CONCORDIA JOURNAL

Fall 2013
volume 39 | number 4

CONCORDIA JOURNAL

(ISSN 0145-7233)

All correspondence should be sent to:
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Issued by the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, the *Concordia Journal* is the successor of *Lehre und Wehre* (1855-1929), begun by C. F. W. Walther, a founder of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. *Lehre und Wehre* was absorbed by the *Concordia Theological Monthly* (1930-1974) which was also published by the faculty of Concordia Seminary as the official theological periodical of the Synod.

Concordia Journal is abstracted in *Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft unde Grenzgebiete*, *New Testament Abstracts*, *Old Testament Abstracts*, and *Religious and Theological Abstracts*. It is indexed in ATLA Religion Database/ATLAS and Christian Periodicals Index. Article and issue photocopies in 16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm, and 105mm microfiche are available from National Archive Publishing (www.napubco.com).

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The *Concordia Journal* (ISSN 0145-7233) is published quarterly (Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall). The annual subscription rate is $25 (individuals) and $50 (institutions) payable to Concordia Seminary, 801 Seminary Place, St. Louis, MO 63105. New subscriptions and renewals also available at http://store.csl.edu. Periodicals postage paid at St. Louis, MO and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Concordia Journal*, Concordia Seminary, 801 Seminary Place, St. Louis, MO 63105-3199.

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EDITORIALS

Editor's Note

This past summer, a blog by Matthew Block at *First Things* (http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2013/07/12/president-harrison-the-lcms-and-ecumenical-dialogue/) noted that the LCMS under President Matthew Harrison's administration has actively pursued conversations and developed good relationships with the leaders of other Christian traditions both here in North America as well as around the world. This is a very good thing!

Hopefully, these initiatives do not come as a surprise to anyone. After all, our Lutheran Confessions have bequeathed to us an "ecumenical obligation" (Robert Kolb) to engage in conversations with other Christians in order to remove stereotypes of each other, clarify our confession, cooperate where we can, and work toward resolving long-standing disagreements for the sake of the church's witness in the world. And so it is heartening to see such conversations and developing relationships taking place with other churches.

The twentieth century has at times been called an ecumenical century given the formation of the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, not to mention the bilateral dialogues among numerous churches and the resultant joint statements, declarations of church fellowship, and at times, the mutual recognition of ministries. And following Vatican II, Rome took the lead in initiating many bilateral dialogues—including with Lutherans—that have spanned more than thirty years.

But conservatives often felt that the agreements reached compromised the truth, or that churches simply agreed to disagree. Now, however, we are witnessing a seismic shift in the Christian landscape resulting in realignments of churches around the world (see 2013 LCMS Convention Workbook, p. 9). Much of it is due to differences over first article moral and social issues (abortion and bioethical issues, sexuality and marriage, to name the most prominent ones) which have moved to the forefront of the culture's attention.

In our own country, we have seen a split within the Episcopalian church leading to the formation of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and a split within the ELCA leading to the formation of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). In Africa, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church—Mekane Yesus (EECMY)—one of the fastest growing Lutheran churches (over six million members), broke fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Church of Sweden. Again, these events took place in part over taking the Bible at face value when it comes to issues of human life, sexuality, and marriage.

During the past three years we have witnessed renewed vigor by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in pursuing conversations and cultivating good relationships with other church bodies such as the new Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) as well as the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). In fact, the leaders of these churches (including the Lutheran Church—Canada) recently adopted "An Affirmation

of Marriage: An Ecumenical Statement" (http://www.canadianlutheran.ca/an-affirmation-of-marriage/).

On the international scene, the International Lutheran Council (ILC), of which we are a part, has broached the possibility of opening up a dialogue with Rome. In addition, "a mutually beneficial relationship has developed" (2013 LCMS Convention Workbook, p. 86) between the LCMS and the EECMY in Ethiopia. Our church body has responded to requests for assistance in matters related to confessional Lutheran identity and the need for theological education (see Convention Workbook, p. 20; see also pp. 84–87, 20–24, and 9–10).

We live in an exciting and uncertain time as the Christian landscape shifts before our very eyes. Thus it is fitting in this issue of the *Concordia Journal* that we reflect on what has taken place up to this point and where things are going as seen through the eyes of those outside the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In a sense, this issue provides some context for what is happening in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church and for how the LCMS is finding a wider place at its table. In a future issue, we hope to provide a glimpse of where things are going and the possibilities that lie ahead as seen through the eyes of those within our confessional tradition or connected to our tradition.

The Reformation ushered in a gospel-centered confessional movement that reconfigured the Christian landscape of the sixteenth century. Faithfulness to that Lutheran Confession continues in such ecumenical witness and conversation.

Charles Arand
Dean of Theological Research and Publication

Light from Above, Laser Our Hearts

President Meyer preached the following sermon for the opening service of the 175th academic year.

It is a great time to be in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ! To our seminarians, I hope this year will fuel your passion for service to the congregations and communities to which you will be called. To faculty and staff, let us demonstrate our calling by putting a premium on our personal interactions with our students. Oh, I know there are people in our churches who furrow their brows and wring their hands. It's a bad time; the church no longer has a privileged place in our culture. It's a bad time; mainline denominations are losing members, ours among them. It's a bad time; the economy is slow and there's not enough money for the work of the church. With so much bad news, what kind of dummy would go to a seminary? I'll tell you who, someone who knows that our sufficiency does not come from the external things but "from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant" (2 Cor 3:5). Hardships are not to be denied and the challenges can be overwhelming, but the truth is these are times of unprecedented opportunity and right now is a great time to be in seminary and ministry. It's all because of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Savior is the game changer when it comes to zeal for seminary and ministry. "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus's sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:5-6). The more he shines in your hearts, the more your life and ministry will radiate a good spirit and joyous confidence of the Christian faith. That's what the people of the church want from their pastors and deaconesses and leaders. That's what so many people want to see from the church. To that end we pray, Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, laser the light from above into our hearts for ministry.

The greatest focus of seminary and ministry, indeed of all Christian living is to be upon God. Through the books, through the classes, through service projects, through conversations, through family, through intramurals and intercollegiate sports, through it all, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Dt 6:5). God focused. Theocentric. "In the beginning God… And God said, 'Let there be light and there was light'" (Gn 1:1, 3). The Word of God accomplishes that which it says. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host" (Ps 33:6). I know that you will have your studies, your work, perhaps family. I know you have time pressures and bills to pay. Put them aside for a time every day and walk through the campus. When you have more time, walk or run or bike through Forest Park. Look up and remember "God, who said, 'Let line shine out of darkness.'" How will you lead souls to heaven if you will not learn to look up at the cathedral of creation? Light from above, laser our hearts. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness…'"

The text moves from the First Article to the Second and Third from the cathedral of creation to your inmost being. Notice the past tense, "has shone in our hearts." That happened when the word came out of the heavens to work saving faith in you. God the evange-

list. Word, water, rebirth, resurrection The devil will tempt you to think that it is all past tense. When externals are depressing you, the devil will twist the word. "You were baptized. So what now?" The truth is, in the midst of all the pressures you feel, you are baptized. When you are absorbed in the intricacies of academic theology at seminary, the devil will tempt you to believe that the Scriptures are only a relic. The truth is, "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). And when you feel alone, alone with your fears and anxieties, your doubts and little faith, your guilt about not being able to get it all done…the truth is "I am with you always." David said something to his son Solomon about the building of the temple. I think it can be applied to us as we begin this new year. "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished" (1 Chr 28:20). So the significance of your baptism continues. "Arise, shine for your light has come" (Is 60:1). Light from above, laser our hearts!

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." What is the glory of God? The great God made the cosmos; he is sovereign. The great God sits enthroned above the turmoil of this world; he is sovereign. The great God will execute judgment over all; he is sovereign. That's all true but the glory of God is that God has come down to bring salvation to you. The glory of God is that God has come down to bring salvation to me. In John chapter 12 Jesus prayed, "'Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die'" (Jn 12:28, 30–33). An old line from African-American preaching says, "God sits high but looks low." God-centered; Christ-centered. Theocentric; Christocentric. The justification of the sinner by grace through faith. Jesus Christ is the glory of God to us. Light from above, laser our hearts!

I'm told this is a true story. An elderly man was dying. Fortunately his children were able to come to his death bed. One child came in and the elderly man said, "Son, daughter," whichever it was, "your mother and I are so proud of you. You've done well in life, have a fine family but most important of all you have not left your Lord or your church. When you were little and it was bedtime, we used to say, 'Good night,' not 'Good bye' because we knew we'd see each other in the morning. And now I say, 'Good night' because we will see each other again." A second child came in. The same conversation: "You have done well but most important of all you have not left your Lord or your church. 'Good night,' not 'Good bye.'" Finally a third child came in. "Your mother and I are so proud of you. You've done well in life, have a fine family but we are so grieved that you have left your Lord and your church. And now I have to say, 'Good bye' because we will not see one another again." And as the story was told to me, that night he died. Many in the church would say, "How sad, how terribly sad about that child." No, no, no! The passion of Concordia Seminary is, "Let's go out and find that child." Let your passion be to go out in your generation and find all those children. What a great time to get into ministry! Light from above, laser our hearts! Amen.

Dale A. Meyer
President

ARTICLES

The Lordship of Christ and the Unity of the Church

Jeffrey Kloha

The last stanza of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (*Lutheran Service Book* 357) expresses longing for the unity which only the coming of Christ can bring:

> O come, Desire of nations, bind
> In one the hearts of all mankind;
> Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
> And be Thyself our King of Peace.

Advent is the time when the church is most aware that it is incomplete; that Christ was present in the flesh at his first advent, and will be in the flesh at his second advent, but his second advent has not yet come. We now live in both aeons: in this world, incomplete, with longing; but also in the eternal kingdom, perfect, with joy. We are, as the apostle writes, those "upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11), even if that age has not yet come in fullness. Among the myriad prayers of the church in this present age is the prayer for unity. It is our prayer because it is the prayer of our Lord Jesus. His High Priestly Prayer offered up petitions for us, the church of this day: "also for those who will believe in me through their word" (Jn 17:20). That prayer is "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you" (17:21). Jesus's prayer for the church and all individuals gathered into it is that we have the same unity as that which exists between the Father and the Son. This relationship is indivisible and one of complete accord. The Father and the Son do the same work (Jn 5:17–19; 10:25), speak the same things (6:45; 8:28), render the same judgment (8:16), are "in" each other (14:10); they are, simply, "one" (10:30; 17:11). This oneness of the Father and the Son is the same oneness that is to exist, in a mysterious yet real way, among those whom he has called. Such intimate oneness among those in Christ is for two purposes. First, Jesus continues, "that they may be in us" (17:21). That is to say, in order for people to be in relationship with the Father and the Son, they must at the same time be in perfect relationship with others. Second, this unity between Father, Son, and church is necessary for faithful witness to the world: "so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (17:21–23). Unity among the members of the body of Christ, the members of the church, is not a small matter. According to this passage, without perfect unity with one another, we can neither be in unity with the Father, nor can we give faithful testimony to the gospel.

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But, as the Advent hymn reminds us, we have "sad divisions" in the body, and so we pray, constantly, that the divisions "cease." We pray that Jesus would come again, and at his coming he would be "King of Peace" over all people, over all Christians. Even this prayer, however, is too small; it is a post-denomination, post-Reformation prayer. The translation we now use was produced in the mid-nineteenth century. The recognition of "sad divisions" did not exist in the version of the hymn that circulated in the middle ages, which concluded with this stanza, one no longer in our usage:

Veni, Veni, Rex gentium,	O come, O come, Ruler of the nations
Veni, Redemptor omnium,	Come, redeemer of all people
Ut salvas tuos famulos	To save your servants
Peccati sibi conscious.	Who know their sin.

There is no mention of "sad divisions" in the older version, nor is the coming Lord hailed as the "desire of nations." Rather, the coming Emmanuel is "Ruler of the nations" and "redeemer of all people." In other words, the hymn confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord (1 Cor 12:3) and acknowledges that we—even we in the church—are still in sin, but we long to be made whole.

This medieval hymn understands, perhaps better than is evident in the recent history of the church, the relationship between the lordship of Christ over all creation and the unity of the church. That is to say, from a biblical perspective, the oneness of the church and its role in the world is inseparable from the fact that there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church" (Col 1:17–18). But we in our day perhaps too easily assume *dis*unity because the church has lived with it for so many centuries. The Nicene Creed's confession of "one, holy, universal (catholic) and apostolic church" may have become mere lip service, a Platonic ideal that has no significance in the lives of the baptized. New Testament ecclesiology, however, is centered in a relentless drive toward unity (ἑνότης) in one Lord, Jesus Christ (Eph 4:3, 13). There is no aspect of the church's thinking, teaching, behavior, or relationships that is not grounded in its unity in Christ. All the baptized are united because they are God's single eschatological people, formed in him by the gospel and waiting for the last day, when all creation is united in Christ. Any discussion of church that does not assume that the goal is the "unity of all" under Christ ignores the fundamental confession of Christ as Lord and the proclamation of his gospel.

We are immersed in a long-standing situation where the church, the body of Christ, is divided. It seems to us normal and acceptable. There seems to be little or no teaching or exhortation toward the unity of the church in any of its manifestations, be it individual, local, or denominational. We have become comfortable with disunity. The gospel goes out, the sacraments are administered, faithful saints live their lives in service to Christ and one another and then rest with all the saints until the last day, and we take it as a given that it is God-pleasing that the church lives in disunity. We seek to justify the divisions that already exist, or to sharpen the lines of who is "in" or "out" of our particular church home, be it tradition, synod, or congregation. The New

Testament, however, does not address our situation at all. For it presumes unity, based on the lordship of Christ and baptism into him.

But it will not always be so. The "now" of the present evil age will become the "not yet" of the day when every tongue confesses Jesus Christ as Lord (Phil 2:11). On that day, the Spirit's work of building "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:20–21) will be complete. The apostle speaks in the present tense concerning the present-day, ongoing work of the Spirit: "in [Christ] you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph 2:22).[1] But on that day, the Spirit's work will be complete; there will be one God and one people. The Lord who will reign on the last day is the same Lord who reigns today, and the one church that he will gather on that day is the same church that lives in him today. Our unity is in Christ.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Unity of the Church

"Jesus Christ is Lord" (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11). In this confession, spoken at baptism and repeated in countless daily encounters with the world and its ways, the church begins, is sustained, and carries out its work. The church cannot be understood without or apart from this confession, for it declares that all other lords are now defeated and destroyed. Under one Lord, all other identities and allegiances—nation, family, race, language, social status—are dissolved and a new people, God's own creation, are brought forth. So there is "one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph 4:4–5).

The only means of entrance into the church is to have been gathered into Christ. This happens by the power of the word in baptism, where the church's confession of Jesus Christ as Lord becomes the confession of the individual. There is no other means of entrance. The chronic obstacle to this teaching during the time of the NT was circumcision. With strong biblical warrant (Gn 19), some in the church *required* that all men, including Gentiles, be circumcised in order to become part of God's chosen people, teaching that Jesus could not be confessed as Lord unless one was circumcised. The book of Acts narrates the struggles that the church had in sorting through this issue, especially in chapters 10–15. First, in a vision, the Spirit teaches Peter that the purity laws are no longer the mark of God's people. In Christ, all foods are clean (12:9–16) and, because "[Jesus Christ] is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead," now "everyone who *believes in him* receives the forgiveness of sins through his name" (12:42–43). As Peter was preaching this to the household of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit poured out on the "God-fearing" Gentiles, and they were "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Not without reason, Luke reports also that after the baptisms, "they asked him [Peter] to remain for some days" (12:48). As soon as the household of Cornelius was gathered into the body of Christ, they shared hospitality with and learned from Peter. That is to say, the newly baptized immediately participated in fellowship with others who were also in Christ. There was unity, because of the word which led to faith and confession of Christ.

The Letter to the Galatians brings the question of the means of unity to the fore: who could be included in the church, and, importantly for our purposes, on what basis? That is, what unites someone to the church? Paul's gospel, that Christ alone was sufficient to bring one into the people of God, to make one an heir of the covenant, a child of Abraham, led him to proclaim the message about Christ even to the Gentiles—and they became part of the ἐκκλησία without undergoing the key mark of the covenant, circumcision. Subsequent teachers followed Paul's departure with the teaching that the Gentiles could only become part of Israel if they were circumcised. According to them, faith in Christ merely made it possible for them to do what God had always required of his people—to undergo circumcision. So faith was not sufficient; indeed, Christ's work was not sufficient (Gal 2:20). Something else was required. Paul calls this teaching "not gospel" (Gal 1:6–9). The first part of Paul's strongly worded counter-argument concludes with what is perhaps an allusion to the words spoken over the Galatians at their baptism:

> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For whoever of you has been baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female, for you are all one [people] in Christ Jesus. So if you belong to Christ, then you are seed of Abraham, heirs according the promise. (Gal 3:26–29)[2]

The point of Galatians 3 and this section in particular is that now the Gentiles are part of the single people of God (λαός; cf. 2 Cor 6:16; Ti 2:14) and as such, heirs of the promise. The use of εἷς to express unity is reflected also in Ephesians, where again the issue of the misuse of the law to divide Gentile from Jew has been abolished, "so that he might create in himself one new man (ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον, all masculine singular) in place of the two, so making peace" (Eph 2:15). Consistently in the NT, unity in Christ is assumed, and any human teaching that would threaten that unity is rebuked.

Breaking Unity

The people of God are united by the Spirit-given confession of Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 12:3), incorporated into the body of Christ in baptism (Gal 3:26), and gathered by the Spirit into that body for the common good (1 Cor 12). Within this body, differences of opinion inevitably occurred. This nascent group of newly baptized did not have generations of traditional teaching to build upon. Every day brought questions about how living in Christ while also living in the world should look. A host of examples are provided in 1 Corinthians: Should the body align around popular speakers, as did the crowds in the public square (1 Cor 1–4)? Should the body tolerate destructive sexual relationships, perhaps driven by inheritance and economic concerns, in the name of "Christian freedom" (1 Cor 5)? Should brothers in Christ bring their grievances against one another to be judged by someone who does not confess Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 6)? Should the married refrain from sexual activity? Should they separate from a non-baptized spouse? Should they remarry, or should they stay single (1 Cor 7)? Should they eat in a temple dining room, or buy meat from the local market that may have been sacri-

ficed to an idol, or eat in a non-Christian's home (1 Cor 8–10)? Should wives wear head covering to worship? Should their banquets look like any other Greco-Roman banquet (1 Cor 11)? What is this bizarre thing called "resurrection," and what difference does it make in the present (1 Cor 15)? Moving outside 1 Corinthians, should Christians eat meat or only vegetables (Rom 14)? In some places the question was whether or not the Gentiles should be allowed into the church (Galatians); in other places, they asked if the Jews should be allowed in (Romans). Should they observe festivals and Sabbaths (Rom 14; Gal 4)? The list is virtually endless; to ears that are accustomed to gospel-focused preaching, it is surprising and perhaps uncomfortable how often of the NT does not focus on "the gospel" (narrowly defined) but on "living in Christ." The confession of Christ as Lord led to a new way of living in the world.

These encounters with the world, inevitably, caused divisions. "I hear that there are divisions among you when you come together as church" (1 Cor 11:18). "Who are you, who judges the servant of another person . . . One person thinks one day is more important than another, another person thinks all days are the same" (Rom 14:4–5). "'I follow Paul!' 'I follow Apollos!' 'I follow Cephas!' 'I follow Christ!' Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor 1:13–14). And similar sad divisions continue today. The question that is most pressing in our day is this: What to do about divisions? When is the matter under dispute simply a matter of opinion, of Christian freedom? When does someone's life and teaching need correction by the church? And what is the point at which fellowship has been broken?

The NT writings are very clear in that any teaching which diminishes Christ and his work is "not gospel." This follows, of course, from the fact that unity is created only because an individual has been baptized into the name of the one Lord. If one confesses a different lord, then that person is no longer a part of his body. Furthermore, those who teach "a different gospel" are to be driven from the gathering of those who are in Christ lest "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Gal 5:9).

Stated in NT terms, it is not different teaching *per se* that receives condemnation; it is the confession of a different lord, by word or deed, that is condemned. Such teaching cannot by definition be gospel, because the gospel is that Jesus has been sent by the Father, killed and raised from the dead for sinners, and exalted to the right hand of the Father as Lord of all creation. So the teaching that only Jesus's death and resurrection makes it *possible* for the Gentiles to be received as part of the people of God—so long as they get circumcised (Gal 5:2, 11; 6:13)—as was being taught by false teachers in Galatia, is by definition "not gospel" (Gal 1:7). Similarly, in 2 Corinthians the "pseudo-apostles, deceitful workers" are those who "proclaim another Jesus than the one we proclaimed," offer "a different spirit from the one you received" and "a different gospel from the one you accepted" (2 Cor 11:4). These teachers are linked to Satan, "who disguises himself as an angel of light," and, for these teachers, "their end will correspond to their deeds" (2 Cor 11:14–15).

Those who have been baptized but reject the faith are therefore cut off, for they are no longer confessing Jesus as Lord and therefore, by definition, are no longer members of his body. This happens either by worshipping as Lord something other than Christ, or by living a life that is not consistent with life in Christ. Examples of the

former are Hymenaeus and Alexander who have "made shipwreck of their faith" by blaspheming, and so are handed over to Satan (1 Tm 1:19–20). The strong warnings against eating in idol temples in 1 Corinthians 10 are prefaced in 1 Corinthians 8 by the confession that there is only "one God" and "one Lord." So the apostle warns the Corinthians not to "be idolators" (10:7) and to "flee from idolatry" (10:14), for participating in pagan rituals makes them κοινωνοί of demons, and not of Christ.

But one can also be cut off from Christ by not living the Spirit-filled life of the baptized. For there are only two categories of people: the righteous and the unrighteous. The unrighteous "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9), and their unrighteous status is demonstrated by their unrighteous behavior: 1 Corinthians 6 lists the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who practice homosexuality, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. The righteous, however are different. They "used to be these things" (καὶ ταῦτά τινες ἦτε), but in what may be the purest gospel statement in the New Testament Paul continues, "you were washed, you were made holy, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Note the reference, consistently, to Jesus Christ as Lord. He reigns, and in his reign the unrighteous are made righteous by baptism into him. However, those who turn aside from the Spirit and reject the righteousness given to them by living unrighteous lives, separate themselves from Christ and his body, the church. An example is seen in 1 Corinthians 5, where there is "sexual immorality *among you* . . . a man has his father's wife." Such a man is to be removed from the church: "When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh." Again, "Lord" is used twice, emphasizing that Christ is reigning in this people. Anyone who claims to be of him and yet lives in this way must be removed, for it is manifest that they are not "of Christ." Yet, even in this situation the goal is, as in Matthew 18, the restoration of the sinner; so that, after repentance and forgiveness, "he may be saved on the last day." Paul next lays out the theological rationale for separation from the body of Christ. The baptized live "in the world," and must associate with those who are of the world. But the baptized are not to live as the unbaptized live. "I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one" (1 Cor 5:11). Two kinds of people are "judged": The "outsiders" are judged, not by the church, but by God. The church's job is to judge those "inside the church." His stunning, heartbreaking conclusion: "Purge the evil person from among you." Troublingly, many in the church today do the opposite: vocal opposition to certain evils present in society, yet silence regarding sin inside the body, such as remarriage, same-sex behavior, abortion, greed, enmity, anger, and on and on. Many today, sadly, claim to confess Christ as Lord but refuse to live out that confession in their bodies (1 Cor 6:19–20). In summary, unrighteous individuals are cut off from the body because they have been cut off from Christ. Some because they have rejected him and his gifts of forgiveness and life; some because they have rejected the life given by the Spirit, which is made sadly evident by their unrighteous living. In these cases, the

church is only acknowledging the reality that such a person is no longer in Christ.

As we struggle to live as one body under one Lord in the present age, we continue to ponder the question: What is the basis of unity in the church? The answers are many. Some find it in human-created structures, whether bureaucratic or episcopal. Others find it in social relationships and cultural homogeneity. Others find it in shared language and forms, even worship forms. But the Scriptures find it in Christ, under his Lordship, living in his gospel, and each of us is called to renounce all that we would add or detract from his glory as Lord. The sad divisions may persist until the last day, but each of us, as the old hymn reminds us, knows our sin and longs for the Ruler of the nations and the Redeemer of all people to come and save us, all of us, who have been gathered into his body. The gospel has created unity; may it never be that we break the unity that the Spirit has created by that great confession: Jesus is Lord.

Endnotes

[1] Luther's Small Catechism summarizes the ongoing work of the Spirit: "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."

[2] Some in the church use this passage wrongly to argue that this passage urges "equality" of social status or power. However, the masculine singular adjective εἷς cannot mean "equal" (the Greek word should then have been ἰσότης, not εἷς).

The Gospel
Luther's Linchpin for Catholicity

Gordon A. Jensen

Introduction

Much has been made about the fact that after Luther launched the reformation in Germany, he changed the wording of the third article of the Apostles' Creed from "holy *catholic* Church" to "holy *Christian* Church." The earliest recorded accounts of Luther changing the traditional wording of the Apostles' Creed, from catholic to Christian, are found in his German writings of 1520. Nor does he make this change only once that year. He makes this change in his treatise, *On the Papacy in Rome: Against the Most Celebrated Romanist in Leipzig*, written at the end of May and the beginning of June;[1] again in his *Treatise on Good Works*, written a couple of weeks later;[2] and yet again in his treatise, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, written in October.[3] This change has been interpreted as a sign of Luther's rejection of the church catholic, especially when he begins using "holy Christian Church" in the creeds at the same time as his reformation theology is coming into full force. This change is explained by suggesting that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith was causing a domino effect as other previously accepted church teachings were now being re-evaluated under the knife of this "first and chief article."[4]

In true Lutheran manner, the Lutheran Churches in North America have followed Luther's practice of substituting Christian for catholic in the creeds for four centuries. When many Lutheran churches in North America collaborated to introduce a new worship book in 1978,[5] there was wailing and gnashing of teeth because the traditional phrase in the third article of the creed, "I believe in the holy Christian Church" was audaciously replaced with "I believe in the holy catholic Church." Opponents of the change did not care that catholic was spelled with a small "c." They saw such a change as nothing short of heretical, and a betrayal of all things Lutheran. They claimed Luther had changed catholic to Christian in order to distinguish the true from the false church. Moreover, after time, it became common to define "Lutheran" as simply, "not catholic." However, that is not a helpful definition.

In a similar vein, during the celebrations of the 450th anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession, many Roman Catholic theologians stated that they recognized the Augsburg Confession as an ecumenical, *catholic* document—but wondered if Lutherans also recognize it as such.[6] In response, many Lutherans angrily

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responded, "we are not catholic! That's why Luther changed the phrase of the creed to holy Christian Church."

These reactions point to the need to explore again how Luther defined and used the words catholic and Christian within the context of his understanding of ecclesiology and its apostolic task. Some Lutherans might suggest an even bolder approach and heed the advice of James Atkinson. He suggested that it is now time to set Luther free from all the confessional Lutheranism that has accrued around him, and "set him in the centre of a new catholicity, where he once belonged and still belongs."[7] Would, and could, Lutherans dare take up this challenge?

Before making such a decision, it would be helpful to explore how the word catholic was used in the period before the reformation, and how Luther himself used it in shaping his theology and developing his ecclesiology. The starting point is to look at how the word catholic was translated and used in the period immediately prior to the beginnings of the reformation.

Matters of Language: Catholic or Christian?

The common perception today asserts that Luther set about with clarity of purpose, almost from the outset, his task of promoting the *gospel* over the Catholic Church. The opposition he encountered in the first years of the reformation struggle merely strengthened his resolve. He was warned at Augsburg by Cardinal Cajetan in the fall of 1518 that his views on justifying faith amounted to "creating a new church." Further, when forced by his opponent Johann Eck at the Leipzig disputation in 1519 into admitting his belief that Jan Huss (†1415) was no heretic, Luther knew that he was firmly beyond the Catholic pale even before the papal condemnations started arriving on his desk. Any residual desire he might have had to claim the title Catholic in his attempts to restore the church to its original calling was finally abandoned when he translated the creeds into German, removing the word catholic as a defining adjective of the church. This is the common perception of Luther's view.

This perception is partially correct. Luther did indeed delete catholic as a descriptor and definer of the church in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and substituted, in its place, the word Christian. Furthermore, he was entirely consistent in this substitution—which is in itself remarkable because unwavering consistency is not a characteristic one normally associates with Luther. One must therefore assume that replacing catholic with Christian in his translation of the creedal formulas into German was a deliberate decision on his part. Luther never gives a theological explanation for this translation, other than to claim that it was the best translation available. As he notes in his 1538 treatise on *The Three Creeds*: "[Catholic (*Catholica*)] can have no better translation than Christian (*Christlich*) as was done heretofore. That is, although Christians are to be found in the whole world, the pope rages against that and wants to have his court alone called the Christian Church. He lies, however, like his idol, the devil."[8] Here

Luther claims that the word catholic had been translated into the German language as Christian before he had done so, and that such a translation was already the custom.

Luther's claim that he is simply following custom is verified in some of the most popular works of practical divinity circulating in the empire on the eve of the Reformation.[9] This practice is followed in the popular *Vocabularius predicantium*, a handy dictionary that translated various biblical and ecclesiastical terms (mainly from Latin) into German, compiled by Johannes Melber and the Heidelberg humanist Jodocus Eichmann, and published frequently between 1480 and 1505.[10] Under the entry "Catholic" the translation was given as "a Christian person."[11] So Luther is not the first to make this switch.

Other late medieval sources in Germany also translated the Latin "catholic" as "Christian." The most popular preaching manual in use in Germany on the eve of the Reformation was the *Manuale curatorum* of Johann Ulrich Surgant.[12] This *Manuale* offered both German and French translations of the Apostles' Creed, since the book was designed for use in the area around the Rhine River. Surgant's French translation of "I believe in the Holy catholic Church" ("*credo in ecclesiam catholicam*") is "*la saincte eglise catholique*," but his German translation reads "*die heilige christenliche kirch*."[13] So even before the Reformation, the word Christian was considered a more natural and appropriate to the German language than catholic, but this was not the case in French. The choice of word in these contexts was linguistic, not theological. Luther himself appears to support this practice of different translations for different languages. For example, until the end of his life, when he wrote in Latin, he continued to use the phrase, *sanctam catholicam ecclesiam*.[14] He did not, therefore, reject the idea of the church catholic by his translation of catholic as Christian in the German language.

Luther was therefore right to say, in his gloss, that his translation was in line with custom, "as has happened hitherto."[15] But it is not as simple as this. He also took advantage of this golden opportunity to draw attention to the mistaken interpretation of this phrase by the pope, suggesting that his translation was also motivated by theological and political considerations.

To explore Luther's theological understanding of catholicity, therefore, it is helpful to turn to his writings in the 1530s as he worked to shape and implement a reformation church. Three documents will be considered. First, the encounter between Luther and the papal nuncio, Vergerio, which occurred in November of 1535, will be explored. Second, Luther's 1537 Schmalkald Articles will be examined. Third, some observations from his 1539 treatise *On the Councils and the Church*, will be given. Each of these reveal that far from being against the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church as confessed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, Luther sought to recover the apostolic message of the gospel as a condition of the church's catholicity. Apart from the apostolic message, the people of God cannot be catholic.

Luther's Conversation with Vergerio, 1535

Ever since the dispute over the sale of indulgences, Luther had been calling for a free, ecumenical council to discuss the matter.[16] The popes who sat in Peter's chair

however—from Leo X, pope at the time of the 1517 "Theses on Indulgences," to Clement VII, who died in September of 1534—had no interest in such an unpredictable event. Even though Charles V had extracted promises from Clement VII that he would call a council after the Nuremberg Stalemate of 1532,[17] nothing was done. It was not until Paul III ascended to the papal chair on October 12, 1534, that discussions became serious. One of the first things Paul III did was to send out nuncios to get a sense from the nobility and ecclesial authorities of where, when, or even if a council should be held. It was within this context that the papal nuncio Pietro Paulo Vergerio appeared in Saxony in November of 1535 to discuss the matter with Elector John Frederick. Just before he arrived in Wittenberg, he also asked to meet with Luther—which he prudently did not mention in his report to the pope.

Luther's report of this meeting, as recorded in the Table Talks, is an interesting mixture of comedy and theological insight. Luther regales those present with details of how the nuncio rode into town in luxury, in a carriage pulled by at least a dozen horses. When he stepped out of the carriage, the gathered crowd saw that he was dressed in splendor. Not to be outdone, Luther got a haircut and a shave for the event. He dressed in his best clothes, put rings on his fingers and marched over to the castle for the meeting, accompanied by Johannes Bugenhagen, pastor of the town church.[18] As they walked over to the castle, Luther joked that the Wittenberg pope and Cardinal Pomeranus were off to meet an ambassador of the Roman pope. When Luther got to the castle, he put on his most youthful face, so that neither the nuncio nor the pope might get the idea that they could be rid of him by delaying a council for a few more years. It appeared to work, according to all reports, though it was the intensity in Luther's eyes that most captivated Vergerio. While Luther did not remove his hat, he used all the proper titles for the nuncio. By speaking to Vergerio in German, he caused the nuncio to wonder if Luther had really written the early spurious books attributed to him, since he did not seem to understand any Latin![19] When Luther boasted about how he had married an honorable nun and had five children with her, Vergerio began to think that Luther was nothing but a godless beast.

At this meeting, Vergerio began by outlining the possibilities of a council, including the approximate dates and potential locations.[20] He then turned gingerly to the question of Luther's participation in such a council. To his surprise, however, Luther quickly stated that if a council was called, he would come, regardless of where it was held, offering his head and neck.[21] Then, however, Luther added that since the gospel would not be on the agenda, nothing important would be discussed,

> Nothing of salutary worth, nothing of sacraments, the faith which alone makes righteous and blessed, nothing of good works and pious ways and living piously. Rather, all they will discuss is the work of fools and children, the length of the vestments that pastors and preachers are to wear, how wide their cinctures should be, which rules should be added to further control nuns and monks and further confuse them as to when foods and drinks are to be consumed, and other puppet works.[22]

According to Luther's no doubt biased report, after hearing this, Vergerio grabbed his head in his hands and declared to his travelling companions, "He is right about what should be discussed at the council. Germany is illuminated by the gospel and this good doctor has opened their eyes to the truth!"[23] Of course, this did not appear in Vergerio's report to the pope.[24] It did appear to have an impact upon the nuncio, however. Even though he was later appointed bishop as a reward for his faithful service in setting up the council that would finally take place in Trent,[25] within a few years he was charged with heresy and banned from attending the very council which he had worked so hard to arrange. After being condemned, he joined the reformation cause, and became an evangelical pastor in northern Italy.

In the midst of all the flourishes and grandiose statements in Luther's report, a stark statement of what makes a church catholic or Christian, as well as the purpose for a council, is revealed. The one, holy, catholic church is defined, not by external rites, not by rules, nor by ecclesial regulations. Rather, the church is defined by what is at its core: the apostolic message. This apostolic message is nothing else than the gospel of justification, as it is proclaimed in word and sacrament, and which equips the communion of saints to live as the people of God.

Further, for a council to be truly ecumenical and catholic, it must be centered in the gospel message, or it ceases to be a catholic council. Instead, it becomes simply a Roman or papist gathering. At such a gathering the head is no longer Christ Jesus, but a usurper, one who stands in the way of Christ—thus, an antichrist. Therefore, when Luther talked about the Roman or papist church, or even the pope himself as antichrist, what he was criticizing was their abandonment of the gospel message.[26] When that message is lost, the church, despite its structures, rules or regulations, ceases to be the church catholic. Apparently, at least according to Luther's version of the story, Vergerio discovered this in his meeting with Luther. It would not be a truly ecumenical and catholic council unless the church gathered around the gospel, the apostolic message.

In commenting on this event between Luther and Vergerio, James Kittelson insisted that for the reformers, "it was impossible to be 'catholic' unless one was 'evangelical.' Being evangelical made one catholic."[27] Kittelson understood evangelical in the sense of proclaiming the apostolic message that by Christ's death and resurrection, sins are forgiven and life and salvation is bestowed upon the believer.[28] It is this gospel that makes the church catholic. The weakness of the phrase in the Apostles' Creed (or Children's Creed, as Luther often called it[29]) was that it did not unequivocally state that the church is constituted around the apostolic message, unlike the Nicene Creed.[30] While the Apostles' Creed later declares belief in the "forgiveness of sins," this gospel could now erroneously be seen as one of the *functions* of the church rather than that which *constitutes* the church.

The Schmalkald Articles, 1538

When the Schmalkaldic League, comprised of secular authorities, princes and rulers sympathetic to the reformation, gathered shortly after Paul III's call for a council in Mantua, Italy, they were a little more cautious than Luther in committing

themselves to attend. They were not quite so ready to offer to the council their head and neck. Nevertheless, they based their decisions upon similar criteria for a council as had Luther, albeit couched in political terms.[31] They had made subscription to the Augsburg Confession, which had been presented to Emperor Charles V in June of 1530, as a condition for membership in the league, so they were clearly supportive, at least to some degree, of the theological approach of Melanchthon and Luther. They wanted to make their decisions judiciously, and so in the summer of 1536, Elector John Frederick asked Luther to prepare some articles for the league to consider in their decision making. By the end of December of 1536, Luther had drafted some articles, which we unimaginatively called the Schmalkald Articles. These articles played a dual role for Luther in that they enunciated the evangelical position for the league, while also giving him an opportunity to spell out his theological testament of faith.[32] Luther left the Schmalkaldic League meetings early due to illness, and thus did not realize that his articles were put aside, in favor of Melanchthon's Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.[33] Luther's articles, later included in the corpus of Lutheran Confessional documents, however, provide some informative clarifications of his view of the criteria by which a church can be considered truly catholic.

In the preface to the Schmalkald Articles, added by Luther to the 1538 edition, Luther notes: "I would indeed very much like to see a true council, in order to assist with a variety of matters and to aid many people. Not that we need it, for through God's grace our churches are now enlightened and supplied with the pure Word and right use of the sacraments, an understanding of the various walks of life, and true works."[34] In this echo of the response given to Vergerio a few years earlier, Luther again identifies the link between catholicity, the gospel, and a council. The purpose of a council is for the clarification of the gospel—of what is at the core of the catholic or Christian faith.[35] The truly Christian or catholic community does not need a council for itself for it is already clear about proclaiming and living the gospel. They are "enlightened and supplied with the pure word and right use of the sacraments." On the other hand, since "the pope and his people are lost and do not want [God's] help,"[36] they have rejected the gospel and have placed themselves outside of the church catholic.

The structure of the Schmalkald Articles is also instructive in understanding Luther's concept of catholicity. He divides the Articles into three sections:1) articles that are not in dispute; 2) the chief article, by which nothing can be given up; and 3) things that need to be discussed among reasonable people. It is important to note what he places in the first two categories, for it also spells out his criteria for what makes the church catholic (its esse). The first section, significantly, is a composite paraphrase based on the first two articles of the three ecumenical creeds. The third article, especially the phrases that cover the church and her activities and ministry, are conspicuous by their absence.[37] There are at least two possible reasons for this. First, Luther prefaces the first section with the notation that "the first part of the Articles deals with the lofty articles of the Divine Majesty."[38] The nature of God in God's triune nature, along with the two natures of Christ, claims Luther, are not a matter "of dispute or conflict, for both sides confess them."[39] The infallibility and nature of the church, as led by the

pope, on the other hand, was under debate.[40] Second, and more importantly, he understands the church as the place where the word about this Triune God is proclaimed, rather than a part of the *content* of what is infallible and eternal. The church itself can err, and is thus not infallible, but the doctrines concerning the Trinity and Christ are above reproach. As early as 1521, in his treatise on *The Misuse of the Mass*, Luther had commented that

> [the devil] has succeeded to such an extent that the papists dare to say: The church cannot err; as if Christ were lying when he says that the elect (who alone are the church) are to be led astray [Mt 24:24]; or as if the church were not the church because it happened to sin or err, when indeed Christ is daily cleansing it of its sins and errors, like the branches of the vine [Jn 15:2]; or as if the faithful and holy ones never sinned.[41]

Thus, the doctrines of God's nature and activities are at the core of what is catholic and evangelical, but the doctrine of the church is not. The church is responsible for proclaiming this catholic and evangelical message, and it is the primary place where it occurs. Thus, Luther often called the church the "mouth-house" (*Mundhaus*).[42] But the church itself is not the content of the message. For this reason, how the church is governed, with or without a "humanly instituted head," in and of itself, does not guarantee the church's catholicity, although it could conceivably help if its leadership was committed to the gospel. As Luther states, "Therefore the church cannot be better ruled and preserved than if we all live under one head, Christ, and all the bishops—equal according to the office (although they may be unequal in their gifts)—keep diligently together in unity of teaching, faith, sacraments, prayers, and works of love."[43] The church's unity is found in the gospel, the proclamation of word and sacrament which in turn empowers people to live lives of faith, and not in a structure or hierarchy centered in Rome.

Crucial to this perspective is Luther's insistence that the gospel is a living event or activity of God that gathers the people of God around it, rather than a static possession that can be contained in a place or structure. This approach to the gospel is echoed in a similar way in the Augsburg Confession by Philip Melanchthon, where the church is defined as "the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly."[44] This satis est, consisting of word and sacrament, as Melanchthon describes it, is nothing less than the gospel, and it is this gospel that makes a gathering catholic, whether at a council or in a congregation.

In the second section of the Schmalkald Articles, Luther spells out the catholic message in even more detail, calling it the "first and chief article."[45] He emphasizes Christ's actions, by which humans are justified "apart from works." These unilateral actions of God comprise the gospel, for they alone give salvation, the good news to a condemned people who cannot save themselves. Luther then asserts that "nothing in this article can be conceded or given up," and that "on this article stands all that we teach and practice."[46] For him, it is the essence (*esse*) of the church's catholicity. What is included in this article is enough (*satis est*) to define the gospel, and thus, what is of the essence of the church catholic. If this is lost, all is lost. Further, all subsequent

doctrines, dogmas, and teachings in the church and about the church are also to be measured by these standards.[47] Without the gospel, the message of God creating and bestowing life and salvation, the church is not catholic. Further, apart from this gospel, no amount of human effort can make the church holy or one. Only God can make the church holy and united, through the catholic and apostolic message.

While the Schmalkaldic League did not ultimately sign the Schmalkald Articles in February of 1537, they did finally reach a consensus. They would attend the proposed council, as long as four criteria were met. It is noteworthy that these conditions were not strictly secular issues, but they nevertheless reflected their concerns which flowed out of their evangelical commitments that the council be truly catholic, and not just Romanist. The council had to: 1) be a free council, rather than papal; 2) the evangelical churches must be invited as full participants, rather than as heretics; 3) decisions must be based on the Scriptures rather than papal authority; and 4) it must be held in Germany, if at all possible.[48] This last condition was apparently a critical point in the negotiations, since they felt that Luther and others would be placed on trial for heresy, as had been the case with Huss. When Charles V was elected emperor in 1519, one of the things that he had promised, in a series of "electoral capitulations," was to not condemn any German unheard, and that if such a trial were to take place, it must be held on German territory.[49] They decided that even if the pope was found wanting in the proclamation of the gospel, then it was the responsibility of the others at the council to correct such teachings and restore the church to it catholic and orthodox center. The Schmalkaldic League also felt that since the pope was the one on trial for being a persecutor of the gospel, he could not preside at such a council. As things stood, however, in their minds it was the papists and not the evangelicals that were outside of the church catholic.

On the Councils and the Church, 1539

In his treatise *On the Councils and the Church*, Luther continues to emphasize and further clarify that the church catholic is to be identified by its proclamation of the gospel. Here, however, he also discusses how the definition of the term "church" is crucial in the creedal phrase, especially in relation to catholicity. Because of his definition of the term church as a political gathering, Luther can make the claim that the Roman church is, at the moment, not catholic, and thus, not Christian.

Luther bases his definition of the term church by beginning with Acts 19:39, noting that in the Latin Vulgate, the term *ecclesia* is used for the gathering or assembly of people in the town market place.[50] He then claims that "in these and other passages, the ecclesia or church is nothing but an assembly of people, though they probably were heathens and not Christians. It is the same term used by town councilmen for their assembly which they summon to the city hall."[51] The difference between an assembly of heathens and an assembly of Christians is that the latter are

> a people with a special call and therefore are called not just ecclesia, "church," or "people," but sancta catholica Christiana, that is, "a Christian holy people" who believe in Christ. That is why they are called a Christian

> people and have the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies them daily, not only through the forgiveness of sins acquired for them by Christ [i.e. the Gospel!] (as the Antinomians foolishly believe), but also through the abolition, the purging, and the mortification of sins, on the basis of which they are called a holy people. Thus the "holy Christian church" is synonymous with a Christian and holy people or, as one who is also wont to express it, with "holy Christendom," or "whole Christendom."[52]

Here, in a most remarkable move, Luther replaces *sancta catholica ecclesia* with *sancta catholica Christiana*. It is the word *ecclesia* (church), not *catholica*,[53] that is in conflict with "Christian." Thus, catholic modifies Christian rather than church. Catholic and Christian, therefore, are complementary words, rather than opposites, in Luther's mind. Further, when Luther translates *ecclesia* into German, he prefers to avoid the word *kirche* wherever possible. Instead, as he notes in the Large Catechism, he favors the words *Gemeine* or *Versammlunge*, translated as a gathering, assembly, or community. This shift moves the focus from an institution or hierarchy to the function of proclamation, since, following Melanchthon's understanding, "for this is enough (*satis est*) for the true unity of the Christian church that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word."[54] The proclaimed word and sacrament create, as God created in the beginning by proclaiming a word, a people of God from those who are gathered in community. Apart from this proclamation event, the people are nothing more than a gathered people. These people also become a holy community when God acts through the word and sacrament. Likewise, the phrase, "communion of saints" is better translated as *ein Gemeine der Heiligen*,[55] a community of saints. As Luther further explains in the explanation to the third article of the creed in the Small Catechism,[56] they are made "the holy ones" by God's actions through the Spirit's working and through the redemptive actions of Christ.

One also notices that Luther does not constrict the understanding of *Gemeine* to a local congregation. Wherever two are three are gathered in the *Gemeine*, God is in their midst and the fullness of the church is present. Similar to Luther's understanding of the ubiquity of Christ in the sacrament,[57] Christ and the church cannot be restricted to a local presence.

Luther concludes from his study of the word *ecclesia* that while the Roman church could call itself a church, a gathering, it lacked the gospel and thus could not be called a Christian church.[58] Therefore, it was outside of the church catholic. He states:

> [The Romanists, led by the pope] give themselves the right name when they call themselves ecclesia (that is, if we interpret this term to agree with their way of life), either Romana or sancta, but do not add (as indeed they cannot) catholica. For ecclesia means "a people"; that they are, just as the Turks, too, are ecclesia, "a people." Ecclesia Romana means "a Roman people"; that they are too, and indeed much more Roman than the heathen of ancient times were. Ecclesia Romana sancta means "a holy Roman people"; that they are too, for they have invented a holiness far greater than the holiness of Christians, or than the holy Christian people possess.[59]

This holiness that they possess, however, is not rooted in the gospel, brought about by the unilateral actions of God, but it is manufactured by their own good works, meant to please and appease God. It is based on human works, and thus is contrary to the gospel. Further, the Romanists' rejection of the gospel puts them outside of the church catholic, rather than at its center. Thus Luther concludes, "Therefore, they are not entitled to the name 'Christian church' or 'Christian people,' if for no other reason than that 'Christian church' is a name and 'Christian holiness' an entity common to all churches and Christians in the world; therefore it is called 'catholic.'"[60] Apart from the gospel, people cannot make themselves holy, nor can they be made holy in God's eyes (*coram Deo*). Their salvation comes through justification by grace alone through faith alone, as they are then transformed into God's holy people. An assembly or *ecclesia* is not a part of the "holy Christian or catholic people" apart from it being engaged and empowered by the gospel.

Having clarified his definition of *ecclesia*, Luther then goes on to delineate seven marks or signs of the "church catholic." The church catholic is recognized, first, by its possession of the holy word of God,[61] which sanctifies and consecrates everything. This word of God, however, is primarily the gospel. Thus he can say:

> Now, wherever you hear or see this word preached, believed, professed, and lived, do not doubt that the true ecclesia sancta catholica, a "Christian holy people," must be there, even though their number is very small. … And even if there were no other sign than this alone, it would still suffice to prove that a Christian holy people must exist there, for God's word cannot be without God's people, and conversely, God's people cannot be without God's word.[62]

Without God's word, this *promissio* that brings life and salvation to those mired in the clutches of sin and death by the devil, the people of God are without hope and salvation. On the other hand, this life-giving action of God, through the gospel promise, is exactly what the church catholic should be about. In his commentary on John 1:1, Luther explains the function of the word in a succinct, poignant way:

> May a merciful God preserve me from a Christian Church in which everyone is a saint! I want to be and remain in the church and little flock of the fainthearted, the feeble, and the ailing, who feel and recognize the wretchedness of their sins, who sigh and cry to God incessantly for comfort and help, who believe in the forgiveness of sin, and who suffer persecution for the sake of the Word, which they confess and teach purely and without adulteration. Satan is a cunning rogue. Through his fanatics he wants to trick the simple-minded into the belief that the preaching of the Gospel is useless. "Greater effort" is necessary, they say. "We must lead a holy life, bear the cross, and endure persecution." And by such a semblance of self-styled holiness, which runs counter to the Word of God, many a person is misled. But our righteousness and holiness is Christ. In Him, not in ourselves, we have perfection (Col 2:10).[63]

God's word creates life and creates a sanctified people out of those who were once no people. It is not the greater effort of the people, or the promises of the hierarchy, but the proclamation of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins, that brings the people of God alive, as surely as God's breathe creates humankind (Gn 2:7) and brings dry bones to life (Ez 37). The Romanists, with their own works, reject this gospel and replace it with "greater effort."

The other signs or marks of the church catholic all center on this proclaimed word, this proclaimed gospel. It is the gospel that is proclaimed in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and in the office of the keys. Further, the ministerial office, the fifth sign of the church catholic, is to ensure that the gospel is properly proclaimed in word and sacrament. This proclamation of the gospel leads to "prayer, public praise and thanksgiving to God,"[64] the sixth mark of the church catholic.

Finally, the church catholic is recognized by its "possession of the sacred cross."[65] When people are gathered into Christ, united with him in a death and resurrection (Rom 6:3–11), they, too, will face taunts and slander and condemnation for their willingness to trust in such a despised and inglorious person as the crucified Christ. In Christ, however, the people of God are also united into life with Christ. This church catholic is not a church of grandeur and glory, but of living life for the other, in the company of those in need, at the foot of the cross. It is through these signs or marks that Christ makes people holy and transforms them into the holy catholic people. Having said this, however, Luther adds a caveat—these are only outward signs,[66] which others can imitate, to various degrees. What makes these things signs of catholicity, therefore, is not human participation in these things, but God's actions in them, declaring and making God's people holy.

Conclusion

Far from being anti-catholic, as is all too often assumed, Luther was a strong proponent of the church catholic, the holy Christian church—as long as one accepts his understanding of the church catholic. It is not the unity of the church under Rome, nor the institutional structure that makes the church catholic. Rather, the assembly is catholic when the gospel is found in its midst. Catholicity is therefore connected to apostolicity. The gathering of people alone cannot make it catholic. Catholicity comes from the proclamation of the apostolic message, which transforms the gathering into the gathering of God's people. The unity of the church is rooted in the one gospel, in which there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph 4:1–5).

In his book, *Martin Luther: Prophet to the Church Catholic*, James Atkinson observed that:

> It is manifest from all the evidence that Luther protested as a Catholic within the Catholic Church: he sought re-formation of that which had suffered de-formation. He wanted his church to be truly and fully catholic and to take within itself again the pure Gospel. This the Church of his day rejected. If today, in the wake of Vatican II, Luther were to be received by the Church and his teaching fully integrated into it, there

would be a conclusion and culmination of Luther's protest: the Church would be truly catholic and evangelical.[67]

Such words aptly summarize Luther's desire for the reformation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. His reformation has not succeeded, and indeed, cannot succeed whenever the gospel is compromised and church bodies cling to a narrowly defined confessional stance that ignores the full implications of the creedal assertions of the church catholic created and sustained by the apostolic message.

Endnotes

1 Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 Volumes (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, and St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986), Volume 39: Church and Ministry I (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 75. Hereafter listed as LW.

2 "Treatise on Good Works" (1520), LW: 44:87; See also Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke:KritischeGesamtausgabe*. 63 Volumes. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus, 1883ff), Vol 6.255.19–23. Hereafter referred to as WA for the Weimar Ausgabe, and WABR for the *Weimar Ausgabe Briefwechsel*.

3 LW 44:135; WA6.412.15–19.

4 Martin Luther, Smalcald Articles, II,1–5. Edited by Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert and Charles P. Arand, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 301.

5 *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis; Augsburg Publishing House; Philadelphia: Fortress Press; and St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978).

6 Personal conversations while I was a student at a Roman Catholic university doing graduate work.

7 James Atkinson, *Martin Luther: Prophet to the Church Catholic* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press; and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 73.

8 LW 34:229; WA 50:283.8. "The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith, 1538." The Weimar edition reads; "*Catholica kan man nicht wol besser deudschen denn Christlich, wie bis her geschenen, Das ist: wo Christen sind in aller Welt, da wider tobet der Bapst und wil seinen hoff allein die christliche Kirche geheissen haben. Leugt aber, wie der Teuffel sein Abgot.*" In the introduction to their book, *The Catholicity of the Reformation*, Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson confidently assert from this that "Luther himself substituted 'Christian' for the word 'Catholic' in the Creed, lest it be equated with 'Roman Catholic.'" Carl E. Braaten & Robert W. Jenson eds., *The Catholicity of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), vii.

9 My thanks here to David Bagchi, who explores this in the paper, "The Problem of Catholicity in Early Reformation Germany," given at the 2010 Society for Reformation Studies Conference at Westminster College, Cambridge, England, April 7, 2010.

10 The immense popularity of this "dictionary" is shown by the fact that it went through at least 26 editions from various Rhineland presses between c. 1480 and 1505. Johannes Melber & Jodocus Eichmann, *Vocabularius predicantium, sive Variloquus*. The edition used was *Vocabularius Jodoci doctoris et predicatoris sacre scripture* ([Strasbourg: M. Schott, between 1484 and 1488]), Bodleian Library, Oxford (shelfmark Auct. 4 Q 5.1). The entries quoted appear at sig. Cviir.

11 "*Catholicus*" is defined as "*ein christenlicher mensch*"; "*Catholici: gemein christen menschen*"; and "*Catholica ecclesia: die gemein cristenlich kirch*." Melber & Eichmann, *Vocabularius predicantium*.

12 This preacher's manual was first published in 1502. The edition used here is Johann Ulrich Surgant, *Manuale Curatorum predicandi prebens modum: tam latino quam vulgari sermone practice illuminatum: cum certis alijs ad curam animarum pertinentibus: omnibus curatis tam conducibile quam salubre* (Basel, 1508).

13 Surgant, *Manuale*, fol. 80vf.

14 For example, the 1520 treatise, "Fourteen Consolations," LW 42:162–163; WA 6:132–133.

15 "The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith, 1538," LW 34:229; WA 50.283.8.

16 Luther made his first appeal to a general council on November 28, 1518, in his *Appellatio F. Martini Luther ad Concilium*. WA 2.34–41. Luther was not the first, nor the only person requesting such a council, even though the last council had ended just over a year ago. Beginning as early as 1523, the emperor and various diets had been demanding one as well. However, beginning with Pope Leo X, and until Clement VII, the popes had no interest in calling a council.

17 Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church*, 1532–1546. Translated by James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 173.

[18] Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church*, 174–175, reports that Luther wore "a dark doublet with satin sleeves, over which he wore a short, fur-lined coat made of serge, a light woollen material. He also wore a heavy gold chain and several rings."

[19] Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 175.

[20] The civil rulers had been insisting on a council in the territory of the Empire, and he knew that this was a potential problem. He also tried to gather information about the English delegation visiting Wittenberg, since Robert Barnes, one of the delegates, declined to meet with him. According to Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 175, Vergerio felt that action against Henry VIII was a more pressing matter than a council, especially in light of the recent executions of John Fisher and Thomas More.

[21] As noted by Brecht, *The Preservation of the Church*, 176.

[22] WABR 5,638.41–639.4. No. 6388. Luther clearly feels the things discussed are not of the essence (esse) of the gospel. He has already made this point in his 1530 commentary on Psalm 117/118:1. He notes, "What have the popes and bishops made of the Gospel and the Christian Church except a completely ecclesiastical, yes, even a worldly dominion? What else are all the new sectarian spirits, fanatics, and foolish saints trying to do but to turn the Gospel into outward holiness or a new monastic order of grey coats [i.e. the monks and Anabaptists] and a long face? We are told: "Praise the Lord, all you heathen. Be heathen, remain heathen, become heathen. Establish ecclesiastical orders, set up rules and codes, make laws and secular government. Be chaste, marry, and devise whatever outward doings and forms you please. But take care that you do not think it possible to become Christians or be saved by such means. Do not imagine for a moment that such things are Christianity or of its essence. For such things as I have just enumerated can all be thought out and established by reason without the help of Christ. One thing must rise high above all that you can devise and do, namely, that you praise the Lord. The things just mentioned praise you yourselves, not the Lord. For these things are yours, developed by you in yourselves out of your mind and previously planted and established in nature." LW 14:23–24; WA 31.I.242.12–27.

[23] WABR 5,639.4–9. No. 6388.

[24] Vergerio's report is found in Philip Melanchthon, *Corpus Reformatorum*, edited by Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider and Henricus Ernestus Bindeseil, Phillippi Melanchthonis Opera, 28 volumes (Halle: C.A. Schwetschke, 1834–1860), 2:982–989.

[25] Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church*, 176.

[26] Such claims are often made by Luther, but they reach their peak in his 1545 treatise, "Against the Roman Papacy, and Institution of the Devil," LW 41:257–376; WA 54.206–99.

[27] James M. Kittelson, "Ecumenism and Condemnation in Luther and Early Lutheranism," *Lutheran Quarterly* NS 3 No. 2 (Summer 1989), 136–137. Kittelson adds, "To put the matter differently, Melanchthon indeed wrote 'it is enough (satis est) to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments,' but these terms carried such theological weight that Eck and the Roman party at Augsburg quickly composed a Confutation of Melanchthon's work."

[28] Luther often defines the gospel as "the forgiveness of sins," and insists, according to his Small Catechism, that wherever there is the forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation. See here my forthcoming article, "Martin Luther's Embedded Commentary Within his Translation of Romans 3."

[29] For Luther's use of the title, "Children's Creed," see WA 50:624; LW 41:132, 143–144.

[30] Of course, this understanding of the church contributes to the ongoing debate of the time on whether the church created the scriptures (Roman view) or the scriptures gave birth to the church.

[31] For historical background on the calling of this council, see Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church*, 178–184.

[32] See here William Russell, *Luther's Theological Testament: The Schmalkald Articles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

[33] Philip Melanchthon, The Power and Primacy of the Pope, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert and Charles P. Arand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

[34] Luther, The Smalcald Articles, edited by Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert and Charles P. Arand, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 299. Luther's Preface, 10. (Hereafter, SA). Luther continues: "Therefore we do not ask for a council for our sakes. In such matters, we cannot hope for or expect any improvement from the council. Rather, we see in bishoprics everywhere so many parishes empty and deserted that our hearts are ready to break. And yet, neither bishops nor cathedral canons ask how the poor people live or die—people for whom Christ died. And should not these people hear this same Christ speak to them as the true shepherd with his sheep?"

[35] This was indeed what the first seven ecumenical councils did determine what was "orthodox" or "catholic" teachings about the doctrines of God, for the sake of salvation.

[36] SA Luther's Pref., 15.

[37] SA I.1–4. Luther does make a passing reference to the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, in the paraphrase of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, but not a word is mentioned about the church.

[38] SA I.1.

[39] SA I.4. This emphasis on the connection between the Triune nature of God and catholicity is also noted in current ecumenical discussions. See here, Braaten and Jenson, eds., *The Catholicity of the Reformation*, 1–12.

[40] Luther in fact addresses the claim of the infallibility of the pope early in the Smalcald Articles, in Part II, Article 4.

[41] "The Misuse of the Mass" (1521), LW 36:193–194; WA 8.533.26–34. This statement came early in his career as a reformer. He does not change his view over time, however. For example, near the end of his life, Luther aptly summarized his view that apart from the catholic or evangelical message, the church can, and does, err. As he states bluntly in his first two points of his treatise against the Louvain theologians: "1) Whatever is taught in the church of God without the Word is a godless lie," and "2) If it is declared an article of faith, it is a godless heresy." "Against the 32 Articles of the Louvain Theologians" (1545), LW: 34:354; WA 54.425.2–3, 430.21–25.

[42] WA 10.I:2.48.5.

[43] SA II.4.9.

[44] The Augsburg Confession, Art. VII.1, as found in Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert and Charles P. Arand, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 43 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

[45] SA I.1.1.

[46] SA I.1.5.

[47] In the second section of the SA, Luther measures each of the topics according to five criteria; 1) is it in compliance with the first and chief article? 2) is it in accord with God's Word? 3) is it necessary? 4) is it commanded or instructed by God? 5) is it dangerous or harmful?

[48] See here, introduction, "On the Councils and the Church," LW 42:6.

[49] Cynthia Grant Schoenberger, "The Development of the Lutheran Theory of Resistance," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 8.1 (April 1977), 66.

[50] Of course, Luther is not the first to understand ecclesia as such. In classical Greece, the gathering of all the citizens was called the *ecclesia*. The Bauer, Gingrich and Arndt Lexicon translates it as "assembly, as a regularly summoned political body." Walter Bauer, William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 241.

[51] LW 41:143, WA 50.624.21–24.

[52] LW 41:143–144; WA 50.624.27–625.2.

[53] At this point, Luther appears to interpret *catholica* as "universal" rather than as a synonym for Christian.

[54] AC VII.2.

[55] LC, Creed, 48.

[56] SC, II. 6.

[57] See, for example, his extended argument on the ubiquity of Christ in his 1528 Treatise, "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper," LW 37:151–372; WA 26.261–509.

[58] Luther states, "Whoever would have heard the words, 'Christian holy people' could have promptly concluded that the pope is no people, much less a holy Christian people. So too the bishops, priests, and monks are not holy Christian people, for they do not believe in Christ, nor do they lead a holy life, but are rather the wicked and shameful people of the devil. He who does not truly believe in Christ is not Christian or a Christian. He who does not have the Holy Spirit against sin is not holy. Consequently, they cannot be 'a Christian holy people,' that is, *sancta et catholica ecclesia*." "On the Council and the Church," 1539. LW 41:144–145; WA 50.625.8–15.

[59] LW 41:145; WA 50.625.29–626.5.

[60] LW 41:145; WA 50.626.33.

[61] LW 41:148; WA 50.628.29–30.

[62] LW 41:150; WA 50.629.28–35.

[63] LW 22:55; WA 46.583.10–23.

[64] LW 41:164; WA 50.641.20–21.

[65] LW 41:164; WA 50.641.1. To possess the sacred cross was also to be united "into Christ in a death like his,"—to become a part of the body of Christ—that is even united on the cross, for the sake of the gospel.

[66] LW 41:167; WA 50.644.14.

[67] James Atkinson, *Martin Luther: Prophet to the Church Catholic* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press; and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 65.

Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue
On Foundations Laid in 1962–1964

Jared Wicks

In June 1964 Professor George Lindbeck visited Monsignor Johannes Willebrands in the office of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting the Unity of Christians (SPCU). Lindbeck represented the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as a delegated Observer at the Second Vatican Council. He came to inform Willebrands that he was proposing to the LWF leadership that it undertake theological dialogue with the Catholic Church.[1]

From that starting point there came the Lutheran-Roman Catholic bilateral dialogues, with their many and wide-ranging documents, which reached a highpoint of wide ecumenical relevance in 1999 with the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. The most recent "vital sign" of the dialogue is *From Conflict to Communion*, a creative proposal of ways Lutherans and Catholics can in 2017 commemorate *together* the fifth centenary of the Reformation.[2]

The Catholic Ecumenical Commitment

The place of the Lindbeck-Willebrands conversation of 1964, the SPCU, was one of the emblematic components of the Second Vatican Council. Pope John XXIII established the Secretariat on June 5, 1960, along with the commissions created to prepare the Council, and it was being ably led by its president Cardinal Augustin Bea and its chief operating officer, called Secretary, Msgr. Willebrands. Sixteen individuals, bishops or senior churchmen, were the Secretariat's members, ably assisted by twenty consultors. By the time Vatican II opened on October 11, 1962, there had been six SPCU plenary meetings of a few days each, for the preparation of texts, both as ecumenically constructive recommendations forwarded to the preparatory commissions and as drafts on particular topics for deliberation by the Council itself.[3]

When Vatican II began, it took up first the reform of Catholic worship leading to the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* on December 4, 1963. This document states in its opening paragraph the four aims of the Council, namely, to invigorate the Christian lives of Catholics, to adapt to present-day needs aspects of the ecclesial institution which are open to change, "to encourage whatever can promote

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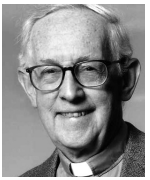

the union of all who believe in Christ," and to enhance the missionary call of the church to all humankind. Pursuit of the third aim led, on November 21, 1964, to the promulgation of the *Decree on Ecumenism*, which begins, "The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council." In its three chapters the Decree states "Catholic Principles of Ecumenism" (nos.[4] 2–4), describes "The Practice of Ecumenism" which it is making imperative for Catholics (nos. 5–12), and concludes by telling how the Church sees "The Churches and Ecclesial Communities Separated from the Roman Apostolic See" (nos. 13–24). The third chapter speaks to the situation of the Eastern Churches in nos. 14–18, and to that of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the West in nos. 19–24.

The ecumenism document is a "decree" giving guidelines and mandates for action. It states doctrinal bases, but in doing this builds on the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, promulgated on the same day in 1964. The Constitution stated briefly in no. 8 that "many elements of sanctification and truth" are found among Christians outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church.[5] Shortly after, in its chapter on "the People of God," no. 15 names several of these "elements," which are among "many reasons for knowing that it [the Catholic Church] is joined to the baptized" of other Christian bodies. They have and cherish Scripture, faith in God and in Christ the Savior, "baptism which unites them to Christ," and other sacraments which they receive "in their own churches and ecclesial communities." Section no. 15 also speaks of other Christians' interior zeal, spiritual benefits, and sanctification, which give rise to true communion in the Holy Spirit.

The ecumenical orientation and mandate given by Vatican II has been received and confirmed by the popes, most strikingly by John Paul II in his encyclical, *Ut unum sint*, of June 15, 1995, where he states that at the Council, "the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture" (no. 3). He restates major affirmations of the Council, for example, on the "elements of sanctification and truth," saying, "To the extent that these elements are found in other Christian Communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them" (no. 10). The elements are not static or passive, for "insofar as they are elements of the Church of Christ, these are by their nature a force for the re-establishment of unity" (no. 49). On these bases, a real but still imperfect communion exists. "Ecumenism is directed precisely to making the partial communion existing between Christians grow towards full communion in truth and charity" (no. 14).

As many will know, the ecumenical commitment just documented represents a notable change in official Catholic attitudes from the outlook before Vatican II. So, the question arises about just *how* such a shift happened. To provide a partial answer, what follows is a work of historical "backgrounding" aiming to identify key moments before and during the Second Vatican Council by which foundations were laid for this new Catholic commitment.

Ecumenical Issues during the Vatican II Preparation: Church Membership

Beginning in late 1960, the Preparatory Theological Commission of the Council devoted considerable energy to drafting what would be a "dogmatic constitution" on the nature of the Church. The need of this was clear, first, as a matter of unfinished business left from the First Vatican Council of 1869–70, where a complete draft *De ecclesia* had been prepared, but when threats of war began looming, only parts of the draft, on the primacy and infallibility of the pope, were discussed, emended, and promulgated before the Council suspended its work. Second, what Vatican I defined left a one-sided account of the Catholic hierarchy and so in 1959–60 many called for the new Council to state a complementary doctrine of the episcopate and the episcopal college. Third, in the decades before the convocation of Vatican II, ecclesiology was a topic of intensive theological reflection, with a focal point being given in the encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *The Mystical Body of Christ* (1943).[6]

The ecclesiological draft of the Preparatory Theological Commission comprised eleven chapters, of which two were especially pertinent to ecumenical concerns, namely, Chapter II on who is a "member" of the Church and how membership relates to salvation and Chapter XI on ecumenism itself.[7]

Critical moments came for the Preparatory Theological Commission when the chapters of the draft text on the Church were examined by the Central Preparatory Commission, a body of eighty cardinals, archbishops, and heads of major religious orders, whose task was to evaluate the drafts coming out of the particular commissions.[8] A positive assessment by the Central Commission would open the way for texts to go to Pope John XXIII for his approval for putting them before the world's bishops for discussion in the sessions of Vatican II. But when Central Commission members expressed reservations or suggested amendments, the draft went back to its particular commission for correction.

The Theological Commission's Chapters I–VI of its *De ecclesia* came up for treatment by the Central Commission on May 8, 1962, some weeks after the Central Commission members had received each chapter in a printed booklet. The presenter was Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, President of the Preparatory Theological Commission. Chapter I, on the nature of the "Church militant" on earth, treated the Church as founded by Christ and existing as the body of Christ, before concluding with an affirmation of the identity of the socially organized Roman Catholic Church with the Mystical Body of Christ.

Chapter II then treated Church membership in three paragraphs.[9] First, it states that the Church is necessary for salvation, in line with the traditional axiom *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. A person cannot be saved who knows that the Catholic Church was founded by God through Christ but then refuses to enter it and persevere there. The same holds for being baptized, which incorporates a person into the Church as a member. But there is also a baptism *of desire* which can fulfill this requirement. For the Church, consequently, there is membership in reality (*reapse*), but also one can be *ordered* to the Church by desire (*voto*), which will be explained. Such a relation is necessary but not sufficient for salvation, since for this, one must also be by grace united to God in faith, hope, and charity.

In its second paragraph, Chapter II went into detail on membership in the Church. While every baptized person is connected with the Church, being a member in reality (*reapse*) rests on conditions which Pius XII had drawn together in his Mystical Body encyclical. The conditions are baptismal regeneration, profession of the Catholic faith, and acknowledgment of the Church's authority, while of course not being expelled from the body for a grievous offense. By these, persons are within the visible Church as members and are united with Christ who rules it by his Vicar on earth. But, as with baptism, there can also be regarding the Church a *votum* (desire), "ordering to the church" in the case of persons ignorant of the Catholic Church being the true and only Church of Christ. This desire can be implicit in wanting to obey Christ's will and intentions or, among non-Christians, it can be implicit in a sincere dedication to fulfilling the will of their God and Creator.[10]

In a third paragraph the chapter fulfills, in part, requests made insistently during the drafting process in the *De ecclesia* sub-commission, especially by Fr. Yves Congar, Prof. Michael Schmaus, and Msgr. Gérard Philips.[11] The text speaks of those who do not profess the Catholic faith and are not in communion with the pope, and so are not members, but nonetheless are ordered to the Church by desire. Among these non-Catholics, a special place is acknowledged for baptized Christians who believe in Christ as God and Savior. This union is greater with Orthodox Christians who revere the Holy Eucharist and love the Mother of God. But with all other Christians there is a shared faith in Christ, a common participation in prayer and spiritual benefits, and a union in the Holy Spirit who works effectively by gifts and graces not only in the Mystical Body but beyond. The Spirit seeks to incorporate the separated brethren into the body and for this the Church prays incessantly, so that they may share in the abundant helps to salvation enjoyed by Catholics who are *reapse* members. But Catholics must keep in mind that their condition is not by their merit but by a special grace of Christ to which they must respond in thought, word, and deed or be more severely judged.

On May 8, 1962, this text came under heavy fire from influential members of the Central Preparatory Commission. Cardinal Achille Liénart (Lille, France) opposed a central tenet of the draft, namely, the identification of the Catholic Church with the Mystical Body of Christ as one and the same. For Christ's body includes as well those suffering in purgatory and the blessed in heaven. Separated Christians are buried with Christ in baptism so as to rise in him to ongoing supernatural life. Sadly they do not share many supernatural benefits administered by the Church, but the Cardinal will not say they are not adhering to Christ's Mystical Body.[12] Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger (Montreal, Canada) said that the distinction between "members" *reapse* and those "ordered to" the Church by a *votum* is not satisfactory to account for the connection between the Church and non-Catholic Christians on the way to salvation. This is a live topic in theology which has not matured sufficiently for it to be decisively stated by the Council. For other Christians, Léger proposed saying not "ordered to," but "belong to" the Church (*pertinent ad*).[13] Cardinal Franz König (Vienna, Austria) disagrees with the denial of membership to baptized non-Catholics, since Canon 87 of the *Code of Canon Law* (1917) affirms that by baptism, one becomes "a person in the Church of Christ." Instead of *reapse* on Catholics'

membership, better to say *perfecte*, so that a level of membership can be ascribed to all the baptized, even if in cases the connection is defective.[14]

Cardinal Julius Döpfner (Munich, Germany) underscored the immense ecumenical importance of the chapter, which therefore must be carefully reviewed. Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis* laid a basis, but does the encyclical say all that is needed for explaining well Catholic doctrine regarding the separated brethren? Döpfner also appealed to Canon 87's ascribing of being "person in the Church" to baptism, which is certainly "convertible" with being a member of the Church. Other canons, e.g., regarding marriage, refer to baptized non-Catholics in ways implying some kind of membership. Another problem is the text's recourse to "ordering by a *votum*" to the Church, which is also true of pagans in good faith. The third paragraph tries to work around this problem, but does not sufficiently distinguish between the baptized and the non-baptized. Döpfner concluded that Chapter II must be thoroughly revised, so as to answer today's questions both about the Church and salvation and about incorporation as a member of the Church.[15]

Cardinal Bea, president of the Unity Secretariat, told the other members of the Central Preparatory Commission that he had to speak at some length on the texts before them, because the Theological Commission had refused to hold joint meetings with the Secretariat. Also, the Commission has not adopted in Chapter II some recommendations forwarded to it in writing by the Secretariat. A first point is that the schema exaggerates the importance of the topic of membership, along with neglect of showing *how* the Church is a means of salvation for all peoples. Then, it speaks of the *votum* of the true Church as possibly present in all non-Catholics, whether pagan, Orthodox, or Protestant. "Speaking in this way," Bea informs his fellow Central Commission members, "greatly offends non-Catholic Christians, because in effect it takes little account of their valid baptism and the status that this confers."[16] Another approach, beginning with God's universal saving will, would work better, but in any case one should avoid the term "member," because in St. Paul's usage this is not referred to the visible church. Also, the New Testament has, beyond body of Christ, other images of the church, such as a vineyard, family, house, and people. One can say of Catholics that they are "in a full and proper sense" members of the Church, but the elements constituting membership are present more widely than only in the Catholic Church, with the effects described in the positive part of the chapter's third paragraph. Baptized other Christians are really our "brethren," even though "separated" and Pope John even calls them "sons."[17]

After a few other comments on the chapter, the sixty-five Central Commission members present on May 8 voted. Only seven voted an approval (*placet*), while eight voted to reject the draft of Chapter II (*non placet*). Fifty voted approval with reservations, calling for further work on the text (*placet iuxta modum*). Fifteen said further work should take account, generally, of the comments of the cardinals and bishops who had spoken, but thirty members identified their reservations specifically with the intervention of Bea. Several agreed with other critics of the draft along with Bea, for example, Döpfner and König (twenty-one references each) and/or Liénart and Léger (fourteen

mentions each).[18] Clearly the ecumenical cause made a major advance in this critical handling of the Theological Commission's draft on church membership just five months before Vatican II formally opened. The critics cited above were soon influencing other Vatican II members, with some exercising leadership in sizeable national conferences of bishops and with Cardinal Bea becoming a speaker in the Council to whom great attention was given.

However, the critical interventions of May 8, 1962 on the draft Constitution *De ecclesia* did not take effect immediately, since in the Central Commission votes with reservations counted as approvals of the draft submitted, which gave a fifty-seven to eight vote favorable to the draft. On behalf of the Theological Commission, in fact, Tromp contested many of the criticisms and admitted only the most clearly demanded changes. Consequently, the version of the Constitution *De ecclesia* distributed in November 1962 to the whole Council differed in no substantial way from the earlier text and remained vulnerable to the critical points made in May by members of the Central Preparatory Commission. Catholics are called (*vocantur*) "members in the true and proper sense" (omitting *reapse*), while all others of sincere good will are "ordered to the Church." Among the latter, other Christians have a more dense ordination by baptism, faith in Christ, and the spiritual benefits set out in the practically unrevised third paragraph.

In the Council assemblies December 1–7, 1962, seventy-seven members spoke on the draft Dogmatic Constitution *De ecclesia*, with many, who often spoke for several or many others, unleashing a crescendo of critical points against the draft constitution. But before reviewing the consequences of this development, another part of the text on the Church deserves treatment.

Ecumenical Issues during the Vatican II Preparation: Separated Communities

The Preparatory Theological Commission's draft Constitution on the Church ended with Chapter XI, treating ecumenism. It had evolved through six drafts, with Professor Jan Witte (Dutch Jesuit, Gregorian University) serving as the reporter who composed several revised versions after discussions in the sub-commission *de ecclesia* and the plenary Theological Commission.

The ecumenism chapter developed gradually from late 1961 to comprise eight sections, beginning with an Introduction (no. 1) in which the Council declares its commitment to promoting the unity of all Christians. Number 2 stated the Catholic Church's recognition of the bonds of baptism, confession of Christ, and witness to him before the world, which connect separated Christians, especially those of eastern rites, with herself—although not in full communion.[19] Number 3 is brief on the Church's relation to individual separated Christians, since Chapter II already treated this. Number 4 then explains the Church's relation to the separated communities, about which more is covered below. Number 5 is a Catholic statement on the existing ecumenical movement, which is inspired by God, but which should aim at unity in faith, sacramental communion, and common governance under Christ's Vicar on earth. Number 6 expresses hope that Catholics will be ecumenically active, while striving theologically and pastorally for inner renewal of their own Church to make it known more clearly as

the Father's house. Number 7 speaks to the issue of common worship, giving detailed reasons against and for, but still looking to later practical norms. The final, number 8, admits and even urges social collaboration with other Christians, by which the world will become more humane and by which inner-Christian prejudice may be overcome.

Number 4 on the separated communities, after Witte's two initial versions, gave rise to a sharp clash of positions in the *De ecclesia* sub-commission on November 21, 1961. Professor Heribert Schauf (Aachen, Germany) held that the separated communities of the West had no religious relation to the Catholic Church, for their separation leaves them existing as only natural religious associations. Witte countered that they possess and live from supernatural elements such as God's revelation, Scripture, and sacraments of Christ. Tromp agreed with Schauf, whom he had directed in doctoral studies at the Gregorian. G. Philips argued that the elements remain good and fruitful in spite of the separation, which gives a supernatural character to the separated bodies.[20] Their members receive the elements in faith, over which we should rejoice, while lamenting the separation. Monsignor Carlo Colombo (Milan, Italy) asserted that Catholic recognition of the Holy Spirit's influence in stirring non-Catholics to begin and carry on the ecumenical movement in effect acknowledged the work of grace in the communities being discussed. Witte's further arguments, with the interventions of Philips and Colombo for the separated communities' religious character, impressed Tromp who accepted calling them "Christian communities."[21]

After further revision, review by the plenary Theological Commission, and a last revision to gain greater concision and more Catholic emphasis by Tromp, the passage on the "separated Christian communities" was printed in the longer Chapter XI of the draft *De ecclesia* for the Central Preparatory Commission. The final session of the Central Commission was scheduled for June 12–19, 1962, but the number of texts to evaluate made it necessary to hold a further meeting on June 20, at which the Commission reviewed together the Theological Commission's chapter on ecumenism and a draft pastoral decree from the Unity Secretariat *De oecumenismo catholico*.[22] Only thirty-eight Central Commission members were present on this added day, but six who had departed gave their votes in writing. Two cardinals had brief remarks to make, Ruffini and Michael Browne, O.P., with both speaking positively about both texts and both mentioning that they could well be combined in one decree, having a doctrinal and pastoral part.[23] In the voting, all the members approved the two texts, with twelve saying they should become one text.[24]

Because of the Theological Commission's refusal to work jointly with the Unity Secretariat, there was no fusion of *De ecclesia*, Chapter XI with the *De oecumenismo catholico* of the SPCU. In the draft ecclesiology Constitution passed out to the members of the Council, Chapter XI stated that other Christians are moved toward the unity of the Church not only as individuals but in their own communities, which hold and administer "certain elements of the Church," especially Scripture and the sacraments, which unite recipients with Christ and which tend toward Catholic unity. Sadly the elements are received outside the fullness of God's revelation, but the Council does not deny their saving effect and promotion of a Christian spiritual life. All Catholics should by word and example show the separated brethren that the fullness of divine revelation is

held in truth and purity in the Catholic Church alone, so that those now separated may come to possess along with us the full heritage coming from Christ.[25]

During Period I (1962) of Vatican II, the chapter on ecumenism of *De ecclesia* did not come onto the agenda for specific evaluation, because it had been aside before the Council debated the draft Constitution *De ecclesia* as a whole. After a short debate of November 26–29 on a draft text on the Eastern Catholic Churches in promoting union with the Orthodox, the Council members voted on December 1 for a fusion into one document of the Council's three ecumenical texts, that is, on the Eastern Churches, Chapter XI of *De ecclesia*, and the pastoral text on Catholic ecumenism which will come from the Unity Secretariat.

The rest of the Preparatory Theological Commission's completed draft Constitution was formally discussed in plenary sessions of the Council December 1–7, 1962, during which incisive objections were made, for example, by Cardinals Liénart, Léger, König, Döpfner, and Bea. The criticism gained momentum and became such that no vote was needed to formally register the text's inadequacy. Instead, the draft Constitution came under the general mandate, issued by Pope John XXIII on December 5, that all the Council's commissions should thoroughly revise the existing draft texts to focus them on issues of major importance and orient them to the pastoral and doctrinal renewal which Pope John had called for in his opening discourse of the Council, October 11, 1962.[26]

De ecclesia on a New Basis, with Recognition of Ecclesial elementa in Other Bodies

Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens (Malines-Brussels, Belgium) participated in the Central Preparatory Commission meetings of May and June 1962 on the chapters of the proposed Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. From the criticisms forcefully expressed by leading Cardinals, Suenens sensed that this key doctrinal text was not prepared in a manner adequate to the Council's aims. Shortly after the Council opened, Suenens asked Msgr. Gérard Philips (Dogma Professor, Louvain) to draft an alternative *De ecclesia* text, doing this privately, but also involving theologians who were serving as experts of other cardinals and bishops.[27] Suenens saw that those who would oppose the Preparatory Commission's text ought to have a substitute text ready to give the Council a basis for advancing positively. Philips's initial text was ready in late October when it was reviewed and only slightly amended by Cardinal Bea and theologians of the Unity Secretariat.[28]

Finally, on November 23, a booklet containing the draft Constitution on the Church was distributed to all the Council members. Philips records that the theologians who had helped in developing his text continued to suggest improvements of his alternative draft, but its future was clouded in uncertainty.

Period I of the Council ended in early December 1962, with the "fall" of the prepared *De ecclesia* and the mandate of John XXIII to revise all the prepared texts in line with the aims he had expressed for the Council. This stirred bishops and theologians around the world to work intently on several new texts which could replace the previous *De ecclesia*. As a result, when the Council's Doctrinal Commission gathered for a working session in February 1963, five alternative texts were on hand which

offered new bases for a Dogmatic Constitution *De ecclesia*.[29] These had come from: (1) Archbishop Pietro Parente, of the Roman Curia, a member of the Doctrinal Commission, who reworked in a modest way parts of the earlier text; (2) G. Philips, with a revision of his October work, now beginning "*Lumen gentium cum sit Christus*"; (3) the German bishops' conference, who approved in early February a theologians' draft of forty-six paragraphs, beginning "*Lumen gentium cum sit Ecclesia*"; (4) a group of about sixty French bishops; and (5) a group of Latin American bishops, headed by Cardinal Raul Silva Henríquez (Santiago, Chile).[30]

Philips arrived in Rome on February 23 and heard that seven Doctrinal Commission members had been constituted as a *De ecclesia* sub-commission. Cardinal Michael Browne, O.P. would preside, with fellow Cardinals König and Léger as members, along with four bishops, who would each advocate one of the alternative drafts: Parente (for his own text), André Marie Charue (Namur, Belgium, for Philips's draft), Gabriel Garrone (Toulouse, France, for the French text), and Joseph Schroffer (Eichstadt, Germany, for the German text). Late in the morning of February 26, while Philips was working on refining his text with theologians at the Belgian College, Bishop Charue called to tell him that the seven had chosen his *De ecclesia* text as the basis of further work, while the other alternative drafts would be consulted for particular contributions.[31] The seven commission members were choosing expert theologians to work on further developing the draft, which led to a remarkable grouping; König chose Karl Rahner, Garrone named Jean Daniélou (soon replaced by Yves Congar), and Schröffer chose the Louvain theologian Gustave Thils who soon gave way to Charles Moeller also of Louvain and very close to Philips. Charue naturally chose Philips who was to preside over the experts' work of preparing a newly minted *De ecclesia* for the Doctrinal Commission to present to the Council.

The theologians went immediately to work on further developing the Philips text, drawing on what they knew many Council members desired, on the other alternative texts, and on their own considerable theological expertise. Two points deserve mention regarding the text before them in late February 1963, which had grown considerably from Philips's initial work of four months earlier:

(1) The opening chapter was no longer on "the Church militant" as in the Preparatory Commission's text, but on "the mystery of the Church"; this then develops biblically from the plan of the Eternal Father and the saving mission of the Son. The Holy Spirit sanctifies the church in which the exalted Christ lives on, nourishing it with the bread of doctrine and the Eucharist. The church is a temple of the indwelling Spirit and the body of Christ by the one bread (1 Cor 10:17), as well as Christ's beloved spouse.

Philips's draft first chapter closes with a paragraph on the Church on earth, which is a structured reality with the means of sanctification and is the true Church of Christ confessed in the creed as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. At this point, Philips' earlier text (*Concilium duce Spiritu Sancto*) had affirmed that the Church, animated, unified, and sanctified by the Spirit, "is on earth an organically constituted society, namely (*nempe*), the Roman Catholic [Church]," which is to lead all persons to the heavenly kingdom for the glory of the Father.[32] This was in effect the same as the final statement in Chapter I of the

Preparatory Commission's draft, that is, that the Church of Christ is the Catholic Church. But this "*nempe*" phrase, changed in the revised text in late February 1963, was taken as the new starting point. Through amendments which are difficult to trace in detail, the new text (*Lumen gentium quod sit Christus*) affirms that the Church on pilgrimage on earth, "the true mother and teacher of all, constituted in this world as an ordered society, is (*est*) the Catholic Church directed by the Roman Pontiff and the bishops in communion with him, *although* (licet) *certain elements of sanctification can be found outside her complete structure*."[33]

The "is" of the Catholic claim remains, but it is now modified in the same sentence by a contrasting or adversative clause. An ecclesial affirmation is made, but it is not asserted in an exclusive manner. Coming upon "is," or the later "subsists in," one might think it to be exclusive, but the added clause corrects this, by affirming the existence of constitutive sanctifying components of the Church of Christ on earth beyond the Catholic Church in bodies separated from it.[34]

(2) Above, in treating Church membership, we related how Philips dissented from Tromp's construction which entered the preparatory draft on the Church. The latter proposed a twofold main division, that is, of those "really" (*reapse*) members of the Catholic Church and those "ordered to" it by a sincere desire of obeying God.

From the beginning of his new draft text—and remaining in what became Council doctrine—Philips set up a three-fold division among persons in regard to the Church.[35] First, Catholics are those who "live within the Church," as really (*reapse*…) belonging, who are described, as Pius XII had done in his encyclical, as accepting all the means of salvation present in the Church, who are baptized, profess the true Catholic faith, acknowledge church authority, and have not been wholly excluded for a grave offense. But Philips avoided the term "member," and adds a note on the controversy over this which makes it better avoided.

The second group comprises non-Catholic Christians, whose union with the Church rests on aspects which earlier were treated as giving density to their relation by desire (*votum*). No such desire appears here, but the text expresses instead the Church's sense of connectedness, grounded in the others' faith in Christ, Son of God and Savior, in the indelible mark of their baptism, and in their acceptance of some, at least, of the sacraments. From this follows communion by the Holy Spirit's work in them, along with the Catholic prayer that they come into the one flock.

A third group has not yet come to the Christian faith and rebirth in Christ, but to them the Church reaches out in prayer and proclamation, while not excluding they can be saved if they sincerely desire, albeit implicitly, what God has in fact established through Christ in his Church.

The treatment of non-Catholic Christians in an intermediate place between Catholics and non-Christians coheres well with the recognition of "elements of sanctification" outside the Catholic Church. The elements are objective bases of the Christian identity of individuals with whom the Catholic Church knows that it is specially connected in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. But the Philips text has left open the theological status and role of the separated churches and communities which transmit the good news of Christ the Savior and the sacraments of new life.

Recognition of the Role of the Separated Communities: the Principle of Ecumenism

The Doctrinal Commission's *De ecclesia* sub-commission received the revised chapters worked out by Philips and his fellow *periti* and made them ready for review, emendation, and approval by the full Commission. By mid-March, 1963, the revised Chapter I on the mystery of the Church and Chapter II on the Church's hierarchical structure, especially the episcopate, were approved by the Doctrinal Commission and on April 22, Pope John XXIII approved them for sending to the Council members. In collaboration with other Council commissions, further chapters were developed in April and May on the laity and on vowed religious, to which the Doctrinal Commission added a chapter on "the call to holiness in the Church." After the pause caused by the death of John XXIII on June 3, 1963, and the election of Paul VI on June 21, the new chapters were sent to the Council members on July 23. At the end of August, the Commission on Coordinating the Work of the Council determined that Period II, scheduled to begin on September 29, would start with discussion of the draft Dogmatic Constitution *De ecclesia*.

When the Council reopened, after a short discussion, a huge majority voted to accept the revised draft text on the Church as a suitable basis of work, and on October 1–4 forty-five Council members spoke on Chapter I, with fifty-two handing in written observations.[36] In the Chapter the final numbers 8–10 presented Catholics, non-Catholic Christians, and non-Christians in the manner described just above. The Council discussion of the further chapters of *De ecclesia* continued until October 31, from which came a huge number of further proposals for its development into a revised text.

In late October, the Doctrinal Commission formed seven sub-commissions to review the Council members' oral and written interventions on *De ecclesia*, among which the second, headed by Cardinal Santos (Manila), was given the paragraphs on "the people of God," a new Chapter II of the draft text. By moving up sections from the chapter on the laity into it, this now comprised nos. 9–16, treating non-Catholic Christians in no. 15. In parceling out the work among the sub-commission's *periti*, Prof. Jan Witte became the reporter on no. 15 on "other Christians."

After his study of the Council members' interventions, Witte reported to the sub-commission, first, that several comments added further *elementa* to the grounds of connection of other Christians with the Church, especially the Holy Scriptures taken as the norm of belief and life. Second, a number of proposals had called for recognition of the communities in which other Christians receive baptism and other sacraments.[37] This was accepted by the Santos sub-commission, and these revisions entered its revision of no. 15 and remained in Constitution *Lumen gentium* promulgated in 1964. Also the sub-commission had to draft brief explanations of the changes for its report, called a *relatio*. Regarding the communities in which other Christians receive the word and sacraments, Witte suggested this formulation, which was accepted: "The elements enumerated regard not only individuals, but also the communities. In this precise point is located the principle of the ecumenical movement."[38]

These then are the foundations of the Catholic engagement in ecumenical dialogue with other Christians, in which dialogues with Lutherans have been especially

productive. The Catholic commitment rests on the recognitions made in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* of the Christian substance cherished and transmitted in the churches and communities, which have become the Catholic Church's dialogue partners.

Endnotes

[1] In his appointment book for June 11, 1964, Willebrands recorded the visit of Lindbeck about "further development of the dialogue," and added, "Conversation très intéressante." *Les agendas conciliaires de Mgr. J. Willebrands*, trans. and annotated L. Declerck (Leuven: Maurits Sabbebibliotheek and Peeters, 2009), 131.

[2] *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 & Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2013). I listed the previous documents of the dialogue in the Appendix of "Lutheran- Roman Catholic World-Level Dialogue: Selected Remarks," in John A. Radano, ed., *Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism. Exploring the Achievements of International Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 73–76.

[3] The SPCU preparatory work of 1960–62 has been abundantly reported by Mauro Velati in *Dialogo e rinnovamento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), which I presented in "Still More Light on Vatican Council II," *Catholic Historical Review* 98 (2012): 476–502, at 477–89.

[4] Nos. refers to section numbers.

[5] With the term "elements" Vatican II adopted a conception of the 1950 Toronto Statement of the World Council of Churches Central Committee regarding what WCC member churches hold regarding the other member churches. They recognize in them "certain elements of the true Church," such as preaching the word of God, holding to Scripture, and administering sacraments. See *The Ecumenical Movement. An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Kinnamon and Brian Cope (Geneva: WCC Publications & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 467. Below, I will relate how the term "elements" came to be inserted into Vatican II's Constitution on the Church.

[6] Examples of this reflection are Romano Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic* (1922; repr. London: Sheed & Ward, 1935); Émile Mersch, *The Whole Christ* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1938) and *Theology of the Mystical Body* (1936; repr. St. Louis: Herder, 1951); Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (1938; repr. London: Burns and Oates, 1950) and *The Splendor of the Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956); Otto Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt/M.: Knecht, 1955); and Lucien Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, 2nd ed. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1959).

[7] The rest of the ecclesiology draft treated the nature of the church militant (Ch. I), the episcopate as the highest grade of ordained ministry (III), bishops in their dioceses (IV), the status of vowed members of religious orders (V), the laity (VI), the magisterium (VII), authority and obedience in the Church (VIII), Church and state (IX), and evangelization of the world (X).

[8] The Central Commission held seven week-long meetings from mid-1961 to June 1962, which are fully documented in the *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando*, Ser. II (Praeparatoria), Vol. II (Acta Commissionis Centralis Praeparatoriae), in four parts.

[9] In the Theological Commission, Sebastian Tromp, S.J., the Commission's Secretary, had drafted Ch. II, because of his extensive writing on Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*. Tromp composed four drafts of the chapter for discussion by a *De ecclesia* sub-commission, leading each time to considerable revision of the text. In late September 1961, a fifth draft went before a plenary meeting of the Theological Commission's members, who approved it, but also asked for further emendations. Tromp entered these into the sixth version that then came before the Central Preparatory Commission on May 8, 1962, for which we have the record in *Acta et Documenta*, II, II. Part IIII: 990–93 (text of Ch. II) and 997–1037 (interventions of the Central Commission members on Ch. II, followed by their votes, that is, either approval, or rejection, or approval with a call for amendment).

[10] The notes to the passage on membership give as sources four references to Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis*, along with citations of other papal documents from 1595, 1749, 1852, and 1960–61 (3 texts from John XXIII).

[11] The papers of G. Philips, in the Leuven Theological Faculty's Vatican II Archive, include no. 123, a 12-page Latin exposition for the sub-commission *De ecclesia* by Congar, dated April 2, 1961, on the *nexus* of baptized non-Catholics with the visible Church and the Mystical Body. The connection is sacramental and by Scripture and the worship of God in their "communions." In the text, Congar says he agrees with what Prof. Schmaus called for regarding baptized non-Catholics. The same archive holds no. 119, which is Philips's seven-page Latin "note" of April 7, "De membris Ecclesiae." For him a baptized non-Catholic has a real *ratio pertinendi* (ground of belonging) to the Church, which though is diminished and incomplete, while being not just a *votum* or desire, which can ground a pagan's relation to the Church.

[12] *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, Part III: 998.

[13] Ibid., 1004.

[14] Ibid., 1005–06.

[15] Ibid., 1006–12. In Munich, Cardinal Döpfner regularly sought the advice of Prof. Klaus Mörsdorf, the well-respected canonist of the Theology Faculty of the University of Munich. Döpfner's appeal to canon 87 may rest on Mörsdorf's article, "Der Codex Iuris Canonici und die nicht-katholischen Christen," in *Archiv für katholischen Kirchenrecht* 130 (1961), 31–58.

[16] At this point Bea cited, without naming the author, a sharp critique of Pius XII's teaching by Prof. Peter Brunner of Heidelberg, in his essay, "Die abendlandischen Kirchentrennung und das kommende Konzil," in *Erwägungen zukommenden Konzil* (Würzburg, 1961), 35–50. Stjepan Schmidt identified Brunner as Bea's source, in *Augustin Bea: the Cardinal of Unity* (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1992), 366, n. 119.

[17] *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, Part III: 1012–16.

[18] Ibid., 1025–37.

[19] Notes to no. 2 explain full ecclesial communion in terms of "eucharistic communion," which presupposes agreement in faith, a common sacramental life, and union in ministry. The Eucharistic focal point of full communion was being proposed, not only by Catholic writers like L. Hertling and G. Bardy, but as well by others, like N. Afanassief, J. Meyendorff, M. Thurian, W. Elert (*Abendmahl und Kirchegemeinschaft in der alten Kirche* [Berlin, 1954]), and in documents of the World Council of Churches.

[20] In his written statement of April 7, 1961, indicated in n. 10, above, Philips concluded that the recognition of many spiritual goods among non-Catholic Christians must apply not only to individuals but as well to their bodies. "Most Protestant confessions profess faith in the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, and redemption, while conferring baptism, promoting a spirit of prayer, etc." (p. 6). Congar's account, from the same time, urged calling the separated bodies "communions," as Augustine did regarding the Donatists. They are imperfect actuations of the Church.

[21] The successive versions of Ch. XI, *De oecumenismo*, are in the Archive of the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, in the papers of Fr. Jan Witte, S.J. The minutes of the November 21 argument are in the Vatican Secret Archive, Collection *Concilium Vaticanum II*, Box 745, Folder 190.

[22] The drafts presented to the Central Commission are in *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, Part IV: 785–92 (SPCU, pastoral decree) and 792–800 (Theological Commission, *De ecclesia*, Ch. XI). The SPCU's pastoral text began with a brief account of the unity of the Church, which is constituted by visible and invisible *elementa*. Some elements can exist and be fruitful outside Catholic unity as means of salvation, although in an incomplete manner. Nonetheless, the separated communities are not deprived of a role in the mystery of salvation. In fact, "The Spirit of Christ does not refuse to use them as means of salvation and to generously pour out on them Himself along with gifts of faith, hope, and charity" (p. 786). The draft decree proposes the exercise of ecumenism by growth in knowledge of separated Christians, prayer for unity, and practical cooperation. Promoting ecumenism also entails renewal within the Church, growing catholicity, and conversion of heart.

[23] *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, Part III: 806–07.

[24] The votes are recorded in *Acta et Documenta*, II, II, Part IV: 807–12, with four members suggesting diverse re-wordings of the texts before them.

[25] Second Vatican Council, *Acta Synodalia*, I, Part 4: 82–83.

[26] The Pope's Dec. 5 "charter" for further work on the Vatican II draft texts is given in *Acta Synodalia*, I, Part 1: 96–98. I treated the overall dynamic of the Council's 1962 Period I in "Vatican II Taking Hold of Its (and Pope John's) Council Goals, September 1962–May 1962," in *Josephinum Journal of Theology*, 19, no. 1 (in the press).

[27] I follow the account written by Philips during his retreat in April 1963 and published in *Carnets conciliaires de mgr Gérard Philips*, translated from Flemish into French and annotated by Karim Schelkens (Leuven: Maurits Sabbebibliotheek and Peeters, 2006), 83–89. Philips names as his collaborators of October in composing a revised *De ecclesia*, first, three theologians of the Preparatory Commission, Y. Congar, Carlo Colombo, and Joseph Lécuyer, and, second, K. Rahner, J. Ratzinger, O. Semmelroth, L. Cerfaux, and W. Onclin. They worked "on the quiet" since the official text of the Preparatory Commission had not been distributed. Congar's diary gives the initial outline, as shown to him by Philips on Oct. 18, and notes meetings of the theologians assisting Philips. *My Journal of the Council* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 97–98, 122, and 124.

[28] An early version of the Philips draft, beginning "Concilium duce Spiritu Sancto," is given by Francisco Gil Hellín in his *Concilii Vaticani II Synopsis …Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia Lumen gentium* (Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 707–715. The alternative text is preceded by a brief statement of its "Intentum" which is do what Pope John's opening discourse had called for, that is, to state the main points of ecclesiological doctrine in a fresh way, based on recent gains from exegesis, patristic studies, and theological reflection, so as to promote a

more intense religious life by Catholics, make Catholic doctrine better understood by non-Catholics, and show the Church as merciful and benevolent toward the whole human family.

[29] With the opening of the Council, the Preparatory Commissions ceased their work and were succeeded by Conciliar Commissions of Council members; sixteen of whom were elected on October 16, 1962, and another nine who were appointed by the Pope and announced on Oct. 29. The "Doctrinal Commission" members are listed in *Acta Synodalia*, I, Part I: 225–226 (elected) and 559–560 (appointed).

[30] These are given by Gil Hellín, *Synopsis*, 681–693 (Parente), 694–705 (Philips), 722–760 (German draft), 751–761 (French draft), and 762–845 (Chilean draft).

[31] Philips, *Carnets conciliaires*, 92–93, relating also that on Sunday, Feb. 24, Abp. Garrone had called together four other sub-commission members (Konig, Léger, Schröffer, and Charue), who agreed on backing Philips's text as the basis for further work, because of its mediating position between Parente and the German offering.

[32] Gil Hellín, *Synopsis*, 708.

[33] "Haec igitur Ecclesia, vera omnium Mater et Magister, in hoc mundo ut socientas constituta est ordinata, est Ecclesia catholica, a Romano Pontificis et Episcopis in eius communione directa, *licet elementa quaedam sanctificationis extra totalem compaginem inventiri possint*." Gil Hellín, *Synopsis*, 697 (italics added). If we ask *with whom* the added clause originated, the answer would be, probably Gustave Thils, for he was at the Belgian College among the theologians working on Philips's text on February 26. Thils, an SPCU collaborator, knew well the Secretariat's draft decree on Catholic ecumenism (n. 21, above) and Thils had written *Histoire doctrinale du movement œcuménique*, originally published in 1955, but about to come out in a new edition (Paris: Desclée & Louvain: Warny, 1963), in which he treats the ecumenical value of the notion "elements of the church" on pp. 247–259. On this topic, see Catherine Clifford's recent study, "*Elementa ecclesiae*. A Basis for Vatican II's Recognition of the Ecclesial Character of Non-Catholic Christian Communities," in *La théologie catholique entre intransigeance et renouveau. La réception des mouvements préconciliaires à Vatican II*, eds. Gilles Routhier, Philippe J. Roy and Karim Schelkens (Louvain-la Neuve: Collège Érasme & Leuven: Universiteitsbibliotheek, 2011), 249–269.

[34] As the draft Constitution developed, the main verb est in this sentence was first changed to adest in by the sub-commission which revised Chapter I in the light of Council interventions made in October 1963. Then, *subsistit in* came to replace *adest in* in the draft presented for voting in 1964 and in the final text of *Lumen gentium*. But *subsistit in* remains elusive as to its precise import. It entered the text at the Chapter I sub-commission meeting of November 26, 1963, when Tromp proposed it, but the sub-commission members accepted it with practically no discussion of its significance in this context. The *relatio* accompanying the revised text, to explain the changes introduced, said that *subsistit in* cohered better than *est* with the *licet* clause affirming that ecclesial elements are also present elsewhere, which underscores the importance of the *licet* clause (Gil Hellín, *Synopsis*, 64). Alexandria von Teuffenbach has reconstructed the insertion of *subsistit in* from several partial records of the Nov. 26 meeting in *Die Bedeutung des* subsistit in *(LG 8). Zum Selbstverständnis der katholischen Kirche* (Munich: Herbert Utz, 2002), 378–388.

[35] Gil Hellín, *Synopsis*, 709–710.

[36] Of the speakers, thirteen spoke on behalf of others, e.g., Bp. H. Volk for 66 German and Scandinavian bishops, Card. De Barios Camara, for 53 Brazilian bishops, Bp. Grauls for 55 bishops of Burundi and Ruanda, Abp. J. Heenan for the bishops of England and Scotland and Bp. van den Burgt for 31 bishops of Indonesia. Among the written comments, five were from bishops grouped in episcopal conferences.

[37] Those making this proposal included Abbot Christopher Butler, O.S.B. (Downside Abbey, England) speaking on Oct. 2 (*Acta Synodalia*, II, Part 1: 462); Bp. Gerard Van Velsen (Kronstad, South Africa), on Oct. 3 *(Acta Synodalia*, II, Part II: 57–58); Bp. Vladimir Malanczuk, C.Ss.R (Ukrainian bishop in France), in a written comment (*Acta Synodalia*, II, Part 2: 178); Bp. José Pont y Gol (Sergove, Spain), also written (*Acta Synodalia*, II, Part 3: 525–527); and Bp. Maurice Baudoux (St. Boniface, Canada), speaking on Oct. 4 (*Acta Synodalia*, II, Part I: 70–71).

[38] This was printed in the booklet of the revised text of *De ecclesia* on which the Council members voted in Sept. 1964. My information comes from Gil Hellín, *Synopsis*, 124, as well as the minutes of the Santos sub-commission in the Vatican Secret Archive, Collection *Concilium Vaticanum II*, Box 766, Folder 306.

Six Ways Ecumenical Progress Is Possible

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson

Ecumenism got started a hundred years ago with the intuition that the state of the church—especially its mutually condemning denominations and competition in the mission field—was contrary to Jesus's prayer for the unity of his disciples. Convicted Christians have acted on that intuition in countless ways, from joint diaconal work and government lobbying, to shared suffering at the hands of oppressors, to mergers and various fellowship agreements, to local, national, and international dialogue and scholarly research. During the first fifty years or so, the principal players were mainline Protestants and the Orthodox; in the 1960s, the previously uninterested Catholic Church joined in; and the past decade has seen the gradual entry of hitherto suspicious Evangelicals and Pentecostals.

As with any movement of its size and scope, the past century's ecumenism has been a mixed bag. Some of the time it has led to extraordinary breakthroughs in what seemed to be intractable situations. Other times it has led to doctrinal compromise, abandonment of mission, and bureaucratic proliferation. There are no clear rules as to what will work and what won't—ecumenism did not arrive on the scene furnished with an instruction manual. Passionately desiring to see the hostilely divided church become one according to Jesus's prayer does not entail accepting every proposal put forth in the name of ecumenism. But it does require careful evaluation of each case on its own merits, learning from failures and successes alike. At the hundredth anniversary of the ecumenical movement, it's fitting to take a fresh look and see what ecumenism can accomplish, and what it actually has accomplished.

What follows are six cases of ecumenical progress over the past hundred years. None of them includes organizational merger (which, curiously, remains the common perception of what ecumenism is ultimately all about). Instead, these are cases in which "stuck" positions got "unstuck," in a variety of ways. I have identified these six ways (there are undoubtedly more) as: removing misunderstandings; distinguishing between competing internal traditions; self-correction; expansion; reminder; and repentance and forgiveness.

In reviewing these cases, it should become clear that the Lord's call to unity is not advanced through doctrinal sellout, cheap political solutions, stubborn attachment to inaccurate polemic, or avoidance of the Christian other. It should also become clear that the church itself is a work in progress during the time between Pentecost and the

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second coming of Christ. Churches and their theologies are not as absolute and static as integers on a number line; rather, they continually develop, reconsider, and self-correct, in no small part due to exposure to each other. Even churches that have historically regarded one another as bitter enemies could not help but be affected by each other.[1] The common experience of social movements and contemporary events constantly forces churches to rethink and express afresh the faith they have received, opening up new possibilities between them. And as scholarship sifts and evaluates the past, new perspectives come to light that have previously remained obscure. In this matrix, faithful ecumenism becomes possible.

1. Removing Misunderstandings

Divided churches are deeply invested in the idea that they have understood each other perfectly and thus that their mutual rejection is perfectly justified. And if that were the case, there would be no room for any ecumenical reconciliation at all. But the urgency of Christ's prayer for his disciples to be one demands a review of past disputes to consider, first of all, whether in fact a misunderstanding gave rise to the division. If so, clearing up the misunderstanding is mandatory.

An excellent test case for this aspect of ecumenical progress is the teaching on the "assurance of salvation" that was disputed by Luther and his Roman opponents. In 1518, Luther had an audience with Cardinal Cajetan, who had been ordered by Pope Leo X to meet with the troublesome friar and get him to recant. But, the pope warned the cardinal, the latter was not to be roped into an argument with Luther. This deeply offended Luther, who wanted to be persuaded of the error of his ways by scriptural appeal (if such a thing were possible), but Cajetan "never produced a syllable from the Holy Scriptures against me."[2]

All the same, Cajetan did come prepared to defeat the incipient reformer's theological errors. He had read all of Luther's works that he could find and prepared a set of "opuscules" in the form of scholastic questions-and-answers based on his reading. (Luther didn't know about this and had never read anything of Cajetan's at all, putting him at a communicative disadvantage.) Question 10 in Cajetan's set asks whether "faith is necessary for an efficacious sacramental absolution."[3] Must the penitent "believe with the greatest certitude that he has been absolved by God?" It seems, says Cajetan in the classic scholastic setup, that the answer is yes. In the first place, one should have faith in the word of Christ regarding what is bound and loosed on earth (Mt 16:19). Further, even if the penitent was not really contrite or the priest didn't absolve "seriously" but just as a sort of joke, the force of Christ's word would still effect a true absolution (Luther himself had said as much in a sermon on penitence). Even if one could be fully contrite, one could never know with certainty that one is fully contrite, so certainty must not lie there but in Christ. And so forth, repeating Luther's arguments.[4]

On the contrary, Cajetan concludes, this argument is "against the common meaning of the church.[5] The problem that Cajetan identifies is Luther's failure to distinguish between "infused faith" (*fide infusa*) and "acquired faith" (*fide acquisita*). The former, a divinely infused theological virtue, is what allows us to believe that God grants grace in the sacraments as a general rule. But it does not allow us to believe in the successful granting of that grace in any particular case, which is the realm of acquired faith. For instance, we can believe with certainty that baptism in general removes original sin, but we can't believe with certainty that (in Cajetan's example) an adult Jew requesting and receiving baptism has actually received the grace of baptism, since he may have put up some impediment to grace within himself (Cajetan's example is an intention to commit adultery). In the immediate case of certainty in absolution, no penitent can be certain that he hasn't erected an internal impediment to the reception of absolution, even if he is correctly certain that absolution can in general remove the guilt of all sins.[6] The problem is certainty about one's own inner states. Acquired faith "cannot be infallibly certain of its objects (to know that, by the absolution, I have been effectively absolved before God), because every man remains subject to doubt in this life: according to the common law, he does not know if he is in the grace of God."[7] A little later Cajetan invokes Luther's (easy-to-misunderstand) phrase "*so glaubst du, so hast du*," objecting that "this faith is a human work (since it is acquired)"—being about the specific human case of me, not absolution in general—and thus "the consequence of it is that confidence in one's proper penitence consists in one's own work of faith: this is foreign to the Christian faith."[8] His concluding judgment about Luther's innovations on this matter turned out to be prophetic: "This is to build a new church."[9]

This is the set of assumptions with which Cajetan greeted Luther and of which errors the cardinal asked him to recant. Luther asked for some time to consider the matter and lay it out in writing. On the third day of his meeting with Cajetan, Luther presented his prepared text. There, Luther reports, he plainly stated that "no one can be justified except by faith,"[10] calling attention to several biblical texts as evidence. Then he clarifies that faith "is nothing else than believing what God promises and reveals."[11] Thus, "a person going to the sacrament must believe that he will receive grace,"[12] since God promises to grant grace in the sacrament. On the same basis it is necessary to believe the words of absolution, since they are tied to the promise of Christ that whatever is loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven (again Matthew 16:19). Otherwise "with your doubt you make of Christ a liar, which is a horrible sin."[13] He recalls one biblical episode after another to show how God always asks for specific faith in specific promises to specific people, not a general faith that does not attach to any particular event. For Luther, faith and its justifying effect always happens in real time, in the church, through the declaration of the promise to a particular sinner and the reception of that promise by the sinner in faith.

But note that Luther's appeal to confidence in the reception of grace in no way reflects the state of the sinner. It's all about the promise of God, of recognizing that God is God and as such keeps his promises. After establishing this, Luther briefly considers the human feeling of being "unworthy and unfit." This feeling is irrelevant

to the question, from Luther's perspective. "Through no attitude on your part will you become worthy, through no works will you be prepared for the sacrament, but through faith alone… Without faith all other things are acts of presumption and desperation."[14]

This concluding insight is important. If people based their certainty of receiving grace on their own worthiness, they would be either presumptuous (of course I'm good enough to receive grace!) or despairing (there's no way I'm worthy enough to receive it!). Cajetan's own concerns are echoed here. He could only imagine that certainty of the reception of grace would be a self-produced work, proudly held over against God; as a good Thomist, he knew this was utterly offensive to Christian doctrine. But his pastoral concern about human presumption and despair made him unable to understand Luther's overriding emphasis on the certainty of God's promise of grace. Likewise Luther could only hear in Cajetan's concern a binding of tortured consciences, forced into ongoing obsession with their own internal spiritual states rather than resting securely in the promise and thus truly trusting in God to be God. Cajetan and Luther's mutual concerns remained opaque to one another. The ensuing political threats of the Roman party and Luther's escalating polemic guaranteed that no fair hearing would ever take place.

Many years later, the Council of Trent maintained Cajetan's position, premised on the same misunderstanding of Luther. Canon XIV condemned anyone who says that "a person is absolved from sins and is justified by the fact that he certainly believes he is absolved and justified; or that no one is truly justified except one who believes that he is justified, and that by that faith alone are forgiveness and justification effected."[15] The Roman concern is the grounding of justification in the human work of certitude. Of course, it is hard to imagine anything more offensive to Luther, either: such would be the ultimate distortion of his teaching on justification by faith. But what sounds to Lutherans like a ringing confession that Spirit-given faith is the only proper and pleasing reception of God's promise in the words of absolution clearly sounds to Rome like a self-aggrandizing act of spiritual pride, if not a vicious circle to which God is at best a tangent.

A German bilateral study from the 1980s, published in English as *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?*, takes up these "fatal misunderstandings," traced back to the meeting with Cajetan in 1518, about the exact meaning of the assurance of salvation.[16] Under the rubric of mutual recognition of each other's "concerns," the study finds that the Catholic position maintains the distinction between certainty with regard to oneself and certainty with regard to God: the former is to be doubted, given the ongoing Christian struggle with weakness and sin, while the latter is to be believed wholeheartedly. Luther's proposal is to assault the doubts about the former on the grounds of the certainty of the latter. A believer, however conscious of his sin, can be confident of his salvation because "[i]t is impossible to rely on God's saving Word and at the same time, in the very act of reliance, hold that Word to be unreliable." The study recognizes Cajetan's seminal misunderstanding that Luther taught certainty "founded on the believer's subjective conviction, or even on his subjective feelings," while the reformers took the Roman views as proof that they wanted to

keep "believers in a state of uncertainty."[17] The bilateral study concludes, however, that "what the Council of Trent rejects is precisely what the Reformers were also concerned to avert: security and self-conceit about one's own condition and a complacent certainty of being in grace, self-deception about one's own weakness, insufficient fear of losing grace, comforting 'feelings' as criterion, moral laxness under appeal to the assurance of salvation, and—even more—security of predestination."[18]

Building on these insights, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999) deals explicitly with "Assurance of Salvation." The result is significant, since this goes to the heart of the Lutheran understanding of the gracious word of the gospel and why justification is by faith, not merely by grace. It's all the more important since this teaching has so often been distorted in other varieties of Protestantism, turning faith into the ultimate good work and encouraging an obsession with one's own spiritual state. The common statement of both Lutherans and Catholics states: "We confess together that the faithful can rely on the mercy and promises of God. In spite of their own weakness and the manifold threats to faith, on the strength of Christ's death and resurrection they can build on the effective promise of God's grace in Word and Sacrament and so be sure of this grace" (4.5.34). It goes on to say that the Reformers exhorted believers never to look to themselves, but always to Christ, for assurance. Then we hear: "Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ's promise, to look away from one's own experience, and to trust in Christ's forgiving word alone" (4.5.36). In fact, the Joint Declaration takes up this renewed understanding of faith not merely as assent (the usual scholastic definition) but also as trust: "With the Second Vatican Council, Catholics state: to have faith is to entrust oneself totally to God, who liberates us from the darkness of sin and death and awakens us to eternal life" (4.5.36). This is no mere intellectual assent to facts about salvation. The debt to Luther is obvious.

The outcome, then, of many decades of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue was not only to *remove one of the misunderstandings* that had dogged their relations for nearly five centuries. It was to discover the great extent to which Catholics could willingly share Lutheran concerns and convictions, even to the point of revising their own formulations, such as the definition of faith, in line with Lutheran teaching.

2. Distinguishing between Competing Internal Traditions

But, one may rightly ask, wasn't Luther on to something when he accused the Roman party of wanting to keep "believers in a state of uncertainty"? Was he entirely off-track with his suspicions about creeping if not outright Pelagianism in the church of his day?

Luther's accusations were not at all unfounded. The complicating factor is that sometimes he hit the mark and sometimes he didn't. The medieval Western church was not a theologically homogenous entity, as Protestant polemics have sometimes assumed. There in fact co-existed two entirely opposed understandings of justification in medieval scholasticism, but this was not widely recognized even on the Roman side. Disentangling the two views and their implications for today is a matter of considerable ecumenical import.[19]

We should start where Luther started, with the late scholastic nominalist Gabriel Biel.[20] Biel, following William of Ockham, distinguished between God's absolute and ordered power. Under the rubric of absolute power, God had the choice and the right to save human beings in any way whatsoever, or not at all. God's mercy is shown in his deciding to save us under the rubric of his ordered power and in being faithful to the promise offered through that ordered power. What exactly is on offer through the ordered power of God? It is the promise that God will save those who do their very best (the infamous *facere quod in se est*).

Biel, of course, was a well-educated scholastic and perfectly well aware of the early Western church's condemnation of Pelagianism, so it is worth asking how he thought he could defend such an outrageously Pelagian account of salvation. The first aspect has already been noted: since God could have offered salvation in a way that was absolutely impossible for humans to manage, or could have refused to save at all, grace is already evident in the provision for an accessible salvation.[21] Further, and more significantly, Biel assumes that the natural powers bestowed on created human beings are eminently up to the task. Unlike Luther (and, as we shall shortly see, Thomas Aquinas), Biel makes no strong distinction between the human will before and after the fall into sin. Since in Biel's view "freedom of the will" is an essential predicate of humanity, to suggest that humans have lost free will is the same as to suggest that they are no longer human. At worst, original sin makes it harder and less pleasant to love and obey God above all things, but certainly not impossible. As far as Biel is concerned, "absolute love [of God] is within the reach of natural man *without the assistance of grace*."[22] As Oberman explains:

> A genuine love of God, above everything else, is within the reach of man, not only in paradise, but also after the fall. Indeed, the material aftermath of original sin, concupiscence, has made for serious difficulties, but the psychological counterforces of the past mercy and future justice of God are extremely powerful. Under these circumstances, it is doubtless possible for the sinner to come to a genuine act of contrition. Once this genuine love for God's sake is reached, the last obstacle is removed and the road to acceptation is paved by the eternal decrees of God.[23]

Prevenient grace, if granted at all, is "thoroughly naturalized and barely distinguishable from man's natural endowments."[24] It is at most "a divine intervention in the natural order which points to the freedom of God to relieve man in particular cases from the *arduous but possible* task of preparing himself."[25] Grace is really then the result, not the cause, of good works: "When natural man has reached a certain level of perfection, grace will be infused. Though this infusion may stabilize and perfect the will, it does not change anything in the requirement that man should do his very best."[26] Before the infusion of grace, human best efforts earn the "merit of congruity," after grace they earn the "merit of condignity," but in either case it is truly human merit that earns grace and salvation.

Oberman summarizes and passes the same judgment as Luther:

> Biel has a remarkable doctrine of justification: seen from different vantage points, justification is at once *sola gratia* and *solis operibus*! *By grace alone*—because if God had not decided to adorn man's good works with created and uncreated grace, man would never be saved. *By works alone*—because not only does man have to produce the framework or substance for this adornment, but God by the two laws of grace is committed, even obliged to add to this framework infused grace and final acceptation. Once man has done his very best, the other parts follow automatically. It is clear that emphasis falls on "justification by works alone"; the concept of "justification by grace alone" is a rational outer structure dependent on the distinction between *potentia absoluta and potentia ordinata… It is therefore evident that Biel's doctrine of justification is essentially Pelagian.*[27]

In short, Biel taught justification by divine acceptation—namely, justification by those naturally possible good works that God has graciously promised to accept—rather than justification by grace or faith.[28] Of course, this justification depends on successfully having done one's very best with one's natural powers, and who can be sure of that? As Luther experienced in his own person, this approach necessarily increases "scrupulousness and despair."[29] Biel won't even accept "the light of truth, the joy in doing good works, and peace of conscience" as signs of having succeeded, since those feelings might be a trick of the devil.[30] A Christian can be certain that God wills to save, but not necessarily that God wills to save oneself.[31]

Luther's objections to Biel are obvious. The reformer especially takes Biel to task in the 1517 Disputation against Scholastic Theology, condemning "Gabriel" by name thirteen times (in Theses 6, 10, 13, 20, 23, 54, 55, 57, 61, 90, 91, 92, and 93). He rejects Biel's confidence in natural human powers after the fall—for Luther, this would call the whole purpose of Christ's incarnation and death into question—arguing instead that grace is needed before the human being can do or offer anything: "On the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except indisposition and even rebellion against grace."[32] It was certainly no error on Luther's part to charge Biel with Pelagianism redux. Notably, Biel's predecessor and inspiration William of Ockham had been charged by Luther's fellow Augustinian Hermit Gregory of Rimini (d. 1358) with Pelagianism, and perhaps not incidentally he was one of the few late medieval scholastics to win Luther's approbation.[33]

So where did the mistake lie that contemporary ecumenism can identify and address? It was twofold: first, that Luther identified Thomas Aquinas as one of the offending scholastic theologians, portraying all of scholasticism as a single heretical whole; and second, that the Roman party failed to recognize and condemn Biel's Pelagianism, and so also failed to recognize that the condemned Luther was far more in line with the authoritative Angelic Doctor than with the uncondemned Gabriel Biel.[34]

Even here, it is tricky to untangle the web. In the first place, it's not surprising that Luther placed Thomas and Biel in the same camp, since Biel appealed to Thomas

for support. Indeed, the early Thomas in his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* said more or less the same thing as Biel regarding natural human powers preparing the way for grace.[35] It was only due to the internal arguments of fifteenth-century Thomists, especially Johannes Capreolus, that Thomas's later writings—in particular the *Summa Theologica*—were recognized as authoritative, especially when they differed from Thomas's earlier writings.[36] Luther wasn't familiar firsthand either with Thomas or with these reflections of his followers.

But Thomas's differences from Biel, and his alignment with the Augustine that Luther so warmly approved, become clear with even a cursory examination of the *Summa*. For instance, Thomas poses the question, "Whether by his own natural powers and without grace man can love God above all things?" The ensuing arguments at first seem to suggest sympathy with Biel: Thomas answers yes, natural powers are sufficient, despite all arguments to the contrary. But then comes the vital distinction that Biel was later to erase: between humans before and after the fall. Thomas explains that "in the state of perfect nature man did not need the gift of grace added to his natural endowments, in order to love God above all things naturally, although he needed God's help to move him to it; but in the state of corrupt nature man needs, even for this, the help of grace to heal his nature."[37] The next several questions bear out Thomas's insistence on the priority of grace in all matters of human salvation. Can humans merit eternal life without grace? Thomas answers no; such is quite beyond natural human powers, even uncorrupted ones. While it is true that "[m]an, by his will, does works meritorious of everlasting life… for this it is necessary that the will of man should be prepared with grace by God."[38] More to the point in Luther's dispute with Biel, Thomas asks "[w]hether a man, by himself and without the external aid of grace, can prepare himself for grace." He answers no. Thomas explains: "[W]e must presuppose a gratuitous gift of God, Who moves the soul inwardly or inspires the good wish… [T]hat [human wills] are 'turned' to God can only spring from God's having 'turned' to them. Now to prepare oneself for grace is, as it were, to be turned to God… Man's turning to God is by free-will; and thus man is bidden to turn himself to God. But free-will can only be turned to God, when God turns it."[39] The apparently active work of "turning to God" turns out to be really the passive fact of "being turned" by God; Thomas redefines the whole sense of the phrase.

Thomas did not end up being just another scholastic theologian. In 1323 he was canonized a saint by Pope John XXII. His *Summa* was laid upon the altar along with the Scriptures and papal decrees during the Council of Trent, and in 1567 Pope Pius V declared Thomas a doctor of the church. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) waxes lyrical about him and exhorts the leaders of the church "in all earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas, and to spread it far and wide for the defense and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the advantage of all the sciences."[40] If there is a difference of opinion between Biel and Thomas, there should be no doubt on the Roman Catholic side that the latter overrules the former.

The significance for ecumenism should be clear by now. There was not a single medieval Western teaching on justification, but at least two major, opposing, and *competing internal traditions* (with of course many varieties on either side). Luther opposed Biel's

take as Pelagian, and due to his own limited knowledge extended this criticism to all other scholastic theologians, including Thomas. But Thomas was as opposed to Biel's position as was Luther. This often unrecognized inner contradiction within Roman Catholicism has continued down to the present and is a long and complicated story.

But given this history, the Catholic assent to the following statement in the Joint Declaration is of tremendous significance: "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works" (§3.15). In other words, justification does not come by our natural powers but by "grace alone," not by our good works but "in faith in Christ's saving work," and all this is "not because of any merit on our part." In its assent to the Joint Declaration, the Catholic Church has committed itself afresh to Thomas's interpretation of justification and has rejected Biel's. There is plenty of room and reason to ask whether the Thomistic take on justification actually wins the day in parish-level Catholic preaching and pastoral practice (just as Catholics may legitimately ask how well Lutheran clergy succeed in conveying the gospel faithfully, even according to Lutheran standards). But there is an officially sanctioned benchmark now for ongoing ecumenical engagement.

3. Self-Correction

Religious and theological movements are never clean and tidy with neatly demarcated edges. Especially in their first growth, they are explosive, creative, and exploratory. Much of enduring value is produced in this initial phase, but not everything is of equal worth. It is the work of succeeding generations to sort out, sift, and discern. This is clear enough in the origins of Christianity itself. Not all literature about Christ was judged to be equally true and valuable. The four canonical gospels finally won a permanent place in Christian teaching; the gnostic gospels were discarded as distortions of Jesus's life and teaching.

So it is for subsequent theological developments in the church's history. Not every proposal, every idea, every line of canon law, every theology is of equal worth. Some are carried along past their usefulness or despite their inadequacy simply because of their association with a famous name or movement. That makes shaking them off difficult business, but it can be done. A core Reformation principle is that the church always needs to reassess and prune away things of inferior value. Theologies always stand in need of correction.

An example of this corrective work can be found in the Leuenberg Agreement (LA) of 1973.[41] The statement was drafted by representatives of Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe to sort out longstanding differences between them and establish a basis for church fellowship in the form of altar and pulpit fellowship. The LA did not remove all differences or deny them; but it did assert that there was sufficient common ground to remove the "church-dividing character" of these differences. The LA was to be only the beginning of ever-growing fellowship and ongoing theological discussion. Accordingly, the document is very brief: it sets out the basic groundwork in anticipation of extensive further exploration.

The three primary areas of historic disagreement between Lutherans and Reformed are, according to the LA, the nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, Christology (in particular the personal union of the two natures in Christ), and predestination. It is the last of these that is of most interest here. Historically, the Reformed churches have followed John Calvin's teaching on so-called "double predestination." As the second-generation Reformer put it:

> We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.[42]

For Calvin, predestination is an essential doctrine because it precludes salvation on the basis of human merit, which of course is a central theme in all Reformation theology. He is not terribly impressed by Luther's warnings to stay away from the doctrine of predestination as a dangerous matter for human minds to probe. But the problem from the Lutheran side, far more than the personal affliction that the doctrine is likely to cause, has been the separation of God's eternal decree from the person and work of Christ. In doctrinal shorthand, the Reformed tradition has tended to teach "limited atonement": Christ only died for those whom God had predestined to save. Lutherans by contrast have taught "universal atonement," extending the real possibility of salvation to all. The division of the saved from the reprobate takes place though the work of the Holy Spirit in calling people to faith, but God does not protologically will the damnation of anyone. As the Formula of Concord (Epitome) puts it, rejected is the error "that God does not desire that everyone should be saved, but rather that without regard to their sins—only because of God's naked decision, intention, and will—some are designated for damnation, so that there is no way that they could be saved."[43]

This, then, is the background of the LA statement on the doctrine of predestination. The first part reads: "In the Gospel we have the promise of God's unconditional acceptance of sinful man. Whoever puts his trust in the Gospel can know that he is saved and praise God for his election. For this reason we can speak of election only with respect to the call to salvation in Christ" (III.24). In other words, the "double" part of predestination has been discarded. Atonement is universal, salvation is offered to all without distinction, none are eternally chosen to be reprobate. The LA then continues:

> Faith knows by experience that the message of salvation is not accepted by all; yet it respects the mystery of God's dealings with men. It bears witness to the seriousness of human decision and at the same time to the reality of God's universal purpose of salvation. The witness of the Scriptures to Christ forbids us to suppose that God has uttered an eternal decree for the final condemnation of specific individuals or of a particular people. (III.25)

In short, Calvin's teaching on double predestination, specifically with regard to an eternal decree apart from Christ, has been rejected by the Reformed churches. A

correction to the inherited teaching was seen to be necessary and in the context of this ecumenical agreement was officially made.

It is interesting to note that this correction did not come about as a result of Lutheran pressure or even the official ecumenical conversation itself. It was a *self-correction* largely due to the influence of the Reformed theologian Karl Barth. He certainly was well familiar with both Calvin and Luther's theology, and the latter's influence is unmistakable, but Barth's work is overall more Reformed in flavor than Lutheran. Nevertheless, working from within his own tradition, Barth became persuaded of the untenability of the traditional Reformed doctrine of double predestination and set out to correct it: "[W]e have to expunge completely from our minds the thought of the foreordination of a rigid and balanced system of election and reprobation . . . the idolatrous concept of a *decretum absolutum*."[44] Barth's case has been generally accepted by the Reformed world, and the occasion of pursuing ecumenical fellowship gave Reformed church bodies the opportunity to declare their theological self-correction publicly.

4. Expansion

Pentecostalism and related charismatic movements as we know them today began at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906. While there were precedents in Wesleyan-Holiness churches in the nineteenth century, it's the Azusa Street experience that stamped the twentieth-century movement. Central to this pentecostal awakening was missionary fervor, which in no small part accounts for Pentecostalism's incredible growth. The range is from 200 million to 500 million Pentecostals alive today—and even at the smaller end, that's more than twice the number of Lutherans in the world.

This also means that the relationship, potential and actual, of Lutherans to Pentecostals is quite different from Lutheran relationships with "historic" churches, especially those with which Lutherans found themselves in conflict in the sixteenth century. While pentecostal churches did and do draw some of their constituency from disaffected Lutherans, their origins are not the fire of controversy over a doctrinal point of difference or a political upheaval. In fact, it's not terribly helpful to think about the differences between Lutherans and Pentecostals as primarily doctrinal, even though such is the preferred Lutheran mode for analyzing differences. This is especially the case since Pentecostalism so often assumes a basic Reformation Protestant outlook as the foundation for its own particular contributions.[45]

The difficulty that has arisen between Pentecostals and historic churches is that Pentecostals emphasize an aspect of the life lived in Christ through faith that has been discarded, neglected, or forgotten in the historic churches (largely, though not entirely). The very suggestion that Lutherans and others have forgotten or overlooked something, even if it does not touch on the central issue of salvation, is threatening and rather insulting. It suggests that they have failed to teach the whole counsel of God, and indeed the slogan "full gospel" doesn't shy away from suggesting that other churches teach only a "partial gospel."[46] The often polemical nature of pentecostal preaching vis-à-vis other Christian churches has frequently meant that their message has been rejected out of hand or tarnished with a variety of put-downs, everything from demonic possession to psychological instability.

Assuming we can cut away all the polemical inflation on both sides and the inevitable distortions to which every church is prey (and certainly Lutherans are no exception to that rule), the pentecostal proposal is rather straightforward. It emphasizes, first of all, the life and ministry of Jesus that is mysteriously absent from the three great Creeds, with his works of healing and exorcism. Taking seriously the real presence of the living Christ even today among his people, Pentecostals assume that healing and release from evil spirits is as possible now as before the ascension. Furthermore, following the clues of the book of Acts and Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts, even with all the proper warnings and caveats in place, they see no reason to assume that such gifts of power for the sake of faith and mission are to be ruled out of court for the church today. The experience of "Spirit baptism," which generally initiates the flowering of spiritual gifts, is subsequent to (always logically, though sometimes temporally simultaneous to) the gift of salvation. Salvation is in no way contingent upon the reception of spiritual gifts. But if the Lord who bestowed salvation also sees fit to bestow spiritual gifts for the upbuilding of the church and the missionary task, why should the church refuse them? Such is pentecostal/charismatic reasoning.

In short, from a Reformation church perspective, Pentecostals propose to expand the range of possibility and expectation in the life of the baptized, saved Christian. Can such experiences be compatible with Lutheran teaching? The question is moot, because they already are. There have been charismatic movements within Lutheran churches in the U.S. (both in the Missouri Synod and in the ELCA and its predecessor bodies) as well as in Europe. European churches in fact have a long history of charismatic movements erupting within the Lutheran folk churches; Finland has been particularly rich in lay charismatic movements.

More dramatically, in many places in Africa, there is no meaningful distinction between Lutheranism and charismatic revival. It's a good question whether Lutheranism would have survived in Africa at all without the integration of charismatic elements, since this form of Christianity has spoken most potently to Africans. The Evangelical (i.e., Lutheran) Church Mekane Yesus (ECMY) in Ethiopia is a premiere example of this reality. It is among the largest and fastest growing Lutheran churches on the planet (rivaled perhaps only by the also charismatically-influenced church in Tanzania). Already in the 1970s the ECMY had to address collectively what pentecostal influences and elements would mean to its life as a Lutheran church. The 1976 document "The Work of the Holy Spirit" is the most balanced and mature statement on the place of charismatic renewal within the global Lutheran church.[47]

Charismatic renewal began in Ethiopia in the city centers in 1965, introduced largely by classical pentecostal missionaries. Over the next ten years a great deal of conflict erupted within the Lutheran church, with blame on both sides: older leaders refused to give space to younger pentecostal-influenced leaders and objected to their less formal worship practices; younger leaders responded with disobedience and sometimes by leaving the church altogether. By the mid-1970s, it became clear that a church-wide resolution of conflict was necessary. A consultation of forty persons issued a statement to serve as official guidelines for dealing with the situation, and the guidelines proved to be

remarkably effective. For some years the Lutheran church in Ethiopia had been "praying for a revival among our church members aimed at strengthening them in their faith and especially to help them reach out to their non-Christian brothers with the Gospel"[48] (note the missionary emphasis, as in Pentecostalism's origins); and the charismatic revival was taken to be exactly that longed-for and God-given renewal. It simply required thoughtful, biblically-guided leadership to settle the conflicts that erupted.

After reviewing the biblical portrait of the Holy Spirit (always clearly seen to be the Spirit of the Father and of Christ), and excerpting the responses of various other Christian bodies to charismatic renewal, the final section of the document recommends that the Lutheran church "be open to it, see it as a blessing and guide it according to the Word of God."[49] Following this statement are "Practical Solutions for the Difficulties Within the ECMY." The charismatic focus on speaking in tongues, healing, exorcisms, and informal worship are recognized as different from conventional practice.

But it is said that there is a difference between "necessary conflicts"—namely the conflicts between God and Satan when the latter wants to destroy a reawakening of faith—and "unnecessary conflicts," such as those over authority, doctrine, and styles of worship, all of which can be resolved through scriptural guidance and righteous conduct.[50] To combat these unnecessary conflicts, church members of all ages are enjoined to engage in Bible study together, to show each other respect, to recognize everyone's importance as equal members of the body of Christ, and to put renewed emphasis on teaching the word of God. The leaders of the charismatic renewal within the ECMY had declared their intention to abide by the ECMY constitution and the Lutheran Confessions, which the guidelines gratefully acknowledge, while reasserting that the word of God, not personal experience, is the basis of doctrine, as apparently certain charismatic elements tended to believe.

It is further acknowledged that "[e]very new revival will bring with it new demands for change of worship. And a living church shall be willing to listen to these demands… Ways of worship cannot be considered as doctrine."[51] Article VII of the Augsburg Confession is cited as evidence for this, with the suggestion that worship should evolve to offer "more freedom and openness for the manifestation of the different gifts of the Holy Spirit," while at the same time "young people [should be] taught the meaning of the traditional worship service." Overall a desire is expressed to "develop one common liturgy for the whole Church, a liturgy with a form that fits better our Ethiopian context."[52]

As to more specific charismatic practices, "[w]e will encourage the biblical practice of prayer for the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the healing of the sick" and "[w]e recommend that speaking in tongues be restricted from meetings when there is no interpretation, but that the congregations must welcome and encourage it whenever interpretation is given."[53] At the end, the conclusion is drawn that the conflict is the result of inadequate teaching of the word of God: the concerns of both sides can be addressed when both know better the content of the Scripture. The document closes with the exhortation: "Let us therefore, young and old together, bow down in humbleness in front of our Lord to repent our sins, to repent of the divisions in our midst and pray that God will create this fruit [of the Spirit] in us."[54]

What we have in the case of ECMY, then, is the *expansion* of one church's tradition and theological scope through its encounter with another. The result was not the compromise of the Lutheran church or the abandonment of its core values. In fact, the encounter with pentecostal movements recalled this Lutheran church to its own central value of teaching and understanding the Scriptures, while empowering it to do better at its missionary calling.[55]

5. Reminder

A reader of the Lutheran Confessions cannot but be struck by the numerous references to the church fathers. While Scripture is invoked as the only final authority, the patristic witness is always the second line of defense. Ancient heresies are rejected (such as those of the Manicheans, Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, and Samosatenians mentioned in Article I of the Augsburg Confession, the Donatists in Article VIII, and the Novatians in Article XII), while the language of the church councils (for example, "two natures, the divine and the human, are so inseparably united in one person that there is one Christ" following the Council of Chalcedon in Article III of the Augsburg Confession, and the discussion of the Person of Christ in Epitome/Solid Declaration VIII of the Formula of Concord) is sounded as evidence of the orthodoxy of the Lutheran movement. By name, the Augsburg Confession refers to Ambrose, Augustine, Cyprian, Jerome, John Chrysostom, and Irenaeus; these church fathers appear elsewhere in the confessional writings as well. A frequent and prime appeal against Roman practice is its "innovation" over against the custom of the early church.

Luther and his followers quickly realized that they didn't need to appeal only to the past to make their case. They had a living example to turn to: the Eastern churches. And in the self-understanding of the Orthodox church, it is simply the early church continued into the present without disruption, dogmatically or canonically. Lutherans (and eventually other Protestants) were gratified to have an example of Christians of great antiquity not under the jurisdiction of the pope. Unsurprisingly, the sixteenth century saw several efforts to bring the new Protestant and old Orthodox churches together: Melanchthon collaborated on a translation of the Augsburg Confession with a Greek deacon from Constantinople; the first Lutheran archbishop of Sweden, Laurentius Olavi, went with a delegation to visit the patriarch of Moscow;[56] and Tübingen theologians established a long-running conversation by letter with Jeremias II, the patriarch of Constantinople, based on Melanchthon's translation of the Augsburg Confession.[57] Succeeding centuries saw various kinds of encounters ranging from hostile to friendly, political to theological in motivation, but forever after Protestants and Orthodox were on each other's radar screen.

The nineteenth century saw a renewed interest in the church fathers throughout the Western church. The entrepreneurial French priest J. P. Migne published 162 volumes of the *Patrologia Graeca* and 221 volumes of the *Patrologia Latina*. The Oxford Movement of the Anglican communion produced forty-five volumes in translation for the "Library of the Fathers," while cooperation between Presbyterians and Episcopalians in both Britain and the U.S. produced the ante-Nicene fathers and Nicene and post-

Nicene fathers series. On a scholarly level, Adolf von Harnack reignited Protestant interest in the fathers through his not entirely sympathetic assessment of how the Greek theologians "hellenized" the simple kerygma of Jesus and Paul.[58] The early and eager entry of the Orthodox churches into the ecumenical movement, starting around 1920 with the encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate entitled "Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,"[59] further enhanced Western and Protestant interest in the fathers.

The movement went in both directions: interest in the church fathers created interest in the Orthodox churches, and fresh acquaintance with the Orthodox churches increased interest in the church fathers. The intensive *ressourcement* of the patristic period by mid-twentieth century Western theologians, particularly evident in Karl Barth and in Catholic theologians like Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou, had a lasting effect on Western theology. The most important of these results was the rediscovery, in effect, that the gospel is incomprehensible apart from the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity was the one classical doctrine almost entirely undisputed in the sixteenth century, but it was not used as a resource for addressing the conflicts that erupted. A common re-rooting in the ecumenical councils of the early church and the centrality of Trinitarian doctrine were crucial to the ecumenical progress of the twentieth century. This can even be seen in the World Council of Churches' revision of its statement of faith. The founding constitution of 1948 was decisive but minimalistic: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour." While this is a good start, it says nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ's Father or their Holy Spirit, nor anything about the scriptural basis for this confession. In 1961, the constitution was revised to state that the WCC is a "fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

In this East-West encounter, ecumenical engagement has given the churches the chance to remember things that they've forgotten. Whether Lutherans realize it consciously or not, Reformation theology doesn't work apart from its basis in the Trinitarian and christological formulations of the first few Christian centuries. Luther's sacramental theology, for one example among many, is an instance of "remembering" Cyril of Alexandria's Christology. Though Luther had no access to Cyril's own writings, by following the same logic as the patristic deposit of faith he reached the same basic conclusions as the champion of Ephesus.[60] In meeting with churches that claim unchanging continuity with the early church, Lutherans and other Protestants, as well as Roman Catholics, have recognized explicitly that a Christian theology worth its salt cannot be ignorant or indifferent to the foundation laid by the church fathers. It has been a salutary reminder to Westerners often obsessed with the upheavals of the past five hundred years.

Another case of ecumenically-driven reminder can be seen in the renewed Protestant interest in hagiography. The process began in Scandinavia, especially Sweden, where attachment to the old saint days was the strongest. Efforts have been made to re-establish a calendar for veneration.[61] Germans have made moves in this direction as well, inspired by the martyrdom of those who resisted the Nazi regime, such as the uni-

versally revered Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[62] The saints who resisted the Communist oppression of Christianity are coming to be recognized as well.[63] Inevitably, reconsideration of hagiography takes Protestants into the company of Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox, as well as to the rediscovery of pre-schism saints. Yet this movement is not simply a wholesale resumption of pre-Reformation practice. One looks in vain for recommendations among Protestants to *invoke* the saints in prayer. But it is a fitting opportunity to rediscover the guidelines offered by the Lutheran Confessions for proper, non-idolatrous *veneration* of the saints. Especially worthy of notice in this regard is Article XXI in both the Augsburg Confession and the Apology.

These texts caught my own attention several years ago, in no small part because of encounters with Orthodox Christians, particularly the work of the French theologian Elisabeth Behr-Sigel. A pioneer of the "new hagiography" among the Orthodox, she approached the saints unafraid of their human and even flawed aspects, seeing in their failures the greater glory of God in using earthen vessels. This new Orthodox approach to hagiography, the Confessional guidelines, reverence for Bonhoeffer, and curiosity about other unknown lights in Lutheran history led me to establish a hagiography department in *Lutheran Forum*, presenting biographical sketches of exceptional witnesses to Christ within the Lutheran family.[64] Readers are not exhorted to invoke them in prayer but "to give thanks to God… because he has given teachers and other gifts to the church. Since these are the greatest gifts, they ought to be extolled very highly, and we ought to praise the saints themselves for faithfully using these gifts just as Christ praises faithful managers," as Melanchthon so beautifully put it.[65] In short, through the ecumenical encounter with the Orthodox, I was reminded of something of authentic Lutheran vintage; and in developing it, I hope the ecumenical connections can further be strengthened.

6. Repentance and Forgiveness

Last but certainly not least, ecumenism suggests the possibility of downright sin in a church's past. The division of the one body of Christ is never a circumstantial or accidental matter: there is always sin involved when Christ's final prayer for the unity of his disciples is violated. No amount of doctrinal dialogue can repair the damage of division without the fundamental work of confession and repentance undergirding it.

This remains, however, a largely unexplored area. Ecumenism's first hundred years has had to proceed with a kind of delicate diplomacy, politely granting to each church the right to consider itself a church and believe its own teaching, gently exploring areas of commonality without recourse to old and tired recriminations against one another. The fact that not every church really acknowledges every other church *as* church has made this precarious business; defensiveness lurks behind every ecclesiology. It is good that churches have to a large measure ceased and desisted in accusing one another, but at some point this silence of etiquette needs to be replaced with self-accusation. Accountability for our own sins is our duty to God even before it is our duty to each other.

A critical movement in this direction grew out of the international Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue, which itself got started because of an awkward public celebration.

In 1980 Lutheran churches worldwide marked the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, inviting other Christians to join them. Mennonites were included. The Mennonites, however, couldn't help but notice that the Augsburg Confession includes clauses stating that Lutherans condemn five errors explicitly attributed to Anabaptists. What Lutherans by and large didn't realize is that the Mennonites consider themselves to be the direct heirs of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists. Their present name comes from the early Anabaptist leader Menno Simons. In effect, the Lutherans had invited the Mennonites to celebrate their own condemnation! As a result of this faux-pas, three national dialogues took place thereafter: in France (1981–1984), Germany (1989–1992), and the United States (2001–2004). These did much to improve ecumenical relations on the national level, but it was clear that a dialogue at the level of the world communions was needed to consider the present-day relation between the historically estranged churches.

Once the international dialogue convened, with delegates from the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference, a new set of difficulties arose. From the Lutheran point of view, it seemed strange that the Mennonites wanted to maintain the name "Anabaptist," especially since, in the Mennonite view, they do not "re-baptize" but actually baptize in the first place. But Mennonites are very proud of their Anabaptist heritage and have no wish to distance themselves from it. This is itself something of a recent development. Up until the mid-twentieth century, scholars tended to regard the sixteenth-century Anabaptists as wild anarchists. It was not until the Anabaptists and related groups were renamed the "Radical Reformation" that attitudes shifted and scholarly interest grew. Mennonites on their part started studying Anabaptist texts with fresh eyes, found them inspirational, and reclaimed the Anabaptists as their spiritual ancestors. So maintaining the connection is essential to Mennonite self-understanding today.

Despite this, the dialogue revealed that present-day Mennonites *also* reject some of the opinions attributed to Anabaptists in the Augsburg Confession, such as thinking "that the Holy Spirit comes to human beings without the external Word through their own preparations and works" (Article V).[66] In several cases, what's condemned in the Augsburg Confession was the minority opinion of a fringe group that has never been central in Mennonite theology, so those condemnations could be dismissed as not applying to the present-day partner. Two of them, however, could not be erased so easily. Article IX condemns "the Anabaptists who disapprove of the baptism of children and assert that children are saved without baptism";[67] Mennonites still reserve baptism to adult believers. Article XVI condemns "the Anabaptists who prohibit Christians from assuming such civil responsibilities" as "to impose just punishments, to wage just war, to serve as soldiers… to take an oath when required by magistrates,"[68] to name the ones that remain problematic for Mennonites today.

The Lutherans were ready to tackle those two issues, but as the discussion proceeded, it became clear that the past was intruding on the present, and not in a good way. The Mennonites remembered something that most Lutherans had forgotten: namely, that some sixteenth-century Lutheran theologians had condoned the use of violence, even capital punishment, against the Anabaptists, and some Lutheran princes took them

at their word. It appears that Lutherans were directly or indirectly responsible for the deaths of at least one hundred Anabaptists. (Although figures are hard to establish with absolute certainty, it seems that around 2,500 Anabaptists altogether were executed for religious "crimes.") And this injustice was preserved in Mennonite memory—particularly in a big book called *Martyrs Mirror*,[69] which details the stories of Anabaptists who suffered and died for their faith, though it rarely specifies whether the persecutor was Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic, or something else—while most Lutherans forgot all about it.

As a result, the dialogue team realized that it was time to change tactics. Instead of negotiating theological differences directly, Lutherans and Mennonites first needed to retell the history of their churches, together, for the first time.[70] They had to be completely honest and accountable to each other if they were going to heal the bad memories. They had to recognize that both sets of their theological ancestors were part of the broad movement of Reformation; neither of them had an exclusive claim on it.

A number of interesting facts turned up in the writing of this history. First, although today and for a long time Mennonites have been committed to nonviolence, their origins were sometimes violent. Early Anabaptist history is tied up with the Peasants' War that broke out in the 1520s. It was actually this terrible disaster that made many of them realize the wickedness of violent strategies and commit the rest of their lives to peace. However, Lutherans at the time didn't know that. They thought Anabaptists were dangerous and violent anarchists. Yet already in the 1520s and 1530s, Anabaptists like the Swiss Brethren, Hans Hut, and Menno Simons were openly promoting nonviolent engagement as the proper way to obey Christ's teachings.

In fact, what the Lutherans actually knew about Anabaptists, when the Augsburg Confession was written in 1530, was extremely little. The movement had not yet unified. There were a number of marginal or extremist figures whose ideas did not end up influencing the Anabaptist movement afterward. The chief thing Lutherans knew about Anabaptists was their habit of "re-baptism," which not only did the Lutherans find theologically offensive but which had been, for nearly a thousand years, a crime punishable by death in European lands.

Finally, the Anabaptist refusal to take oaths of loyalty or participate in war appeared to many as if they were simply taking advantage of the potentially costly actions of everyone else. Their religious principles suggested political treachery. The experiences of democracy, tolerance, and pluralism that are so normal in many contemporary societies were simply unheard-of then. No one seriously thought a political entity could include more than one religion (the eternally uneasy position of the Jews is a case in point). In this situation, Lutherans were threatened by any possible alignment of their own movement with that of the Anabaptists: it could get them judged as traitors. The Augsburg Confession was a plea for tolerance of Luther's followers as much as it was a theological statement, and part of their case was to prove that they were nothing like the universally despised Anabaptists, who had been condemned politically a year earlier in the 1529 Diet of Speyer for their re-baptisms.

Altogether, the result was that Luther and Melanchthon both thought it was permissible to punish Anabaptists by secular power for their religious offenses. In

some cases these two Reformers positively encouraged it; in other cases they didn't object to the princes showing leniency to the Anabaptists. On the other hand, the Swabian reformer Johannes Brenz argued very strongly against any secular punishment of Anabaptists. He realized that punishing *any* particular religious group could ultimately lead to punishing *every* religious group. The "orthodox" would end up being no safer than the "heretics." The Scriptures alone were to be the treatment for spiritual "crimes," otherwise, as Brenz so vividly put it, "[W]hat point would there be in studying Scripture, for the hangman would be the most learned doctor?"[71]

In the process of retelling this history together with Mennonites, it became clear to the Lutherans that, if they and the Mennonites were to have a future together, the Lutherans would have to admit publicly the error of their church in the past, apologize, and ask for forgiveness. The Mennonites did not ask for an apology; it was a free decision on the part of the Lutherans to offer one. The curiosity of apologizing for the dead, to the living descendants of the victims, has prompted reflection on the meaning of the communion of saints and the interconnectedness of Christians over time as well as space, and what this could mean for an ecumenical future.[72]

The first step toward this apology was taken through a vote of the Council of the LWF in 2008, when representatives of the member churches agreed to explore this course of action. They were especially concerned not only to take responsibility for the failures of the Lutheran tradition in the past but also to articulate connections between the sins of the sixteenth century and the lives of Lutheran churches now. Then a handful of Lutheran representatives attended the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Paraguay in July 2009 to announce the intention to seek forgiveness. The response was overwhelming—tears of joy, relief, and gratitude on the part of the Mennonites.

The final step occurred at the 2010 LWF assembly in Stuttgart (notably Brenz's home city), when after a unanimous vote the Lutherans publicly stated: "Trusting in God who in Jesus Christ was reconciling the world to himself, we ask for forgiveness—from God and from our Mennonite sisters and brothers—for the harm that our forebears in the sixteenth century committed to Anabaptists, for forgetting or ignoring this persecution in the intervening centuries, and for all inappropriate, misleading and hurtful portraits of Anabaptists and Mennonites made by Lutheran authors, in both popular and scholarly forms, to the present day." Remarkably and unexpectedly, a Mennonite delegation at the assembly arrived prepared with a statement of full pardon and joy in the reconciliation at long last. They were also able to acknowledge their own sins in the course of the estrangement, such as a pernicious victim mentality and pride at their separateness.[73]

Note that the Lutherans' repentance and the Mennonites' forgiveness does not pretend to resolve all theological disagreements between them. It is not an exercise in dishonesty or mere diplomacy. Rather, Christians are commanded to confess and repent of their sins, and the ecumenical encounter reminded Lutherans of an unrepented-of sin, giving them the chance finally to confess it. It has opened up the possibility for conversation and cooperation with Mennonites, which was cut off by sins half a millennium old. And it has led to another ecumenical "first": an international trialogue between Lutherans, Mennonites, and Roman Catholics on the subject of baptism.

A frank appraisal of Christian history, especially in the turmoil of the sixteenth century and beyond, shows staggering cruelties committed by the body of Christ against itself, in the name of righteousness but far more often for political expediency and self-justification. We have no reason to expect a renewed and unified community of love in truth without serious reckoning of our crimes. Doctrinal discussions remain at some level artificial without admitting how much the violence and politics of the past influenced the course of events.[74] As we approach the anniversary year of 2017, it behooves us all to consider well what this celebration might look like. Imagine a 2017 characterized by mutual repentance and forgiveness rather than triumphalism on one side and stony silence on the other. That would do more honor to the gospel proclaimed by Luther than any number of self-administered pats on the back.

Conclusion

The ecumenism described here, in these six varieties of ecumenical progress, operates on two assumptions. The first is an unswerving obedience to the eighth commandment. Falsely declaring unity violates the eighth commandment, but falsely declaring impediments to unity violates it as well. Standing by past judgments that are demonstrably the result of misunderstanding, political expediency, coercion, lack of logical coherence, or plain old sin serve no one, least of all the God of truth. If we say that we have no sin, and that we have had no sin in our respective church histories, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Ecumenism requires us to love the truth more than our own tribal boundaries.

The second assumption is that churches are not locked boxes. If they are living communities of the living God, then they are in constant contact with the wider world, both the great mass of the unevangelized as well as others who profess faith in Jesus Christ. No church is immune to the effects of this interchange, and it is faithless to suppose that in every case the result is tainting, compromise, or loss. Churches over time learn and improve; they also forget and fail. Sometimes the impetus is external and sometimes it is internal; it can be the result of social change, spiritual awakening, or intellectual exploration. It is with good reason that ecumenical statements distinguish between the "present-day dialogue partner" and that partner's past. Ecumenism asks churches to discern within their own bodies what kinds of developments are faithful extensions or revisions of their own best and wisest insights, and which are misguided, subpar, or destructive.

Ecumenism of this stripe cannot be about doctrinal trade-off, then: it's not a matter of me sacrificing this if you'll sacrifice that. It certainly can't be solved by political solutions, even if these are less violent than in the past. It can only be the outcome of both mutual and internal discernment in the churches. It will take time, it will involve missteps, and it will require humility. Above all it will be the work of the Holy Spirit, who, as Jesus promised us, will lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13).

Endnotes

[1] See my discussion of Lutheran and Roman Catholic acknowledgements of how the two churches formed in reaction to one another in "What Has Erfurt to Do with Rome?" *Lutheran Forum* 45/1 (Spring 2011): 2–7.

[2] Martin Luther, "Proceedings at Augsburg," in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., eds. J. Pelikan and H. Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress, 1955ff.), 31:275 [hereafter cited as LW]. Maybe Cajetan was stung by this criticism; he spent the rest of his career till his death in 1534 writing biblical commentaries.

[3] Ch. Morerod O.P., *Cajetan et Luther en 1518: Edition, traduction et commentaire des opuscules d'Augsbourg de Cajetan* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg, 1994), I:319. All quotations from this book are my translations from the French.

[4] Ibid., p. 319–323, X.1–7.

[5] Ibid., p. 323, X.8.

[6] Ibid., p. 327, X.10.

[7] Ibid., p. 329, X.11.

[8] Ibid., p. 329, X.13.

[9] Ibid., p. 337, X.21.

[10] LW 31:270.

[11] LW 31:270–1.

[12] LW 31:271.

[13] LW 31:271.

[14] LW 31:271.

[15] "Decree on Justification," in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, ed. Norman P. Tanner S.J. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 679–80.

[16] *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?* eds. Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 53.

[17] Ibid., 54–55.

[18] Ibid., 56.

[19] I would like to express here my gratitude to Theodor Dieter for first drawing my attention to this matter.

[20] Since very little of Biel is in English, the best resource for understanding his theology is Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1963).

[21] Ibid., 181.

[22] Ibid., 133. Oberman's italics here and in all the following quotations.

[23] Ibid., 184.

[24] Ibid., 138.

[25] Ibid., 140.

[26] Ibid., 176.

[27] Ibid., 176–7.

[28] Ibid., 183.

[29] Ibid., 160.

[30] Ibid., 218.

[31] Ibid., 227.

[32] LW 31:11.

[33] Otto Hermann Pesch and Albrecht Peters, *Einführung in die Lehre von Gnade und Rechtfertigung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), 117.

[34] *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era* notes the specific objections of Luther and his fellow reformers to Biel; see pp. 43 and 55.

[35] Oberman, 142.

[36] Oberman, 143, 145.

[37] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [hereafter cited as STh] I–II, 109, 3. All citations of Thomas come from www.newadvent.org/summa/ (accessed March 15, 2013), which makes available *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, second revised edition of 1920.

[38] STh I–II, 109, 5.

[39] STh I–II, 109, 6.

[40] Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, §31, available at www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris_en.html (accessed March 15, 2013).

[41] The text can be found online at www.leuenberg.net/node/642 (accessed March 15, 2013).

[42] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 926.

[43] "The Formula of Concord," Epitome XI.3, in *The Book of Concord*, eds. Timothy J. Wengert and Robert Kolb (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2000) [hereafter cited as BC], 519.

[44] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, trans. G. W. Bromiley et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 143.

[45] Some clarification is needed at this point as to which Pentecostals we have in mind. The most dramatic internal Pentecostal schism was between the Trinitarians and the Oneness or Jesus' Name Pentecostals. The former share the same dogmatic beliefs as the rest of the historic churches, especially regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for salvation to which good works add nothing essential. The latter rejected baptism in the Trinitarian name in preference to the name of Jesus only, adopted a more modalistic view of the Trinity, and generally assumed the bestowal of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts to be necessary for salvation. Oneness Pentecostals have been as thoroughly rejected by Trinitarian Pentecostals as by historic churches. While the doctrinal reasons are valid, the fact that the divisions probably have more to do with poor race relations than theology are tragic indeed. This article assumes Trinitarian Pentecostalism as the ecumenical partner. See the discussion in Cecil M. Robeck Jr., "Introducing Pentecostalism to Lutherans," in *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (Strasbourg, Pasadena, and Zürich: Institute for Ecumenical Research, David Du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality, and European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010), 31–57.

[46] See the discussion on the "pure gospel" vs. the "full gospel" in "Insights and Analysis," §II, in *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*, 9–12.

[47] "The Work of the Holy Spirit," Lutheran Church—Mekane Yesus, Ethiopia, in *Presence, Power, Praise: Documents on the Charismatic Renewal*, vol. II, ed. Kilian McDonnell (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980), 150–182.

[48] Ibid., 178.

[49] Ibid.

[50] This is reminiscent of the language of the Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration): "we must steadfastly maintain the distinction between unnecessary, useless quarrels and disputes that are necessary," BC 530.

[51] Ibid., 181.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 182.

[55] And it should be said that confessional Lutheranism's constant emphasis on justification is a salutary corrective to churches whose identity lies in the renewal of the believer, even if they presume the sufficiency of Christ and faith for salvation. In reality, a healthy balance between justification and sanctification has proved very difficult for any church to maintain.

[56] George Florovsky, "The Orthodox Churches and the Ecumenical Movement Prior to 1910," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517–1948*, eds. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (London: SPCK, 1967), 177.

[57] The documents are translated into English by George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tubingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982).

[58] John Meyendorff, "Patristics," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd ed., ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC, 2002), 888.

[59] The text is available online at www.incommunion.org/2004/10/24/unto-the-churches-of-christ-everywhere/ (accessed March 15, 2013).

[60] See David Yeago, "The Bread of Life: Patristic Christology and Evangelical Soteriology in Martin Luther's Sermons on John 6," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 39/3 (2004): 257–278, and Christine Helmer, *The Trinity and Martin Luther: A Study on the Relationship between Genre, Language and the Trinity in Luther's Works, 1523–1546* (Darmstadt: Philipp von Zabern, 1999).

[61] See Yngvill Martola, "On the Question of a Lutheran Sanctorale," *Studia Liturgica* 34/1 (2004): 92–108.

[62] Two such hagiographical collections are Heilige(s) *für Protestanten: Zugänge zu einem "anstößigen" Begriff* (Karlsruhe: Verlag Evangelischer Presseverband für Baden, 1993) and *"Ihr Ende schaut an...": Evangelische Märtyrer des 20. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Andreas Kurschat and Harald Schulze (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008). Another book, jointly sponsored by the German (Roman Catholic) bishops' conference and the Evangelical Church in Germany, honors Protestant and Catholic martyrs together: *Zeugen einer besseren Welt: Christliche Märtyrer des 20. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Karl-Joseph Hummel and Christoph Strohm (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000).

[63] For one example, see Tibor Fabiny, *The Veil of God: The Testimony of Bishop Lajos Ordass in Communist Hungary* (Budapest: Center for Hermeneutical Research, 2008).

[64] See my introductory essay on the topic, "Saints for Sinners," *Lutheran Forum* 43/1 (Spring 2009): 2–9, also available online at www.lutheranforum.org/categories/archive/spring-2009/LF2009-1_02-09_Wilson-Saints_for_Sinners.pdf/view (accessed March 15, 2013).

[65] Philip Melanchthon, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," in BC, 238.

[66] Philip Melanchthon, "The Augsburg Confession," in BC, 41.

[67] Ibid., 43.

[68] Ibid., 49.

[69] Thieleman Van Bragt, *Martyrs Mirror: The Story of Seventeen Centuries of Christian Martyrdom from the Time of Christ to A.D. 1660* (Waterloo: Herald, 2001).

[70] The mutual history has been published as *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ*, Report of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission (Geneva and Strasbourg: Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference, 2010). The details of the history presented here are drawn from this report.

[71] *Healing Memories*, 48.

[72] See my discussion in "Joyful Exchanges, Part II," *Lutheran Forum* 44/3 (2010): 4–6.

[73] See John D. Roth, "Mennonites and Lutherans Re-Remembering the Past," *Lutheran Forum* 44/1 (2010): 38–42.

[74] A good beginning—though only a beginning—on the Catholic side is the statement, "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," available online at www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000307_memory-reconc-itc_en.html (accessed March 15, 2013). See also the potent studies by Ephraim Radner, *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) and *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012).

HOMILETICAL HELPS

Proper 27 • 2 Thessalonians 2:1–8, 13–17 • November 10, 2013

Overview

In 2 Thessalonians 2 the Apostle Paul discusses matters of eschatology as he exhorts the church in Thessalonica not to be disturbed by false teachings that said that the day of the Lord had already come. He quells these fears by pointing out what must take place first, namely the apostasy and revelation of the man of lawlessness. As these two events had not yet taken place as Paul writes, the day of the Lord had not yet come. These believers, therefore, are finally told to stand firm and hold onto the traditions which they were taught by Paul (2:15) instead of being unsettled and alarmed by this false teaching that supposedly came from him (2:2). (This pericope does not include Paul's description in 2:9–12 of how the man of lawlessness will come.)

Many interpreters agree that Paul's teaching about the Parousia contains the same interests as the teachings of Jesus as found in Matthew 24, in particular the warnings that believers not be alarmed by events or deceived by false teaching. There is great disagreement, however, about the timing of the events Paul foretells and the identity of the man of lawlessness. For instance, preterism argues that Paul foretold events that all took place in the first century while dispensationalism argues that these events will all take place in the future, and so that the return of Jesus is necessarily delayed. Such disagreement calls for us to be ever more cautious as we approach this text and ever more prepared to hold on to the traditions that we have received.

Textual Considerations

Verses 1–4: Paul addresses concerns about the coming (Parousia) of Jesus and our being gathered to him. Paul introduces this subject with the exhortation that these believers not be unsettled or alarmed by a spirit or a word or an epistle that appears to have come from him (v. 2) and not to let anyone deceive them by any means (v. 3). Before the day of the Lord comes there must first come the rebellion or falling away (ἀποστασία) and the revelation of the man of lawlessness (ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας). The actions of this individual are further described as one who will lift himself up above all objects of worship and who will sit in the temple/sanctuary of God (τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ), setting himself forth as God.

Verses 5–8: Paul reminds these believers that this is what he taught them when he was with them. They know what is now restraining (νῦν τὸ κατέχον) the revelation of this individual and that only when he who restrains (ὁ κατέχων) is set aside will the man of lawlessness be revealed. Nevertheless, Jesus will destroy this man by his Parousia. It was apparently clear to Paul's original readers what is the referent of the two substantive participles τὸ κατέχον and ὁ κατέχων, and thus whether the neuter and the masculine participles have the same or different referents, but it is unclear to readers today.

Verses 13–15: Paul reminds these believers of what God has done for them in calling them by the gospel; that they are chosen by God as the first fruit for salvation. Paul therefore urges these believers to stand firm and hold onto the traditions that he taught them. Thus Paul sets up his *authentic* teaching given via word and epistle (v. 15) in opposition to the *false* teachings that were only said to come from him via word and epistle (v. 3). Paul concludes this section with a benediction in which he prays that God will give to these believers comfort and hope and to establish them in every good work and word.

Considerations for Preaching

Paul's purpose is to quell fears that the day of the Lord has already come, to confirm these believers in their call to faith, and to urge them to hold onto true teachings about the coming of Jesus. The preacher should have a similar purpose as he preaches on this text today—to remind his hearers of their call to faith and salvation by the preaching of the gospel and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit and to urge them to hold onto what the church has received as now contained in Scripture, the ancient creeds, and the Confessions as they await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In our present context we face different misconceptions about the second coming of Jesus, yet false teachings about the end still abound. Consider, for instance, the recent example of Harold Camping who urged believers to stop attending church and made failed predictions of the last day; teachings and predictions that deceived some. We are not to be deceived or alarmed by such false teachings, but to stand firm in what we have received.

Though Paul's purpose here appears to be quite plain, there is vast disagreement among interpreters today regarding the referents of the various things that Paul describes in vv. 3–12. The Reformers and the Lutheran Confessions identify the man of lawlessness with the Roman papacy and argued that the temple of God is meant to be understood nonliterally and refers to the church. From a classical Lutheran perspective (as well as a preterist perspective), the apostasy and the revelation of the man of lawlessness have already taken place. The last day has not yet come, but today there is nothing that necessitates that it be delayed.

David I. Lewis

Proper 28 • 2 Thessalonians 3:(1–5) 6–13 • November 17, 2013

Since becoming a seminary professor, I have been unpleasantly surprised at the number of lay people who have told me that they do not believe their parish pastor is working very hard. Note that this is their perception, and is not necessarily truth. They have said things like, "Our pastor preaches and teaches on Sunday morning, attends a few meetings and does a few pastoral visits, but not much else that we see." When I have been allowed to inquire about why they have such a perception, often they have

misguided assumptions about how many hours it takes to do certain pastoral functions. I have had lay leaders tell me that they think it takes a pastor less than an hour to plan a worship service and only two to three hours to write a sermon. They have been surprised (but not always convinced) when I told them those pastoral functions often take five times longer than their estimate, and that other pastoral functions are done in private settings that a layperson never sees.

I state this as prologue to the pastor's decision about text and context. I assume that there are some pastors who do not work as many hours as they should, but I also assume that if you are taking the time to read *Concordia Journal* in preparation for your preaching task, you are probably not one of those. Yet, it is good for you to know that some lay people might perceive your labor as less burdensome than it is. If you think that a plurality of your listeners have that perception, you might either consider not preaching on this text (although you could allude to it if you preach on the Malachi 4 or Luke 21 lessons), or to include some evidence in your sermon of your toil among and with them (although you would have to be careful not to sound defensive or self-serving).

Preaching on the theology of labor presented in this text is also complicated by the economics of the time and region. If many of your congregants are retired, or are unemployed or under-employed because of conditions that are largely out of their control, preaching generically on this text could bring about an unintended shame. Others may be addicted to their work and see this text as a rationale for their overwork and, therefore, under-attention to their other vocations in life.

But we are called upon to proclaim the "whole counsel of God." If you do believe that this "stewardship of labor" message is important for your listeners to hear, here are some suggestions:

Introduction: Our God is a working God. When he first introduces himself to us in Genesis 1, he is busy creating the entire universe in just six days. He speaks, and with the word of his mouth, he creates light and water and dry land and vegetation and sun and moon and stars and living creatures and then Adam. Then after he had worked for six days, he rested and blessed the seventh day and made it holy (Gn 2:3). He placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, a paradise. But when we think of paradise, we're often prone to thinking mainly of leisure, like some tropical vacation paradise where it is other people's jobs to take care of the vacationers. Yet when "the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden," he did so with the design that Adam (and Eve) were "to work it and keep it" (Gn 2:15). We sometimes think that our work-a-day existence is only a result of our sin-filled situation, but God gave work to our kind even before the fall, and work was good.

Unfortunately Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent, doubted God's plan for their lives, ate the fruit and fell into sin. The LORD God sent them out from the garden of Eden to continue to work the ground (2:23), but before he sent them out, he said to Adam "cursed is the ground because of you … thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you … By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground for out of it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return." The fall into sin surely did complicate work, make it much more difficult, for some people

even dangerous, but work in and of itself is a good gift from God, something he created for us all to do.

We see continued evidence of that in the rest of Scripture (examples could include Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, the prophets, the apostles as fishermen, Paul a tent maker, and of course, our Lord Jesus as a carpenter).

However, our Lord Jesus did not come into the world just to model hard work for us. His was a much larger calling, the largest vocation. The word made flesh made all things at creation (Jn 1:3), but 2000 years ago he came to recreate all things through his suffering, sacrificial death, and resurrection.

Like us, the Christians in Thessalonica had been called by the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of Paul (Acts 17) to trust in Jesus Christ for their rescue in this dead and dying world (passive, vertical righteousness, our identity is in Christ).

But some of them "missed the memo" about how we are to respond to this gracious gift of salvation, by loving our neighbor and being about our various vocations in this life (active, horizontal righteousness). We don't fully know the motivation of the idlers. They may have been misusing the charitableness of more well-to-do believers (Acts 17:4) or they may have been so fixated on Christ's return that they neglected their current vocations.

How does Paul's instruction to the Thessalonian believers apply to us still today? (This is where the pastor will need to know his own congregation and community to best know how to encourage the able to "earn their own living" and "not grow weary at doing good" [cf. 1 Cor 15:58, Gal 6: 9–10].) To all, but especially to those who are less able to work because of disability or age, encourage them to be praying for you and other pastors and church workers (v. 1) so that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored.

In closing: our God is a working God who has blessed us with the opportunity to serve him as his instruments to love and serve our neighbor.

Rick Marrs

Proper 29 • Colossians 1:13–20 • November 24, 2013

An encouragement when preparing to preach on this text, the Epistle assigned for the Last Sunday of the Church Year: *Read aloud and meditate on all the assigned readings for the day, praying that the Holy Spirit will enlighten and move you with the truth of the Scriptures which you are reading and on which you are meditating. Take your time.*

Psalm 46: the ever-present help-in-trouble God who is our refuge and strength is, indeed, the God who will be exalted among the nations and in the earth. *In your meditation, be still and know that this is so, that God is God, your God as well as the God of all the earth.*

Malachi 3:13–18: the day of the Lord is coming (include Mal 4:1–2 as something of an exegesis of 3:17–18), and God, the Lord Almighty, who can throw open the floodgates of heaven in blessing and also curse whole nations, indeed is the ruler of heaven

and earth. *In your meditation, consider not only the power and majesty of the Lord Almighty, but also the call to ethical and obedient behavior. This call is directed to you as well as all of humankind.*

Luke 23:27–43: Jesus's crucifixion is recorded. At the same time that he is being crucified he also shows the nature of his promise, a promise he can make to the thief who asks to be remembered in Jesus's kingdom, that, indeed, "today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43b). *In your meditation place yourself as the thief who asks to be remembered when Jesus comes into his kingdom. Jesus, the suffering servant, also becomes Christ the King … just not quite yet, for death, descent into hell, and resurrection are yet to come in the gospel story. But the promise is to you. Be still and know the promise of Jesus the Christ.*

At a personal level, I am very grateful for the bundling of these passages into the pericopes for this day. The Holy Spirit-guided readings and meditations helped prepare me for approaching, or perhaps rather being approached, by the Colossians passage.

This passage contains the magnificent poetry of 1:15–20. In the face of what appears to be the heresy of positioning Christ as just one of a number of heavenly beings in a hierarchical collection of divine beings and also the political-cultural threat of the place of and authority of Caesar as at least semi-divine, Paul sings (or at least uses) this wonderful hymn that focuses on the being of Jesus Christ. Christ is "firstborn over all creation," creator of all things, head of the church, "firstborn from among the dead," and the peacemaker through his blood shed on the cross. Christ is placed into Psalm 46 and Malachi 3! *In your meditation consider Christ's redemption, majesty, sovereignty and rule, not only over the whole world and all of humankind, but also over you.*

All this does lead to a living ethic, a behavioral life to "live in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Col 1:10a).

The pattern of attending to all the readings for the day could, then, form the outline for the day's sermon. Invite your hearers into the readings in much the same way that I have invited you. The readings, in this pattern, build to the great christological hymn, a celebration of the power and majesty of Christ. The building toward this, however, uses these readings from various places and times in the scriptures to prepare us for the overarching reality: Christ the creator, Christ the ruler, Christ the victor, Christ the redeemer, Christ the king.

This overarching reality is not just a big-picture picture, although it is most certainly that. It is also a small-picture picture, for it embraces you and me individually and every person on whom the Holy Spirit has come and who confesses this Christ who "has rescued us from the dominion of darkness" and "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:13a, 14).

This, then, also sets the stage for the kind of life we live as well!

Bruce M. Hartung

Advent 1 • Isaiah 2:1–5 • December 1, 2013

A new church year has begun, and the prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse of the future new creation by focusing us upon the past. Isaiah is prophesying about that which is yet to come in the restoration of the church, begun in Christ's first advent and yet to be concluded in his second advent. Isaiah prophesies within the context of the past in order for the Israelites to understand the future. It is almost a literal backing up into the future.

Our twenty-first-century minds look towards the future, and in some respects do so without much focus on the past. Conceptualizing moving in reverse in a way that undoes what has transpired, rights wrongs, and even improves what was before is a concept which is difficult for our minds to grasp. Backing down the street does not take miles off of our car as though they were never driven. Even repenting of a wrong we have done and receiving forgiveness from the one we have wronged does not undo the historical event which took place, at least, not in the context of our frail humanity. Yet, this is precisely the kind of restoration and reversal that Isaiah proclaims in the text; a reversal possible only in Christ.

The Israelites were well accustomed to the mountain of the Lord; it was the place where Yahweh met with his people: Moses receiving the Commandments on Sinai, Abraham and Isaac on Moriah, and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. So, in Christ, will the church be lifted up and exalted as the mountain of the Lord; the place of the Lord's dwelling with his people. The nations will stream to the mountain of the Lord and dwell in Christ. A great reversal indeed, for water does not flow up hill, but the nations stream upward to the church. Christ draws them in.

Judgment is needed and it will come; Isaiah makes this quite clear. Yahweh will judge between the nations. In this judgment comes peace where there has been war. Peace between the nations which were set against each other in the sin that corrupted the old creation. Peace between God and the nations. Peace between God and Israel. Peace between God and us. In so doing things will be reversed and the new creation will emerge. Weapons of war will be reduced to tools of agriculture, for in Christ, in the new creation, the house of Jacob will walk in the light of the Lord.

In Christ the church is restored. In his holy incarnation he backs the church out of death into life. By entering into the old creation, taking on human flesh, being lifted up in death on the cross, and being raised to new life, Christ begins the great reversal and initiates the dawn of the new creation. He brings the church back through death to life in the river of salvation, Holy Baptism; and the church is drawn up to the mountain of the Lord.

Suggested Outline

I. The reversal – backing out of the past into the future
II. The world in need of Christ's advent
III. Christ lifts the church out of death by lifting himself in death and resurrection.
IV. Christ has reversed all things and made them new.

Paul Philp

The tree metaphor with which the text begins is a continuation of the same metaphor introduced at the end of the preceding chapter (Is 10:33–34). There the metaphor is used *for law purposes*. "The Lord Almighty will lop off the boughs … the lofty trees will be felled" (NIV) and "Lebanon with its majestic trees will fall" (RSV). The threatening metaphor is applied to Assyria in the immediate context (Is 10:24) and to Israel in the more remote context (Is 6:13). Because of their wickedness God cuts these nations down and reduces them to a mere stump.

But in our text God uses the tree metaphor *for gospel purposes*. From the stump to which Israel has been reduced, called "the stump of Jesse" (King David's father) in our text, a shoot or twig will grow, resulting in the fabulous peace and salvation so poetically described in verses 6–9 of the text.

Note especially that the tree metaphor "bookends" or "frames" the text, appearing in the first verse and surfacing again in the last verse. Even as a frame contains and highlights the picture it surrounds, so the tree metaphor contains and highlights the beautiful gospel picture in our text. The framing verses (1 and 10) bring that gospel into sharper focus. There is gospel not only in the content of our text but also gospel in its structure. God's gospel heart is shown not only in what he says but also in the way he says it.

Although the tree metaphor frames our text, its use in verse 10 is not a mere repetition of its use in verse 1. There is progress. The shoot of verse 1 becomes a root in verse 10. A descendant has become a progenitor. A product of life has become a source of life.

That the tree is a metaphor for an actual person is clear to begin with from the phrase "the stump of *Jesse*" (v. 1). Jesse, of course, is the father of King David, and King David is the ancestor of Jesus, the Messiah (often called in the Bible "the Son of David"). Thus "the shoot" that grows out of "the stump of Jesse" is the Lord Jesus himself. Further, verses 2–5 continue to speak of this "shoot" as a person.

Verses 2–5 incidentally suggest a possible outline for a sermon on this text. Those verses describe:

Three Aspects of Jesus, the Promised Messiah

I. His endowments for rule (wisdom, power, faithfulness, righteousness, etc.).
II. His relationship with God the Father ("his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord"—RSV) and his relationship with God the Holy Spirit ("the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him"—RSV).
III. His relationship with the people he rules (vv. 3b–4 and especially vv. 6–9).

If the suggested outline is used, the pastor will need to expand part III (especially his consideration of vv. 6–9) in his sermon to remain true to the emphasis of the text. These verses are loaded with beautiful metaphors that capture the fabulous peace

resulting from the Messiah-King's rule. So extensive is this peace that it's as if ferocious animals were to consort with domestic animals (vv. 6–7), the former not only abandoning their customary carnivorous appetite but even settling for the tamer foods of the latter (v. 7b). Not only will there be peace between animals and animals but also between animals and people. Normally dangerous creatures will not even harm a child (v. 8); in fact, "a little child shall lead them" (v. 6). This peace, resulting from the knowledge of the salvation Messiah brings, will be as universal as the water covering the sea (v. 9).

Beautiful metaphor, yes, but more than metaphor. Might these verses also hint at the truth of Romans 8:20–22, that the redemption the Messiah effects will embrace, in some way, the whole universe, the world of creatures as well as the world of people?

Note that this text pictures salvation as a Trinitarian activity. All three persons of God are engaged in our salvation. The "shoot," of course, is Jesus, the second person of the Triune God. "The fear of the Lord" refers to God the Father, the first person. And "the Spirit of the Lord" refers to the Holy Spirit, the third person.

Should the preacher wish to incorporate the other pericopes for the day into his sermon, our text provides verbal links to facilitate the effort. The "righteousness" and "justice" with which the Messiah-King treats "the poor" in our text are spoken of extensively in the psalm for the day, Psalm 72: 1–7. The "stump of Jesse" mentioned in our text is referred to as "the root of Jesse" in verse 12 of the epistle for the day, Romans 15:4–13. The tree metaphor of our text surfaces in verse 10 of the gospel for this Sunday, Matthew 3:1–12.

Although bonus gospel for this text is like carrying coals to Newcastle, there is opportunity for additional gospel in the metaphor of verse 7, "The lion shall eat straw like the ox." Via gospel handle methodology this metaphor can connect us with the reference to Jesus himself as a lion in Hosea 11:10 and especially in Revelation 5:5, a metaphor for Jesus popularized by C. S. Lewis with his depiction of Aslan the lion as a Christ symbol in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. This "Lion of Judah," Christ, shared our nature and shared our life. He became flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and he experienced our joys, our emotions, our hardships, our temptations, our work, our play, our routines, even our food. In a sense this lion too ate "straw like the ox." To realize the extent and the purpose of the Lion of Judah "sharing our fare," read especially Hebrews 2:11, 14–15, 17–18. We rejoice in our Lord's incarnation. We are thankful to the Lion of Judah for "sharing our fare," for eating "straw like the ox." Because he did so, we now enjoy eternal peace with him, just like the peace pictured between the lion and the ox in verse 7 of our text.

Francis C. Rossow

Editor's Note: The following homiletical help is adapted from Concordia Journal*, October 1998.*

Advent 3 • Isaiah 35:1–10 • December 15, 2013

Textual observations: The historical situation at the time of Isaiah's prophecy is impossible to determine. Oppression by Assyria is one possible setting. These verses are matched with Isaiah 34 as oracles regarding Edom's doom and Israel's salvation; the present text is "as eschatological as anything in the book" of Isaiah.[1] The following is a possible structure for this oracle of hope and salvation:

A. Verses 1–2: The promise of future reversal of conditions; the creation itself will experience the change from conditions of death and dying ("desert, dry ground") to a situation of joy and life, brought about by the manifestation of God's glory. The future hope is emphatic ("the desert will be glad; the Arabah will exult and sprout") and certain ("it shall surely sprout and exult with exultation and a ringing cry").

B. Verses 3–4: On the basis of this certain hope, the prophet offers strength for the hearers who are still in a time of trouble. Since this promise is sure, therefore, make the weak hands and the staggering knees to be strong-fry means of the proclamation of the future deliverance: "Say to the anxious of heart, 'Do not fear … your God will come!'" In the present time of trouble, God's word offers strength.

C. Verses 5–10: This is a full description of the future reversals and salvation. Healing of human infirmity will follow from ("because," v. 7) the abundance of life that will break forth in the desert. A return from exile is envisioned, with a highway in the desert built up by God himself. Those who walk on the road are not responsible for its construction—they are the redeemed and ransomed of Yahweh. The road is a road of holiness (v. 8), of true wisdom (verse 8; "the foolish ones will not wander"), of safety (v. 9), and of joy (v. 10).

In sum, the larger moves of the text are: (1) These reversals will happen; therefore, (2) speak a present word of encouragement, and (3) describe what God will one day do.

Isaiah's prophecy looks forward to a time of literal and complete fulfillment on the final Day of Yahweh when all the promised reversals will take place in their consummated form. Yet Jesus's answer to John the Baptizer's query about his identity (Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22) applies this text to the miracles and preaching of his own earthly ministry. As New Testament Christians, we may receive this word as already fulfilled and as yet to be fulfilled.

From the Lord's application one can take direction for the sermon. Isaiah 35 was fulfilled in the earthly ministry of Christ. Yet even as Jesus spoke those words to the Baptizer's disciples, their teacher was in prison, about to be beheaded, and Christ himself was on the way to the glorious climax of his ministry—the cross. Isaiah 35 is fulfilled in Christ yet the power of evil, the desert's hold of death, continues to exert its influence as Christians await the final and full manifestation of Yahweh's glory, promised in the text. Already… and not yet.

Jeffrey A. Gibbs

Endnote

[1] Horace Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 213.

"Behold the virgin is about to become pregnant and bear a son, and you will call his name Immanuel" (Is 7:14).

Unfortunately, the commentary for this part of Isaiah, written by Dr. Andrew Bartelt, that will be part of the CPH Commentary Series, has not yet been published. It should be available in three years, the next time this lesson is used. Dr. Bartelt says, "The key exegetical theme is that the presence of God is both judgment and salvation, but his promises to the house and lineage of David—botched up by his people in every generation—are both present and future and full-filled in the Christ, David's Son and David's Lord."

Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs, in his commentary on Matthew 1:1–11:1, deals with Isaiah 7:14 in its Old Testament context as well as the context of Matthew 1:21–23.[1]

People today think a lot like Ahaz, "I have already made up my mind, don't confuse me with the facts." Consider Ahaz, King of Judah, afraid that the kings of Israel and Syria will unite and bring destruction on his kingdom. Isaiah comes to Ahaz with encouraging news from God. "It will not happen. They will not stand. Ask for a sign to know that God is with you to deliver you." Instead of trusting in God for help and deliverance, Ahaz has already determined to seek help in an alliance with Assyria to the north. So instead of choosing a sign, since he was not trusting in God for help anyway, he piously states that he will not test the Lord. Does he not realize that God can see into his heart? So God gives his own sign: Immanuel.

People are blinded by a world view that is contrary to the scriptural view. They want to explain the existence of the world without giving credit to the Creator God who made it. They look for assistance and support from everyone and everything, other than their loving Father who provides for all their needs. They look for salvation in manmade religions or the things they have done instead of from the gracious Lord who already provided for eternity in Christ. They have already made up their minds and it will be difficult for even the truth to convince them otherwise.

What about us? We also find ourselves trusting in our own strength or the strength of our own alliances rather than trusting in the Lord. We make our plans as though we had control of the future, sometimes without even praying and consulting God for direction and guidance. We trust our income, bank accounts, retirement funds, the government, to provide for all our needs, and we panic when these things fail us. We trust our military strength and power of might to secure our own peace and the peace of our allies, but realize that there is so much war and violence, not just in other parts of our world, but right here in our own neighborhoods.

God promises to be with us, and gives us the sign of Immanuel. A virgin does become pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the child born is truly God and truly man. She calls him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins, but he is truly Immanuel, God with us. All this has happened for us, but have we already made up our minds and don't want to change them? Don't confuse me with the facts. How teachable are we? How open are we to letting God and his word shape our lives and guide our decisions?

The sign of God's Immanuel comes as both law and gospel. God is indeed with us through the virgin birth—the incarnation of Jesus. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. He continues to be God with us as he comes into our lives through his Word and Spirit.

The sign of Immanuel is a call to repentance for all who trust in their own strength, their own way, their own works, their own world view; for, apart from Jesus, God with us, there is no other way, no other rock, no other salvation.

The sign of Immanuel is a call to repentance for us, who want to trust in Jesus and follow as his disciples. It is a reminder that we need to take inventory of our own alliances and friendships—where we place our hope and trust—and bring those back to Christ alone.

The sign of Immanuel is a sign of hope and promise, of grace and mercy, for Jesus has come to be with us, with forgiveness, life, and salvation. He is with us in the good times and the bad, but we really need to know that he is with us in the bad times. He is with us when everyone and everything is against us. He is with us when the bottom falls out and we are falling into despair or brokenness. He is with us through the tragedies of life, and through the valley of the shadow of death. He will take us through death to share the glory of heaven with him. Trusting in him and his promises we are truly secure in this life and in the life to come.

Wally Becker

Endnote

[1] Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 109–114.

Christmas 1 • Isaiah 63:7–14 • December 29, 2013

Israel, God's rebellious son, God's adulterous bride, remains always the unexpected recipient of God's greatest giving. He even intervenes for Israel as a Savior who chooses to suffer affliction for the sake of his chosen people. In response to such extraordinary lovingkindness, Israel, of course, rebels … and then yet once more remembers her saving Lord. So the familiar story goes. Still, in light of Christmas revelry, it's a story we'd rather not confront just now and the text, aside from the fleeting mention of Lord turned Savior, reeks of poor timing. God's timing, of course, is perfect; Paul makes that clear in the text from Galatians. But it is the accompanying Gospel reading that forces us to consider the possibility that perhaps the Old Testament story is better timed than we would care to admit.

With the official celebration of Christmas over, and the debauch of New Year's Eve soon to pass, people are beginning on December 29 to give some thought to getting "back to normal." Christmas was nice, but the ordinary routine will bring the comfortable and reassuring familiarity of an old friend. It'll be good to get into the regular swing of things. But, we forget: Christmas delivered a baby. And as the saying goes: a baby changes everything. Once a baby arrives there's no going back. The old routine is gone forever. The Christmas baby was duly and fittingly welcomed with great festiv-

ity and much celebration. And once the trappings of the celebration have been packed away, it's tempting to assume that the baby has gone with them. But, a baby won't be packed into a box and forgotten. Indeed, the newly arrived Christmas baby makes an even greater impact than any ordinary birth. This child has come to save … and on his terms. This baby comes with an agenda attached. This child brings a kingdom, and a kingdom has a king; indeed a kingdom can have but one king. And that's the rub, and that's the vindication of the sad, old, unwelcome story of Isaiah. God acts and brings salvation. Man responds with rebellion. What choice does he have? A new king has arrived and the current potentate cannot help but keenly feel the threat.

Autonomous man is always threatened by one who would usurp his place of rule. Of course, autonomous man is a myth. But deluded by the illusion of self-mastery and bolstered by the culture's eager affirmation of the supremacy of the individual, autonomous man is as resistant to the incursion of a new ruler as was Herod of Jerusalem. Faced with such a threat, Herod provides the paradigmatic response: violent attack. Herod may be the terrifying ogre of the Christmas story, but modern man still plays his game. Worse, we still play his game. The baby comes with an agenda. He is Lord. He will not be content until he rules all … even every aspect of our own lives. Herod's reaction isn't so surprising, then. This baby changes everything. Because this baby has come, someone is going to get hurt. Someone is going to die. It is inevitable. The baby threatens to kill my autonomy. He will kill me: my need for a savior is the admission of my own utter inability and failure to rule my world and myself. *Someone* is going to get hurt, and if not me … then the baby! And so it happens. On Calvary Herod's business is finished. The baby is killed. But, God is not about to lose the fight for his people—even when the fight is with the people themselves! When autonomous man attacks, God fights back. The Lord is raised; his rule is vindicated. His claim on our lives is validated and made ineradicable. We are beat by the baby. In the baptismal waters, the self dies. We remember the truth of that event, and live it again. Autonomy is destroyed. Just like Israel of old, the new self is raised from death to live a new life subject to the Lord.

Suggested Outline

What about the Baby?

I. The Baby has come.
   A. Christmas is over; we're ready to move on.
   B. But, nothing can be the same anymore.
II. The Baby has an agenda.
   A. He is Savior and Lord.
   B. Autonomous people attack this threat.
III. The Baby will rule.
   A. All will eventually yield.
   B. Stop fighting his rule: die and live.

Joel Biermann

Epiphany • Isaiah 60:1–6 • January 5, 2014

Our text proclaims the manifestation of the Lord's "light" and "glory" upon his people (v. 1), and through Israel to the "peoples" of the earth who dwell in "thick darkness" (v. 2a). Isaiah uses the contrast between light and darkness to offer us an image of salvation: The light of the Lord "will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you" (v. 2b), so that the "nations shall come to your light" (v. 3a). The glory of the Lord shines so brightly upon his people that it cannot be ignored. It is like a magnet that draws the nations to the church, so that "they all gather together, they come to you" (v. 4a).

The preacher may ask: What are the dark areas that cover our lives today? Where do sin, death, and the devil work hard all around us to cover and darken our hearts, to prevent us from seeing the saving light of the Lord upon us? What darkness does the Lord's light need to reveal and dispel from our lives so that "the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you" (v. 2b)?

The preacher can also invite God's people to come and see that the light of the Lord shines brightly upon all whom he draws to himself. In the text, salvation is both to "come to" the light and brightness of the Lord (v. 3a), and to "see" what the Lord is doing to "gather together" all who "come from afar" to see his salvation (v. 4). Come and see the light! Salvation has come! Isaiah extends the salvation of Israel to the nations (v. 3), so that the glory of the Lord will also be revealed to the Gentiles (v. 5: "the nations shall come to you"; v. 6: "all those from Sheba shall come"). In this grand story of salvation, the magi (v. 3: "kings")—or "wise men" in Matthew's account (2:1, 7)—are portrayed as our Gentile forerunners in the faith, the first Gentiles from the "nations" who are blessed to come to Israel and see with their own eyes the salvation of our Lord.

In the West, Epiphany celebrates the journey of the "wise men" to come and see the Christ child, who in Matthew's narrative (Mt 2:1–12) is the true embodiment of Israel, the true light and glory that saves us from the darkness. Because of her sins, the light of Israel does not always shine so brightly. The same is true for us. But Jesus, the new Israel, always shines and draws the Gentiles to himself.

The text offers preachers an opportunity to teach about worship, since the wise men followed the star and came to Bethlehem for no other reason than to "worship" the Lord (vv. 2, 11). With Isaiah, we picture these "kings" (v. 3) coming to the Lord with their "wealth" and on "camels," bringing to him their offerings of "gold and frankincense" (60:5–6; and also "myrrh," in Mt 2:11). These are all acts of worship. One recalls the confessional definition of "spiritual worship" as "the righteousness of faith and the fruits of faith" (Apology XXIV, 26–27). We see in the wise men's worship of Jesus a picture of faith and love.

Reflecting on the example of the magi, the preacher may ask: What does a grateful heart offer to the Lord for all his gracious benefits to us? (Mt 2:11: "… and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts… "). Say, how do we use our "wealth" (Is 60:5) and possessions, our "treasures" and "gifts," like the Gentile kings, to honor Jesus? In some Spanish-speaking countries, gifts are not

received on Christmas day, but on Epiphany (Kings Day). Having received the gift of salvation from Jesus, the kings now bring gifts to others. The light of Jesus shines unto others through his people's faith and love.

There is a missionary dimension to the text. The Gentiles are made sons and daughters of God, becoming spiritual Israel, through faith in Christ (cf. Eph 3:6). They proclaim "the praises of the Lord" (Is 60:6b). The life of Jesus shines unto others through the church's proclamation of the gospel.

The preacher may ask: Who are those in our neighborhood who have yet to be drafted into Jesus, the new Israel, brought into the light of the Lord, so that they too may be saved and worship him? Who are those in our circles upon whom the light and glory of Christ is yet to shine? To whom shall we, Gentiles who have seen the light, "bring good news, the praises of the Lord" (Is 60:6b)?

Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.

Editor's Note: The following homiletical help is adapted from Concordia Journal*, October 2003.*

Baptism of Our Lord • Isaiah 42:1–7 • January 12, 2014

It can be exciting to meet a famous personality. In this Scripture text, God, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, introduces someone whom he wants his people to meet. Behold! Look! He calls out in the original Hebrew. See the one portrayed here! Isaiah's hearers could only see him afar off through prophecy. But there would be people of a later time who could rejoice in knowing him intimately. Do you count yourself among them?

Suggested outline

Look Who Has Come!

I. Here is the Servant of God, in whom he delights (v. 1).

This is the great envoy and official minister of God, approved and upheld by God in all the work he is sent to do. Isaiah says that this Servant will bear the iniquities of sinners and justify them (Is 53:5, 6, 11). He will bring and establish justice (mishpat, vv. 1, 4), the total redemptive order of God's rule. "He shall make the right and good and holy will of God everywhere prevail, so that all nations find their sure ground of confidence in Him."[1] He will bring reconciliation with God, renewal, and deliverance from the moral, physical, and social evils of a fallen world (v. 7; Is 61:1; 35:7)—at first in part and in hope, and then with total victory in the grand consummation. Matthew 12:15–21 quotes the words of Isaiah 42 and declares that they are fulfilled in the messianic work of Jesus.

God is heartily delighted (v. 1) with him who does this, for the Maker of heaven and earth (v. 5) longs and plans for the restoration of the ruined world and its inhabitants. He wants sinners to be saved, receive his mercies, and glorify him forever (Ez 18:23;

Jn 3:1; Ps 113:1–2; 50:15). Therefore, when Jesus began to perform the Servant's work, the Father's voice was heard from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

"I will put my Spirit upon him," to work with him in the actions of his mission as the Servant. This has happened in the work of Jesus the Messiah (Lk 3:22; Mt 1:28; Heb 9:14; Mt 3:11; Jn 16:7–15; 1 Cor 12:3).

II. He is sent to bless and restore those who have faith in him (v. 3).

God the Father says, "Behold my Servant!" and wants people to know him as Redeemer. He sends his Servant and his Spirit to continually create and build up such faith. The bruised reed and smoldering wick of weak and feeble faith are strengthened and made firmer. Christ will not crush or condemn or abandon one who looks to him for help. A contrite heart will always find a forgiving, helping Savior. The Servant worked lovingly and knowingly with weak faith (Mt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Lk 18:lff.). Walter A. Maier told of a young man who had lost his faith and had spent Christmas Eve gambling, drinking, and carousing, ending by feeling ashamed of himself. He was awakened in the morning by carolers outside his window singing of the newborn Redeemer's forgiving, rebuilding love. He was filled with repentance and eventually became a notable Christian businessman. Maier urged his listeners to take the message of the Christmas carols to heart and say: "Those songs sing Christ's love for me!"

III. He is appointed to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles (v. 6).

The covenant which Christ confirms and mediates is the new covenant (Jer 31:33–34), which has been made the basis of life with God in Christ's church, the new Israel (Heb 8:8–12).It promises that God will be our God, that all his people will truly know him, and that he will forgive our sins and write his law on our hearts. By the baptism which Christ instituted, we enter into and live in the covenant of Christ, as the Collect for the Day says. Through the baptismal covenant, we are united with Christ and receive his blessings (Rom 6:1–6; Ti 3:4–7). In that covenant we are redemptively conformed to him: As the Father delights in him (v. 1), so he delights in us and accepts us for his sake (Ti 3:4–7; Eph 1:6–7). As he is the chosen one (v. 1), so through baptismal faith we recognize that we are elected in him (Eph 1:3–4). As the Spirit is upon him and works with him (v. 1), so the Spirit is given to us for our life in Christ (Acts 2:38).

The Servant is appointed to be a light for the nations (v. 6), and for centuries people have found light and grace in him for the darkness of their sin and misery. Illustration: A man who had been a professed atheist all his life was found dead in his room. But clenched in his hand was a note with words which showed that at the end of life he had met the Servant and come into his light:

I've tried in vain a thousand ways
My fears to quell, my hopes to raise;
But what I need, the Bible says,
Is ever, only Jesus.

My soul is night, my heart is steel—
I cannot see, I cannot feel;
For light, for life, I must appeal
In simple faith to Jesus.

Thomas Manteufel

Endnote

[1] Martin Franzmann, *Follow Me* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 121, on Is 42:1–4/Mt 12:18–21.

Epiphany 2 • Isaiah 49:1–7 • January 19, 2014

This second of Isaiah's so-called Servant Songs continues the theme of Israel's redemption. Like the exodus of old, God will gather his people out from under the hand of oppression and bring them back to himself. And as in the former days, this salvation will be accomplished through a chosen servant, a vessel and instrument of Yahweh's salvation. Yet the continuity of God's saving act is now punctuated by a newness heretofore unknown. Israel's existence is darkened by more than exile—idolatry, greed, and injustice have cast deep shadows over her life. The servant's task is more profound and more difficult than that of Moses. Not simply freedom from chains, but freedom of the heart, not only a return from exile to the warm glow of house and hearth, but a journey from wickedness to the bright country of justice and righteousness—this is the servant's monumental mission.

Perhaps then we should not be surprised that the servant now expresses frustration. His message—though forged by Yahweh like a sharpened sword—seems unable to penetrate the hardness of hearts. Through no fault of his own, his labor bears no fruit; it all seems vain, futile, empty.

Yahweh's response to this frustration is remarkable and further unfolds the surprising "new thing" that he is doing: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." In the midst of his apparent failure, God expands the servant's mission—not just a guide for wayward Israel, but a light to all the nations. The darkness extends over every people and they too need the light. How is it that apparent failure becomes the occasion, indeed the catalyst for an even greater work of salvation?

While Isaiah's fourth Servant Song gives us a deeper glimpse into this mystery: "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed" (Is 53:5), it is the cross of Christ that shines the brightest. Precisely in the rejection of Christ when his message and mission appear thwarted and ruined by the crucifixion—precisely here is where his mission begins its greatest expansion and success: "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself … God so loved the world … the light shines in the darkness."

Today the church faces frustration and failure. A decline of members, a hostile cultural landscape, a disillusioned generation—the church's labors seem futile. On the one hand, our failures might be attributed to our own shortcomings—we do not always faithfully and fully live in the church's vocation as a "light unto the nations." Yet even when we do labor as God's servant, we do so embodying Christ's body. We testify to God's salvation as a body wounded and scarred, often rejected and scorned. But we know that our labor is not in vain. Just as God was faithful to his servant Jesus and raised him from the dead, so we live and bear witness to this undying hope in him. This is the great epiphany—the mystery hidden for ages but now revealed, the surprising "new thing" of God's salvation!

Erik Herrmann

Editor's Note: The following homiletical help is adapted from Concordia Journal*, October 1998.*

Epiphany 3 • Isaiah 9:1–4 • January 26, 2014

Textual considerations: The Old Testament lesson for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany begins with chapter 9 of Isaiah, which contains one of the best-known prophecies of the birth of Christ in Scripture, namely, verses 6 and 7. The first verse of this chapter is a transitional verse as is indicated by the fact that verse 1 of chapter 9 is the final verse of chapter 8 in the Masoretic Text, but is assigned to chapter 9 in the English translations. Verse 1, whether it ends chapter 8 or begins chapter 9, is a key verse in that it helps to set the historical context for the messianic prophecy that begins in verse 2.

Verse 1 looks back to the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom, which included two of the northernmost tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, in 722–721 B.C. In 701 B.C., the southern kingdom and Jerusalem itself were threatened by the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. Although spared at this time, Judah would eventually fall to the Babylonians almost a century and half later as Isaiah warns.

With the north subjugated, Jerusalem threatened, and eventual captivity certain, a cloud of darkness hung over Jerusalem and Judah because of their sins, especially their apostasy from Yahweh. In that context, Isaiah's words of hope, "There will be no more gloom for those who were in distress," were greatly needed and should have been welcome words of comfort.

The opening Janus-like verse of this text (v. 1) looks back to the conquest of two of the northern tribes that fell at the time of King Ahaz and forward to God's promise of salvation because it was precisely out of this region that the promised Messiah would emerge in the person of Christ, the very Son of God made flesh. It was in this very region of Palestine that Jesus Christ would spend his childhood and begin his ministry. In the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, Jesus performed not only his first miracle

(changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana), but other notable miracles as well, such as healing the centurion's servant, the paralytic man, and Peter's mother-in-law, and the raising of Jairus's daughter. It was also here that Jesus began teaching in the synagogue (Lk 4:16–21) and preaching his message of repentance (Mt 4:13–17), most notably his great Sermon on the Mount.

The clear message of this text is that God keeps his promise of redemption in spite of the apostasy of his people. He raised up the Messiah out of the very people who had sinned greatly against him. This contrast between the people's spiritual infidelity and God's gracious mercy is made clear in the various dualistic-type contrasts that run throughout these verses, namely, the people's past sins versus their future glory, darkness versus light, death versus life, gloom versus joy, defeat versus hope of victory. Christ began calling to repentance and offering the gift of eternal salvation to the very people who had experienced the burden of the law in the divine judgment of their sins.

The text contains some very clear law-gospel messages which are most appropriate for our day as well. A sermon based on this text may well draw comparisons between the sins of Israel, which brought about their captivity, and the almost mass turning away from God and God-enjoined morality that is characteristic of the spiritual apostasy of our contemporary world. The unrepented sins of Israel received their due; so the sins of our age will not go unpunished by God unless people confess their sins and cast themselves upon the mercy of God that is offered in Christ Jesus. In the midst of the current spiritual darkness, gloom, and apostasy from God, we need to hear God's call to repentance and his promise in the gospel as never before. What better season than that of Epiphany to speak about God's promise of salvation through the work of the Son of God whose advent we still celebrate in this long liturgical shadow of the Christmas season.

This text provides a good opportunity to point out that sins never go unpunished and that the righteous few will often suffer because of the sins of the majority. The great sins of our day may seem to go unpunished, but we have the example of Zebulun and Naphtali, who had already experienced divine judgment, and the lesson of Jerusalem and Judah, who only temporarily, not permanently, escaped the judgment of God upon their sins. This certainly is a fact of which our world needs to take note. Yet we and our world are never without hope. Verse 3s reference to the harvest is a reminder that God is still the giver of all good things even when people do not deserve such blessings. Verse 4's mention of Midian's defeat at the hands of Gideon calls to our attention the fact that God does remember and redeem his people no matter what their sins have been. What a joy it is to be reminded of the gift of our Savior at a time when the Christmas message begins to ebb from our everyday consciousness.

Quentin F. Wesselschmidt

Epiphany 4 • Micah 6:1–8 • February 2, 2014

In spring 2013, I taught an elective to our Residential Alternate Route students on the book of Micah. Early in the term, one of the students asked how the Seminary can afford to offer a full ten-week course to the study of just one book, as brief as Micah. I can imagine that most of my exegetical colleagues would relish, as I did, the opportunity to read slowly and repeatedly one biblical book, to digest its message and the way it is told.

At first, Micah 6 seems to echo Micah 1, with calls to hear what the LORD has to say. But there is a pronounced difference. In Micah 1, Yahweh is not prepared to listen to anyone; he is about to act, decisively, even ruthlessly. He is going to make Samaria a heap (1:6), but Judah and Jerusalem are not immune to his judgment (1:10). Among cancer patients and their families, it is not unusual to hear the lament that the treatment is worse than the cure. But if the treatment actually produces a cure—by no means guaranteed—then we might be prepared to say it was worth it. Yahweh is going to bring disaster on his people—not all at once, but it will come, and it is entirely deserved—but gradually it emerges that, through the ordeal, will come deliverance (chs. 4–5).

Micah 6 begins on a similar note: a general call to "hear what the LORD says" (6:1), with no addressee indicated, then a call to the mountains also to hear what ESV calls "the indictment" (Heb. ריב)—what a fair number of OT commentators call a "lawsuit," but it isn't necessarily that technical. Yahweh has a dispute (ריב) with his people, and he is going to argue with them (6:2b; the preposition in both clauses is עם, so there is no reason for rendering it "against" the first time and "with" the second, as does ESV).

The pronounced difference comes clear in the LORD's question. Unlike chapter 1, where there was no question but that the people are guilty, here the LORD puts himself "in the dock": "What have I done to you? How have I wearied you?" (6:3).

The benchmark of the LORD's devotion to his people was the exodus (6:4), and yet it was not "enough" for Yahweh to liberate the people of Israel and give them leaders. He remained with them throughout the way of their wandering. He averted disaster in the confrontation with Moab; Balak turned back (Nm 24:25). In his disputation here, Yahweh declines to mention Baal Peor (Nm 25), but invokes his guidance from Shittim to Gilgal—to make a longer story short: Gilgal is Israel's first stop in the land Yahweh swore to give their forefathers, where Joshua circumcised the people and they celebrated the Passover (Jo 4). The LORD saw them through their entire journey; he brought them to the goal. These three broad segments from the exodus history are "the saving acts" (ESV), in Hebrew צִדְקוֹת "the righteousnesses" of the LORD.

Yahweh's disputation is a call to remember what he has done. There is an "old" hymn—it didn't make the cut into LSB—that this call to remember evokes for me: "The Lord Hath Helped Me Hitherto" (TLH 33), or "God Brought Me to This Time and Place" (LW 456). Verse 2 seems particularly apt:

> I praise and thank Thee, Lord, my God,
> For Thine abundant blessing,

Which heretofore Thou hast bestowed
And I am still possessing.
Inscribe this on my memory:
The Lord hath done great things for me
And graciously hath helped me.
(TLH 33:2)

The remaining verses of the Micah text are a tale of two responses. The first (vv. 6–7) misunderstands the character of Yahweh, who is God on high (אֱלֹהֵי מָרוֹם). God is not impressed by bigger shrines and grandiose campaigns and strategies and gestures. Rather, "what is good" (v. 8) are simple things, which people who know what God has done can carry out: מִשְׁפָּט (justice), חֶסֶד (chesed; often "loving-kindness" or "mercy," but pertaining to "devotion" and "loyalty"), and הַצְנֵעַ (a hapax legomenon, familiarly translated "walk humbly;" I think it carries a connotation of attentiveness). These are the "stuff" of our ordinary vocations as parents and children, supervisors and workers, governors and citizens: doing what is orderly, with devotion, and circumspectly.

The exodus from Egypt was the paradigm of the LORD's "righteousnesses" for the people of Micah's time. We are the beneficiaries of God's new and, indeed, greater paradigm, Christ. God on high gave his own firstborn for our transgressions, this Jesus who brings the kingdom of God and who begins to teach what it is on a Galilean hillside (the Gospel of the Day, Mt 5:1–12). Whatever else are the "poor in spirit," the "mourners," the "meek," etc., they are people who remember and believe and "do justice, love devotion, and are attentive to God."

Oh, help me ever, God of grace,
Through ev'ry time and season,
At ev'ry turn, in ev'ry place—
Redemptive love the reason.
Through joy and pain and final breath
By Jesus' life and saving death
Help me as you have helped me.
(LW 456:3)

William Carr

BOOK REVIEWS

1–3 JOHN. Concordia Commentary Series. By Bruce G. Schuchard. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012. 752 pages. Hardcover. $49.99.

This is among the world's thickest commentaries on these short epistles, containing some 800 pages when bibliography and other front matter are factored in. Some of the bulk is the result of the frequent inclusion of long citations from secondary sources in the footnotes. While this is unusual, I do not find it overdone and in fact feel it is helpful, for it gives the larger context of other scholars' best insights as Schuchard has dug them out through his research.

In some ways, then, this is not only the author's attempt to present 1–3 John's insights in the most thorough way possible: he also compiles a mini-library of the richest, most pithy observations he could find in other commentators' works. This feature will be especially valuable for preachers, who may not have access to all these other significant studies, but who will be able to cite them with confidence because Schuchard has provided sufficient context to do so.

While Schuchard is alert to patristic commentary and Luther, he most frequently cites contemporary exegetes like Brown, Dodd, Kruse, Lieu, Marshall, Smalley, Stott, Witherington, and many others. He also gives due attention to the standard grammars, lexica, and other technical resources. On the whole, this is a scholarly and not a popular-level or sermonic commentary (like, say, David Allen's recent *1–3 John: Fellowship in God's Family*).

The commentary's introductory sections lay out an informed and persuasive case that John the son of Zebedee is the author of 1–3 John. Included here are thorough reviews of the patristic data along with careful interaction with important current scholarship by the late Martin Hengel, Charles Hill, Richard Bauckham, Paul Trebilco, and others.

Readers can go to www.cph.org/t-topic-bgscharts and access supplementary color-coded charts highlighting various literary and linguistic features of each section of 1–3 John. They are additional testimony to the care with which Schuchard has pored over the Greek text.

A very simple structural analysis of all three epistles is found at the outset on a single page (viii). Individual sections (twelve for 1 John, one each for 2 and 3 John) are broken down as follows: Translation, Limits and Structure, Textual Notes (mainly close grammatical and syntactical analysis), Commentary, and Concluding Observations. Reading knowledge of Greek is needed to consult "Textual Notes" with profit, but the "Commentary" section is free of Greek citations. "Commentary" also includes the "Icons" (xviii–xix) that highlight important theological themes.

A notable feature of this commentary is the absence of *odium theologicum*—rancor or snarkiness toward scholars with whom Schuchard disagrees. In that respect, it not only explains but models the graciousness and love that are such central features of 1–3 John. This is a commendable achievement in commenting on a corpus containing so many hotly disputed passages. Schuchard declines to fixate on points of disagreement with other scholars, instead choosing simply to cite them when he agrees with them or finds their formulations beneficial.

A challenge in reading 1 John is the Apostle John's tendency to revisit the same subject in various places and from varying angles. Schuchard helps the reader here with a thorough subject index (696–718). If a reader wants to know what 1 John says about "anointing," for example, one does not have to guess at where Schuchard might have enlarged on that topic, or read the whole commentary to find out, but will be directed (697) to the nearly two dozen passages where this theme is broached in the commentary. Considering that the word occurs only three times in 1 John (2:20, 2:27 [twice]), this opens up a wealth of discussion that would otherwise remain hidden from all but the most avid readers with lots of time on their hands—which does not describe many pastors, at least, who might consult this book.

While this is among the longest commentaries on 1–3 John, opinion will vary on whether it is also among the best. The decisive question is: for what purpose? If the ideal is breaking new ground with innovative "critical" theories, this work is not at the top of the list. If however one seeks resources for a grasp of these epistles that is faithful to the original writer's likely meaning, Schuchard has produced a valuable work indeed. There is plenty of data provided to help readers make up their own minds about disputed questions. Schuchard's own proposed solutions are generally reasonable and clearly formulated.

I especially appreciate the commentary's openness to theological and pastoral dimensions of the text's message, matters that can be overlooked in an exegetical commentary. This feature (along with others already mentioned) suggests that the commentary will prove particularly valuable to seminary students seeking to get a feel for these epistles' message in light of ongoing scholarly discussion. Working pastors with aspirations to highlight God, Christ, and the gospel in their preaching will likewise find this to be a go-to homiletical resource for preaching from these epistles.

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DIVINE KINGDOM, HOLY ORDER: The Political Writings of Martin Luther. By Jarrett A. Carty. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012. 525 Pages. Hardcover. $59.99.

Divine Kingdom, Holy Order is a useful addition to the vast literature on Luther's political thought. In this anthology, Jarrett A. Carty has collected the texts from *Luther's Works* that touch significantly on topics such as law, government, authority, and war. To this he has added a brief, general introduction to Luther's political thought, solid introductions to the selections, notes to secondary literature throughout the volume, and a brief bibliography.

The introduction is an excellent brief exposition of the subject. Carty presents a nuanced and historical account of Luther's understanding of the two governments. He takes seriously Luther's own assertion that he had restored temporal government to its proper place by recognizing it as God's establishment and God's gift. Perhaps more important in terms of recent works in this area, Carty ably expounds the inherent and fundamental consistency of Luther's approach to resisting God-appointed authorities.

The reformer had the same message for both princes and peasants when it came to rebellion: there can be no armed resistance to a superior authority. Yes, you must obey God rather than man, but you may also suffer for it.

The bulk of the volume presents the selections that demonstrate Luther's approach with brief introductions so that the reader can grasp the situation that elicited a particular text. Rather than presenting all the texts chronologically Carty has divided them into three sections: overtly political writings, exegetical works that touch on political themes, and text that represents Luther's political thought in practice. Thus the first section, The Reformation of Temporal Government, contains the texts one would expect to encounter in this volume, such as "To the Christian Nobility" and "Temporal Authority." Here the reader finds Luther's two kingdoms thinking propounded, advanced, and defended against both the papal monarchy and the overreaching of secular rulers. Following this solid first section, the anthology comes into its own with the second section, The Political Teachings of Scripture. Here Carty has included portions of Luther's lectures and commentaries that touch on political themes. That Luther might have commented on topics such as the duties rulers and subjects owe each other in the course of a biblical lecture will come as no surprise to anyone who has read even a smattering of his commentaries or sermons. Yet many readers will be surprised to find Luther's commentary on the Song of Songs here, especially since the subject of government is not merely incidental to the text. Instead, Luther understood the entire book to be an allegory of a ruler (Solomon) and his people. Similar surprises await the reader in the third section that deals with applied political thought. Luther brought his political ideas to bear in concrete situations—some well-known in this context, like the Peasants' War, and some not, such as Luther's appeal to the authorities to refuse to allow unauthorized preachers, presumably Anabaptists and the like, in their territories.

There is much to like in this volume, but it is not perfect. The introductions should provide more of the medieval background to the sixteenth-century debates and developments elucidated here. To be fair, Carty has his hands full with the immediate context for these works and the literature on Luther and his thought. Yet Luther's appeal to the princes as emergency bishops in "To the Christian Nobility" becomes more understandable in light of the medieval proprietary church system, in which the nobility directly controlled churches in their territories. The practice was still common in Luther's day despite several centuries' worth of papal attempts to eradicate it. Likewise, it might have been noted at some point that the debate over conditions for resisting a God-appointed ruler did not originate in the sixteenth century but had a long history in medieval writing on the nature of tyranny.

As mentioned above, all of the texts presented here can be found in *Luther's Works*. The decision not to add newly translated material is understandable but still somewhat unfortunate. It means, for example, that although "On War against the Turk" is in this volume, the reader cannot compare it with Luther's "*Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türken*" ("An Army

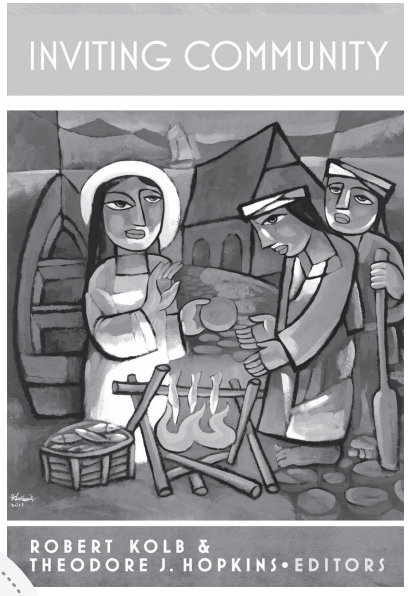
Sermon against the Turks") because that text was not translated for *Luther's Works*. (Since there was no need for both texts in that edition, which was meant to be a general collection of the reformer's writings, "*Heerpredigt*" was not included.) Yet anyone seriously considering Luther's political thought would benefit from consulting it alongside "On War" in this anthology.

Putting aside, however, what is not in this volume, what is here is a nice collection of texts for which Carty has provided the essential historical context along with a solid introduction to the nature and scope of Luther's political thought. Any reader interested in the topic will be well served by this anthology.

Paul W. Robinson

INVITING COMMUNITY

What challenges are congregations facing in North America today, and how can churches effectively proclaim and embody the gospel in the midst of such challenges? These two questions are at the center of a new collection of essays from Concordia Seminary Press, Inviting Community. These essays, by the Concordia Seminary faculty and others, address concrete challenges that churches face, and were written in order to help church leaders and pastors consider how their congregations can be better witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ.



As the first step in any theological reflection, the volume begins with internal critique, noting where the church has failed to be the inviting community that God desires, and then drives toward a comprehensive vision of Godís Kingdom embodied in church communities. The essays in the second part explore ways that the church can foster genuine community through practices like personal devotions and reading Scripture together. The final section focuses on challenges to congregations, challenges such as consumerism, the use of technology in cultivating community, and the impact of debt upon a congregationís witness. Each essay is aimed at helping churches to be a clearer and more effective witness to the Lord Jesus, who graciously made us members of his body and through us invites all people into community with him.

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