave,” the “giving” of apostle, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers is not a “gift” specifically given to the Church but rather is given to all of humanity. Non-Christians in secular roles also fulfill the role of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers in the areas of politics, business and all other secular vocations. For instance, an “apostle” in a secular role is a pioneer who might turn around a failing school or a person who creates a movement or who starts entrepreneurial businesses. APEST is a part of being “made in the image of God” and not a special spiritual gift to the

church, specifically the gift of the office of the ministry to proclaim the Gospel. Presumably, the Church, being enlightened by the Holy Scriptures, would seek to recover and utilize the APEST given to all humans as part of the order of creation. As a result of APEST being based on the order of creation, that is, according to Hirsch, qualities endowed to the human condition, it is possible to test and identify the APEST in individuals. Hirsch offers tools to test which of the APEST gifts a person has so that he can enter into the proper form of ministry. An online test can help a person and a congregation find which person has what APEST gift. (See <http://www.theforgottenways.org/what-is-apest.aspx>). Consequently, since the Church for the past 1,700 years has only had shepherds and teachers (pastors and academics), the Church is no longer missional, nor is it capable of being missional in the 21st century unless the Church recovers the APEST ministry.

Hirsch provides definitions of each APEST ministry. “The *apostle* is tasked with the overall vigor, as well as extension of Christianity as a whole, primarily through direct mission and church planting.” (Kindle location: 1067). “The *prophet* is called to maintain faithfulness to God among the people of God” (Ibid.). “The *evangelist* is the recruiter to the cause, the naturally infectious person who is able to enlist people into the movement by transmitting the gospel” (Ibid.). “The *shepherd* (pastor) is called to nurture spiritual development, maintain communal health, and engender loving community among the people of God” (Ibid.). “The *teacher* mediates wisdom and understanding. This philosophical type brings comprehensive understanding of the revelation bequeathed to the church” (Ibid.). Hirsch maintains that all five of these forms of the ministry are needed for the Church to be “authentically missional.” Hirsch acknowledges that his approach to interpreting Ephesians 4 is sociological. He argues that the sociological approach “allows us to demystify the overly fraught language of the Bible and approach the meaning of Ephesians 4:11 without the polemics that have accompanied it in the past” (Kindle location: 1100). His sociological approach causes Hirsch to say that the shepherd (pastor) / teacher model employed by the Church has led to a leadership dysfunction.

Hirsch views Ephesians 4 as a “constitutional document” of the Church. He considers it to be authoritative for the “ecclesia as God intended it to be.” He identifies the apostle, prophet and evangelist as “generative forms of the ministry,” while the pastor and teacher modes maintain systems. Hirsch states that such a

view will revolutionize the Church. “Instead of seeing the church as an extension of the seminary (teacher) or as a place merely to get fed (shepherd), we can rightly conceive of the church within the broader framework of Christ’s ministry” (Kindle location: 1162). Hirsch’s problem with relying on the shepherd (pastor) and teacher models of ministry is that a church plant based on this model inevitably leads to “the primary purpose of the new plant will be to run worship services and Bible studies” (Kindle location: 1177). Hirsch argues that churches that operate with only a twofold ministry of shepherd (pastor) and teacher are incapable of maturing and are unable to “equip” the saints. Hirsch views the APEST ministry as Christological, because it is an extension of the original ministry of Christ. For Hirsch, Christ was an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a shepherd and a teacher. Since no one person possesses this fivefold office, individual people take on the role of one. Therefore, “A twofold ministry can never hope to reflect a complete and comprehensive ministry of Christ to the world, and neither can it ever hope to fulfill his purposes through the church. Anything less than a fivefold ministry is a misrepresentation of the ministry of Christ, and by consequence, that leads to a misrepresentation of Christ in the world” (Kindle location: 1391). For Hirsch, the absence of a fivefold APEST ministry in the church is a distortion of Christ, which causes a distortion or a dysfunctional church.

Hirsch spends significant time critiquing the church and the ministry of the past 1,700 years. He regards the shepherd (pastor) and teacher model of ministry as the cause for the institutionalization of the Church. He is not fond of the term “church planting” because of the cultural associations of the word “church” in the West. For Hirsch, the word “church” is linked to buildings, clergy and rituals. He also contends that the Scriptures do not command church planting.

One of the core tasks of apostolic ministry is to plant churches, but we are increasingly convinced that the term church planting itself is problematic. That is partly because we are never actually commanded to plant churches. In the Bible, that is always considered to be Jesus’s job; for our part, we are called to evangelize the world by making disciples ... To get to the real heart of the Great Commission, we suggest that it might be useful to drop the phrase “church planting”; instead we should begin to focus on the approach of “gospel planting.” This is actually very useful because it takes us to the core of what

missionary work is about in the first place: planting the message of Jesus and cultivating contextualized communities of faith that shape themselves around it” (Kindle location: 5962).

Hirsch believes that “apostolic doctrine supplanted apostolic practice.” In regard to doctrine, Hirsch writes:

We can no longer afford to delude ourselves into thinking that simply believing apostolic doctrine is going to be enough. If theological ideas were enough to create a mature church and usher in the kingdom, it would surely have happened by now. We have literally hundreds of millions of words of theology stored up in our libraries. For too long, we have allowed ourselves to be deceived into thinking that because we advocate apostolic doctrine that we are somehow going to automatically be an apostolic church. History has proven this to be patently false: having millions of theological books has not kept us from being profoundly heretical at times. God save us from thinking another volume of systematic theology is going to fix things up” (Kindle location: 7200).

Much more regarding Hirsch’s views could be written. Although Hirsch offers some helpful critiques on Western culture in the twenty-first century, his solution to solving the decline of the Western church requires a reinterpretation both of the Church and of the ministry. As Hirsch himself noted, the history of the Church has never conceived of a fivefold office consisting of APEST (apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher). His understanding of the Church is not rooted in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments as confessed by Augustana VII. For Lutherans who believe in the Holy Scriptures and confess the Book of Concord, Hirsch’s definition of the church and of the ministry cannot be seen as compatible. It is important for us to understand Hirsch’s argument on both the Church and the ministry as his views have become incredibly popular in the missional crowd. Many missional works follow, assume, borrow or adapt ideas from Hirsch. When reading these works, we should keep in mind Hirsch’s framework so that those works can be understood within the context they were written.

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