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The Response of the Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary to Questions Concerning Lay Teachers of Theology

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) has given a positive response to questions submitted by the Board for Higher Education of the LCMS as to whether laymen and laywomen may teach theology in the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) of the LCMS. Through its members on the CTCR, the Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary has already submitted its objections to a prior edition of the same proposal. The representatives of the faculty are among those members of the CTCR who disagree with the decision of the commission to allow the laity to teach theological courses at the colleges and universities of the CUS and have joined in the preparation of a minority opinion. The faculty now supports this minority opinion and herewith provides a more detailed critique of the document adopted by the CTCR than is possible in the minority opinion itself. The Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary joins its representatives on the CTCR in rejecting the opinion of the majority of the CTCR as contrary to the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the historic practice of the Lutheran Church.

Essential to the objections of the faculty is the fact that the CUS consists of colleges and universities that were established and are still owned and operated by the LCMS to prepare teachers for parochial schools of its congregations and to provide pre-seminary training for its future pastors. Hence the teaching of theology or religion in the classrooms of the CUS is essentially no different from what pastors do in their congregations. Over the years, the schools of the CUS have expanded their curricula to provide a broader education for non-churchly or secular fields of service, and so it is not unlikely that, for some schools, their original purposes may no longer be self-evident. The student bodies now enrolled in these schools are not as homogenous as they were when these schools were founded. Some students are Lutheran, including members of the congregations of the LCMS, others are non-Lutheran Christians, and others are unchurched. This variation, however, does not change the fact that the task of the synodical schools is not education in the sense of merely imparting cognitive knowledge or information in the spirit of the Enlightenment. They were not founded to foster inquiry for the sake of inquiry in an atmosphere of politically correct openness. These schools focus, rather, on students in a more holistic sense. What is meant by this focus is not merely the formation of responsible citizens or even of committed church-workers, carrying out their respective vocations in a professedly Christian, and thus also Lutheran, manner.

When it comes to theological education, the schools of the CUS act on behalf of the synod, providing the students, not only with in-depth theological knowledge, but also with pastoral care and models of pastoral care. They are concerned, not only with knowledge, but also with the truth of God, with the salvation of students, and, in this way also, with the well-being of the church to whose service the students will one day be called. Theological education is a churchly enterprise rather than a sterile exercise in speculation. It is transmitted by those who are regularly called, *rite vocatus,* to be stewards of the mysteries of God. Practically speaking, therefore, it is in the schools of the CUS that students continue their catechetical instruction. Those who one day will be pastors learn the indissoluble bond between the preaching office and the word of God as it is exhibited in and by their instructors, who are as much pastors as they are teachers. Those who will serve in auxiliary positions in congregations of the LCMS learn already in the classroom how to see themselves in relation to the pastoral office. Because, in sum, of the pastoral nature of theological education we believe that it can only be carried out by those who are pastors themselves.

Since, moreover, all students are required to take courses in theology or religion according to the requirements of the individual institutions of the CUS, a door to the gospel is opened. Along with serving their original purposes in preparing students as parochial school-teachers and providing others with pre-seminary education, these schools of higher learning in their courses on theology and religion are providing a deeper understanding of the faith for Lutherans and giving us an opportunity to convince others of the Lutheran position. Theological courses serve to evangelize non-Christians. Accomplishing these last two objectives are now all the more important, because in most cases the Lutheran student population is less than fifty percent of the total enrollment. Thus these theological courses prepare some for full-time church-work, catechize others, and evangelize still others – obligations which the Lord Jesus gave to His apostles in Matthew 28 (verses 16-20) and which remain distinctive functions of the pastoral office.

"The Order for the Installation of a Professor" in *The Lutheran Agenda* (1948) assumes that the position of a theological professor is intended only for those who hold the pastoral office. The agenda, in this regard, paraphrases and quotes Matthew 28 (16-20): "Our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples for three years and then gave them the commission to teach 'all things whatsoever' He commanded them" (121-122). The same rite includes professors in "the Office of the Holy Ministry in His Church on earth" (121).

Since, according to the doctrine of the LCMS, teaching theology in the CUS carries out the mandates given by Christ Jesus to His apostles and later to pastors, the teaching of religion and theology at our schools is essentially different from what is done in courses often with the same names at secular colleges or universities. Such courses constitute a sub-discipline often called "Religious Studies" in the department of humanities. In courses on "Religious Studies," Christianity is presented as one option among many. Some pastors of the LCMS have taught such courses. Even with the understanding that no commitment from the students taking these courses is required, these pastors have been effective. Our church has no vested interest in who should teach these courses in religion or theology in these settings, but competent Lutheran lay men and women with strong Christian convictions are encouraged to seek these positions so to make a testimony to Christ.

Many of the great American institutions of higher learning that were established with the same or similar goals as the institutions within the CUS (for example, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Baylor), have now detached themselves from their supporting churches. They no longer pursue their original goals. Even explicitly church-related institutions may offer courses in theology and religion according to secular models.

The rite of installation of professors of theology in *The Lutheran Agenda* expressly says of "our beloved Church" that she "has likewise adopted this method and in Christian liberty has established institutions of learning in which the future servants of the Church are taught and instructed" (122). The teaching, therefore, in our colleges and universities must conform (*norma normata*) to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacrament in the church without a regular call." Thus only those who hold the pastoral office or, as it is called in our confessions, the office of preaching (the *Predigtamt*, as in Article V of the Augustana) can become regular professors and teachers of theology in our colleges and seminaries.

Historically the terms "theology," "doctrine," and "sacred doctrine" were interchangeable. Later the term "theology" came to be used to the exclusion of the other two.[1] The word "theology" and the concept of theology were rooted in the word used in the New Testament for teaching or doctrine, *didache*. Christ Himself is *the* Teacher, the διδάσκαλος of Matthew 4 (verse 23) and 26 (verses 18 and following), and He commanded His apostles to teach, διδασκειν (Matthew 28:20). The obligation of teaching was continued and perpetuated in the public office of the ministry of which the apostles were the first occupants. Thus the New Testament calls those in this public office "teachers," the designation which applies first to Jesus Himself and then to His apostles (Matthew 5:19; Acts 13:1; Romans 12:7; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 1:1; James 3:1).[2] Like Jesus, then, Paul calls himself a teacher: "For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher" (2 Timothy 1:11). Those, likewise, who follow in his footsteps are also teachers: "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher" (2 Timothy 1:11). Other references to the same point are found in 2 Timothy 2 (verse 24), 1 Corinthians 12 (verse 29), 1 Timothy 4 (verse 11), and 2 Timothy 2 (verse 2). James cautions his hearers against becoming teachers, since they will be subject to stricter standards.[3] Teachers assume an obligation that others do not.

In some cases our Lutheran Confessions use words differently than they are used in the Bible. Article V, however, of the Augsburg Confession uses the words "teach" and "teacher" in the same way already seen in Holy Scripture. In using "teaching" and "preaching" interchangeably, Articles V and XIV of the Augsburg Confession are only following the usage of the New Testament. The ministry of Jesus is described in this way: "And He went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23).[4] Ephesians 4 describes pastors as διδάσκαλοι: "And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" (verse 11). In commenting on this verse, the Treatise on the

[1]This change occurred during the High Middle Ages, when the newly founded universities assumed the teaching of theology.

[2]The New Testament can speak also about a teaching that pertains to all Christians when, for example, they admonish each other in song (Colossians 3:16).

[3]"Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness" (James 3: 1).

[4]According to Matthew 9, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (verse 35).

Power and Primacy of the Pope likewise calls pastors "teachers" (Tractatus 26:67).

The Orthodox Lutheran fathers held that the teaching of theology was inherent in the office of the ministry. This became the historical position of the LCMS, as it was articulated by her foremost theologians, C. F. W. Walther and Francis Pieper. They called theology a *habitus* or an aptitude (ability), "the proficiency which the incumbents of the teaching office in the church should possess."[5] Theology and the teaching of theology, therefore, by their very nature belong to the pastoral office or, as it is called in the Augsburg Confession, the preaching office (*Predigtamt*).

Teaching theology in a church-related academic setting is really only one form of the public proclamation of the Word of God, of which preaching in a church-service is another form. It should be noted that the gospels of the New Testament consist of words which the Lord Jesus entrusted to His disciples to make them, as Luke says, "ministers of the word" (1:2). Since the colleges and universities of the CUS are parts of the LCMS, the teachers of theology should be, along with parish pastors and missionaries, members of its ministerium. Together we constitute one brotherhood in Christ in whose ministry we equally share. Like all pastors of the LCMS, these teachers should be properly called and ordained. Like other clergy, they are accountable for their ministry and so are under the doctrinal supervision of the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities. As such their office is not simply one of human right, but a form or expression of the public office (*Predigtamt*) which exists by divine right.

The historic practice of the church also shows that teachers of theology in our colleges held the pastoral office. In the past the conventions of the LCMS issued divine calls to professors of theology, and the LCMS thereby acknowledged that this office was considered to be an expression of the one divinely instituted office (*Predigtamt*). This belief is evident, as noted above, in the rite of installation.

[5]C. F. W. Walther, "Was ist Theologie?" *Lehre und Wehre*, 14 (1868): 10, quoted in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, eighth printing (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 1:46. Pieper knows of four different uses of the term "theology." In a sense all Christians can be called theologians because of their knowledge of Christian doctrine, but properly speaking theology was seen as the ability to teach and therefore specifically tied to the ministry.

The opinion of the CTCR allowing laymen and laywomen to teach theology in the CUS assumes that teaching theology in a church-related school is essentially different from that which every other pastor does in his congregation. With this conception we fundamentally disagree. The document of the CTCR sees these two functions as essentially different. Arguments offered by the majority need separate attention. Essential to the document of the CTCR is its interpretation of Colossians 3, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach (διδάσκοντες) and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (verse 16). On the basis of this passage, the majority concludes that another kind of teaching exists besides that given exclusively to pastors. This supposed kind of teaching is called teaching in "a wider sense," even though this "wider sense" has no known historical precedent. It is also described by the document of the CTCR as "the broader task of instruction and explanation of theological matters." Its exegesis is hardly beyond serious challenge. Verse 16 of Colossians 3 does not refer to the kind of teaching that Jesus, the apostles, and pastors did or do now (nor does the document make this claim), but is speaking about a worship-service in which everyone in the congregation, by sharing in all that belongs to the liturgy, uplifts and admonishes each other. This passage makes no reference to the kind of teaching that takes place in schools of all kinds, where a specific person known as the teacher is responsible for the instruction.

The document of the CTCR endorses the position of the LCMS by correctly noting that, on the basis of verse 12 of 1 Timothy 2, the responsibility of teaching belonging to the pastoral office cannot be committed to a woman.[6] The document goes on, however, to deny the application of this principle to the teaching of theology in a classroom of a church-related college. The Bible itself, however, actually prohibits women from teaching and having authority over men. Refusing the pastoral office to women is only an application of the prohibition against teaching which is an unchanging principle. No passage specifically says that they may not be pastors. If women be allowed to teach theology in a public way in the CUS, in spite of the prohibitions already shown, it will take little effort for those promoting the ordination of women to achieve their goals. For nothing specific in Scripture proscribes the

[6]The document might have also made reference to 1 Corinthians 14:14.

ordination of women, while something specific does prohibit them from teaching in the way now contemplated.

The document of the CTCR argues for women being allowed to teach theology on the basis of Acts 18, where Apollos "began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but, when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded (ἐκτίθημι) to him the way of God more accurately" (verse 26). This extrapolation might be considered the chief argument in the document. The argumentation is inadequate in some places and faulty in others. The document makes no mention of Aquila, although the effort in Acts 18 was clearly made by a team of wife and husband. Clearly, the exposition occurred in private, most likely in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. Synagogues were as much havens of Jewish culture as they were religious institutions. One has, then, to ask why Priscilla and Aquila did not straighten out matters in public, as Paul did with Peter, if Priscilla and Aquila resembled teachers in the public sense. There is no shred of evidence that they functioned in at all the same way as teachers in the classroom or lecture-hall. The way in which they explained things to Apollos away from public scrutiny seems more in line with Paul's admonition that certain instruction be done privately (1 Corinthians 14: 35).

To speak of teaching in "a wider sense" on the basis of the one Greek word ἐκτίθημι is without warrant. The document of the CTCR seems to be seeking biblical data to support a prior conviction. Such criticism is often leveled against conservative theology. It seems applicable here. The Greek word ἐκτίθημι means to "lay out" or "set forth." Priscilla and Aquila put in order the things that Apollos already knew. Priscilla and Aquila did not give Apollos a knowledge which he did not already have but, to use modern phraseology, "they straightened him out." The word ἐκτίθημι is used of Peter explaining to his opponents why he ate with Gentiles (Acts 11: 4) and Paul applying the Old Testament to Jesus (Acts 28: 23). We know that such a situation was nothing new. During the public ministry of Jesus, both laymen and laywomen often had a better comprehension of who Jesus was than the disciples, but to none of them did He entrust the apostolic office to which the responsibility of teaching belonged. There is no intention to be judgmental here, but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the CTCR has manipulated the biblical data in a rather remarkable way to arrive at conclusions that were already in place before the study in question was undertaken.[7]

The word "teacher" is currently used in many different ways which include references to instructors and professors of secular subjects at all sorts of institutions of higher learning, including those of the LCMS. A church bound to the Holy Scriptures should use the word "teacher" as they do. The church should, therefore, designate as teachers of theology only those who are called to teach and transmit the sound doctrine which comes from Christ through His apostles. This usage is also required by the commitment of the church to the Lutheran Confessions. It is our hope

[7]The document of the CTCR claims that Philip Melanchthon and Martin Franzmann "served as 'teachers of theology.'" Melanchthon is sometimes adduced as an example of a lay theological teacher. The historical evidence, however, is not so clear as is often claimed. In 1518 he was appointed a professor in the faculty of liberal arts in Wittenberg. After he had received the degree of *baccalaureus biblicus* on 9 September 1520 he was obliged to offer classes on biblical books, but without ever becoming a member of the theological faculty. According to medieval custom Melanchthon, who was now a *cursor* by virtue of his degree, had to lead the beginning students in the cursory reading of Holy Scripture. Thus, in this restricted sense he could be considered a teacher of theology. While there is no parallel in our system, it is comparable to a graduate teaching assistant or an adjunct instructor. Melanchthon purposefully avoided pursuing the higher degrees of a *magister sententiarius* and doctor of theology, which would have obligated him to join the theological faculty. During Luther's protective confinement at Wartburg castle, Melanchthon substituted for Luther, but he consistently resisted later attempts by Luther to have him join the theological faculty. This was not seen as establishing a precedent. To construct from his unique and exceptional case a general rule is questionable in the face of the overwhelming *theological* argumentation against such a rule.

A word must be said concerning ecclesiastical visitations. These visitations were organized by Elector Johann and first took place in 1527 by a committee of two councilors, such as high civil servants and representatives of the University of Wittenberg, Melanchthon and the professor of law, Hieronymus Schurf. Strange as it would seem to us, the visitation was a civil matter because the elector had religious responsibility for his subjects. For the second series of visitations in 1528, the committees were composed, not only of civil servants, but also of pastors. It was at this time that Luther joined one of the committees. Since we have no state-church today, the use of these visitations as precedents is limited. Mention has been made of a painting in Saint Mary's Church in Wittenberg in which Melanchthon is baptizing an infant. There is no historical reference to his baptizing anyone, and his inclusion in a triptych was iconographic in purpose. No one in the LCMS is as yet suggesting that lay men or women should take the place of pastors in baptizing children or adults, even though the suggestion has been offered in other quarters, as, for example, the Yale School of Divinity.

that the CTCR and the LCMS at all levels will take this matter under advisement.[8] There is no better place to begin than with the essay of Hermann Sasse entitled "The Office of the Teacher in the Ancient Church."[9]

The Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas McC. L. Judisch,
Secretary of the Faculty

The Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary began its discussion of the questions treated in the opinion printed here in a meeting of 8 October 2002. At that time, the representatives of the faculty on the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod distributed to all members of the faculty copies of a proposal then on the agenda of the commission to give a positive response to questions which had been submitted by the Board for Higher Education of the LCMS as to whether laymen and laywomen might teach theology in the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System of the LCMS. The faculty encouraged its representatives to oppose this proposal, and the Department of Systematic Theology was deputed to propose to the faculty a more formal response. The designated department presented its suggested "Response to a Proposal Before the CTCR" to the faculty in its meeting of 11 November 2002. On the basis of the ensuing discussion the Department of Systematic Theology undertook to bring to the faculty a revised version of the suggested "Response to a Proposal Before the CTCR" on the following day. In its meeting, therefore, of 12 November 2002 the faculty considered this revision and, following various additional amendments, resolved that the resulting "Response to a Proposal Before the CTCR" be presented to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations as the official opinion of the Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, although the opinion was to be treated as "confidential" (as this term is defined by the CTCR) while the matters concerned were still under consideration by the commission). In the event, however, the majority of the members on the CTCR, over the objections of the faculty, voted to adopt a response to the questions of the Board for Higher Education that would allow laymen and laywomen to teach theology in the institutions of the Concordia University System. The representatives of the faculty thereupon joined with other members of the CTCR in preparing a minority report. Following a discussion of developments in the CTCR in a meeting of the faculty conducted on 17 March

[8]"Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Timothy 1: 13).

[9]*The Lonely Way: Selected Essays by Hermann Sasse,* translated by Matthew C. Harrison, 2 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 2:197-224.

2003, the Department of Systematic Theology was deputed in a meeting of 25 March to propose a response to the opinion of the CTCR. The departmental proposal was discussed and extensively revised in the course of the ensuing meeting of the faculty. The opinion printed here was, in the end, adopted by unanimous vote in the meeting of the Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary which convened on first day of April in the year of our Lord 2003. On the same day the representatives of the faculty on the CTCR presented a tentative form of the "minority response" to the questions of the BHE which they had, as already noted, prepared in conjunction with others on the commission. Following the acceptance of a minor modification to the wording therein, the faculty, again by unanimous vote in the same meeting, resolved to endorse the aforesaid minority response. Douglas McC. L. Judisch.

Baptism as Church Foundation

David P. Scaer

The Missteps of Youth

In coming to the seminary, then in Springfield, in 1966, I was faced with teaching the first three courses in dogmatics. The department chair suggested that I use Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*.[1] By then it had gone through nine printings, which may prove that the Reformed write and read more dogmatics books than Lutherans. Melanchthon's *Loci* is no match in scope and size for Calvin's *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (though by Gerhard's time the Lutherans were no longer lagging behind). Those first students—among whom were synodical and district presidents and several now ELCA via the AELC pastors—recognized the stratagem. In those turbulent days, belief in the Bible was a commonly celebrated achievement. Later, it became evident that Lutheran and Reformed branches had sprung from different roots.[2] Each held to biblical authority, but for different reasons.

Caught between embarrassment and amusement over a deception easily detectable to everyone but myself, I lived with the guilt that I had been an unwitting conduit for Reformed theology into the Lutheran psyche. However, this contagion was already in place in the body ecclesiastic and so my transgression was not unique and no antibodies engaged the transgression. Mutations replace eliminated viruses. Much of what passes itself off as Lutheran may be closer to Reformed thought.[3] Having evolved from Schleiermacher's minimal *Bewusztsein* of a Reformed influenced consciousness to the *Selbstbewusztsein* of a Lutheran

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[1]Fourth revised and enlarged edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1965).

[2]See the cover of *Logia* 9 (Reformation 2002), which displays a seventeeth century Dutch engraving of Luther and Calvin sitting side by side with a candle signifying that the gospel's light was their common inheritance to Protestants. This issue is appropriately titled "Wittenberg & Geneva."

[3]As a church body we have even leapfrogged over Geneva and adopted the non-liturgical worship practices traceable to the Radical Reformation. Many Lutheran church services can hardly be distinguished from the Assemblies of God, with bouncing balls on the silver screen showing aroused worshipers which words are now being sung.

Dr. David P. Scaer is Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary and Editor of the **Concordia Theological Quarterly.**

self-awakening, one experiences the contours of the bone structure of the Reformed whale's belly from the inside out (*von Haus aus.*) After the beast's hearty belch up onto the beach, one happily breathes sweet Lutheran air. To remedy former lapses, I have labored to identify Reformed motifs that still flow from roaring "grand rapids" into Lutheran theology.

The Grand Awakening: Lutheran Style

A chance remark by Walter Kaiser, then at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and now at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, located the fundamental difference between Reformed and Lutheran theologies not in how we understood Christ (*extra Calvinistium*) and the sacraments (*finitum non capax infiniti*), but in where each begins theology. The Reformed begin with God and Lutherans with Christ—roots, trunk, branches and not just the shapes of the leaves are different. Calvin defined God's existence philosophically and then proceeded to the locus on Scriptures and the Reformed confessions followed suit. Their concern is God's rule, which is reflected in their doctrines of divine sovereignty, providence, and election. Lutherans begin with Christ (or at least they should) and then proceed to the Scriptures. This approach predetermined for Luther a christological interpretation of the Bible and so Lutheran and Reformed *Weltanschauungen* are worlds apart. Parallel doctrines may be identically worded, but the similarity is superficial. For example, Calvin defines faith as obedience and so even our doctrines of justification are different.[4] Zwingli and Luther came to a marvelous (now suspicious) agreement in the Marburg Articles (October 1529). They parted company only over the third part of the fifteenth article on the spiritual versus material understandings of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. However, rapprochement evaporates when one discovers that the articles were thoroughly Luther's and, perhaps for this reason, the Reformed have not

[4]For a thorough discussion of Lutheran and Reformed differences see Armand J. Boehme, "Justification by Grace through Faith: Do Wittenberg and Geneva See Eye to Eye," *Logia* 11 (Reformation 2002): 17-27, especially 18-19.

made them a platform to accommodate union with the Lutherans.[5] For Zwingli, fourteen and two-thirds loaf was better than none.

Theistic Wars

Though "theology" can refer to the entire seminary curriculum or a system in which religion is studied in detail, it is, etymologically at least, synonymous with theism, the doctrine of God. The issue of whether theism can be a legitimate point from which to begin theology might not have aroused attention without the current Evangelical debate over whether open theism is an acceptable option alongside the traditional classical theism.[6] This controversy threatens to divide the Evangelical Theological Society, an organization in which conservative non-Lutheran scholars find common ground.[7] Lutherans are allowed, but Roman Catholics need not apply. Classical theism understands God as self-existent, self-sufficient, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.[8] Open theism challenges this and holds that God keeps these attributes in abeyance, so that He can join His creatures in stumbling along into a future unknown to both.[9] Open theism faults classical theism as a philosophical construct derived from Philo of Alexandria and mediated through Saint Augustine into the body of

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[5]Article 8, "On the External Word," "Rather, the Holy Spirit works and creates faith through and with this spoken Word where and in whom he wills," hardly preserves the Reformed view that the Spirit works directly. Quotation taken from Robert Kolb and James A. Nestigen, editors, *Sources and Contexts of The Book of Concord*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 90.

[6]Nine essays representing both positions are contained in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (June 2, 2002).

[7]At its 2001 meeting the Evangelical Theological Society passed a resolution denying open theism and defined classic theism: "We believe the Bible clearly teaches that God has complete, accurate, and infallible knowledge of all events past, present and future, including all future decisions and actions of moral agents." Two open theists were expelled from the group, one by a vote of 171 to 137 and other by 166 to 143. Doug Koop, "Closing the Door on Open Theists?" *Christianity Today* (January 2003): 24-25.

[8]For a defense of classical theism see articles by Michael Horton in *Modern Reformation* 11 (May-June 2002). In one he refutes open theism, "Is the *New* News *Good* News," 11-19, and in another he defines classic theism, "The Incommunicable Attributes of God," 14-17.

[9]Craig Blomberg, a classic theist, says that "[Open theists] are not denying that God cannot choose to know in advance what creatures can do, but that he has chosen not to know everything in advance." Quoted in Koop, "Closing the door," 25.

Christian doctrine. Open theism stems from futuristic philosophies that have spawned process theology and the theologies of hope and history in the late twentieth century.[10] Each side in the debate claims biblical support for its position, but without a christological reference. The controversy is purely theistic. It is about God as God. Among open theism's biblical supports is the Book of Jonah, in which God changes His mind about Nineveh's destruction, opting instead to save the city.[11] Lutherans do not believe that God is subject to historical variables and hence we are classic theists; however, God relates to mankind in different ways. In the atonement, He moves from condemning humankind to accepting it. His negotiations with Abraham and Moses about the fate of rebellious peoples were not a divine charade. Traditional Reformed thought holds that God is the cause of all things and so He never really negotiates. He knows, determines, and is responsible for all conclusions, even tragic ones. If life were a bridge game, He would sit at all four sides of the card table playing through His surrogate creatures, whose reason and will would not matter all that much in determining the outcome. Abstract theism of any kind is not without its drawbacks, especially in explaining how God can become man. Incarnation is more of a problem for the Reformed, who can never accept it completely, than for the Lutherans, but we still have to rearrange divine attributes in order to explain it. It is tempting to accept classic theism as it is defined in the Evangelical debate, but we do not want to discount the biblical references to God's changing His mind about repentant sinners. We should be hesitant to interpret those sections of the Bible that, at first glance, do not correspond to our particular way of thinking (system). A solution for some of God's allegedly contradictory actions cited by the open theists may be the law-gospel dialectic: the God who threatens sinners (law), then places Himself under His own threats by sending Jesus as the world's redemption (gospel). God approaches man in seemingly contradictory ways, but He is consistent in desiring humankind for Himself. At present, only Evangelicals are involved in the theistic quarrel. It had no place on the agenda at the November 23-26, 2002 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, which studies God not as He is in

[10]See for example Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, editors, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2 volumes (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

[11]See John Sanders, "Be Wary of Ware: A Reply to Bruce Ware," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (June 2, 2002), 221-231.

Himself (Reformed) or in Christ (Lutheran) but sociologically. Yet this debate provides opportunity to examine what role theism has played and should be allowed to play in Lutheran theology.

Theism as Theological Topic

By placing theism and how God reveals Himself (revelation) in the introduction (prolegomena) of the theological task, we run the risk of defining a God before we examine the biblical data or know Christ. An ill-defined theism can infect the entire theological system, as in the case of Calvin and Reformed theology in general. It also raises the question, as mentioned, of how was it possible for God, who is defined theistically, to become man. Lutherans and the Reformed give different answers. The classic versus open theism debate is arguably an extension of the Reformed-Arminian debate over whether God or man is ultimately responsible for one's salvation. In the current debate extreme forms of monergism and synergism come into conflict with one another. God as God as a topic is more characteristic of non-Lutheran Protestant theology theologies, though it is not unknown in Lutheran dogmatics. By placing Christology, that is the person of Jesus, before theology (theism), this question does not have to be faced or, should we say, it is already answered before it is asked.

Berkhof devotes approximately the first sixty pages of his dogmatics to the topic of God. James Montgomery Boice wrote a book on God that left the topic of the Trinity to a second volume.[12] Wherever God is the first topic in the theological system, reasons for denying His existence become significant antitheses. Berkhof distinguishes between dogmatic atheism and skeptical atheism, and ordinary atheism and agnosticism.[13] These distinctions have diagnostic value in dealing with those who have no use for God. So we might conclude that without moral norms the post-modern world is agnostic rather than dogmatically atheistic. Atheists have a dogmatic conviction about reality that agnostics do not, but agnostics are dogmatic about the impossibility of knowing anything at all. Practical atheists do not care about the issue at all. Matters are not always clear about who is who. In a letter in the October 2002 column of

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[12]James Montgomery Boice, *The Sovereign God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978).

[13]Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 22-28.

the successor to Ann Landers, an agnostic asked not to be confused with an atheist. Prior to the Godless Americans March on November 2, 2002, a controversy arose about who qualified as godless.[14] Satanists have their god, as even Paul would grant (2 Corinthians 4:4). The bottom line is that for all (g)God deniers, he/she does not count or he/she does not count for much. Reasons for denying theism may be remedied by counter-philosophical arguments, as the Reformed do, but even if they are successful, a philosophically convincing theism does not necessarily translate into faith.

Theism belongs to American history, as is obvious from our coinage, "In God We Trust," a phrase that includes the particular Lutheran definition of faith as *fiducia*. (Some orthodox phrases may not be as airtight as they first appear.) But it takes a leap of faith (fideism) to believe that the "currency god" is the one who appeared to Abraham and took on flesh and blood in Jesus. Ultimately, reasons for denying theism do not really matter. Unbelief of any kind can only be disarmed by the law, which has less of a claim on the public conscience in a morally declining culture. As harsh as it might sound, a God proven by philosophy and reason has as little existence as a stone idol. Early American theism was rooted in Calvinism, and so used biblical images and assigned Jesus a place in defining the public morality of the civic religion. Even for unitarian theistic Deists, the Bible was a source of morality and its stories set a pattern for our history. Civic theism no longer exists under a Christian guise, which, in some cases, may be illegal. Its prominent symbol is the national flag graced by an eagle, which for the Romans was an idol, under whose wings any number of religious options are invited to find refuge. The God in "God Bless America" or "God Bless Our Native Land" takes on different forms depending on whether it is sung in a church, a synagogue, a mosque, a Hindu temple or an athletic arena. (Words, including "God," do not have constant meanings.) Theism asserts God's existence, but is indefinite in identifying who he/she/it may be or how he/she/it is known. It may lead to an exclusive christological definition of God, as with the Reformed, but it can also embrace a God who can be known by direct revelations and hence immune to historic critique (Mormonism, Islam, Barth), by reasoned and scientific arguments (Rationalism), by moral intuition (Kant), by culture (Schleiermacher), or by history (Moltmann,

[14] "Interfaith atheists," *World* (September 7, 2002): 13.

Pannenberg).[15] In discussing theism, we have not climbed ivy vines into moldy academic attics. On Wednesday, November 6, 2002, the Reverend Rick Hawks, pastor of The Chapel in Fort Wayne, Indiana, led an event entitled "Monotheistic Symposium 2002" for seventh graders. Rabbi Jonathan Katz and Imam Tamer Rasheed were co-participants.[16] All this is old hat. In the eighteenth century, the Rationalists opened the umbrella of monotheism wide enough to harbor Judaism and Islam. Christianity no longer possessed an exclusive knowledge of God. Theism, even the monotheistic kind, is not benign. It can be offered with Christian characteristics, but happy endings are not inevitable. The theism of pagans may be crude in comparison with that offered by the philosophers, but each has no existence. In his explanation of the Large Catechism, Luther claimed that the pagans "made a god of what their hearts desired most."[17] David Davenport of the Hoover Institute used the same argument in a positive way when he defined "God" as one's highest priority.[18] (This comes close to Paul Tillich's Ultimate Concern.) Thus atheists believe in God and are theists. They just do not realize it. According to this definition, atheism is another form of theism and so the distinction between the two becomes meaningless and also between the God fearing and the godless. If for pagan idols we use "gods," why do we use "God" for a deity that emerges from a philosophy?[19]

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[15]Francis Pieper assumes that most people have a religion and then applies the standard of the law and the gospel to determine that the true religion is Lutheran. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951-1953), 1:7-40.

[16]Kenya Woodard, "Leaders Highlight Religions: 7th-graders Learn 'Common Thread," *The Journal Gazette* (November 7, 2002): 3C.

[17]Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, editors, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 388.

[18]"Atheism Is Really Much Ado About Nothing," *The Journal Gazette* (November 21, 2002): 11A.

[19]Gilbert Meilaender provides a valuable article on whether Christians and non-Christians pray to the same God. "Interfaith 'prayer': What Is It and Should We Do It," *Christian Century* (October 23-November 5, 2002): 32-37. He asks "whether, when the peoples of the world cry out to god in their need, there are Christian grounds for supposing that, at least sometimes, it may be the true God whom they address" (35). Meilaender seems to allow the idea that Christians pray to the same God the Jews do, but the same cannot be said for Muslims. "But theirs is the god of Abraham and Ishmael—not of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." "And if we cannot make the case with respect to Muslims, it is surely folly to try with respect to Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs-i.e., all those 'non-Abraham' traditions" (35).

From Theism to Biblical Authority

After defining God—often accompanied with evidences for His existence—the Reformed assert the Bible as an authority because of its inspiration by the Spirit, which is accepted because of the Spirit's inner testimony in the believer's heart. So the Spirit is on both sides of the equation without reference to the historical person of Jesus. An authoritative Bible directs the readers from belief in God (theism) to belief in Jesus, which is confirmed by the Spirit's assurance of salvation.[20] How God is known and the inner certainty of this knowledge are essential to the Reformed approach and thus it is a religion of revelation. Since theism occupies the prominent place in Reformed theology, philosophy and apologetics are foundational in their theology and in the training of their clergy.[21] In Lutheran theology man never knows God as an abstraction demonstrated by philosophical arguments or scientific proofs. Rather, man stands before God (*coram deo*) as one judged (law) or redeemed (gospel). Justification belongs at the beginning of man's encounter with God and at the front of the theological system (Pieper).[22] Since Lutheran theology confronts man with the impossibility of self-justification and of knowing God apart from Christ, its character is more historical and redemptive than revelational in character and this historical-redemptive feature belongs at its theological foundation (prolegomena). Lutheran theology's redemptive character plays itself out in its sacramental character: the sacraments are the place where the

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[20]Boice, *The Sovereign God*, 41-95. A more recent example of this approach is Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

[21]For example Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority God*, volume 1, *Who Speaks and Shows*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1976), 241. "*The theology of revelation requires the apologetic confrontation of speculative theories of reality and life.*" (Italics original). The purpose of apologetics is to "reduce to absurdity the successively proffered alternatives to Christian theism and force the intellectual abandonment of speculative views." "The Mission Statement of Westminster Theological Seminary (PA)" says that "Biblical theology (in the tradition of Geerhardus Vos) and presuppositional apologetics (in the tradition of Cornelius Van Til) are among the crucial methods to be used in interpreting and applying the teachings of Scripture and in developing a biblical world view." Found at the Westminster Theological Seminary's website http://www.wts.edu/general/mission.html.

[22]Pieper begins by assuming without presenting reasons for the Bible's authority. In dividing the true expression of Christianity from false ones he applies the law and the gospel as the principle of justification. *Christian Dogmatics*, volume 1.

believer encounters God in Jesus, whom God showed to be Lord and Christ by His resurrection within the dimensions of our history (Romans 1:4).

Though Lutheran theology should not begin with arguments for God's existence or offer abstract arguments for the possibility of revelation, as the Reformed do, circumstances since the eighteenth century have dictated that the first course in dogmatics be called "Revelation and Scripture." Rationalist theologians relegated Christian doctrine to the sphere of ordinary knowledge that was discoverable by scientific and scholarly (*wissenschaftlich*) methods. Theology was secularized and was no longer considered what its etymology suggested, "words about God." Its origin and content were no longer seen as supernatural, and formerly divinely given knowledge was amalgamated with philosophical systems. Immaneul Kant's ideas were used by Schleiermacher and formed the basis of the old Liberalism in the programs of Albrecht Ritschl and Walter Rauschenbusch. The theologies of hope and history had Hegelian and Marxists structures. Paul Tillich spoke for his predecessors and successors by defining theology as providing answers to philosophy's questions. Our response to this illegitimate union of theology and philosophies is that theology begins with Jesus (Christology) and in confronting Him we know God (theology). If we must speak of a theism, it must be a christological theism. Without Jesus all our ideas of God are defective and perhaps just plain wrong. Philosophically influenced theologies use different methods, but they agree that knowledge about God (theism) is attainable by ordinary means. In this sense all are cut from one cloth. They hold that Jesus did not provide exclusive knowledge of God and so the door was open to recognize other religions as possessing authentic knowledge of God (theism). So Christianity has something to learn from other religions, a position that Rome endorses.

We may want to ask whether theism, in which God is defined before and apart from His revelation in Christ, that is, apart from the incarnation, falls into the same ditch dug by the Rationalists and their successors from which, to this very day, they have never been able to extricate themselves. According to Robert D. Preus, theism found its way into Lutheran theology in the seventeenth century. Johann Gerhard began his dogmatics with arguments that classic theists use to prove God's existence.[23] His word for theism is theology, for which he offered five proofs, taken from Thomas Aquinas.[24] These proofs are: (1) The first is a self-authenticating understanding of "divine revelation, which is the foundation of theology." Because the biblical writers were recipients of immediate illumination, the Bible possesses a self-authenticating authority.[25] The word of God "was revealed and communicated to the prophets and apostles by immediate illumination." Like all first principles, the Bible's assertions are "beyond criticism, credible in themselves, undeniable and unproved."[26] "The written Word of God, therefore, is the unique and characteristic principle of theology." Self-authenticating arguments are like axioms, immune to external critique. The biblical writers are informed of the Scriptures' contents by illumination; that is, divine revelation through an internal working of the Spirit. Where today we distinguish between a prior revelation by which a prophet or apostles acquired knowledge about God, and the later inspiring of the Scriptures, Gerhard saw these as one act.[27] Defined in this way, inspiration has a more significant role in providing data to the biblical writers than do the historical witness of the apostles to the life of

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[23]Robert D. Preus notes that Gerhard begins his discussion of God with a discussion on natural theology, but that it plays no role in the rest of his theology which is established from the Bible. Gerhard leaned heavily on the arguments of Thomas Aquinas. Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheran Theology*, 2 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970-72), 2:33-37.

[24]Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces of Johann Gerhard: A Sampler for Review by Theological Faculty and Pastors* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 1. The title for this section seems to refer to theology as a discipline, "From the Introduction on the Nature of Theology." Arguments offered for the existence of theology in paragraph 7 are those offered for God's existence. Preus discusses these five arguments, but does not at this juncture discuss their philosophical nature. Preus, *Post-Reformation Lutheran Theology*, 1:109-110; 2:35.

[25]Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces*, 3: "Because [the Bible] is God-breathed, published and spread by divine inspiration, it is therefore credible in itself, having credibility in itself."

[26]Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces*, 2.

[27]Pieper also does not see revelation as a topic separate from Scripture. *Christliche Dogmatik*, 3 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917-24) 1:453. Undoubtedly, he is concerned about how revelation is known now and so he does not address how it may have existed before the Scriptures came into existence.

Jesus.[28] (2) God, as the highest good, communicates knowledge of Himself to His rational creatures. This seems to be Aristotle's argument conveyed through Thomas Aquinas, but this is more of an assumption than an argument. (3) Creation's goal is to honor Him. Similarly, this is an assumption of faith and not really an argument. (4) Innate principles in the human mind teach that there is a God whom we must worship. This is also an argument from intuition and anticipates Kant, who held that humans were born with a moral compass. (5) Lastly, all the heathen have a knowledge of God.[29] This argument from culture anticipates the Rationalists and Schleiermacher, who observed religious peoples and assumed that there had to be a God.[30] Gerhard's arguments may not be as convincing in the post-modern world as they were in the seventeenth century. Even if they were, it has to be asked whether this or any kind of theism is preliminary to faith in Jesus? Since Gerhard insists that only in knowing the Trinity do we know God, as Preus points out, one wonders why he bothers with his theistic arguments at all.[31] By a felicitous inconsistency the seventeenth century theologians read the Bible christologically and held to a Christology that could not be mistaken for Reformed views.[32]

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[28]Robert D. Preus notes that before the Scriptures were written, "the *vive voce* utterance of an inspired spokesman of God could establish articles of faith and was authoritative, but since the establishment of the canon, God's evangelical revelation that is, his revelation . . . is to be sought only in Scripture." *Post-Reformation Lutheran Theology*, 1:257.

[29]Pieper also uses this premise.

[30]Francis Pieper claims that religion of the heathen is one of the law and is hence different from Christianity, which is one of the gospel. He claims that one excludes the other so that a common religion cannot be attributed to non-Christians and Christians. Since Christianity is a religion of the law and gospel, as even he defines it, the law is the common possession of all, even though it is not known perfectly by the heathen. See Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 1:6-19. His second volume on christology appeared seven years before his volume on prolegomena, so it is possible that he began the theological task with christology and appended—a misuse of the word—the prolegomena as an introduction. Thus, there was a certain detachment between the two volumes.

[31]Preus, *Post-Reformation Lutheran Theology*, 2:116.

[32]Preus points out that the classical Lutheran dogmaticians first defined God (theism), but in a strange contrast their exegesis was marvelously christological, Preus, *Post-Reformation Theology*, 2:110-11.

Though Gerhard believes in the apostolic witness to Jesus' resurrection and the testimony of the historic church (tradition), his arguments for God and biblical authority do not include them. The Bible is God's word because of its self-attested inspiration by the Spirit, a definition which did not include historical evidences.[33] Gerhard's theism was followed by a thoroughly christological theology. A transcendental theism can progress to incarnation (Lutheran), but in some cases it does so only partially (Reformed) and still in other cases not at all (Deism; Unitarianism). Gerhard's arguments for making inspiration the authoritative touchstone for knowledge about God (*principium cognoscendi*) were, in part, a reaction to the Roman Catholic argument that the church was the final arbiter in determining the canon.[34] His arguments resembled those of the Reformed.[35] Aversion to the Roman position was not so severe to prevent Gerhard from arguing for the authenticity of Christian truth from the church and its history, as he did in *Roma enim Ecclesia particularis est, Catholic vero universalis,* in which he defined theology by what the church

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[33]Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces*, 7.

[34]"We therefore believe the canonical Scriptures *because they are canonical* Scriptures, that is, because they have been brought about by God and written by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Gerhard seems to make no distinction between the Scriptures' inspiration and its canonicity. This becomes evident when he argues that the biblical canon is principium that "cannot be proved by something intrinsically prior to it." He distances his position from the Roman Catholic one by saying that "we do not believe in Scripture because of the church, that is, the testimony of men, but because of itself, because it is the voice of God." The Gerhard quotes are taken from Preus, *Post-Reformation Lutheran Theology*, 1:305. Preus notes that Quenstedt, besides using inspiration as a criterion for canonicity, used prophetic or apostolic authorship, Hebrew or Greek language, recognition by the Hebrew or Christian church, and use in the ancient church. Christocentricity is offered by other Lutheran dogmaticians. Preus seems to be alluding to Jerome Kromayer (1610-1670) (306). Quenstedt begins with historical proofs by requiring authorship by a prophet or an apostle, but moves toward the Catholic view when he cites recognition by the church. Arguments based on the Hebrew and Greek languages are somewhat baffling. Some of Daniel was written in Aramaic, a Hebrew dialect. Church use of a document is an historical argument. Another problem is how we know what the Hebrew church used.

[35]Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen*, translated by John Hoffmeyer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 39. Using inspiration as the basis for canonicity actually gives the decisive role to the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. This is evident from the Westminster Confession: "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof [sc. the Bible], is the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."

believes.[36] Lutherans are not only the true catholics, but in a sense the real Roman Catholics because they believe what that church has always taught. In this he is in sync with the Augsburg Confession.[37] For all his dependency on inner illumination of the biblical writers in setting the boundaries of the canon, Luther amazingly relies on a dubious post-biblical tradition that the Apostle John lived long enough to identify which books belonged in the New Testament.[38] He steps outside of the Bible to determine its limits. Ultimately, tradition trumps the biblical writers' inner illumination as the *principium cognoscendi*. In Gerhard, two disconnected engines are operating separately.

Problematic with Gerhard's argument is not that through its inspiration Scripture is the *principium* (source) of doctrine and that in this function it is not susceptible to external critique, but to arrive at this conclusion he first puts into place a theism based on inner illumination of the writers and reasoned arguments. A theism, which is supported by inner illumination and rational arguments, is made foundational for his theology. Gerhard, among the Lutheran theologians, is not alone in

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[36]Gerhard cites Pope Gregory's answer to a question from Saint Augustine to show that Rome is not equivalent with Catholic: "However it is my opinion, that you can find the church in Rome or Gaul or in any place." *Confessionis Catholicae, in qua Ecclesiae Augustanae Confessionis addict profounder, ex Romano-Catholicorum Scriptorum suffragiis confirmantur*. Editiona appeared in 1634 and 1662 at Jena. Another edition is known to have appeared in 1690. The two volumes of the 1634 edition contain 2251 pages total. Rome's fallibility is discussed in volume one, pages 209-306.

[37]Conclusion of Part One: "As can be seen, there is nothing here that depart from the Scriptures or the catholic church, or from the Roman church, insofar as we can tell from its writers."

[38]Gerhard assigns the function of determining the canon to the Apostle John. "Consequently, a very long life was given to the blessed John that he might be able to teach the church about the genuine canonical books of the evangelists and apostles and to distinguish them from the spurious works of fiction." Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces*, 4. Gerhard has to assume that certain post-biblical sources are accurate in claiming a long life for John. Without citing any post-apostolic evidence, he asserts that John was aware of other truly apostolic writings. This raises another question of why writings, which were endorsed by John, later were regarded as antilegomena and then deutero-canonical, that is, they were not universally accepted in the early church. With John's *imprimatur* this secondary category would have never existed. Gerhard may have found his own arguments for biblical authority so unconvincing, that he had to hypothesize that the Apostle John constructed the canon.

placing a theism at the base of his theology.[39] He still comes to marvelously Lutheran conclusions. Theology's material (content) is law and gospel. The latter includes the prophecies and types of Christ in the Old Testament and the Gospels: "we call the material of Scripture divine topics [christology] reduced by God to writing."[40] As Preus points out, the Lutheran dogmaticians saw Christ as the Scriptures' author and their content. As the hypostatic Word, He was in the inspired word. "[Christ] is the chief and central message of Scripture. Therefore, if one does not seek in the Word of the Bible the Word that was made flesh, it would be better to spend one's time reading adventure stories."[41] The Lutheran dogmaticians stood in Luther's line in reading the Scriptures christologically, but theism was not foundational for his theology.

Antidotes to Theism

Claiming that the Scriptures contain no theistic arguments is stating more than can be proven. Both classic versus open theists support their reasoned arguments with biblical citations. Psalm 14:1 and 53:1, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God,'" may support theism, but the fool is more probably the one who ignores the God of Israel. A worshiper of the god Baal is a fool. Hebrews 11:6 might at first glance support an abstract theism, "For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him." God, in this context, is not deity in general, but the God who revealed Himself to the prophets. None of the books of either the Old or New Testaments begin with arguments for God's existence, an essential feature for theistic arguments. At the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures, God appears as creator, and in Matthew Immanuel, God with us, is introduced before the First Person (the Father). Our knowledge of God begins not with an abstract definition of deity (theism) or even with the Father, but with Jesus. Our knowledge of the Father is accessible only through Jesus, who is the introduction to

[39]Francis Pieper in his section "The Sources of the Two Existing Religions" assumes that one religion is of the law and the other the gospel. Of the latter "men know of it only through God's revelation in the Word," by which he means the Scriptures. *Christian Dogmatics*,1:20-21; 213-16. Belief in the Scriptures is prior to and separate from Christology.

[40]Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces*, 3-4.

[41]Preus, *Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:373.

the trinitarian definition of God (Matthew 11:27). A theology that begins with the Father without the Son is, for that moment, an abstract theism.

"The Lutheran theologians," notes Preus, "refused to debate about how Christ is present in the Word of Scripture and how Scripture brings Christ to us."[42] Perhaps they should have. The Gospels claim to have their origins in the words and acts of Jesus, especially His crucifixion and resurrection, from and out of which the Spirit is given to the apostles and in this giving of the Spirit the church is born. Scriptures are inspired by the Spirit not directly from a transcendently remote God, but from Jesus who abides with His church (Matthew 28:20). "If you have seen me you have seen the Father" can just as easily be understood as "If you have heard me you have heard the Father" (John 14:9). Hence the inspired words of the Spirit are necessarily those of Jesus first, and ultimately the Father's. Knowing the Father requires knowing Jesus first (John 14:7). This is required by the *filioque* and Jesus' sending of the Spirit.[43] Jesus is present in the inspired word, as the Lutheran theologians taught, and through it works faith first in Himself and then in His Father and finally in the Spirit, whom He gives from the Father. Faith is worked no differently now than it was when Jesus was with His followers. Faith in Jesus as God's Son embraces faith in His word preserved by the apostles and inscribed in the Bible. Putting it the other way around, belief in the Scriptures or God first involves belief in Jesus. These are not separate kinds of faith. God cannot be known apart from and before Jesus and the Scriptures cannot be accepted as God's word apart from faith in Jesus. Christianity is a religion of revelation only in the sense that God works through events that are historically accessible and not because the Spirit works directly in our hearts to believe the Bible or God (Reformed). Remove this historical dimension from revelation, and Christianity becomes a Gnostic mystery religion offering otherwise inaccessible knowledge. Christianity is not revealed knowledge for the sake of itself, but redemptive knowledge having its origin in God's historic redemptive acts for His salvific purposes. God is known in what He does for us in

[42]Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:374.

[43]John 16:13-15: "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that He will take what is mine and declare it to you."

Jesus (*propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem; crucifixus pro nobis.*) He never merely exists (theism) but He exists *pro nobis* to rescue His fallen creatures and in His acts of redemption He is known. Only after He is known in Jesus do we know the Father. Then baptism brings into focus the creedal order of Father-Son-Spirit and the believer knows God for who He is.

Where theism is placed in the foundation of a theological system, as is characteristic of the Reformed approach, the next likely topic is how God is known in revelation or Scripture, which are often treated as one topic. Luther may offer a theism in his explanation of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism, but he brands it as useless. The Augsburg Confession, like the other confessions, lacks theistic arguments. God is believed as Trinity in accord with the decree of Nicaea (Augsburg Confession 1). A council, but really councils—Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon—reflects the church environment in which divine things are known, which engenders faith (*fides qua*), and in which the rule of faith is preserved (*fides quae; didache; paradosis*). Unlike Reformed theology, which moves from the doctrine of God to revelation and Scripture, the Second Article of the Augsburg Confession sees humanity in the dilemma brought by original sin from which no one can extricate him/herself. Attempts at self-resolution (self-justification) offend against Christ's merits and work, add to His person, and are an affront to the Trinity, who alone is the source of our salvation. God is known as the one whom humanity has offended (law) or who rescues it (gospel). Christology within the law-gospel definition is placed at the beginning of the system, but then so is sacramentology, since Christ and His benefits are known and received in baptism. Rather than proposing an abstract doctrine of God (theism) and listing the canonical books in which true knowledge is found (revelation), as the Reformed confessions do, Lutheran theology presents a God who is either condemning (law) or saving the sinner (gospel). Since gospel is God's last word, Christology is the ultimate and purest revelation of who God is. Not only can divine revelation be characterized as incarnational (Jesus of Nazareth), but also as sacramental, since in baptism He makes Himself known to believers (revelation) and incorporates sinners into Himself (redemption). In response to confronting the Trinity in baptism, the believer responds with the trinitarian confession and, from God's encounters with believers in baptism, the creed was born and still is. In this sense, baptism is the church's foundation.

Scriptures, Community, and Baptism as Places of Revelation

Reformed theology first establishes God's existence and then proceeds to His revelation in the inspired Scriptures, belief in which is authenticated by the Spirit's internal testimony, which then engenders faith in Christ. The historical apostolic witness to Jesus and the baptized community of believers play a subsidiary, or at best an ancillary, role in our coming to knowledge about God. Our position is that the Spirit is encased in the apostolic witness to Christ's redemptive acts, out of which the baptized community of believers has its origin. From this witness to and within this community, the Spirit gives the Scriptures. Inspiration has its origins in the Spirit's accompanying Jesus' acts and words. This culminates in Jesus fully giving the Spirit at His crucifixion and resurrection to His apostles from and through whom the New Testament documents possess their inspiration and authority. The Spirit's working on the writers cannot be isolated or divorced from the historical incarnation of the Son of God and His words and deeds, but it is an extension of them as they were witnessed and preserved by His followers who are recognized by their being baptized. Faith finds its origins both in the Scriptures and in the community in which they arose. Scripture and community form one reality in and from which faith is engendered.

Baptism is a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, a confrontation with the Trinity, and an historical practice, originating with John, administered by Jesus through His disciples, elevated into a trinitarian mystery by Him and first administered by the apostles and then His other ministers. So baptism provides the church with her historical continuity with those who knew Jesus in His earthly existence. He who was first known in Jesus of Nazareth is known sacramentally in baptism, and so this sacrament becomes the church's foundation and binds it together. Baptism is the mark of the church by telling us where the church is, but more importantly incorporates the church into the trinitarian mystery and so gives the church salvation and provides her with the knowledge of the only true God. Faith finds its certainty and object in Christ through baptism, not as if they were two separate objects of faith, but one. Christ is believed as He is present in baptism, not apart from it. Are we then left with a bifurcation so that faith finds its certainty in Christ in baptism and theology finds its certainty in the Scriptures? In this case, belief for salvation would be something different from how our theology or system of beliefs is constructed. This is only a problem if the theological task is begun outside of the church with philosophical and scholarly proofs for

God's existence (theism), which then proceeds to establish the truthfulness of the Scriptures by the Spirit's working in our hearts and through philosophical and other scholarly proofs.

Norma Normans and *Norma Normata* Reversed for the Moment

Each beginning Lutheran theological student learns that *norma normans* applies to the Scriptures as the primary and originating standard of the faith and *norma normata* to the Lutheran Confessions, a secondary standard of faith dependent on the Scriptures. At one time, things may have been just the opposite. Church confessions were in place before the Scriptures were written and were preserved in them. Only those documents that preserved these confessions and were in agreement with them came to be considered our New Testament. The creed(s) was the canon. Confessions were not isolated, autonomous, unproven fideistic axioms, but they were responses of believers made at baptism to what Jesus had first said of Himself. All early church creeds were baptismal as ours must also be. Jesus is the absolute truth and standard of all truth and not subject to critique by any other standard. He alone is, in the terms of the Lutheran dogmaticians, "credible credibility beyond criticism," and "this credible credibility beyond criticism" is preserved in the apostolic word. Scriptures derive their authority from Him through the apostles—not the other way around! The earliest creeds from which our Apostles' Creed evolved were not mere human formulations, but Jesus' own self-understanding that believers at their baptism confronted and responded to in creeds: "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Thomas' confession, "my Lord and my God," is the foundation of Christian truth. Belief in the God whom Jesus revealed and the confession made at baptism were not disparate things, but they constituted one reality in which the Spirit worked. God can only be known in the one who died for sins and rose again. Just as Jesus' disciples were given the full revelation of God in baptism as Father-Son-Holy Spirit, so the same revelation is given to subsequent baptized generations. Without the trinitarian presence, "the water is plain water and no baptism." But with it, baptism is the foundation on which the church is built because here believers find and meet God. It is that event in which the Trinity is present to reveal His saving purposes to the believer and so He is the church's foundation. First God is known in Jesus, who then reveals the Father, and then the Spirit, and baptism reveals God as He is in Himself: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The order of revelation is 2-1-3, as Paul does in 2 Corinthians 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Baptism then provides the order of divine essence as it is in itself, "Father and Son and Holy Spirit," 1-2-3, the outline and content for the church's creed. Out of baptism the church is born and this sacrament becomes the foundation of what the church believes and marks off her boundaries. No other moment in the church's life is so specifically trinitarian as baptism and every recitation of the creed is a response to that moment. Without baptism, the followers of Jesus constitute little more than another religious community, but with it that community becomes church, God's chosen people, the people in and with whom God is present and who are incorporated in Him.

One or Multiple Foundations

We have already discussed the connection between theism and the Bible as theological foundation for the Reformed. In their different interpretations of Matthew 16:18, "you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," Lutherans and most Protestants have given the honor of the church's foundation to Peter's faith or confession, and Roman Catholics to Peter, and thus find a mandate for a succession of Petrine authority. If the stakes were not so high, this would dissolve into a non-issue. Confession, what we say, *fides quae,* (Lutherans) is embodied ultimately in real people like Peter (Rome), who really believe, *fides qua* (Evangelical Protestants). What people confess (*fides quae*) expresses what they believe (*fides qua*). Paul saw faith and confession as parts of one thing: "because, if you *confess with your lips* that Jesus is Lord and *believe in your heart* that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For man *believes with his heart* and so is justified, and he *confesses with his lips* and so is saved" (Romans 8:9-10). He could also say that the church "was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:19-20), among whom he certainly included himself and Peter. Paul turns the tables over and calls the "household of God . . . the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) in language that is clearly reminiscent of the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Son of the living God on which (whom) the church is built. It is awkward to claim multiple foundations for theology, but we can claim a multifaceted foundation.

Lutherans and Roman Catholics have also divided themselves over whether the Scriptures or the church, specifically the Roman magisterium, is the final standard of truth.[44] Evangelicals are unlikely to surrender the Bible's role as the arbiter of the truth to Rome's magisterium, since they hold that no church organization can be the final arbiter of the truth. This is in line with their hesitancy to give allegiance to any human confessions, which for them can only approximate biblical truth but not absolutely contain it. In holding that the Scriptures are foundational, we want to acknowledge that they arose within the community of baptized believers as statements of what they already believed. Paul wrote to confirm the gospel already preached to them (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The Scriptures exercise their authority from within the church for whom alone they are intended and not *extra ecclesia*. Such a principle is hardly new for Lutherans who require acceptance not only of ancient creeds, but sixteenth-century documents. Community interpretation of the Scriptures is accepted as a subsidiary standard (*norma normata*), but with this caveat. Where "our church has always taught" takes the place of biblical arguments, we disregard the *sola scriptura* and fall into the same kind of traditionalism we find unacceptable in others. A theistic approach to theology establishes the authority of the Scriptures outside the church and then applies it as an external standard. In this scenario the church is hardly the pillar and the foundation of the truth. She is incidental to it.

In Search of a Bible Passage

Things of which we have been speaking are brought together in Ephesians: "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 us all, who is above all and through all and in all"(4:4-5). Terms here are ecclesiastical, confessional (doctrinal), baptismal, and trinitarian. Church and the Holy Spirit are bound together. Jesus, His teachings (*fides quae*), and baptism form the next constellation, reminiscent of Matthew 28:16-20, "baptizing . . . and

[44]Evangelical and Roman Catholic scholars have tried without success to reconcile these differences, but they have discovered that the positions of each may not be as extreme as the other thinks. See Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, editors, *Your Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002). Along with other topics, this one is presented as a project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together. Lutherans are not included. ELCA theologians might be seen as too much in the mainline and LCMS ones too entrenched for these kinds of discussions. Among current ecumenical dialogs, these are among the most productive.

teaching." Finally, the Father is revealed as the God who is as much a part of His creation as He is distinct from it (a good counter argument against open theism.) In the midst of a marvelously abbreviated statement of what the church believes is baptism, not as a self-contained ritual, but originating as divine command from the divine Lord who in His own baptism by John assumed the role of the world's redeemer and gave His first followers a foretaste of a fuller trinitarian revelation to come. The presence of God and the Spirit at that baptism anticipated the complete revelation of Father-Son-Holy Spirit in the baptism that Jesus would give to His church after He had offered Himself as an atonement and was found by God to be acceptable by being raised from the dead. Though now we know God as Father-Son-Holy Spirit, this God today can still only be approached through Jesus of Nazareth, who works faith in Himself by the Spirit given in His words and deeds.

In defining our knowledge of God by incarnation (revelation), the sacraments – which have their reality first through incarnation and then crucifixion – can be understood as revelatory. Such thinking is impossible for the Reformed, who can attribute as little to a full revelation of God in the sacraments as they can to His revelation in Jesus (*extra Calvinisticum*). In their system revelation is not a flesh and blood matter either in Jesus or in the sacraments or, for that matter, in the Scriptures, but is found ultimately in the *testimonium spiritus sancti internum*. An immediate working of the Spirit in the human heart to receive divine knowledge and assurance bypasses the full incarnation of God in Jesus, through whom alone we know Him as Father. It also circumvents the creation that necessarily belongs to our understanding of God, whom Jesus addresses as "Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Matthew 11:25). Incarnation is neither an embarrassment nor an impossibility for God but His own self-endorsement as creator. Theism is the pursuit of philosophers, even Christian ones, but theology is the privilege of the community of believers in Jesus who have found Him and still constantly find Him in baptism.

Should Lutherans Reserve the Consecrated Elements for the Communion of the Sick?

Roland F. Ziegler

The universal custom in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy is for the priest to commune the sick and shut-ins with previously consecrated elements.[1] These churches do not know of a consecration of the elements outside the liturgical order of the eucharistic celebration. In Lutheranism the traditional practice is to consecrate the elements in the presence of the communing person(s), be it home, hospital, or nursing home. Lately, however, this practice seems to be changing. Students at the seminary find themselves in situations where they are required, on vicarages or even before as field workers, to bring elements that had been previously consecrated by the pastor to those who can no longer attend the communal worship at church. Practical reasons seem to be at the root of this practice: a large number of shut-ins plus numerous other pastoral duties are the apparent compelling justification for using a vicar or field worker as a relief for an all too pressing schedule.

There are also other occasions where such a change in practice (the reservation of the consecrated elements for later communion) is observed because of its practicality. For example, when a pastor is away for the Sunday, and the summer vicar is in charge of the communion service. The pastor consecrates the elements before he leaves, so that the vicar can distribute them and the congregation can celebrate communion. Or, a pastor, having accepted a call and in order to help the congregation that faces a certain period in which she is vacant, consecrates a rather substantial amount of hosts and wine, so that the elders have sufficient supply to provide holy communion to the congregation from the reserved sacrament.[2]

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[1]For the Eastern Orthodox church see *Book of Needs of the Holy Orthodox Church with an Appendix Containing Offices of the Laying on of Hands, Done into English by G. V. Shann* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 123-127; for the Roman Catholic Church see *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* [*The Roman Ritual. Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and published by Authority of Pope Paul VI*] (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 49-71.

[2]Here is a certain ecumenical convergence—due to the lack of Roman Catholic priests, deacons or laypeople are increasingly being commissioned as "Extraordinary

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Rev. Roland F. Ziegler is Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary.

As convenient as such solutions to the issues of clergy shortages and overwhelming workloads are, it especially befits a church like The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which is proud of her strong confessional tradition and her emphasis on sound doctrine, to examine this solution carefully. Is such a change in practice just that, a mere change in *practice*, in which the church deals with the shifting practical demands in a congregational setting by adapting herself to minister more effectively, shedding outdated customs? Or, is such a change also a change in *doctrine*, so that the new practice includes a new or changed understanding of the theological position that had informed the customary practice?[3]

A first observation to that issue is the basic fact that the communion from the reserved elements is an innovation in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. A short survey of the textbooks on pastoral theology demonstrates this. In his classical treatment, C. F. W. Walther gives detailed advice on how the pastor is to celebrate the Lord's Supper at the home of the sick, including the remark that the pastor should at least wear preaching tabs (if he does not wear his preaching gown, including tabs, which Walther seems to presume as the regular case), but any idea that anybody else but the pastor should commune the sick with the reserved sacrament is absent.[4] That Walther did not simply forget this option is obvious from his quotation of Deyling's *Institutio prudentiae pastoralis* in his section on consecration: "The holy elements, consecrated by the pastor, can neither be reserved nor *sent to those absent*, which was a bad habit of some in the early church."[5]

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ministers of Holy Communion" to preside at the liturgy (a service of the word), which then includes communion at the end out of the tabernacle. See *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (New York; Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), Canon 230 §3, 910 §2 (167-169; 649-651).

[3]A similar change, but not out of such practical considerations, happens when, immediately after the service is over, the pastor or commissioned lay person brings the consecrated elements to the home-bound. This is done to include the shut-ins more intimately into the congregational celebration of the Lord's Supper.

[4]C. F. W. Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, fifth edition (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1906), 291-292; see also C. F. W. Walther, *Pastorale, That Is American Lutheran Pastoral Theology* (New Haven, Missouri: Lutheran News, 1995), 212-213. "Tabs" are essentially the same as clerical collars.

[5]"Die vom Pastor consecrirten heiligen Elemente können weder aufbewahrt, noch den *Abwesenden zugesendet* werden, was eine üble Gewohnheit Einiger in der alten Kirche war." (Author's translation) Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, 187, emphasis in the

In his *Pastoral Theology,* John H. C. Fritz also presupposes that when the sick are communed, the elements are consecrated immediately before the communion.[6] Like Walther, he explicitly rejects the idea that the sacrament be reserved.[7]

Proceeding in time, in 1960, *The Pastor at Work* was published, a collective effort of pastors and professors in the Missouri Synod. It explicitly states that elements that have been consecrated in the congregational service and have not been consumed can be used for the communion of the sick, but they have to be "reconsecrated."[8]

Thirty years later, this solid consonant view in the Missouri Synod was weakened somewhat in the latest textbook, *Pastoral Theology* by Kraus and Mueller. Though there is no reference to the reservation of elements in the

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original. See also Walther, *Pastorale,* 144. On Deyling, see Walther, *Pastorale,* 17-18, where Walther praises Deyling. See also the short biographical sketch in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie,* volume 5 (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1968), 108-109. Walther's practice here is in accordance with that of other confessional Lutherans of the nineteenth century. For Wilhelm Löhe, see his *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses, 2. Theil,* second enlarged edition (Nördlingen: Druck und Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1859), 94-99 (his liturgical order for the communion of the sick) and Hans Kressel, *Löhe als Liturg und Liturgiker* (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 1952), 205-207.

[6]John H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology,* second edition (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), 183.

[7]"*g. Bread and Wine to be Consecrated Whenever Used in the Sacrament.* – Some in the early Church sent the consecrated elements to those who were absent for the purpose of administering the Sacrament. This must not be done, since consecrating, administering, and receiving the bread and wine must be *uninterrupted acts,* even as was the case when the Lord first instituted and administered the Sacrament. If for some reason the administration of the Sacrament has been interrupted for a longer period (fire), the elements should again be consecrated. The same should be done if a person receiving Communion suddenly faints after he has received the bread and remains unconscious for a longer period." Fritz, *Pastoral Theology,* 128.

[8]Richard R. Caemmerer, and others, *The Pastor at Work* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 173. "After the Communion service the remaining elements should be disposed of in an appropriate manner. They ought not to be 'retained' in the manner obtaining churches which teach transubstantiation. In sick Communions the unused elements may well be distributed. In that event the elements should be reconsecrated before the eyes of the person to be communed. If they are not to be so used, any left-over wafers may be stored for future congregational use. Wine remaining in the flagon and cup should be poured away, preferably into a place in the ground or into a piscina."

section on the treatment of consecrated bread and wine that remain at the end of the Sunday service, nevertheless in the treatment of the communion of the sick, the practice that the consecration happens in the presence of the communicant is called "ordinarily," with a reference to exceptions with precedence by "some of the earliest church orders."[9]

At this place these church orders are not identified. It might be safe to assume first that the author is thinking of church orders of the Reformation era, not any documents from the early church. One order that actually has such a practice is the Church Order for Brandenburg of 1540. Another document that ordered the life of the nascent Lutheran church with such a provision is the decree of the Diet at Ansbach of the Markgravate of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach in 1526.[10]

The influence of Luther's writings in the territory of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach, an offshoot of the House of Hohenzollern, started in the early 1520s.[11] Three brothers were the princes of this territory. The oldest of them, Margrave Kasimir, was in actual charge of affairs, whereas his brother Friedrich (who lived in Spain) had little influence

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[9]Norbert H. Mueller and George Kraus, editors, *Pastoral Theology* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), 106, *Setting of Sunday communion:* "And therefore the unused elements should be treated with fitting reverence so that the Lord may be honored and that none of his children may be offended or caused to stumble. Therefore, what remains of the consecrated bread and wine, if individual cups are used, may be consumed or stored for future sacramental use. If a large amount of wine is left in the chalice, it may be poured into the *sacrarium / piscina* or poured out on bare earth. It is the responsibility of the presiding or a delegated assisting minister to supervise the disposal of the elements."

[10]Theodor Kliefoth, the most knowledgeable nineteenth-century expert in sixteenth-century liturgical matters, calls the Brandenburg Church order singular (Th. Kliefoth, *Die ursprüngliche Gottesdienst-Ordnung in den deutschen Kirchen lutherischen Bekenntnisses, ihre Destruction und Reformation* 2, beträchtlich erweiterte Auflage, volume 5 [Schwerin: Verlag der Stiller'schen Hof-Buchhandlung (Didier Otto), 1861] [Liturgische Abhandlungen, volume 8], 157). A hundred years after him, E. F. Peters corrected Kliefoth by adding the decree from the Diet of Onolzbach (the old name of Ansbach in Franconia) 1526 (Edward Frederich Peters, "The Origin and Meaning of the Axiom: 'Nothing Has the Character of a Sacrament Outside of the Use,' in Sixteenth-century and Seventeenth-century Lutheran Theology," [Th. D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, 1968], 312-314).

[11]For the historical context, see also Emil Sehling, editor, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts,* continued by the *Institut für evangelisches Kirchenrecht der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland zu Göttingen,* volume II: Bayern, part 1 (Franken, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1961), 62-71.

and died early. Georg, who later was one of the first signers of the Augsburg Confession, was also excluded from daily business. Kasimir at first supported the Reformation, but in the fall of 1525 he changed his position, partly because the bishops who had the churchly oversight in his territory tried to sue him because he had secularised the monasteries to pay off his debts and partly to appease the catholic estates, which were now, after the peasant revolt, rather hostile towards the Reformation movement. Thus in 1526 he mandated the restoration of the Corpus Christi procession and allowed communion under both kinds only "secretly and quietly."[12] The decree of the diet, published October 10, 1526, is a document of compromise and ambiguity.[13] For example, the words of institution should be proclaimed with loud voice, but in Latin, as Latin in general should be retained in the mass.[14] Communion under both kinds is allowed, German can be used in the baptismal rite, but the festival of Corpus Christi is retained and marriage of priests is still forbidden and prosecuted.[15]

Regarding the reservation of the consecrated elements and the communion of the sick, the decree states: "And if at the times and days, when the communicants receive the holy, most reverend sacrament, something of the sacrament remains, then it shall not be disrespectfully discarded, but with due reverence retained in the tabernacle for the communing of the eventual sick or other communicants."[16]

After Kasimir had died September 21, 1527, his brother Georg, who was a personal friend of Luther, succeeded him. Georg now sided with the Lutheran Reformation. He convened a diet, again at Ansbach, and the decree, dated February 20, 1528, emphasised that the gospel should be preached purely, that the sole authority in the church is Holy Scripture, and that all ceremonies that are not grounded in God's word or even against it, are not binding on anybody.[17]

The next step in the reformation in Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach was a visitation. This was a joint enterprise with the free imperial city of

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[12] "heimlich und stille," *Kirchenordnungen*, II, 1, 68.
[13] The text is published *Kirchenordnungen*, II, 1, 88-97.
[14] *Kirchenordnungen*, II, 1, 90.
[15] *Kirchenordnungen*, II, 1, 91-94.
[16] *Kirchenordnungen*, II, 1, 91.
[17] *Kirchenordnungen*, II, 1, 102-104.

Nuremberg. For this purpose a guideline was written that summer, the Brandenburg-Nuremberg Church Order of 1528.[18] This church order is an unapologetically Lutheran document. Regarding the communion of the sick and the reservation of the sacrament, it mandates that the sick are to be explored regarding their spiritual state; if they lack knowledge of the basic doctrine of the faith, they are to be catechised. The communion itself is to be in German, including preface, consecration, admonition, communion under both kinds, concluding with a prayer of thanksgiving. Regarding the reservation, the theological argumentation against such a practice is founded on the command by Christ to eat and to drink. Christ did not mandate to carry the sacrament around or reserve it. The consecration should be in the presence of the communicants. Additionally, practical reasons against reservation are mentioned: the sacramental elements may spoil when they are kept for a longer time.[19]

Concluding, we can say that the provision of the Diet of Ansbach 1526 was the product of a transitional stage in the history of the introduction of the Reformation in of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach. Once all tactical considerations to appease the Roman Catholic bishops or estates were cast off, the regulation regarding communion of the sick with preconsecrated elements and other remnants of Roman Catholic practices were abolished.

The church order for Brandenburg, published 1540, gives the following provisions for the communion of the sick.[20] Normally, a pastor is instructed to carry the sacrament (after consecration) to the sick at the same time as the congregation communes. Obviously, it assumes that there is more than one pastor at a church, and, as it becomes clear afterwards, it is assumed that it is in the setting of a city. When the sacrament is brought to the infirm in such a manner, the pastor is to be

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[18] *Kirchenordnungen*, II, 1, 135-139.

[19] *Kirchenordnungen*, II, 1, 138. See also the much more detailed church order that replaced the order of 1528, Brandenburg-Nuremberg 1533, which has the same views regarding reservation (184) and regarding the communion of the sick (199-200). In Nuremberg, the two provosts of the main churches, Saint Sebald and Saint Lorenz, had abolished the communion of the sick with preconsecrated elements already in 1524. In its stead, either a mass was read in the house of the sick or, in an emergency situation, a priest should simply consecrate and distribute the elements (44).

[20] Emil Sehling, editor, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, III (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1909), 77-81.

vested in cassock and surplice, and he is proceeded by the sacristan who carries a lamp and a bell (77). If there is a sudden emergency, the pastor is to go to the church. Then, with those present, he first prays for the sick, continues with the Lord's prayer, and ends this little service with consecration. The consecrated elements are then likewise taken to the sick person. For the communion of the sick, prayers and psalms and a short order are provided, but the words of institution are not repeated.

In a rural setting, where the roads are bad and the pastor has no sacristan to accompany him, or even when the pastor drives a carriage or rides on horseback at night, there might be dangers and scandals. So, the church order prescribes that the consecration should be in the houses of the sick.[21]

The Brandenburg church order of 1540 is unique and has not had any impact on the further development of the Lutheran liturgical life. It is unique because it was the deliberate effort to create a mediating position between the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church. The instigator behind it was Elector Joachim II.[22] He was connected through his wife, Hedwig, with the royal house of Poland, which remained faithful to Rome. After his accession in 1535, bound by his father with an oath to uphold the Roman Catholic faith, he tried to become the mediator among the German princes to solve the ecclesiastical problems, since the ecumenical council was postponed several times by the pope. The Reformation made great inroads among the people of Brandenburg and the bishop of Brandenburg, Matthias von Jagow, had embraced the Lutheran doctrine. Joachim II decided to reform his church—without separating himself from the catholic church, a "Christian reformation of some ceremonies and church orders," as he wrote to his father-in-law, King Sigismund of Poland.[23] Joachim was personally involved in the drafting of the church order. Doctrinally, the *sola fide* is confessed, but liturgically many Roman catholic customs were retained, though not as many as were originally intended.[24] Also, the Augsburg Confession is not mentioned. It is, therefore, the only church order that was approved by the Emperor Charles V—doubtlessly because of political reasons, since

[21]*Kirchenordnungen*, III, 80 "zufellig ferligkeit, ergernis und hindernis."

[22]Compare Georg Kawerau, "Joachim II," *Realencyclopädie für Theologie und Kirche*, third edition, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1901), 9:223-227.

[23]Kawerau, *Joachim II*, 234, 52-53.

[24]*Kirchenordnungen*, III, 43.

it was not acceptable to the Apostolic See dogmatically. Yet, even this maneuver shows that it could be interpreted detached from the Lutheran Reformation. But Joachim II cultivated his distance to Luther and the Wittenberg Reformation also after 1540. At the colloquy of Worms 1540-1541 his delegates sat with the Roman Catholics, not with the Lutherans, he approved of the Augsburg Interim of 1548, which was co-authored by his court preacher, Johann Agricola. In 1549 he said: "As little as I want to be bound to the Roman church, as little I want to be bound to the church in Wittenberg. For I do not say: I believe in the holy Roman or Wittenbergian, but catholic church, and my church here in Berlin and Cölln is just as well a right Christian church as the one of those in Wittenberg."[25] All of this leads Robert Stupperich to question whether Joachim II had ever understood what the Reformation was all about.[26] Joachim II subscribed to the Augsburg Confession only at 1555, after the Peace of Augsburg. There it was decided that the only legal religions in the empire were Roman Catholicism or the Church of the Augsburg Confession. Joachim had to make the choice he had tried to avoid until then. In the age of confessionalisation, mediating positions like his had outlived themselves. The Elector did nothing to revise the church order so that it reflected this move. Changes were introduced immediately after his death by his successor Johann Georg in 1572, who eliminated the provisions about carrying the sacrament in procession to the sick.[27]

Before the church order was published, it was sent to Wittenberg for an opinion, and there are two letters in which Luther gave his view on certain points.[28] In the first letter to Elector Joachim II, Luther approves of the preface, but he critiques three points that seem to him to indicate the influence of Georg Witzel.[29] First, that the consecrated elements

[25]Robert Stupperich, *Die Eigenart der Reformation in der Mark Brandenburg,* "Dem Wort nicht entgegen . . ." Aspekte der Reformation in der Mark Brandenburg, edited by Hans-Ulrich Delius, Max-Ottokar Kunzendorf, and Friedrich Winter (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), 13-30, 25.

[26]Stupperich, *Die Eigenart,* 25.

[27]*Kirchenordnungen,* III, 101.

[28]Luther to Elector Joachim II of Brandenburg, 4 (5?) December 1540, *WA* Br 8, 620-624; Luther to Georg Bucholzer, 4 (5?) December 1540, *WA* Br 8, 624-626, the latter letter translated in Martin Luther, *Letters of Spriritual Counsel,* edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 305-307.

[29]Georg Witzel (1501-1573) sympathized with the Reformation at the beginning, but later opposed it and represented a humanistic reform catholicism. He cooperated in

should be carried in processions (a Corpus Christi procession under both kinds, so to speak). The procession under one kind is idolatry, and the new procession under both kinds would cause ridicule. Also, he disapproved of the fact that extreme unction was maintained, although he allowed that it might be done, just not in the popish way. The same is said about the carrying of the reserved sacrament to the sick. But Luther knew that this was a point dear to the heart of Joachim, so that he gave the advice that it might be done, but it should not be put into writing, since "it is a regulation of human piety, not of divine command, therefore one may do it, but without superstition, until one can do it in a better way."[30] Luther is here willing to tolerate a custom, although he does not think it is the best way to solve the practical question. He obviously envisions it as a transitional provision, therefore he gave the advice not to put it into the official text, and his remark that it might be done "until one can do it in better way" shows that he intended to changed the practice. In his letter to Georg Buchholzer, Luther does not refer to the rite of the communion of the sick—it seems as if that was not a problem for Buchholzer—but deals with the elaborate ritual Joachim II wanted to maintain, including many processions. Regarding this and the elevation, Luther counsels him to yield here, as long as certain practices are abolished (daily masses, invocation of the saints, vigils for the dead, blessing of water, salt, and herbs), the word is preached purely and clearly, and the sacraments are administered in conformity with their insitution.[31] These liturgical ceremonies are free and they pose no danger to the Christian faith.

Luther shows here how he wants to solve the theological problem of liturgical forms retained from Roman Catholicism that might have connotations that are not necessarily Lutheran or seem to be an expression of ecclesiastical pomp. As long as they are not doctrinally wrong he is willing to tolerate them, until they might be changed at some time in the future. Bringing the reserved sacrament to the sick is in his opinion not heretical, although it is definitely not his preferred practice. It may be tolerated during the transition from Roman Catholicism to Lutheranism.[32]

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the writing of Joachim II's church order, see Stupperich, *Die Eigenart*, 21.

[30]*WA* Br 8,623,55-57.

[31]Luther, *Letters*, 306.

[32]The topic came up again in a conversation of Luther with Cordatus, who

Melanchthon had a more positive view of this custom. In his letter of December 5, 1540 to Joachim II, he approved of this practice, because it is still inside the institution. Only the practical question of how to bring both kinds to the sick, is not yet solved for him.[33] This contrasts with his rejection of theophoric processions, since this contradicts his axiom, "Sacramenta sunt in instituto usu sacramenta."[34]

The two orders of the time of the Reformation, therefore, can hardly be cases of precedent to change the present practice of the Lutheran Church. They are obviously documents of transition of limited force that were abolished once the Lutheran Reformation was firmly established.

Since the reservation of the sacrament was a marginal practice of a transitional time that died out rather quickly in Lutheranism, it was

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participated in the introduction of the reformation in Brandenburg, between October 19 and November 5, 1540. "When the doctor was asked whether the sacrament can be carried to the sick, he replied, 'We don't think it should be done. To be sure, one must allow it for a while. The practice will probably be dropped, if only because they have no ciborium." (*WA* TR 5,55, 5314; J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann, editors, *Luther's Works,* American Edition, 55 volumes [Saint Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986] 54: 407-408). Luther continues that the sacramental union continues, even when the sacrament is carried over the street, or one or two hours pass between consecration and distribution. His dislike of the practice in Brandenburg is therefore not rooted in a narrow definition of the "extra usum." Luther allowed for the reservation of the sacrament in 1522, although he did not think that there was really a necessity since communion of the dying was optional: "I shall continue to allow the practice of reserving the sacrament for the sick in pyxes; but if the proper use of the mass were to come into general acceptance simply through a clear understanding of the gospel, people would realize that the elements of the sacrament at the time of death are not essential. Since the words of the sacrament are present, on which its power entirely depends, it is enough that a person should receive the elements while he is healthy, and not despise them when he is dying" (*WA* 10 II, 32,4-9; *AE* 36,257). In an opinion on the church order of Brandenburg-Nürnberg, written by Luther, Jonas, Bugenhagen, and Melanchthon in 1532, the reservation of the sacrament is simply rejected: "Concerning the reserving of the sacrament in the ciborium, we think that even though it might still be the custom to reserve the sacrament and lock it up, this custom ought to be abolished; for sacrament and Word ought to be together. We know, of course, that this sacrament has been instituted for the purpose of being used and not for the purpose of making a special worship of God with [one] piece of the sacrament apart form the usage of the sacrament and the Word" (*WA* Br 6,341,86-91, 1959 *AE* 50,66).

[33]CR III, 846.

[34]CR III, 846.

therefore not explicitly discussed in the Formula of Concord, whose scope was primarily against the Crypotcalivinistic tendencies in the Lutheran Church. However, because the Council of Trent had asserted the traditional Roman Catholic position in its seventh session, Martin Chemnitz had to discuss it in his voluminous *Examination of the Council of Trent.*[35] The fathers of Trent had decreed in the sixth chapter of the thirteenth session:

> The custom of reserving the eucharist in a sacred place is so ancient that even the age of the council of Nicaea recognised it. In addition, the practice of carrying the holy eucharist to the sick, and hence its careful reservation for that purpose in the churches, is not only consonant with right and proper understanding, but can be shown to be enjoined by many councils, and has been observed by long-standing custom of the catholic church. And so this holy council rules that this salutary and necessary practice is to be universally retained.

The pertaining canon 7 states: "If anyone says that it is unlawful to reserve the holy eucharist in a sacred place, but that it must of necessity be distributed to those present immediately after the consecration; or that it is unlawful for it to be carried with due honour to the sick, let him be anathema."[36]

Chemnitz's treatment of this chapter and the canon belonging to it are a fine example of how he deals with a controversial question. He first states what the issue is: should the consecrated wine and bread be at once distributed, or can they be "inclosed, reserved, carried about, displayed, and put to other uses, so that finally, after a number of days, weeks, months, or years the taking and eating may follow"?[37] Chemnitz also discusses questions he had previously touched on in his chapters on the

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[35]Norman P. Tanner, editor, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Volume 2: Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward; Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University, 1980), 696 (decree); 698 (canon). On the history of the decree on the eucharist compare Hubert Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient,* volume 3 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, no date), 268-285. Chemnitz is quoted according to the following editions: Martin Chemnitz, *Examen Concilii Tridentini* (Berlin: Gustav Schlawitz, 1861), 326-334; Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent,* 4 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 2:293-313.

[36]*Decrees,* 696. p. 698: can. VII: "Si quis dixerit, non licere sacram eucharistiam in sacrario reservari, sed statim post consecrationem astantibus necessario distribuendam; aut non licere, ut illa ad infirmos honorifice deferatur: a. s."

[37]Chemnitz, *Examination,* 293; Chemnitz, *Examen,* 326.

cult of the sacrament and the festival of Corpus Christi.[38] In our context, we will concentrate on the statements that directly pertain to the question of the reservation of the sacrament for the sick.

Chemnitz first states that the Council of Trent only claims tradition, namely a canon of the Council of Nicaea, for this practice.[39] A custom of the church, though, can never be binding on the Christians without command or example in Scripture [§6, 296]. The institution of Christ shows that there was no long delay between consecration and eating and drinking. Discussing the evidence of the practice of the early church, he shows that there existed a certain variety. On the one hand, there are documents that show that the elements were consumed immediately after the end of the divine service. His array of testimonies does not only cover the early church, but calls up such unlikely witnesses in his favour as Gabriel Biel.[40] On the other hand, there is the aforementioned stipulation

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[38]Chemnitz, *Examination*, 276-292; Chemnitz, *Examen*, 320-326.

[39]*Canones et Decreta*, 57 refers, in an annotation, to canon 13 of the Council of Nicea, which treats the communion of those close to death. It does not speak explicitly of the reservation of the sacrament (see Norman P. Tanner, editor, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Volume I: Nicaea I to Lateran V* [London: Sheed and Ward; Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University, 1980], 12). From Chemnitz's discussion (*Examination*, 300; *Examen*, 328-329) it is obvious that his partners in the dialogue quoted canon 18 in a form of which Chemnitz was rightfully suspicious. This canon deals with the issue that deacons are not supposed to give communion to priests. Since deacons are lower in the hierarchy, priests have to be communed by bishops or other priests. In one Latin translation, this canon (numbered as 14) has the addition: "Quod si non fuerit in praesenti vel episcopus, vel presbyter, tunc ipsi proferant, & edant" (Mansi, 2, 690). From the fact that the deacons commune themselves when no priest is present, it follows necessarily that the eucharist was reserved. Unfortunately, this is a later addition and not part of the original canon of Nicaea.

[40]Chemnitz quotes, among others, Corpus juris canonici, De consecratione, dist. 2. Ch. Tribus gradibus (ch. 23, *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Aemilius Friedberg, Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1959, vol. I, col. 1321: "Tribus gradibus conmissa sunt sacramenta diuinorum secretorum, id est presbitero, diacono, et ministro qui cum tremore et timore clericorum reliquias corporis domini custodire fragmetorum. *Idem*: § 1. Tanta in altario certe holocausta offerantur, quanta populo sufficere debeant. Quod si remanserint, in crastinum non reseruentur. sed cum timore et tremore clericorum et diligentia consumantur. Qui qui autem residua corporis Domini que in sacrario relicta sund, consumunt, non statim ad accipiandos communies cibos conueniant." Origen, Homilies on Leviticus 5,8 (PG 12, 458f). esp. 459: "Nam et Dominus panem, quem discipulis dabat, et discebat eis: 'Accipite et manducate,' non distulit, nec servari jussit in crastinum." Council of Matiscona II (Macon), 585, canon 6, Mansi 9,952, Humbert of Sylva Candida, Contra Nicetam 23,

of Nicaea and numerous accounts that show that the consecrated elements were retained for a later communion. In examining the historical evidence Chemnitz first questions the authenticity of the Nicene canon, since it is missing in several editions.[41] But he admits that there are examples from antiquity whose authenticity cannot be denied. Consecrated elements were exchanged as a sign of fellowship between churches.[42] They were reserved for the sick.[43] There was also the reservation of the elements in private homes , for example, hermits, who did not have access to the eucharist at all times, took the blessed elements to their cells. This practice was later forbidden. Of the reservation for the communion of the sick in the strict sense, Chemnitz knows only one true example (Eusebius, 6,34) from the very special situation of the Novation schism, where communion for those schismatics who wanted to be reconciled with the catholic church before their death was made available also on those days where there was no celebration of the sacrament.[44]

Chemnitz's conclusion from the historical evidence is that the custom was not universal and that the reservation of the sacrament was "free

PL 143, col. 994; and. Gabriel Biel, 26th lecture on the canon (recte 36th lecture, compare Gabriel Biel, *Canonis Missae expositio*, edited by Heiko A. Oberman, William Courtenay, volume II (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965), 45. His cloud of witnesses spans the time from the Early Church to the late Middle Ages, thereby trying to establish *another* chain of tradition than the one the Roman Catholics claimed for their position.

[41]Rightfully so, compare footnote 35.

[42]Chemnitz refers to the practice of Irenaeus as mentioned in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* V ,24,14 (Eusèbe de Césarée, *Histoire Ecclésiastique II, Livre V-VII*, Paris: Éditions Le Cerf, 1955 [SC 41], 70;Engl. translation: Eusebius, *Church History*, in: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers II,1, 243).

[43]Chemnitz quotes Eusebius and the account of how a presbyter in Alexandria who could not bring the eucharist to the dying Serapion, since this presbyter himself was sick, sent a boy with the consecrated elements (Chemnitz, *Examination*, 307; *Examen*, 331; reference to: Eusebius, *Church History* VI, 44 [not 34, as the Latin and English edition says]; Eusèbe, *Histoire*, 159-160; Eusebius, *Church History*, 290). Chemnitz seems to be unaware of the first account of the practice to have communion outside the divine service by Justin Martyr, *Apol.* I, 67 (Ante-Nicene Fathers, 186).

[44]Otto Nußbaum, *Die Aufbewahrung der Eucharistie*, Theophaneia, volume 29 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1979) gives an exhaustive treatment of the historical evidence for the reservation of the sacrament in church history. Nußbaum's study supports Chemnitz' theses that the reservation was not a universal practice.

from any superstition and without any special worship apart from the use."[45]

Since there is historical precedent, although not as widespread as Trent claims, how prevalent should the present practice be? For that, Chemnitz goes back to the institution narrative, which is "norm and rule."[46] Chemnitz is not in favour of a reservation and gives several arguments for his position.

First, from the description of the last supper, Chemnitz concludes: "Therefore it agrees better with the description of the institution and the example of Christ to recite the words of institution and by means of them to bless the Eucharist at the place and time of Communion, in the presence of those who are to be communed, rather than at another place and time in the absence of those to whom it is to be offered."[47] The second argument looks at the character of the words of institution. "'Take, eat, do this etc.' are directed not to the elements, but those who were about to commune."[48] Therefore, it is not in harmony with the institution to consecrate in the absence of the communicants. Third, the Lord's Supper is not a medicine to be taken quietly, but the words are necessarily attached to it. A separation of the words of institution and communion distorts the intimate connection between the proclamation of Christ's death and communion. Fourth, the sick need comfort, and the best consolation they can get are the Words of Institution. Fifth, if there is no reservation, the question of what the elements are apart from the use, which "disturb the simplicity of the doctrine and faith concerning the Eucharist," is avoided.[49] Sixth, and last, since Rome tries to make it mandatory, as a sign of Christian liberty in protest of this effort to enslave consciences, the Lutherans reject this canon of Trent.

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[45]Chemnitz, *Examination*, 309; *Examen*, 332: "Fuit autem talis illa reservatione simpliciter sine aliqua superstitione, et sine peculiari cultu extra usum."

[46]Chemnitz, *Examination*, 311; *Examen*, 333: "norma[m] et regula[m]"

[47]Chemnitz, *Examination*, 311; *Examen*, 333: "Magis igitur consentaneum est descriptioni institutionis, et exemplo Christi, verba coenae recitare, et illis benedicere Eucahristiam, in loco communionis, et tempore communionis, in praesentia communicandorum: quam alio et loco et tempore, absentibus illis, quibus exhibenda est."

[48]Chemnitz, *Examination*, 311; *Examen*, 333: "Verba illia conae, Dixit: Accipite, comedite, hoc facite etc. diriguntur non ad elementa, sed ad communicaturos."

[49]Chemnitz, *Examination*, 312; Examen, 333.

Therefore, the Lutheran practice is to "recite the words of the Supper, which are in fact the consecration, in the presence of the sick person."[50] In that way, the Lutherans follow the prescription and example of Christ, and not a particular tradition which has no foundation in Scripture.

If we look at Chemnitz's argument, we see that he very carefully investigates the historical evidence. He does not go the easy route, simply dismissing all historical questions by referring to the sole authority of Scripture. Nevertheless, a practice that is not mentioned in Scripture and is not universal must be judged according to Scripture. He does not argue that any prolongation of the use is in itself illegitimate—as the bringing of the elements immediately after consecration to the sick and shut-ins, or to keep elements for a short time to commune the sick.[51] But for the present time, he sees no advantages of such a practice that is not as close to the example and command of Christ as the practice the Lutherans have adopted, to keep consecration and communion as close together as possible.

Having surveyed the historical practice and reflection in the Lutheran church on the question of whether preconsecrated elements should be used at the communion of home-bound Christians, the question remains, how this informs our present practice.

First, in the Lutheran church there is no real historical precedent to bring the consecrated bread and wine to the homes. The really scanty evidence from two orders of the Reformation time that bear the marks of a period of transition and that did not in any way shape the later practice of the Lutheran tradition, is rather explained out of certain idiosyncrasies given up after maturing. Second, following the Lutheran rule that the institution of the Lord's Supper gives the pattern and rule of our practice, the custom to separate the community in which the sacrament is

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[50]Chemnitz, *Examination*, 312; *Examen*, 333.

[51]Also in his discussion of chapter III and canon IV of the decree on the sacrament (*Decrees*, 694-695; 697), in which the theological foundation of the reservation of the sacrament and the eucharistic cult is laid by the assertion that the sacramental union starts after the consecration and continues after mass, Chemnitz, using extensively the rule "that sacraments apart from their divinely instituted use are not sacraments" (Chemnitz, *Examination*, 243), concludes that we are not allowed to disrupt the action of the Lord's Supper and postpone communion for days, months, or years. "For the account of the institution relates that the offering, taking and eating took place at once" (*Examination*, 249; *Examen*, 307).

consecrated from the community in which it is consumed—as it is done in when the consecrated elements are brought to the homes—is more remote from the institution of the Lord's supper than having the entire *actio* happening with the communicants present. Third, since the Words of Institution are both proclamation and consecration, such a practice severs what God has put together in this action, even when the words are repeated at the place of communion, since the words are no longer performative words bespeaking *now* what the elements are, but they become merely an historical report. We also have to remember that it was the gist of Luther's reform of the mass to bring consecration and communion as closely together as possible, so that in his *Deutsche Messe* he even has the consecration of the bread and its communion first, and then following the consecration of the chalice and the communion of the blood of Christ.[52] This practice, although not followed in the orders for corporate worship in the Lutheran churches, nevertheless influenced the way in which the communion of the sick was celebrated. Here, where because of the small number of communicants such a celebration was more practical, the bread was consecrated and immediately distributed, followed then by the chalice.[53] Fourth, the Lutheran Church took great pains to make it clear to the communicants what elements were consecrated. For that purpose, the signing of the cross during the very words of Christ as a significative gesture was introduced at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[54] It is against the spirit of this liturgical approach, which cherishes the certainty of the communicant very highly, if this certainty is not given to a communicant when he is deprived of the consecration in his presence. Fifth, the communion of the sick is part of the overall spiritual care of those persons. The general custom to have at least the opportunity for private confession or the obligatory general confession before the Lord's Supper shows that communion is embedded in the pastor-communicant relationship. This becomes impossible if

[52]Martin Luther, *WA* 19, 99,5-11; *LW* 53, 81-82.

[53]Th. Kliefoth, *Die ursprüngliche Gottesdienst-Ordnung in den deutschen Kirchen lutherischen Bekenntnisses, ihre Destruction und Reformation. 2., beträchtlich erweiterte Auflage*, volume 5 (Schwerin: Verlag der Stiller'schen Hof-Buchhandlung [Didier Otto], 1861) [Liturgische Abhandlungen, vol. 8]), 161.

[54]Georg Rietschel, *Lehrbuch der Liturgik*, second edition, revised by Paul Graff (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1951), 376-377; Paul Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung der gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands*, volume 1 (Göttingen: Vandehoeck und Ruprecht, 1937), 200-201.

people who are not called to the ministry become "extraordinary ministers of communion," to use the Roman Catholic term. Another aspect is the question of admission to the sacrament. It is part of the pastor's duty as a steward of God's mystery to explore and decide if the person asking for the Lord's Supper is in the state to receive in a way that is benefiting this person. The question of admission to the Lord's Supper is too often seen only as a question of church membership, instead of a question of spiritual care, if communion is beneficial for this person at that specific time.[55]

It remains in question whether today's situation forces us to deviate from the historical Lutheran practice and to adopt a practice that might not be heretical, but is definitely inferior. Is it the lack of time, a schedule of duties that leaves the pastor hardly time to breathe? In the nineteenth century, horse and buggy or walking were the means of transportation of a pastor visiting his people. Now we have cars and the congregations are, for the most part, not really larger than in times past. Do we really have the right to say that pastors today have less time to visit their parishioners than in times past? If there is a problem with time, maybe the pastor has to rethink his schedule and his priorities in the light of what he has promised at his installation when he responded affirmatively to the question: "Will you minister faithfully to the sick and dying?"[56] That might mean that some things he does now he no longer can do. But a concentration on the essential duties of the pastor is certainly not a luxury, but rather a sign of faithfulness to the Lord of the office and to the congregation the pastor is serving. Luther approved of the Brandenburg order "until one can do it in a better way."[57] The Lutheran church has found a better way. To go back to a poorer practice cannot be an adequate way in which we face the challenge of a greying society.

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[55]Maybe one reason for that is the fading of the notion that one can eat and drink the Lord's body and blood to one's damnation. If that is seen as a real possibility, questions of admission become rather urgent for those who care about the spiritual future of those desiring communion.

[56]The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship: Agenda* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 225.

[57]Compare note 16.

Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation

Charles A. Gieschen

The Book of Revelation is often interpreted as a document that is full of eschatology, namely, it is understood as depicting the gloom of the last days and the glory of eternity. Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature typically does have eschatological content, but such literature—including Revelation—should not be interpreted as speaking exclusively about end time events.[1] Apocalyptic literature primarily consists of visions about divine mysteries, some of which may be future mysteries and many of which may be past or present. The risen Christ says to John: "Write therefore the things that you have seen, namely *the things that are* and the things that are about to take place after these things" (1:19). The "things that are" include the many worship scenes John sees, like the throne room scene in Revelation 4-5, that depict a reality that is both present and eternal. Since Revelation speaks about Christ's action and presence in the past and present, it is reasonable to assume that it should teach us something about how Christ is present with His church and received in the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Largely because traditional terminology that is associated with Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper is not found in Revelation, it is not a centerpiece in discussions of the biblical basis for teaching the sacraments. This study, however, will demonstrate that Revelation contains a significant amount of imagery that provides evidence of both sacramental theology and practice among first-century Jewish Christians. The imagery that teaches about baptism is primarily the sealing with the Divine Name and the clothing with white garments. Imagery involving dining with Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, the Passover, and Divine Presence worship, teaches about the Lord's Supper.

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[1]This distinction between "apocalyptic" and "eschatological" literature is especially emphasized by Christopher C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Jewish Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 1-48.

Dr. Charles A. Gieschen is Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology and Chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

I. Baptismal Theology

One of the reasons that some interpreters overlook evidence of baptismal theology in Revelation is because they do not connect two important actions in early baptismal rites with depictions of similar actions in this apocalypse.[2] These two actions are the marking of the Divine Name on the baptismal initiate and the placing of a white garment on the newly baptized. The crucial methodological question is this: Did mention of marking and giving of names as well as the wearing of white garments in Revelation become the source of this baptismal practice in the early church or do these depictions reflect already existing first century baptismal practice?[3] There are two solid reasons to see these depictions as reflecting already existing baptismal practice. First, these

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[2]Robert H. Mounce, for example, denies any connection between the sealing in Revelation 7 and baptism; see *The Book of Revelation*, revised edition, New International Commentary of the New Testament (NICNT) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 157. In spite of G. K. Beale's excellent discussion of the seal, he only briefly notes that Jewish Christians connected the seal with baptism; see *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGNTC) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 409-416, especially 409, note 105. Even Lutheran commentators are not particularly strong on seeing an allusion to baptism here. For example, Louis A. Brighton generalizes the seal in Revelation 7 to both baptism and the Lord's Supper as "sealing" activities of the Spirit, and also notes that the sealing activity of Revelation 7 does not refer to the initial sealing of believers (for example, conversion); see *Revelation*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 186-187. Brighton follows the basic approach of R. C. H. Lenski, who states this is a sealing of the heart by the Holy Spirit through word and sacrament; see *The Interpretation of Saint John's Revelation* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), 249. John G. Strelan makes several insightful comments about the relationship of the seal to Christ, but does not mention baptism; see *Where Earth Meets Heaven: A Commentary on Revelation* (Adelaide, South Australia: Openbook Publishers, 1994), 131-135. Other scholars who see an allusion to baptism in Revelation 7 or even a reflection of baptismal practice include: Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of Saint John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 283-284; Massey H. Shepherd Jr., *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), especially 85-91; Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 147-163; J. Ysebaesart, *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development* (Nijmegan: Dekker and Van de Vegt, 1962), 285-288; and Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 159-163.

[3]For a broad study of these actions in baptism, see G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study of the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers* (London: SPCK, 1967).

two aspects of the baptismal rite are not completely new with the administration of baptism among early Christians, but both reflect rites from Israel's past. Second, the scenes of this vision communicate to Christians more readily if their imagery is grounded in the actual experience of the readers.

A. Sealing with the Divine Name

Revelation shows a great interest in the marking or receiving of a "name" (ὄνομα) or names. There are three primary texts in Revelation that speak about this:

> 3:12: [Christ says] He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never will he go out of it, and I will write on him *the name of my God* [τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου], and *the name of the city of my God* [τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου], the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and *my own new name* [τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν].
>
> 14:1: Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had *His name* and *His Father's name* [τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦβο] written on their foreheads.
>
> 22:4: There will no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him; they will see His face, and *His name* [τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ] will be on their foreheads.

How many names do the followers of the Lamb receive? Revelation 3:12 speaks of having the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of Christ written on those who are faithful. Revelation 14:1 states that the saints had the name of the Lamb and the Father's name written on their foreheads. Revelation 22:4 testifies that the saints have the name of God (the Father) on their foreheads. The fact that these texts exist alongside each other in the same document supports the conclusion that they each are speaking of a singular name that is shared by God (the Father), the Lamb (Christ), and the Church (the visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit).[4] What, then, is this name?

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[4]Some may argue that this conclusion is reading trinitarian theology back into Revelation. However, the explicit use of "trinitarian" language for God in Revelation 1:4-5, the titles shared by God (the Father) and the Lamb, the position of the seven Spirits before the throne, the position of the Lamb upon the throne, and the worship of the Lamb with God (the Father), all support the understanding that the Son and Holy Spirit share the Divine Name.

The place to start in solving this puzzle is Revelation 19:12b-13, which gives insight into the mysterious or hidden name of the Son: "He has *a name written on Him that no one except He Himself knows* [ἔχων ὄνομα γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ αὐτός]. [13] He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and *His name is called the Word of God* [κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ]."

There is solid evidence for the conclusion that the unknown or hidden name of Christ is YHWH, the personal name of God in the Old Testament.[5] Furthermore, this conclusion is also supported by the fact that the name by which Christ is known according to this text is "the Word of God" (Revelation 19:13; compare John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 4:11-13). The identification of Christ as the Word is founded upon the identification of Christ with the angel of YHWH, who is present in several theophanies in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges.[6] Exodus 23:20-21 states that this angel has the Divine Name "in him": "Behold, I [YHWH] send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my Name is in him." Since this "angel" has the name YHWH in him, he is not from among the myraids of created angels; he is YHWH in a visible form.

It is not surprising that ancient Israelites and pre-Christian Jews, long before and during the first century A.D., referred to this angel who possessed the most important word of the world as "the Word of YHWH," "the Word of God," or simply "the Word."[7] Note the following texts from Genesis, Ezekiel the Tragedian, Wisdom of Solomon, and Philo that evince this phenomenon:

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[5]Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 253; see also the broader discussion in Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115-158, and Adelheid Ruck-Schröder, *Der Name Gottes und der Name Jesu: Eine neutestamentliche Studie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchenener Verlag, 199). Some commentators on Revelation have have drawn this same conclusion; for example, see Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of Saint John*, 542.

[6]See Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origins of Gnosticism* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1985); see also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 51-69.

[7]Exodus 23:20-21 is a frequent text used by Philo in his discussion of the Word. For further evidence, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 103-113.

Genesis 15:1-4: After these things *the Word of YHWH* came to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." [2] But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" [3] And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir." [4] And behold, *the Word of YHWH* came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir."

Ezekiel the Tragedian, *Exagoge* (second century B.C.): [96]"Stay, Moses, best of men, do not come near [97] until you have loosed the bindings from your feet; [98] the place on which you stand is holy ground, [99] and from this bush *the Divine Word* shines forth to you."

Wisdom of Solomon (circa first century B. C.), 18:14-16: For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, [15] *your all-powerful Word* leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior [16] carrying the sharp sword of your authentic command, and stood and filled all things with death, and touched heaven while standing on earth.

Philo, *De Confusione Linguarum* (circa first century A. D.), 146: But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a son of God, let him press to take his place under God's Firstborn, *the Word,* who holds eldership among the angels, an archangel as it were. And many names are his for he is called: the Beginning, *the Name of God, His Word,* the Man after His Image, and "He that sees," namely Israel.

The identification of the hidden name of Christ as YHWH may appear to go against the clear testimony of Revelation 19:12: "He has a Name written on Him that no one but He Himself knows." This assertion, however, does not mean that Christ cannot or has not revealed His hidden name. This statement is evidence that an important aspect of early Christian teaching, probably pre-baptismal instruction, was the revelation of the true name of Christ, as can be seen already in the foundational Christian creed: "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:11). The significance of this revelation of Jesus' hidden name as the Divine Name is also visible in the prayer that concludes the farewell narrative in John 17:11b, 26: "Holy Father, protect them in your Name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your Name that you have given me [. . .]. [26] I made your Name known to them and will continue to make it known."

The understanding that the Son and the Holy Spirit share the Divine Name is evident in the baptismal formula (Matthew 28:19): individuals are to be baptized in the singular Divine Name shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[8] The revelation of Jesus' hidden name is also a significant topic in some Gnostic texts.[9]

Therefore, the three references in Revelation to the name on the forehead speak about the Divine Name that is given in baptism. Although 3:12 speaks about the writing of the Name as a future reality ("He who conquers [. . .] I will write on him the Name of my God"), both 14:1 and 22:4 imply that the Name was written on the people of God before the eschatological events and certainly before these people entered heaven. This Name gave them identity and protection during earthly tribulations as well as assured them of their heavenly inheritance. Note the relationship between the Name and being faithful to Christ in these two texts from the seven letters to the churches:

> Revelation 2:3: I know you have fortitude even to endure on account of *my Name*.
>
> Revelation 3:8: I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied *my Name*.

This language and imagery is grounded in the fact that the Divine Name is written, spoken, and imparted in baptism.

The primary text that supports connecting this language of the writing of the Name on the forehead with baptism is the reference to the "sealing" (σφραγίζω) of the saints in Revelation 7:2-3: "Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, [3] saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed [ἐσφραγισμένων] the servants of our God upon their foreheads.'"

The historical background of this sealing imagery in Revelation is Ezekiel 9, where the prophet sees "the Glory," who is the visible image of YHWH, command a man in white linen and his six associates to mark

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[8]See also Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Holy Baptism," in *All Theology Is Christology: Essays in Honor of David P. Scaer*, edited by Dean O. Wenthe, William C. Weinrich, Arthur A. Just Jr., Daniel Gard, and Thomas L. Olson (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2000), 67-77.

[9]See especially *Gospel of Truth* 38.7-40.29 and *Gospel of Phillip* 54.5-8; see Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," 153-158.

the faithful of Jerusalem and then carry out a Passover-like purge of all the unfaithful who do not bear YHWH's mark.[10]

> Ezekiel 9:4-6: And the LORD said to him, "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over the abominations that are committed in it." [5] And to the others He said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him, and kill; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; [6] slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one upon whom is the mark."

The Hebrew word translated "mark" here is תָּו (*taw*), which also signifies the specific mark made for the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Therefore, the mark to be placed upon the faithful remnant is probably the Hebrew letter *taw*. It was placed upon the forehead for visibility. As the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it functioned as a mark of YHWH's ownership because it was considered shorthand for His Name, much like the Greek letter Omega does in early Christian symbolism, including Revelation, where both God (the Father) and Christ are known as the Alpha and Omega (1:8; 21:6; 22:13). Like the blood on the Israelite door posts during the night of the tenth plague, this mark was a protecting sign or seal that shielded its bearer from the purge of the unrighteous that YHWH ordered in the vision of Ezekiel 9. Furthermore, it is not insignificant that in ancient Hebrew script, and even in the first century A.D., a Hebrew *taw* looked like two equal lines crossed, either erect like + or at an angle like X.[11]

This imagery from Ezekiel 9 is the pattern used in both depicting and recording the vision of the sealing of the righteous in Revelation 7. The "angel" who ascends "from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God" in Revelation 7:2, therefore, appears to be a depiction of the angelomorphic Glory, since the Glory was to return from the East (Ezekiel 43:1-2) and he bears the seal, which is the Divine Name (Exodus 23:21; compare 28:36).[12] The identification of the Son of Man or Glory as

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[10]This relationship with Ezekiel 9 is acknowledged by most commentators; for example, see Beale, *Revelation*, 409-410.

[11]For a discussion of this mark and its transformation into the sign of the cross, see Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 220-260.

[12]See Robert H. Gundry, "Angelomorphic Christology in Revelation," *Society of Biblical Literature Special* 33 (1994): 662-678, and Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*,

the Risen Christ in Revelation 1 makes a christolological identification of this angel possible. This sealing in Revelation does not necessarily imply that the name was actually written, but the sealing was probably accomplished with a mark, possibly a Hebrew *taw*, that represented the Divine Name.[13] This conclusion is supported by the observation that the contrasting mark of the Beast represents nothing other than the name of the Beast: "so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name" (Revelation 13:17).

Some have argued against understanding the sealing in Revelation 7 as baptism since it is depicting this group as already Christians who then are sealed before the eschatological tribulations.[14] It must be remembered, however, that John is given a vision that encompasses and collapses a lengthy period of time. Several generations of Christians had already been reborn in baptism, had experienced the chaos of this world as described in John's visions, and then had died in the faith. John is not given multiple individual visions of these Christians, but one encompassing vision that depicts the sealing of the church of various generations with the Divine Name in baptism. In other words, it is precisely in the individual baptismal sealings throughout history that this eschatological sealing dramatized in Revelation 7 is taking place.

Another Christian apocalypse, the second century *Shepherd of Hermas*, provides abundant support for this understanding of sealing with the Divine Name in holy baptism. Note what the following text (*Hermas Vis.* III.3.5) says about the building of the church: "Hear, then why the tower has been built upon the water: because your life was saved and shall be saved through water, and the tower has been founded by the utterance of the almighty and glorious Name, and is maintained by the unseen power of the Master."

159-163; see also John 6:27.

[13]Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 329-331. Daniélou details evidence of the sign of the cross as the *Sphragis* (seal) in the early church fathers; see *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 54-69.

[14]For example, Ysebaesart argues that this scene depicts the bestowal of the "eschatological seal" that is a development of the first century "baptismal seal"; see *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 287. Brighton distinguishes this sealing activity from the "initial sealing" of the saints, namely their conversion; see *Revelation*, 187. Revelation, however, is not depicting a new "eschatological seal," but is portraying the eschatological significance of the seal Christians receive in baptism.

This text is vivid testimony that the church, which is the tower, is built by baptism, which is depicted as water and the utterance of the Divine Name. *Hermas* also specifically speaks of baptism as "the seal" (*Hermas Sim*. IX.16.3-4): "'So these also who had fallen asleep received the seal of the Son of God and entered into the kingdom of God. For before,' said he, 'a man bears the Name of the Son of God, he is dead. But when he receives the seal he puts away mortality and receives life. The seal, then, is the water.'"

There are also several hymns in the Jewish/Christian *Odes of Solomon*, dated between the late first to the third century, that understand the sealing as the marking of the Divine Name with oil in baptism. Although it cannot be determined that the author of *Odes* actually knew the Book of Revelation, the eighth ode is an especially helpful commentary on the scene in Revelation 7:

> *OdesSol* 8.13, 19-22: And before they existed, I [Christ] recognized them and imprinted a seal on their faces [. . .]. [19] And my righteousness goes before them; and they will not be deprived of my Name; for it is with them. [20] Seek and increase, and abide in the love of the Lord. [21] You who are loved in the Beloved, you who are kept in him who lives, you who are saved in him who was saved, [22] you shall be found uncorrupted in all ages, on account of the Name of your Father. Hallelujah.

Although Ezekiel 9, with its roots in the Passover, is the primary text shedding light on the vision depicted in Revelation 7, some of the background for the significance of the Divine Name as a protecting agent has its origin in the High Priest traditions of ancient Israel. The High Priest, who entered the Holy of Holies on *Yom Kippur*, bore the Divine Name on his turban (Exodus 28:36-38). This Name was understood as an important element of what protected the High Priest as he came into the presence of YHWH. The protection that the priestly garb (including the Divine Name) provided from the punishing presence of YHWH is especially vivid in Wisdom of Solomon's description of Aaron's intervention on behalf of Israel (compare Numbers 16:41-50):

> Wisdom of Solomon 18.22-25: He conquered the wrath not by strength of body, and not by force of arms, but by his word he subdued the Punisher, appealing to the oaths and covenants given to our fathers. [23] For when the dead had already fallen on one another in heaps, he intervened and held back the wrath, and cut off its way to the living. [24] For upon his long robe the whole world was depicted, and the glories of the fathers were engraved on the four rows of stones, and thy majesty [i.e., the Divine Name] on the

> diadem upon his head. [25] To these the Destroyer yielded, these he feared; for merely to test the wrath was enough.

The priests of Israel were also anointed with oil as part of their ordination rite (Exodus 29:7). A relationship between priestly rites and early baptismal practices involving the baptismal formula is explicitly expressed in some second and third century texts concerning baptismal practice:

> Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 22.2-3: After this pouring the consecrated oil and laying of his hand on the head, he shall say: "I anoint thee will holy oil in God the Father Almighty and Christ Jesus and the Holy Ghost." And sealing him on the forehead, he shall give him the kiss of peace [. . .].[15]

> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 7: Then having come up from the font we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction, in accordance with the ancient discipline whereby, since the time when Aaron was anointed by Moses, men were anointed unto the priesthood with oil from a horn.[16]

> *Didascalia Apostolorum* 16: But where there is a woman, and especially a deaconess, it is not fitting that women should be seen by men, but with the imposition of the hand do thou anoint the head only. As of old the priests and kings were anointed in Israel, do thou in like manner, with the imposition of the hand, anoint the head of those who receive baptism, whether of men or women.[17]

In summary, these texts support the understanding that the texts from Revelation that speak of sealing or writing the Name on the forehead are depicting the baptismal rite and resulting baptismal reality. Jean Daniélou has even argued that early Jewish Christians placed the *taw* upon the forehead of the baptismal initiate with oil as the seal of the Divine Name spoken when the water was poured.[18] It was the sign of ownership, protection, and enlistment into the church. Christians then bore the Name, had the power of the Name, called upon the Name, and willingly suffered on account of the Name.[19] Neither was this seal a mere symbolic abstraction for early Christians; the outer mark was a tangible

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[15]Translation from E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 1960), 6.

[16]Whitaker, *Documents*, 8.

[17]Whitaker, *Documents*, 10.

[18]*Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 329-331; see also J. Daniélou, *Primitive Christian Symbols*, translated by D. Attwater (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964), 136-145.

[19]See Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," 127-156.

reminder that Christ, the incarnation of YHWH, tabernacles in the Christian even as the Name dwelt in the tabernacle and temple of ancient Israel. This understanding of the Name as the personal reality of Christ dwelling in the believer is evident in the post-communion prayer found in the *Didache*: "We give you thanks, Holy Father, for *your holy Name*, whom you have caused to dwell in our hearts" (10.1). Therefore, the focus on the marking with the Divine Name in Revelation likely reflects extant first-century baptismal practice.

B. Clothing with White Garments

In addition to this focus on the Divine Name, a second aspect of Revelation's testimony to early baptismal practice is evident in the repeated imagery of white "garments" (3:4-5, 18; 4:4; 16:15; 19:13, 16) or "robes" (6:11; 7:9,13-14; 22:14). Because of the frequency of depictions of saints and angels in heaven clothed in white, it may be argued that the white clothing is simply a symbol of glorification. Revelation, however, appears to make a distinction between the white "garments" (ἱμάτια) worn by the followers of the Lamb on earth and the white "robes" (στολαί) worn by saints and angels in heaven.[20] Several Revelation texts testify that the white garment is already a possession of Christians on earth, long before their glorification in heaven:

> 3:4-5: Yet you still have a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled *their garments*; and they shall walk with me in *white*, for they are worthy. [5] He who conquers shall be clad thus in *white garments*, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life [. . .].
>
> 3:18: Therefore, I counsel you to buy from me [. . .] *white garments* to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen.
>
> 16:15: "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping *his garments* that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!"

There is clear testimony from the third century forward that the baptismal initiate was stripped naked, washed, and then clothed in a white garment.[21] Anointing with oil was also part of the baptismal rite in some locales. These two texts from very significant church fathers are representative evidence of this baptismal practice:

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[20]The one exception to this distinction is the elders of heaven in 4:4 who wear white "garments."

[21]See Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Michael Glazier, 1992), 7-21.

> Ambrose, *De mysteriis* 34: After Baptism, you have received white garments, that they may be a sign that you have taken off the clothing of sin and that you have been clad in the pure garments of innocence.[22]

> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Cathecheses*: Now that you have taken off your old garments and been clad in white garments, you must also in spirit remain clothed in white. I do not mean to say that you must always wear white garments, but that you must always be covered with those that are truly white and shining, so that you may say with the prophet Isaiah: "He has clothed me with the garment of salvation, and he has covered me with the vestment of joy."[23]

It has been already demonstrated that early baptismal practice of anointing is rooted in the priestly ordination rites of ancient Israel. It is very probable that the clothing with white also has its roots in priestly clothing.[24] According to Exodus 29, YHWH commanded Moses that Aaron and his sons be washed with water, anointed, and clothed at the door to the tent of meeting:

> Exodus 29:4-9: You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water. [5] And you shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the coat and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the skilfully woven band of the ephod; and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; [6] and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy crown upon the turban. [7] And you shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him. [8] Then you shall bring his sons, and put coats on them, [9] and you shall gird them with girdles and bind caps on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual statute. Thus you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

These ordination rites clearly informed early Christian baptismal practice and theology.[25] The many divine theophanies of the Old Testament, as well as the careful priestly rituals, all testify concerning the difficulties involved with sinners coming into the presence of a holy God. Like the faithful of ancient Israel, Jewish Christians had a healthy

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[22]Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 49.

[23]Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 49.

[24]White linen appears to be a central aspect of the garb of every priest (Exodus 28:42). This is reflected in Revelation where the priestly elders of the heavenly throne room are clad in white (Revelation 4:4; compare 1 Chronicles 24:3-19; 26:17-19).

[25]Margaret Barker identifies the Name and clothing on the saints in Revelation with the Divine Name and clothing of the High Priest; see *On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 71.

understanding and respect for the holiness of God. Baptism in Revelation, therefore, can be understood as the salvific event that purifies sinners to be "a kingdom and priests to our God who reign on earth" (Revelation 5:10). This evidence supports the conclusion that later baptismal practice in the church is not rooted primarily in the visions of Revelation, but is a continuation of extant baptismal practice that is reflected in Revelation and was influenced by the ancient ordination practices of the Israelite priesthood. The priestly nature of baptism in cleansing and clothing God's people to enter and serve in His presence is also visible in this text from the Epistle to the Hebrews:

> 10:19-22: Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the [heavenly] sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, [20] by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, [21] and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, [22] let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

This priesthood of the baptized, according to Revelation, is lived out in gathering around the heavenly throne during worship to sing the unceasing liturgy with the angels and saints, and then going into the chaotic world to be faithful and uncompromising witnesses like Jesus, the faithful and true martyr.

In addition to this priestly background, the white garment imagery in Revelation also reflects how Holy Baptism was understood as a wedding ceremony in which a person is cleansed, clothed as a bride, and joined with the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. The church as Christ's bride is the prominent image of the closing chapters of Revelation (19:7-9; 21:2, 9). Although Revelation 19:8 states that the fine linen of the bride is "the righteous deeds of the saints," this should not be viewed as distinct and disparate from the understanding of the white garments elsewhere as baptismal. This, rather, reinforces one of the themes of Revelation that the baptized saints indeed bear the fruit of their life in Christ. The white garment of baptism, therefore, shows forth the individual foretaste of the corporate experience of the eschatological wedding between Christ and the church. A similar understanding of baptism is the foundation for Paul's discussion of marriage in Ephesians:

> 5:25-27: Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, [26] in order that He sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word [i.e., the Divine Name], [27] that He

> present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she be holy and without blemish.

Therefore, the white garment imagery of Revelation probably reflects both baptismal practice and theology. The white garment depicts the purity from sin and the priestly vocation that Christians receive in Holy Baptism. It is a reminder that this baptismal purity allows Christians to live and serve in the presence of God now and is the basis for our future service before the throne in eternity.

II. Eucharistic Theology

It has already been emphasized that significant portions of Revelation depict the present and eternal worship in which the saints participate, both in heaven and on earth. A central part of early Christian worship was the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This section, therefore, will examine the relationship between the worship imagery presented in Revelation and the eucharistic worship of early Christians. As stated in the introduction above, imagery involving dining in the heavenly sanctuary, the Passover, and Divine Presence worship, teaches us important theology about the Lord's Supper.

A. Dining with Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary

The Book of Revelation provides significant glimpses into the reality of the heavenly sanctuary, especially in chapters 4-5. Like several Old Testament texts, this vision affirms that the heavenly sanctuary is where the action truly is; the earthly temple served as a reflection of this sanctuary and even as an entry point to participation in the heavenly sanctuary. A central point of Ezekiel is the assurance that the heavenly sanctuary is real and will continue to exist even after the first earthly temple in Jerusalem is destroyed, as it was by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. The vision of Ezekiel assured those who would see their temple torn down by the Babylonians that God's dwelling place continues in heaven and is accessible to God's people, even when they are exiled from the promised land.[26] In a similar manner, the central vision of the Book of

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[26]The Jewish priests who left the temple and settled at Qumran show in some of their writings, especially *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, an acute awareness of their participation in the heavenly sanctuary even as they are cut off from the Jerusalem temple; see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 173-175, and C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

Revelation assured Jewish Christians who had been cut off from the synagogue and the Jerusalem temple that they still had access to God; thus, they participate in the most important worship, that which happens in the heavenly sanctuary. Revelation even calls those who worship Christ "a kingdom and *priests* to our God *who reign on earth*" (Revelation 5:10). Christians on earth, therefore, are presented as priests who have access to the heavenly sanctuary.

Some scholars have drawn attention to how the reading of Revelation allows the hearers to have an experience that parallels John's vision.[27] There is validity for this assertion in terms of experiencing all the scenes of Revelation. The experience of the Divine Presence, however, does not appear to result solely from the reading of the Book of Revelation. It is not insignificant that John had this experience on the Lord's Day, the typical day for Christians to gather for worship that included the Eucharist.[28] After John beheld the risen Christ on earth and heard the seven letters to the churches, he then enters the heavenly sanctuary via an open door (Revelation 4:1): "After these things I looked, and, behold, *a door* [θύρα] that has been opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard as a trumpet was speaking to me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you what will necessarily happen after these things.'"

Is John the only one who can pass through this open door? The understanding that other faithful Christians can pass through this open door to the heavenly sanctuary in the context of Lord's Day worship appears to be the basis for two invitations of Christ in the seven letters:

> Revelation 3:8: I know your works; behold, I have placed before you *a door* [θύρα] that has been opened, which no one is able to shut, because you have little power and you kept my word and did not deny my name.
>
> Revelation 3:20: Behold, I stand at *the door* [τὴν θύραν] and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens *the door* [τὴν θύραν] I will come in to him and eat with him and He with me.

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[27]David Aune speaks of "actualizing" the experience of the vision; see "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 65-96. Leonard Thompson emphasizes that the use of this book in worship enabled the congregation to experience the eschatological deliverance in the here and now; see *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 53-73.

[28]Richard Bauckham, "The Lord's Day" in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, edited by D. A. Carsons (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 197-220.

In spite of the fact that these references to a "door" are sometimes understood to have different referents, it will be demonstrated below that all three texts, which are within a few verses of each other, refer to the same door: the entry to the heavenly sanctuary.[29] A ladder, a gate, or an opening are words sometimes used to describe an entry point into God's presence, or His heavenly sanctuary, in biblical and extra-biblical literature. Examples are found in these texts:

> Genesis 28: 12, 17: And he dreamed that there was a *ladder* set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven [. . .]. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the *gate of heaven*.
>
> *1 Enoch* 14.15: And behold there was *an opening* before me and a second house which is greater than the former and everything was built with tongues of fire.
>
> *Testament of Levi* 5.1: At this moment the angel opened for me *the gates of heaven* and I saw the Holy Most High sitting on the throne.

But what about the specific word "door" where is this word used for the entry point to the heavenly sanctuary? This usage can be understood by examining the frequent use of θύρα as the word used in the Septuagint for the door to Israel's tabernacle and then their temple. For example, God instructs Moses in this manner: "And you shall make a screen for *the door of the tabernacle*, of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework" (Exodus 26:36). The tabernacle reflects the heavenly sanctuary: if the earthly sanctuary is entered through a θύρα, then the heavenly sanctuary also has a θύρα as its entry point. Of the three references to "door" in Revelation presented above, 4:1 is the easiest to understand. There is no doubt that the door is here an image for entry into the heavenly sanctuary, for John passes through the open door and beholds the mystery of the heavenly sanctuary with the divine throne at the center.

The first usage of door is found in the letter to the church at Philadelphia, which begins with this title of Christ: "the one who has the key of David, the one who opens and no one can close and closes and no one opens" (Revelation 3:7). Jesus is drawing on the language of Isaiah

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[29]Brighton sees the occurrence in 3:8 as a metaphor for mission opportunity, the two occurrences in 3:20 as a metaphor for the heart of Christians in need of repentance, and 4:1 as a metaphor for the entry point of divine revelation given to only a few; see *Revelation*, 89-114.

22:22 where YHWH directs His words to Shebna, chief steward of Hezekiah, whose management role of the king's house, symbolized by the "key of David," will be replaced by Eliakim. Louis Brighton unpacks the significance of Jesus' usage of Isaiah: "Jesus uses the words of Isaiah to proclaim that He is over the household of God, and that He alone has the authority to control entrance into it [. . .]. The key of David symbolizes his authority now by which He has opened to all people the door of his Father's Kingdom."[30]

The "key," "opening," and "closing" imagery of verse 7 has an obvious relationship with the mention of the "door" that immediately follows in verse 8: "I have placed before you *an open door* which no one can *close.*" Furthermore, one of the significant problems that the congregation in Philadelphia was facing was opposition from the Jewish synagogue: "Behold, I am going to hand over those of the synagogue of Satan who call themselves Jews and are not, but rather they lie" (3:9; compare John 8:31-59). One of the lies these so-called "Jews" surely shared with their Jewish brothers who worshipped Jesus is the accusation that Jewish Christians had abandoned YHWH and no longer had access to Him. To such a lie Jesus says: "you have an open to door to the kingdom before you." This interpretation is supported by the promise Christ gives to this church at the end of this letter: "I will place him as a pillar in the temple of my God and he will never again go outside" (3:12). The one who is faithful will not only have access to the heavenly sanctuary for eternity, but he will become a vital part, "a pillar," of that sanctuary in which God dwells for eternity. He will never have to go out, but will remain in the presence of God eternally. This text, therefore, is speaking about the fact that Christ is giving this congregation access to heaven in the midst of their struggles: the door is open to them and no one will close it. This interpretation, although not widespread, is by no means new.[31] Pierre Prigent cites several commentators who support the conclusion that this is "the door to the Kingdom, the door of the heavenly Jerusalem that is offered to Christians."[32]

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[30]*Revelation*, 91-92.

[31]Early in the twentieth century Wilhelm Bousset identified this door as the entrance of the community to participation in the Messianic feast in his *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (1906); see R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, Volume I of the International Christian Commentary (ICC) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 87.

[32]*Commentary on the Apocalypse of Saint John*, 203.

A common interpretation of the second "door" text (Revelation 3:20) emphasizes that Jesus is standing at the door of our hearts, calling sinners to repentance; people must only open their hearts to Him so that He can enter.[33] This interpretation ignores the context and the meal imagery. If this text is interpreted in its immediate context, however, there is a door and a voice described only two verses later: the door to heaven and the voice of the Spirit who calls John to come into the Divine Presence. This text, moreover, echoes Song of Songs 5:2, where the bride states: "the voice of my beloved, he knocks at the door: Open to me, my beloved." Jews of the first century interpreted this book allegorically; the bride was Israel and the groom was YHWH, even the Messiah.[34] Christ uses this marriage imagery and language from Song of Songs to present Himself as the groom, seeking marital union with His bride, the church, specifically the congregation at Laodicea.

This interpretation is congruent with the wider context of Revelation 19-22 where the New Jerusalem, the church, is presented as the bride of Christ, and the last day as the greatest of marriage celebrations that includes a banquet (Revelation 19:7-9). The role of a marriage banquet in celebrating the realization of the prophetic hope of messianic deliverance is well known in the Old Testament (for example, Isaiah 25:6; 62:9; and Ezekiel 39:17) and the Gospels (for example, Luke 14:15-24 and Matthew 22:1-14). The explicit mention of dining is found in the blessing that follows the announced arrival of the marriage of the Lamb: "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage banquet of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). Although it is common to see the marriage banquet as an experience that will commence on the last day, the Book of Revelation certainly understands that these endtime realities have been inaugurated through the death and resurrection of Christ. Worship not only transcends the separation between heaven and earth, but also between the present and the last day.

Finally, how should the eating imagery in Revelation 3:20 be interpreted? Is it merely figurative language for close fellowship? As is obvious from the immediate context, Jesus is calling this congregation to repentance and a restoration of marital union, the intimate union that is most powerfully accomplished in the Lord's Supper, the marriage feast

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[33]For example, Lenski, *The Interpretation of Saint John's Revelation*, 164.
[34]See Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of Saint John*, 218-219.

of the Lamb.[35] This door, therefore, is not a metaphorical door to one's heart, but the entry to the heavenly sanctuary that is accessed here on earth in eucharistic worship when we behold the presence of God in Christ and are united with Him through eating His body and drinking His blood. The question, however, arises: Why is the door to the heavenly sanctuary *open* in 3:8 and 4:1, but here Christ is knocking at a door that is *closed*? The church of Laodicea is a wealthy, "lukewarm" congregation rebuked by Christ because she needs to repent and re-enter the gracious presence of God. The door is not locked to her; she had previously entered Christ's open door and feasted in his presence, but subsequently left. Now Christ invites this congregation to re-enter in order that she dine with Him again at His eucharistic table.

The reference to dining in Revelation 3:20, as well as in 19:9, should not be dismissed as obscure or isolated testimony to the role of the Lord's Supper in the experience of the Divine Presence. These texts, rather, are tangible evidence of a truth that is elsewhere implicit in the worship scenes of Revelation: the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper enables worshippers to transcend both space and time.[36] When we participate in such worship, we join in the heavenly reality and foretaste the end time blessings displayed in Revelation: "they will hunger no more, neither thirst any more" (7:16).

B. The Passover

One of the primary images that points towards a relationship between the heavenly worship depicted in Revelation with the Lord's Supper is the recurring Passover imagery, especially Christ as the Lamb.[37] Although it is often the historical event from the Exodus that comes to mind when we hear the term "Passover," it is vital that the annual festival that centered on the Passover *meal,* which recounted the whole Exodus and

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[35]See Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (1958; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 16. See also Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of Saint John*, 219-220.

[36]See Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 53-73.

[37]Most commentaries note the recurrent Passover/Exodus imagery, so a few examples will suffice: the plagues of Eygpt inform some the imagery in the cycles of seven (especially the bowls in Revelation 16:1-21); the Exodus through the Red Sea stands behind the image of the saints besides the sea of glass (Revelation 15:2); the "Song of Moses" sung after the Exodus is transformed into the Song of the Lamb (Revelation 15:3-4); and the Hallel Psalms (113-118) used at Passover celebrations are prominent in Revelation 19.

wilderness deliverance, also be keep in mind when interpreting this imagery. Furthermore, the most significant scenes in apocalyptic literature are the depictions of the presence of YHWH in His heavenly throne room. This is also true of the Book of Revelation. It is no coincidence that Christ as the having-been-slaughtered-and-now-standing Lamb is the focus of worship in the heavenly sanctuary according to Revelation, not Christ as the glorified "one like a son of man" who is seen in several other scenes of this vision (1:12-3:22; 14:14-16; see also 10:1-14; 19:11-16). The image of Christ as the Lamb, therefore, is the dominant portrait of Revelation's unveiling of Christ.[38]

The understanding that the *Passover* lamb stands behind the Lamb Christology in Revelation is a subject of considerable debate.[39] Although some influence from Isaiah 53 and apocalyptic tradition (for example, Daniel's use of animal imagery and the so-called "animal apocalypse" of *1 Enoch* 83-90) is probable, Pierre Prigent notes the value of emphasizing the Passover background:

> It is in this way that one can best explain the emphasis on the blood of this Lamb and the effect of his sacrifice, which guarantees mankind's redemption (Rev 5:9), as of old during the first Passover, when Israel was ransomed from the land of slavery. When we recall the eschatological notion in the Passover celebrations, we can more readily accept the possibility of identifying Jesus with the lamb of the eschatological Passover whose blood will guarantee definitive and perfect redemption, that is, one that is worldwide (Rev 5:9).[40]

Prigent points to "blood" as a very significant element in the portrayal of the Lamb: He is a lamb who has been "slaughtered" but now stands (5:6; 13:8), who "has freed us from our sins by His blood" (1:5; compare 5:9) because we have washed our robes and made them "white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14), and who enables His followers to conquer "by the blood of the Lamb" (12:11). There is other evidence that early

[38]"Lamb" as a title for Christ is used 28 times (4 x 7), more than any other christological title in Revelation. For a discussion of these titles and the numerology indicated by their usage, see Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 29-37.

[39]See Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of Saint John*, 43-44 and 249-251. The research of Concordia Theological Seminary student Gillian Bond on this topic has influenced and enriched my own understanding of this aspect of Revelation's christology.

[40]*Commentary on the Apocalypse of Saint John*, 250.

Christians combined the themes of Passover and atoning sacrifice. 1 Peter 1:18-19 states: "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with *precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*" Paul, who calls Christ our "Mercy Seat sacrifice [ἱλαστήριον]" in Romans 3:25, also stated: "For Christ *our Passover* [τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν] has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7b). The Gospel of John, especially, presents Jesus as the Passover Lamb: John the Baptist announces Him to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29; compare 1:36); Jesus is crucified on the Day of Preparation when all the lambs are slaughtered for the Passover Feast (19:14); and John's quotation of Exodus 12:46 at the close of his passion narrative identifies Jesus as *the* eschatological Passover sacrifice. Furthermore, Jesus' Bread of Life in John 6, which—at the very least—alludes to the Lord's Supper ("he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" in 6:53), is delivered in the context of the Passover Feast.[41]

Why would the Passover Lamb imagery be featured so much in the giving and recording of this apocalypse? First, it obviously grounds the Christology of this vision in the true humanity and death of Christ. The exalted and reigning Christ is none other than the one who was sacrificed and died on the cross. Second, this Lamb stands in stark contrast with the Beast, the form that Satan takes in order to deceive the nations (Revelation 13:1-18). Even as one has contrast in Revelation between the two cities (Babylon and the New Jerusalem) and the two women (the Harlot of Babylon and the Bride of Christ), there is also a major contrast depicted between the Lamb as the object of true worship and the Beast as the object of false worship. Third, and very crucial for this study, this Lamb Christology is congruent with the way worshippers "saw" Christ in the Lord's Supper. It is vital to understand that first-century Jews remembered the Passover deliverance and anticipated the eschatological deliverance in the Passover *meal* where they ate an unblemished lamb. The depiction of Christ as the Passover Lamb in the heavenly sanctuary helped Christians see that He is one and the same as the Christ whose

[41]John 6:25-65 should not be understood as speaking solely about the Lord's Supper, but neither should it be interpreted as having nothing to do with this sacrament. The words of Jesus are about "eating and drinking" our incarnate Lord in faith through the means by which He offers Himself to us. See also James W. Voelz, "The Discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6: Is it Eucharistic?" *Concordia Journal* 15 (1989): 29-37.

flesh they ate and whose blood they drank when they celebrated the Christian "Passover" each Lord's Day on earth. It is, no doubt, this strong Passover theme in the Lord's Supper that led the church to incorporate the *Agnus Dei* into their eucharistic liturgy.

There may even be a reference to the atoning blood of Christ found in the Lord's Supper in Revelation 7:14. Since the white baptismal *garment* could be soiled by sin (Revelation 3:4-5), it is quite possible that Revelation understands the Lord's Supper as the source for the regular cleansing of the baptismal *garment* in order that one wear a white *robe* for eternity: "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14). The primary Old Testament text for understanding this image is Daniel 11-12, where tribulation comes to the saints "in order to refine, purge, and make them *white* until the end time" (11:35).[42] The testimony of Revelation, however, is not that tribulation leads to this purification, but the source of cleansing is "washing in the blood of Lamb." Once again, Exodus traditions assist in the interpretation of this scene.[43] A priest's garments were sprinkled with blood to signify consecration for service in the temple (Leviticus 8:30; Exodus 29:10-21; compare Exodus 24:4-8).

A similar image is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews.[44] Hebrews 10:19-22 discusses the access of the baptized who dwell on earth to the heavenly sanctuary, as noted above. The author later offers a brief glimpse of the worship within this heavenly sanctuary:

> 12:22-24: But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, [23] and to the assembly of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, [24] and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

Although the "sprinkled blood" here certainly alludes to the Day of Atonement sacrifice offered by Christ Himself (Hebrews 10:12-14), yet it is probably pointing to the presence of this atoning sacrifice in Christ's

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[42]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 436-438.

[43]Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 438-440.

[44]See Daniel J. Brege, "Eucharistic Overtones Created by Sacrificial Concepts in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66 (2002): 61-81.

blood offered in the Lord's Supper since it speaking of the worship in which Christians currently participate ("Mount Zion").

C. Divine Presence Worship

As noted in the introduction, Revelation 4-5 and the other scenes of worship that follow are visual depictions of the hidden-to-the-naked-eye heavenly worship that the church participates in each Lord's Day as the church on earth. These chapters are not only depicting a past or future reality, they are showing forth a present reality for John and the church of his day. As such, they serve as a vivid commentary on what is happening in worship, especially in the Lord's Supper, where the Paschal Lamb who shed His blood and gave His body is present sharing His victory through this meal. The liturgy of Divine Presence found in Revelation 4-5—especially the use of the song of the seraphim from Isaiah 6 (Revelation 4:8)—may have already been brought over from temple and synagogue worship by Jewish Christians to their eucharistic celebrations at a very early date. If so, its presence in this scene would have helped the original hearers see the relationship between John's Lord's Day entry into the heavenly sanctuary and their entry into the heavenly sanctuary during eucharistic worship each Lord's Day.[45]

This function of Revelation in the life of the church is supported by two pieces of evidence. First, Revelation was meant to be read in worship, at one setting, from start to finish: "Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy [the lector] and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written therein [the congregation]" (Revelation 1:3). The contents of this prophecy helped the worshipers to understand the reality they experienced out in the world (for example, the chaos of sin and the activity of Satan) as well as the reality they experienced in worship (for instance, the presence of God and the Lamb, angels, and saints). Second, Revelation ends with a prayer that may be functioning as a "preface" to the Sacrament of the Altar: ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ ("Lord Jesus, **come**!").[46] After experiencing the "revelation" of Christ through the reading of this prophecy, the congregation then experiences the "revelation" of Christ through His "coming" in the Lord's Supper. Oscar Cullmann has argued that this prayer is an example of the Aramaic *Maranatha* ("Our Lord,

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[45]See Shepherd, *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse*, 92-97.

[46]The use of the present imperative makes this an emphatic prayer (thus, the bold font). Aorist imperatives are typical in prayers.

come!"), which is transliterated in a similar position at the end of 1 Corinthians (16:22) and is also found at the end of the preface to the Eucharist recorded in the *Didache* (10.6).[47] He summarizes its significance and application in this manner:

> This ancient prayer thus points at the same time backwards to Christ's appearance on the day of his resurrection, to his present appearance at the common meals of the community and forwards to his appearance at the End, which is often represented by the picture of a Messianic meal. In all three cases a meal is involved. Therefore the *Maranatha* is above all a eucharistic prayer.[48]

> The bold prayer: "Lord come! *Maranatha*!" ought to assume again the eucharistic reference that it originally had, and it should express the double desire, which was realized for the early Christians, of seeing Christ descend into the midst of the faithful gathered in His name and of discovering for themselves, in that coming, an anticipation of His final Messianic return.[49]

Finally, what is the relationship between this eucharistic theology and the baptismal theology discussed earlier in this study? If one accepts the relationship between baptism and priestly ordination rites proposed above, then the marking with the Divine Name, washing, and the clothing of baptism prepares for, and leads one into, the experience of the Divine Presence in the Lord's Supper. A congregation who listened to this apocalypse from start to finish is reminded that the heavenly sanctuary is neither a distant "up there" reality nor a future reality "far down the road" of time: it is an accessible and present reality that the baptized on earth enter and truly experience now in worship, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this sacrament, Christians are invited to experience the Divine Presence: the door to heaven is open as Christ, the Passover Lamb, comes to eat with us by giving us His own flesh and blood for a blessed feast.

III. Conclusion

It may be helpful to reflect briefly on the hermeneutical approach used in the exegesis above. An understanding of the implied reader of

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[47] *Early Christian Worship*, 13-14; see also Oscar Cullmann, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper in Primitive Christianity," in *Essays on the Lord's Supper*, translated by J. G. Davies (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1958), 13-15.

[48] *Early Christian Worship*, 14.

[49] Cullman, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper," 23.

Revelation is vital to the proper and faithful interpretation of this apocalypse. James Voelz states: "A valid interpreter of a text, then, is that person, that man or woman, who assumes the role 'required,' as it were, by a given text—who becomes the reader 'implied' or called for by that very text. And such a one is formed to assume that role by a community, a community which has assumed that role itself."[50]

In light of the imagery discussed above and our knowledge of early Christianity, the "implied reader" of Revelation was a first-century Jewish Christian who had been baptized and participated in eucharistic worship. I have interpreted several scenes of Revelation by seeking to assume the role of this "implied reader." Although one must be careful not to read later liturgical practices into a text, the opposite problem also exists: an interpreter who does not believe or participate in the sacraments as defined in the Holy Scriptures and celebrated in the early church will have difficulty understanding how these texts communicate sacramental theology. This is part of the danger of Lutheran pastors drinking too deeply from the wells of the many Reformed commentaries on the market.[51] They will not find much baptismal water or eucharistic blood in those volumes, and may even begin to think that such theology is not in the Scriptures being expounded.

The scenes of John's vision were given and recorded for worshiping "communities," which understood that the presence and grace of God is communicated through Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The evidence reviewed above certainly confirms this assessment. Revelation both fosters and reflects the understanding that eschatological expectations are experienced in the present through worship. The content of Revelation, therefore, sheds light on sacramental theology and practice among first-century Jewish Christians, light that can also guide the theology and practice of the modern church.

First, Revelation gives us insight on the sacramental practice of first-century Jewish Christians. The sealing with the Divine Name by means of the Hebrew *taw* and the wearing of white garments after baptism were probably prominent aspects of the baptismal rite already in the first

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[50]James Voelz, *What Does This Mean? Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*, Second Edition (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 220.

[51]See David P. Scaer, "Reformed Exegesis and Lutheran Sacraments: Worlds in Conflict," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64 (2001): 3-20.

century. Because of this, the sealing and garment imagery used in the giving and recording of this apocalypse was accessible and understandable to John and the churches to whom he wrote. All the discussion of sealing with the Name should move pastors to reflect upon how they mark a baptismal initiate and how the identity of this person is being transformed with the speaking of the Divine Name and the washing of water. Furthermore, the dominant image of the Passover Lamb, as well as the meal invitations, confirms the understanding that the Lord's Supper was celebrated frequently and that it was an integral part of early Christian worship.

Second, and even more significant, Revelation gives us insight into the sacramental theology of both the God who imparted this visionary experience and the Christians who received and were shaped by it. Baptism is not depicted as merely a initiation rite that shows forth repentance and faith. Through the mention of naming, sealing, and garments, baptism is projected on the big screen of this vision as *the* gracious action of God that brings individuals the eschatological deliverance from sin and its consequences won by the Lamb's sacrificial death and resurrection. Baptism transforms us into a priesthood whose life and identity flows from what we receive and confess in worship. The liturgical rhythm of Revelation, especially the dominant scene of chapter 5 that depicts the worship of the Lamb, demonstrates how worship, in which the Lord's Supper plays a major role, unites us with the heavenly and eternal reality.

In this new millennium when Holy Baptism is viewed by some within Christendom as little more than an initiation rite and the Lord's Supper is sometimes marginalized because of its supposed lack of entertainment value, it is refreshing to read these portraits where the sacraments are presented as central to the church's life. The Book of Revelation reminds us that the seer John was not the only one to experience an apocalypse of Jesus Christ. As the church hears these words, the Lamb of God reveals Himself for His church to behold and worship. Even more: as the church is sealed with the Name and washed, as she sings with angels and archangels, as she eats and drinks, she beholds and is united with—already now—this bloodied Lamb whom she will worship eternally in the age to come.

Liturgy and Dogmatics

Kurt E. Marquart

The purpose of this article is to unpack the tangle of issues hidden beneath the deceptively self-evident commonplace *lex orandi lex credendi*. At the surface level this maxim seems plausible enough: of course there is reciprocity between worship and doctrine! All decent doctrine is prayable, and all decent prayer reflects and inculcates sound doctrine! If this were all there is to it, we could without further ado simply commend the motto to religious educators for practical implementation. But our little motto is not as simple or innocent as it seems. The original form of our now simplified saying was *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*—"that the obligatory manner of praying may determine the obligatory manner of believing." The clause comes from a fifth century collection of anti-Pelagian pronouncements by Roman pontiffs, compiled probably by Saint Prosper of Aquitaine.[1] The original meaning then is clear: the authoritative rule of prayer determines the rule of believing, not vice versa.

It seems that for theologians under the influence of the Reformation, *lex orandi lex credendi* is generally a two-way street, with the rule of faith having the primacy. For certain Roman Catholic writers, on the other hand, the primacy belongs decidedly to the rule of prayer, with the traffic moving decisively in one direction, from liturgy to theology. Such, at least, are the broad conclusions to be drawn from a perusal of Aidan Kavanagh's *On Liturgical Theology*, and of David Fagerberg's *What Is Liturgical Theology*.[2] Fagerberg, himself a former Lutheran, relies heavily on Kavanagh on the one hand, and on the late Russian Orthodox liturgiologist Alexander Schmemann (whom also Kavanagh invokes) on the other. To clarify just what is at stake, let us converse a bit with these authors, and then draw some conclusions of our own.

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[1]Cyprian Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1976), 529.

[2]Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1984); David Fagerberg, *What Is Liturgical Theology?* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992.

Dr. Kurt Marquart is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary.

Following Kavanagh, Fagerberg distinguishes between primary and secondary theology, or *theologia prima* and *secunda*, or first order and second order theology. "Primary theology" is what happens in the liturgy, or more precisely, in the liturgical act or "rite." "Secondary theology" is the systematic reflection upon the primary, liturgical reality. The inescapable conclusion is that liturgy is primary, and dogmatics is secondary theology. Does that mean that liturgy is the chicken that lays the eggs of dogmatics? Fagerberg repeatedly criticises those who would resolve the "chicken-or-the-egg question" by allowing liturgy and theology to take turns—sometimes one being chicken, sometimes the other.[3] His own conclusion is:

> *lex orandi* establishes *lex credendi* and not vice versa. This is not affirmed merely because it can be demonstrated that in most cases a doctrine's formulation was influenced by some antecedent liturgical practice. No, the claim means that the ekklesia's *lex credendi* is fundamentally worked out in the ritual logistics of leitourgia which brings the Church and its faith into being. Therefore we reject the very set-up of what we have been calling the chicken-or-the-egg question. The historical question of which influence came first, liturgical practice or doctrinal teaching, is irrelevant. That the law of prayer establishes the law of faith does not hang on the question of temporal priority. Leitourgia is not an expression of an idea (I have a body or I am a body), it is epiphanous (I am bodily).[4]

Again:

> Leitourgia establishes theology in the way community establishes individual, Tradition establishes icon, gospel establishes homily. It is not mainly a chronological relationship, but a normative one. *Lex orandi* establishes *lex credendi.*[5]

Or:

> Theology is influenced by liturgy, yes; but leitourgia establishes theology because the grammar of *lex orandi* precedes (normatively) the *lex credendi* of the community and individual.[6]

This does not mean that either Kavanagh or his interpreter, Fagerberg, advocates a doctrine-free, mumbo-jumbo ritualism. Both men, and certainly also Schmemann, are at pains to disavow a mere smells-and-

[3]One may see Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 71, 134, and 141.
[4]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 195.
[5]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 200.
[6]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 211.

bells liturgical dilettantism. Indeed, some of Kavanagh's most devastating rhetoric is directed against the notion of "Christian life sunk in a miasma of ritual obsession":[7]

> Sacramental discourse in fact is often thought of as theological adiaphora best practised by those with a taste for banners, ceremonial, and arts and crafts. It is regarded as an academically less than disciplined swamp in which Anglican high churchmen, Orthodox bishops, and many if not all Roman Catholics and others are hopelessly mired. . . . A good example of this attitude is the following description in the catalogue of a certain academic institution for the summer course 106, "Creative Worship": "How to creatively use liturgy, liturgical robes, banners and stoles in both worship and church school. Discover exciting 'tools' for spreading the Good News!". . . Besides being marginally literate, the description cannot bear much scrutiny, because the notion of Church which lies behind it seems to be that of an ecclesiastical boutique. The relationship of embroidery to the driving of a diesel locomotive seems easier to demonstrate than the connection between stoles and proclaiming the Gospel. Something here seems to have been enthusiastically trivialised. Incongruities are joined, reality warped, meaning maimed. Artifact becomes plaything, *sacramentum* a rubber duck.[8]

Fagerberg adds for good measure: "For many, liturgy means exactly no more than protocol, order, pastoral care, or esthetics, which is why what sometimes passes for liturgical theology is nothing more than neatening up the 'how.' Thus liturgy comes to be the province of quirky seminarians who get a thrill out of rubrical tidiness."[9]

Kavanagh and Fagerberg, however, are not content to assert simply that liturgy must have theological substance. Their claim is much more far-reaching. Fagerberg rejects the whole dichotomy "liturgy and theology," as though these were two different entities needing to be brought into some sort of working relationship. Thus a "theology of worship" is as inadequate as a "theology from worship." As examples of the former, Fagerberg cites works by Regin Prenter and Vilmos Vajta, and the latter he illustrates by way of Peter Brunner and Geoffrey Wainwright. Fagerberg devotes chapters 2 and 3 (some 120 pages), respectively to detailed discussions of the two conceptions of theology and worship. Prenter and Vaijta are said to represent a "theology of

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[7]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 178.
[8]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 46-47.
[9]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 181.

worship." The basic criticism of this scheme is that worship or liturgy here are viewed as simply illustrations or expressions of doctrine or theology imposed, as it were, from without, rather than arising from the liturgy itself. Brunner's and Wainwright's schemes, dubbed "theology from worship," are marginally closer to the mark in that this option "not only wants doctrine to be expressed in liturgical form, it also wants worship to be rooted in doctrine."[10] In other words, the latter view lays more stress on the *lex orandi*. Still, that is not enough.

What is wanted by our authors is nothing short of the total dominance of *lex orandi*, the rule of prayer, over the rule of faith, *lex credendi*. The crucial move here is the rejection of the dichotomy "theology and liturgy" in favour of their "organic" union in "liturgical theology." Let us hear Fagerberg verbatim to this point:

> Our first affirmation is that liturgical theology is primary theology. . . . It is a truism to say encounter with God precedes reflection upon that encounter. Liturgy is encounter with God, but furthermore it is also a living adjustment, i.e. a theological response, to the Holy One. The division which puts raw experience in the sanctuary but theology in the office is here rejected. . . . The adjustment made by those who encounter God's holy presence in word and sacrament is an instance of *theologia prima*. . . . Because encounter with God precedes reflection upon that encounter, liturgy is the ontological condition for theology. This is what tradition means when it says that the law of prayer (*lex orandi*) establishes (*statuat*) the law of belief (*lex credendi*), and not vice versa. Thus our second affirmation is that liturgical theology originates and resides in the communal rite.[11]

Or, in the blunt prose of Aidan Kavanagh:

> For many this puts us on strange ground indeed, for since the high Middle Ages with the advent of the university and of scientific method, we have become accustomed to the notion that theology is something done in academies out of books by elites with degrees producing theologies of this and that. . . . To argue with minds accustomed to thinking of theology in such a manner that theology at its genesis is communitarian, even proletarian; that it is aboriginally liturgical in context, partly conscious and partly unconscious; . . . and that its agents are more likely to be charwomen and shopkeepers than pontiffs and professors—all this is to argue against the grain. It is to argue that the theology which we most readily recognise and practise is in fact neither primary nor seminal but secondary and

[10]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 12.
[11]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 16-17.

> derivative: *theologia secunda*. . . . For what emerges most directly from an assembly's liturgical act is not a new species of theology among others. It is *theologia* itself. . . . Theology on this primordial level is thus a sustained dialectic. Its *thesis* is the assembly as it enters into the liturgical act; its *antithesis* is the assembly's changed condition as it comes away from its liturgical encounter with the living God in Word and sacrament; its *synthesis* is the assembly's adjustment in faith and works to that encounter. The adjustment comprises whole sets of acts both great and small, conscious and unconscious, all of which add up to a necessarily critical and reflective theology. . . .[12]

> One was called secondary theology, about which we talk a lot. The other was called primary theology, about which we talk little if at all. . . . A liturgical act *is* a theological act of the most all-encompassing, integral, and foundational kind. . . . It is this constantly modulating, self-critical, and reflective adjustment to God-wrought change in the assembly's life of faith which constitutes the condition for doing all other forms of theology and of understanding the Word of God. It is not so much an isolated act as it is a state of continuing discourse within the worshipping fellowship, and the state is graced, self-critical, reflective, and altogether primary. It is the wellspring out of which the river of secondary theology arises and begins its flow by twists and turns to the sea. It is what liturgy enacts . . . the immense gravitational pull exerted by secondary theology makes all this not easy to do.[13]

I must apologize—not for Fagerberg and Kavanagh—but for my own lengthy quotations from their works. I simply see no other way to do justice to the complexity of their argumentation, without distorting it by paraphrase and interpretation. I trust, however, that it is now reasonably clear what these authors really mean by primary and secondary theology respectively. Despite the warning flags of certain turns of phrase in the quotations, it is entirely imaginable that many readers—and not only those of a churchly, liturgical orientation—will be inclined to respond viscerally with a hearty "Amen" to the primary and secondary distinctions developed here. Who could be so icy-veined as not to thrill to Kavanagh's bold *pronuntiamento*: "It was a Presence, not faith, which drew Moses to the burning bush, and what happened there was a revelation, not a seminar"?[14] Down then with the academic pedantries of "secondary theology"—and hooray for the primacy of worship and

[12]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 74-76.
[13]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 88-90.
[14]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 92.

devotion! Did not the Lord Himself call for confession rather than discussion of Him?

There are no doubt worthy motives in such instinctive reactions. But have the underlying issues been grasped correctly? Or are we being deceived by superficial first-hand impressions? Much of what is driving the Kavanagh-Fagerberg agenda seems indeed to be noble and genuine—a crusade for integrity and authenticity, and against sham and humbug in religion. If one found oneself mired in the swamps of an unbiblical, authoritarian papal scholasticism, the bright vision of "primary theology" could easily offer hope and promise of spiritual escape and liberation. Some such dynamic is suggested by Kavanagh's complaint about modern English versions of a ninth- or tenth-century prayer, which in the original had mentioned the pope and the local bishop and concluded "and with all right-worshipping cultivators of catholic and apostolic faith."[15] An imprimatured 1961 English translation renders this: "and for all those right-believing teachers who have the guardianship of the catholic and apostolic faith"! Comments Kavanagh: "a considerable secondary theological paraphrase." He goes on to complain that even after Vatican II, the official English version puts it like this: "and for all those who hold and teach the catholic faith that comes to us from the apostles." He grumbles about the switch from "right worship" to "right believing" and "right teaching, and both are by the context centered upon church officials." He laments the servitude of right worship "to correct belief and teaching by church officials and secondary theologians."[16] Again:

> Furthermore the liturgical assembly, which has been meeting under God fifty-two times a year for the past 2,000, now must be regarded as a theological cipher drawing whatever theological awareness it has not from its own response to its graced encounter with the living God, but from sources found in ecclesiastical bureaucracies and within the walls of academe. The served has become servant, mistress has become handmaid.[17]

The quest for spiritual liberation is unmistakable. Yet there is another, more secular agenda underlying the Kavanagh-Fagerberg paradigm of primary versus secondary theology. Cyprian Vagaggini's rather more

[15]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 81.
[16]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 82.
[17]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 83.

traditionalist *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* draws attention to the liberal-modernist exploitation of the *lex orandi*:

> It is well known that the modernists supposed they could find in the formula *lex orandi lex credendi* their theories on the concept of the faith as blind feeling, completely extraneous to discursive reason, which is generated in the subconscious and is expressed in some way in the practical and religious life, especially in the liturgy. The liturgy in turn would be the generative rule of dogmatic formulas, and these would be nothing but an attempt to express intellectually the state reached at a certain moment of development by that same blind religious feeling. Thus the blind religious feeling, extraneous to reason and continually changeable, which somehow makes its states extrinsic in the liturgy, would also command the formulation and the meaning of the dogmas, as well as the necessity of their continual adaptation, even substantial, to its variation.[18]

Comments the Italian author: "There is no need to waste time on such an interpretation of the formula *lex orandi lex credendi.* It is completely foreign to the Catholic meaning and falls with the concept of faith and of dogma which it presupposes."[19]

Clearly neither Kavanagh nor Fagerberg advocate "primary theology" simply as "blind religious feeling," liturgically expressed. Both are at pains to show that their "primary theology" is really theology and not blind, amorphous experience. Kavanagh: "The language of liturgy is not just religious rhetoric in need of disciplining by the scientific rigour of secondary theology. The language of liturgy is . . . a primary *theological language* different from, but architectonic of, the language of theologians," or "The language of worship mediates the substance on which bishops, councils, and theologians reflect. Without that substance, their sort of theology would have no referent."[20]

Both Kavanagh and Fagerberg defer a great deal to the Russian Orthodox Father Alexander Schmemann, as representative of a presumably more authentic and patristic liturgical theology. At one point, however, Fagerberg actually comes close to criticizing Schmemann:

> After all this talk about theology being grounded in and springing from the liturgy, after this defense of liturgy as the ontological condition for theology and its norm, after arguing for a special methodology for liturgical theology

[18]Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions*, 530.
[19]Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions*, 530-531.
[20]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 123-124.

> which begins with historical structural analysis, Fr. Schmemann is able to say—with a straight face, apparently—that there also needs to be a theological critique of the liturgy![21]

But Fagerberg is quick to point out in response that "the faith ritually expressed can be lost to arbitrariness," and that for Schmemann, the theological critique of such arbitrariness ("several strata of pseudo theological and pseudo pious explanations and interpretations, . . . a superficial pseudo symbolism, . . . individualism and legalism") must arise from within the liturgical tradition itself.[22] However, says Schmemann himself, "it is not easy today . . . to rediscover and to communicate the real 'key' of the Orthodox liturgical tradition, to connect it again to the *lex credendi*."[23] Thus Schmemann's sort of theological critique escapes the alleged errors of Prenter, Vajta, Brunner, and Wainwright:

> He does not mean finding a doctrinal key to the liturgical rite, a theological plumb line for liturgical reform. He is not lapsing back to a liturgical resourcement of *a priori* doctrinal propositions. This is what theology of liturgy has often done, yes: searched for a consistent theology of worship with which liturgy must comply once it is formulated. But the theological task is to find the meaning of the Ordo exactly in its structures.[24]

This critical talk about a "doctrinal key" or "a theological plumb line" really has in mind something very concrete, viz. the Reformation's doctrinally based purification of late medieval liturgical forms and aberrations. Consider Fagerberg's summary of Vajta's main point:

> In the contrast between justification and work righteousness, we encounter this center of Luther's whole thought. Vajta has attempted to show that Luther's critique of the Mass stems not from reactionary objection to external form, nor from simplistic objection to sacrificial categories and repetition of the Mass, but rather from the fundamental distinction between righteousness as God's mercy (gift) as opposed to righteousness as God's justice which humans must fulfill.[25]

Here at last we are face to face with the crux of the Reformation: what is the gospel? Is it the glorious trinitarian truth of full and free salvation

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[21]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 172.
[22]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 176.
[23]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 176-177.
[24]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 173.
[25]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 51.

in the incarnate Son of God—*sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura*—to which everything else must yield, even an angel from heaven (Galatians 1:8!), how much more then various details of liturgy or ritual, no matter how "traditional"? Or is the gospel a complex amalgam to be pieced together from or read out of the bric-a-brac of traditional ecclesiastical ritual? The contradiction between the two views could not be more glaring—there can be no compromise between them.

For the church of the purely preached gospel and the rightly administered sacraments, justification is indeed the heart and soul of everything, and is therefore also *the* criterion for the whole life of the church. This very truth was unceremoniously surrendered by the pseudo-Lutheran bureaucracies of the "Lutheran" World Federation, when they agreed to the shameful Augsburg Concession to the Vatican in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1997). At the insistence of Cardinal Ratzinger's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, paragraph 18 of the Joint Declaration was amended to make justification "an indispensable criterion," that is, one among others, rather than *the* unique and overarching such criterion for all teaching and practice!

Kavanagh also inveighs against the sixteenth century, when liturgical "interpretations took on a particular theological and polemical cast among both Reformers and Catholics, a step which led quickly to a secondary theology officially defined as 'correct' now determining rather than interpreting liturgical text and form."[26] Again, justification is just one point among others: ". . .there was rather more afoot in the sixteenth century than some disagreements over justification, the real presence of Christ in the eucharist, and papal primacy." Really? What could possibly be "rather more" than these? The astonishing answer is: "A sense of rite and symbol in the West was breaking down and under siege."[27] So a "sense of rite and symbol" is more crucial than justification and the Real Presence? Again, the real villain is doctrine: "And the primary theological act which the liturgical act had once been now began to be controlled increasingly by practitioners of secondary theology whose concerns lay with correct doctrine in a highly polemical climate."[28]

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[26]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 81.
[27]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 108.
[28]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 109.

There is in Kavanagh's work a persistent anti-doctrinal drumbeat:

> The liturgy is neither structured nor does it operate in such a way as to provide doctrinal conclusions. These are distilled from the liturgy by theologians according to the general principle that data are not *given* but must be consciously *taken*. Doctrinal conclusions are lifted from the liturgical engagement of Christians by theologians whose consciousness at the time of the lifting ineluctably affects what is lifted. This means that doctrinal conclusions are selective and may well tell one more about the theologian, and about the state of theological discourse at the time the conclusions are taken, than about the liturgy itself.[29]

Does this not land us rather near the relativistic swamps of modernism which, as such, Kavanagh surely wishes to avoid?

Here is a particularly eloquent denunciation by Kavanagh of modern subjectivism:

> "Real people" are regarded as existing prior to social discourse with others. This gives rise to the impression that whatever evils there may be are rooted in impersonality; that closeness between persons is requisite; that such closeness must be immediate and primary, and that this is the only way one grows—by sharing the unspoken with the unspoken-to (the most important things, we say, cannot be put into words). Anything that intrudes into this exclusive and fairly aphasic bond between sovereign individuals imperils the bond and is therefore oppressive—social things especially, such as customs, manners, law, role, reverence, even grammar. This produces people who are awash in an oceanic ideology of shifting intimacy which is replete with uncontrolled, unanchored, and undirected sacralities.[30]

How can "liturgy," or if you please "leitourgia," cure this malaise apart from solid doctrine? In the absence of "secondary" doctrine is it not a matter of driving out one "immediate and primary" "closeness" with another? What is this "primary theology" anyway, if it is not truth or doctrine? Kavanagh's favorite term for it is "rite":

> Rite involves creeds and prayers and worship, but it is not any one of these things, nor all of these things together, and it orchestrates more than these things. Rite can be called a whole style of Christian living found in the myriad particularities of worship, of laws called "canonical," of ascetical and monastic structures, of evangelical and catechetical endeavours, and in particular ways of doing secondary theology. A liturgical act concretizes all

[29] Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 126.
[30] Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 28.

> these and in doing so makes them accessible to the community assembled in a given time and place before the living God for the life of the world.[31]

Later the sixteenth century is blamed for "a new system of worship which would increasingly do without rite, one in which printed texts would increasingly bear the burden formerly borne by richly ambiguous corporate actions done with water, oil, food, and the touch of human hands."[32] Are "oil" and "hands" really that much more "richly ambiguous" than the despised "smells and bells"? Can "corporate actions," no matter how "richly ambiguous," really rise above the level of trivial ritualism and mumbo-jumbo apart from the clear word, truth, and doctrine of God? Why then all this exaltation of ambiguity? Why the flight from doctrinal clarity?

In the end, Fagerberg appeals to George Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic" theory of religion. Lindbeck, of course, reduces doctrine from revealed truth to mere "grammatical rule." With one stroke the whole question of truth is side-lined into irrelevance.[33] But the ecumenical prospects are rosy:

> The cultural-linguistic theory takes liturgy seriously as a locus for theology. . . . Ecumenical concord might then be recovered when a commonly shared code can be perceived despite differences of encodement. Then our unity would lie in orthodoxy (right worship; *doxa* means glory) rather than uniform orthodidaskalia (right teaching) or fuzzy orthopistis (right believing). Such would be the power of Pentecost.[34]

Kavanagh strikes an even more explicitly agnostic note:

> It is thus hard for Wainwright to see how absolute certainty could attach to any doctrinal conclusion drawn from the worship of the Church. Absolute

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[31]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 100.

[32]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 108.

[33]George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 54-55: "One can admit the unsubstitutable uniqueness of the God-willed missions of non-Christian religions when one thinks of these faiths, not as objectifying poorly what Christianity objectifies well (as Karl Rahner proposes), but as cultural-linguistic systems within which potentialities can be actualized and realities explored that are not within the direct purview of the peoples of Messianic witness, but that are nevertheless God-willed and God-approved anticipations of aspects of the coming kingdom. This obviously is a biblical argument for a practice of interreligious dialogue that was unthinkable in biblical times and that the Bible nowhere discusses, either to approve or disapprove."

[34]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 301-302.

> certainty is a rather large order to expect of any conclusion, doctrinal or otherwise, drawn from anywhere. The lives of people rarely wait on such certainty before proceeding to the business at hand. To expect that the worship life of faithful people will yield up absolute doctrinal certainty seems to expect a lot from lives which do not themselves, whether in worship or out of it, move to absolute certainty on any or all matters human or divine. . . . A people's liturgy, like the people themselves, does not wait upon absolute certainty. It, like them, takes risks, even faith risks, because plausibility, unlike absolute certainty, is rife with risk. Standing before the living God is a risky business.[35]

Here is secularization with a vengeance! This is the very *monstrum incertitudinis* which Luther rejected in the frivolous word-games of scholasticism! Theology deals only in *credibilia* (things to be believed), not *probabilia* (mere probable opinions), the province of sophists: "let scholastic doctors be scholastics; all of them put together do not suffice, with their opinions, to confirm one single sermon."[36] All true theology is eminently preachable.

All this is turned on its head when adiaphora become primary and doctrine secondary. This is a mockery of the truth, which alone can make us free. Mere ritualism enslaves us instead to human opinion, be that ancient superstition or the latest post-modern *Zeitgeist* (for example, Lindbeck).

There is an interesting autobiographical note in Fagerberg's book: "This book was written when the author was a Lutheran pastor; as it was being published the author is Roman Catholic. . . . The basis of this book was my dissertation at Yale in which I tried to outline the perimeters of liturgical theology; then I blinked and saw an ecclesiology, one which drew me into the Roman Catholic liturgical tradition."[37] No doubt the ritualist-traditionalist bondage can seem quite bracing compared to that of ELCA/Yale nihilist anomia!

How error-prone liturgical evolution is without strict doctrinal controls, is made clear by none other than Kavanagh's and Fagerberg's star-witness for "liturgical theology," Alexander Schmemann. He points out the baneful effect of Byzantine court ceremonial on the liturgy in the

[35]Kavanagh, *Liturgical Theology*, 125.

[36]Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 58 volumes (Weimar, 1883-), 1:246. Hereafter abbreviated as *WA*.

[37]Fagerberg, *Liturgical Theology*, 8.

fourth century. Before that Christian worship had been "profoundly solemn with an inner solemnity, and devoid of external solemnity," whilst "the pagan cults were shot through with this external solemnity and Christians regarded this style of worship as *pompa diabola*."[38] Further:

> In the Byzantine epoch the emphasis was gradually transferred from the assembly of the Church to the exclusive and actually self-sufficient significance of the clergy as celebrants of the mystery. . . . One of the final stages of this development will be the transferring of the name 'holy doors' from the doors of the church building to the doors of the iconostasis, with the prohibiting of all but ordained persons to enter these doors.

Thus "Byzantine thought came to the conclusion that the true mystery of consecration was not Baptism, but the sacrament of Ordination. In the light of this theory the majority of those who had earlier been regarded as 'consecrated' were now 'deconsecrated'." The cult having become a mystery, the "altar or sanctuary became its place, and access to the sanctuary was closed to the uninitiated" that is, the unordained.[39]

Perhaps the classic examples of false doctrine by liturgical evolution are provided by Vagaggini:

> The liturgy is one of the principal contributors to the evolution of dogma, as that evolution is admitted by Catholic teaching. This is the kernel of truth which was contained in the modernist interpretation of the principle *lex orandi lex credendi*. . . . The reader who has followed this long reasoning has certainly been thinking continually of the case of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption. And rightly so. These two cases are the most recent and most conspicuous demonstration of the influence of the liturgy on the development of a dogma. . . . Who could be sure, for example, that the doctrine of Mary Mediatrix of All Graces is not on the same road toward definition?[40]

As Hermann Sasse pointed out just after the Second Vatican Council, and precisely in connexion with the Marian dogmas: "But in the very moment in which we *de facto* subordinate the Scriptures to the authority of the Church, the Church becomes not only the judge, but also the source of doctrine."[41]

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[38]Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction To Liturgical Theology*, second edition (New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 94.

[39]Schmemann, *Introduction*, 99, 101.

[40]Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions*, 533, 541.

[41]*Holy Church or Holy Writ*. Interchange Supplementary Paper (Sydney: IVF

The Augsburg Confession makes it perfectly clear just what is primary and what is secondary: "For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church, that the Gospel be preached there unanimously according to its pure understanding, and the sacraments be administered in keeping with the divine Word. And it is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church, that uniform ceremonies, instituted by men, be observed everywhere."[42]

The blessed primacy of the evangelical truth, of God-given doctrine, *doctrina divina*, is stressed by the Church of the Augsburg Confession as by none other. Ritual and constitution are central for Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy—and perhaps ethics for Calvinism—in a way in which these things can never be central for the Lutheran Church, whose distinctive modern form was conceived in Theses, born of a Confession, and weaned on a Formula!

To the preached word or doctrine everything else is subordinated—human ritual absolutely, but even the divine sacraments relatively:

> For the greatest of all, holiest, most necessary, highest worship, which God has required as the greatest in the First and Second Commandments, is to preach God's Word; for the preaching office is the highest office in the church.[43]
>
> For the ceremony of the mass or of the Lord's Supper . . . [was] instituted for the sake of preaching, as Paul says: "As often as you eat this Bread and drink the Cup, you are to proclaim the Lord's death."[44]
>
> If the office of teaching be entrusted to anyone, then everything accomplished by the Word in the church is entrusted, that is, the office of baptising, consecrating, binding, loosing, praying, and judging doctrine. . . . Even Christ chiefly proclaimed the gospel, as the highest function of his office, and did not baptise [John 4:2]. Paul, too, gloried in the fact that he was sent not to baptise [I Corinthians 1:17], as to a secondary office, but to the primary office of preaching the gospel.[45]

Graduate Fellowship, 1967), 22.

[42]*Augsburg Confession* VII, 2, 3, German.

[43]*Augsburg Confession* XV, 42, German.

[44]*Augsburg Confession* XXIV, 35, German.

[45]*Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 volumes, edited by J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986), "Concerning the Ministry," 40:36. Hereafter abbreviated as *LW*.

> Truly the Gospel is the one most sure and noble mark of the church, much surer than Baptism and the Bread, because [the church] is conceived, made, nurtured, borne, trained, fed, clothed, adorned, armed, and preserved only through the Gospel. In short, the church's whole life and being consists in the Word of God.[46]

> For the pulpit can and must alone preserve Baptism, Sacrament, doctrine, articles of faith, and all estates in their purity.[47]

This reflects exactly what is true primary theology in Holy Scripture, namely the confession of the divine truth or doctrine. The classic confession of course is that of Saint Peter in Saint Matthew 16:16: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Lord does not respond that this is a fine, secondary reflection on a primal or primary experience! No: "flesh and blood has not revealed [this] to you, but My Father, Who is in heaven." What Peter confesses is exactly what has been revealed to him—not "rite" or ritual clues or approximations, but truth itself, yes, "propositional" truth—and it can be restated without loss of truth, for example, the parallels in Mark 8 and Luke 9. The biblical source of all of our trinitarian creeds is the proposition: *Jesus is Lord* (that is, YHWH!). The rest of Christian dogma is simply further amplification of this central truth, for instance, 1 Timothy 3:16: "Great is the mystery of our religion, etc." The very words of our God incarnate "are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). They let us know the truth which makes us free (John 8:32). This is the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42), the "faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) for which, in all the articles of faith, our whole Book of Concord contends so earnestly!

We are back with the traditional two basic meanings of "theology": objectively it means the content, the God-given doctrine, and subjectively it means the God-given sufficiency to be "able ministers of the New Testament" (2 Corinthians 3:6). Which then is the primary meaning, the objective or the subjective? Pieper says: "Obviously the first and proper meaning of the term *theology* is theology in the subjective sense, aptitude. . . . For, as Walther says: 'Theology must first be in the soul of a man before he can teach it, present it in speech and writing.'"[48] Given

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[46]*WA* 7:721.12; English version in C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 70.

[47]*LW* 28:62.

[48]Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951-1953), 1:45.

our present age of rampant subjectivism and sentimentality, and therefore theology-by-sob-story, I respectfully prefer the logic of Luther against Karlstadt and the "heavenly prophets":

> But whatever their measure or order the outward factors should and must precede. The inward experience follows and is effected by the outward. God has determined to give the inward to no one except through the outward. For He wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside of the outward Word and sign instituted by Him. . .
>
> Observe carefully, my brother, this order, for everything depends on it. However cleverly this factious spirit makes believe that he regards highly the Word and Spirit of God and declaims passionately about love and zeal for the truth and righteousness of God, he nevertheless has as his purpose to reverse this order. His insolence leads him to set up a contrary order and, as we have said, seeks to subordinate God's outward order to an inner spiritual one. Casting this order to the wind with ridicule and scorn, he wants to get to the Spirit first.[49]

The outward, revealed Word, truth, or doctrine of God *is* theology in its most basic, primal sense. This objective theology is the source and means from which alone issues genuine theology in the subjective sense, as the spiritual competence of the ministers of the New Testament. In a time when divine truth is the object of journalistic scorn and hysteria without, and of ritualistic, pseudo-theological, and bureaucratic evasion within the church, may the Lord of the Church inflame our dear Synod once more with love and zeal for these incomparable riches!

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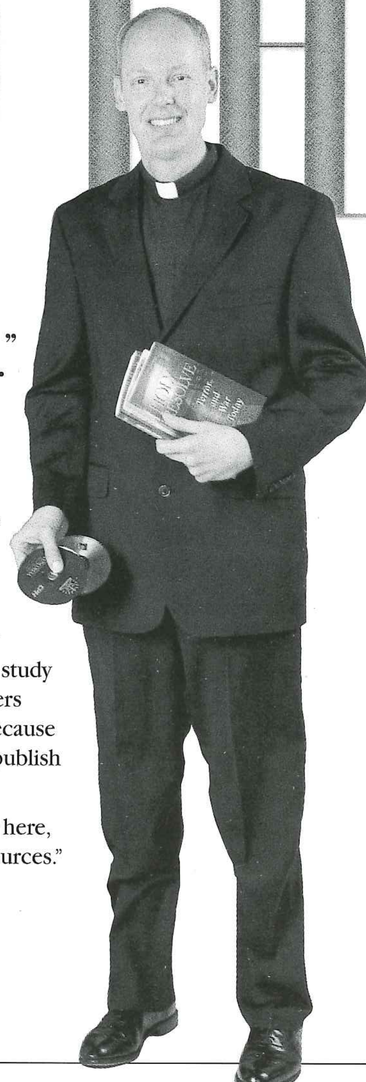
[49] *LW* 40:146-147.

TRUTH



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