CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

of Concordia University

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Editorial

Editorial Introduction

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our Fall 2016 issue of *Concordia Theological Journal.* First, a comment on our publication schedule and timing. After a rather uncertain "reboot" of our journal, we are nearly back on our planned schedule of two issues each academic year. I'm hoping to have a "normal" routine established by the end of this academic year.

In this issue, we have a wide variety of articles, again reflecting the expertise as well as the varied interests of our Theology faculty. I am especially pleased that we have three contributions by members of our Philosophy Department which has expressed continued interest in this journal. Our first article by Roland Cap Ehlke demonstrates his academic interests and gifts in the area of history, particularly as he provides reflections on the English Reformation for our consideration. Thomas Feiertag's understanding of missions is again expressed most clearly in this historical article on the Mediterranean culture of early Christianity. Theodore Hopkins also has a heart for missions and ecclesiology as evident in his article on Christology. We are pleased to have a contribution by John Warwick Montgomery, while he served Concordia as Research Professor for a couple of semesters, in which he uses his legal expertise to engage in a critique of higher criticism. Jonathan Mumme's article on Holy Absolution brings us back to pastoral care and the need for a Lutheran understanding of God's grace in Christ. Stephen Parrish, another member of our Philosophy Department, brings to light some of the recent arguments for the existence of God in a unique way. Finally, Charles Schulz has explored an interesting image, the hand of God, as it is evident in several unique depictions from a number of ancient iconographic sources.

As in the past, we have a good set of book reviews for the consideration of our readers. I thank Dr. Jeffrey Walz, PhD, Professor of Political Science, for accepting my request to review On Secular Governance (see Book Review section). We will continue these reviews, particularly in the next issue as we enter the quincentennial of the Reformation, featuring books about Luther and the Reformation.

I wish to express my appreciation for the support and encouragement from the Theology Department as we continue this academic publication. It is an act of service to the Church and the world as we fulfill our University commitment.

Timothy Maschke *Editor*

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

Articles

Reflections on the English Reformation

Roland Cap Ehlke

Perhaps no single country has so affected the life of modern Protestant Christianity as has England. Paralleling the worldwide expansion of the British Empire, English has become the international language, and no book has received such wide circulation as did the King James Version of the Bible. It was through the efforts of William Carey, an Englishman who become known as the father of modern missions, that in the nineteenth century—the great "mission century"—Protestant Christianity would enter its most expansive period of international growth.

While Germany is known for its scholarly theologians, English divines and philosophers have spearheaded major trends of modern thought, such as eighteenth-century empiricism and deism. Affected by the spirituality of their times, English writers—whether Shakespeare in drama, Milton in epic poetry, the Romantics in lyric poetry, Dickens in the novel, or Woolf in feminist themes—have influenced the public around the world.

To set the stage for this remarkable story, we go back to the time of the English Reformation. It is impossible to capture the many and complex strands of this history in a single work, much less in an essay of this sort. Moreover, it is a history that is constantly being rewritten and revised, with ongoing debates over unresolved issues such as how quickly or slowly the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism actually took place.[1] It is not our intent to settle such debates, but rather to outline with broad and, at the same time, historically accurate strokes the main themes of the Reformation and how they have had an effect on subsequent history. To that end, we shall review the history, the theology, and the legacy of the Reformation in England.

I.   The History of the English Reformation

The history of the English Reformation is a complex mixture of church and state relations. It involved politics, personal ambition, intrigue, and, seemingly almost as an afterthought, some theology as well. In the final analysis, its inception is more the story of Henry VIII and his ambitions than of doctrinal disputes. This history unfolds through the drama of the

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[1] See, for example, Margot Todd, Introduction, Margo Todd, ed. *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England.* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-10. The book is part of Routledge's *Rewriting History* series.

reigns of the last four Tudor rulers, Henry VIII and his children, Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth.

A. Henry VIII (1509-47)

On the eve of the English Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church in England was a powerful institution, with some 12,000 monks and nuns in a population of 3 million people. The church also owned a quarter of the land and was a part of everyone's life: "Men with tonsures, a shaved patch on the top of their heads indicating their religious calling, were a very visible part of any community, a sign of the ubiquitous presence of the church."[2] No one would have guessed that this solidly Catholic country was soon to break with Rome.

Moreover, its ruler was a staunch defender of Roman Catholicism. Henry VIII was surrounded by a court of which Erasmus of Rotterdam said, "[There are] more men of learning at the English court than in any university."[3] The king soaked in much of that learning, and amid the turmoil following the dissemination of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517, he became a defender of Catholic orthodoxy. England forbade the importation of Lutheran books, and Cardinal Wolsey held two "well-publicized book burnings."[4] In spite of that, Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) did manage to get into England and into the hands of Henry. With its attack on the church's sacramental system, the book struck at the heart of Roman theology. By July 1521, Henry's personal response was in print.[5]

A gold-bound copy of *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* was sent to Pope Leo X, and English editions (*An Assertion of the Seven Sacraments*) were made available for the people. Against the most venomous serpent Luther, Henry called readers to put on the twofold armor of God: true celestial doctrine and terrestrial punishment of heretics. Pope Leo X enthusiastically gave Henry the honorary title of *Defensor Fedei,* Defender of the Faith, and added "[We] command all Christians, that they name your majesty by this title."[6] In spite of this, Protestantism established a precarious toehold in England.

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[2] Doreen Rosman, *From Catholic to Protestant: Religion and the People in Tudor England* (London: University College Press, 1996), 11.

[3] Quoted in Neelak S. Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans: a Study in Anglo-Lutheran Relations from 1521 to 1547* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 4.

[4] Ibid., 5.

[5] From the time of its publication, there have been questions as to how much of the *Assertio* Henry himself wrote. Yet he himself staunchly defended his authorship, and scholars have tended to agree with that contention. The evidence, then, indicates that Henry possessed some insight into theological issues.

[6] Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans*, 10.

In the 1530s the defender of the faith and the pope would part ways. The split arose from Henry's desire to divorce his wife Catherine of Aragon, to whom he had been married since 1509 and by whom he was unable to have a male heir. Henry argued that the marriage was not legitimate in the first place since she was the widow of his older brother Arthur. Henry wanted to divorce her and marry Anne Boleyn, a lady of the court. The pope, at this time Clement VII, was not inclined to grant the divorce lest he offend the Emperor Charles V, who was Catherine's nephew.

Exasperated by waiting for a papal dispensation that might never come, the king eventually took matters into his own hands. He secretly married Anne and in 1534, the same year Elizabeth was born to Anne, Henry broke with Rome and declared himself the religious authority of England. This was the Act of Supremacy, which the Parliament obligingly passed: "the king's majesty justly and rightfully is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England."[7] Thus began the English Reformation. It was a reformation from the top down, involving church-state politics and Henry's lust.

One of the questions of the Reformation is how, if Catholicism was so entrenched, Henry was able so blatantly to defy the pope. Some historians, such as David Cody in the following entry, have argued that the stage was set:

> There was, however, widespread discontent both at the extent of corruption within the English Catholic Church and at its lack of spiritual vitality. A pervasive anti-clerical attitude on the part of the population as a whole and in Parliament in particular made it possible for Henry VIII to obtain an annulment in 1533 of his first marriage (to Catherine of Aragon) in the face of papal opposition, and in 1534 the Act of Supremacy transferred papal supremacy over the English Church to the crown.[8]

Others, such as Eamon Duffy, have argued that point. In his monumental *The Stripping of the Altars,* Duffy contends that contrary to much historical thought, England was not ripe for ecclesiastical change.

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[7] Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church,* second edition. (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 227.

[8] David Cody, "The Church of England," *The Victorian Web: literature, history, & culture in the age of Victoria.* <http://65.107.211.206/religion/denom1.html>

Rather, he says, English Roman Catholic spiritual life was vigorous and the shift toward Protestantism was not inevitable.[9]

In either case, there were other factors that help explain why there was no outcry against Henry. Three of them bear mentioning. For one thing, there was historical precedent for controversy and reform, and medieval Catholicism was not so monolithic as is popularly supposed. Doctrinal discussion and debate were ongoing activities, at times leading to change and acceptance, at other times to charges of heresy and suppression. One of the notable English examples was John Wyclif (†1384), who had translated the Bible into English and called for changes. Moreover, perennial pilgrimages to Canterbury and the shrine of Thomas Becket (†1170)[10] were a constant reminder that English church-state relations had a less than perfectly harmonious record.

A second factor was the sheer strength of Henry's personality. To set himself against pope and emperor, he had to have a strong will. Henry was confident of his control over the English clergy, and he appointed Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1535. As second in command to Henry, Cranmer (1489-1156) felt conscience bound in his loyalty to the ruler. He was agreeable to Henry's reform and in doing so "was largely responsible for shaping the Protestant Church in England."[11] It seems that most people were either comfortable with Henry's changes—which, as we shall see, initially kept many Roman practices—or were willing to live with them.

The third factor was the dissolution of the monasteries and nunneries. First Henry dissolved the smaller monasteries (376 in 1536); then in 1539 he dissolved the rest. With as much as twenty percent of the land having belonged to monasteries, this was a blow from which the Catholic Church in England could not recover: "[T]he loss of the monastic properties so weakened the Catholic Church in England that no effective resistance to the English Reformation was to come from that source."[12]

Between the appointment of Cranmer in 1535 and Henry's death a dozen years later, the king would enact much more that had bearing on the church

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[9] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

[10] In 1538 Henry destroyed the magnificent shrine, "as that of a rebel against royal authority," and confiscated its treasures. Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949), 2:401.

[11] James Atkinson, "Thomas Cranmer," in Tim Dowley, ed., *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1978), 390.

[12] Neelak S. Tjernagel, *The Reformation Era* (St. Louis: Concordia: 1968), 65.

in England. He also entered four more marriages. Anne was accused of adultery and treason, imprisoned in the Tower of London, and beheaded. The next day, Henry married Jane Seymour, who died shortly after bearing him a son, Edward. Next came Anne of Cleves, a German princess, whom Henry divorced. Wife number five was Catherine Howard, who was executed for adultery. Catherine Parr, a supporter of reformation, was Henry's last wife. When the willful defender-of-the-faith-turned-reformer died, his passing was "unwept, unhonored, and unsung."[13]

Just how Protestant was England at the end of Henry's reign? That question is not unlike asking how solidly Catholic it was at the beginning. Again, there is debate. Many Catholic doctrines and practices remained in place. Yet, again, the picture is more complicated. Had Henry been devoted to Catholic doctrine, it is unlikely he would have left his son in the hands of Protestant protectors. This fact insured the transformation of English Catholicism into Anglicanism.

B. Edward VI (1547-53)

Edward VI was only twelve years old when he succeeded his father. His reign is more the story of his tutors or advisors than of his own views. Along with Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer played significant roles, as did the continental Reformers Martin Bucer from Strasbourg, Peter Martyr from Italy, and John à Lasco from Poland.[14]

During the brief reign of the boy king, Protestantism established a more secure beachhead on British shores as the English Church became Protestant in doctrine and ritual. An example of this is the dropping of marriage as a sacrament, as it had been—and remains—in Catholicism. The service became simpler, and theology took on a stronger Reformed Calvinist tint. In 1548, the English Order of the Communion was added to the Latin Mass, and the following year saw the publication of the first edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*. While the English Ordinal of 1550 preserved much from the medieval church, it also made significant changes, such as dropping the old reference to purgatory.

A second edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* appeared in 1552 with Edward's royal assent, further instilling Protestant thought into English worship. The *Forty-Two Articles,* completed shortly before his death, discredited the Catholic doctrines of Roman primacy, infallibility of general councils, scholastic accretions to theology, transubstantiation, and the mass

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[13] Gene Gurney, *Kingdoms of Europe: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Ruling Monarchs from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Crown, 1981), 174.

[14] See Dowley, *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity,* 386-7.

as a sacrifice. [15] These articles, largely the work of Cranmer, became the basis for the *Thirty-Nine Articles* that under Elizabeth would definitively shape Anglican theology.

With the death of the young king of tuberculosis in 1553, there were no males left in the Tudor dynasty to ascend to the throne. While his transitional reign marked a strong shift toward Protestantism, the church remained traditional in organization.

C. Mary (1553-58)

Like her mother Catherine of Aragon, Mary Tudor was a Catholic, and during her brief reign she did what she could to reintroduce Catholicism. From the beginning, Mary made mistakes that were to alienate her from her own subjects. The first was the execution of the innocent Lady Jane Grey, who had been proposed as queen. A more serious error was the queen's marriage to her cousin, Philip II the king of Spain, who would spend little time in England. Since anti-Spanish sentiment was growing among the English people, this powerful endorsement of a pro-Spanish policy could hardly have come at a worse time, especially coming as it did from a queen who unashamedly "scorned to be English and boasted her descent from Spain."[16]

In her pro-Catholic program, the queen again forced the clergy to give up their wives. She also had Latin reintroduced into worship. Most of the intellectual Protestant elite fled to the Continent; a few hundred people—about 300—were killed under "Bloody Mary." Among that number were Edward's theologians Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer, who after wavering and recanting boldly confessed his faith and was burned at the stake in 1556.

Nevertheless, Mary was unable to take back the church lands. Nor was she able to stem the Protestant tide.

D. Elizabeth (1558-1603)

Ascending to the throne on November 17, 1558, Elizabeth I, Anne's daughter, was to enjoy a long, glorious reign and become one of the most renowned sovereigns in history. The queen began her rule decisively, and by the end of 1558, Elizabeth's Act of Supremacy was in place. Much more would follow in the church-state arena, as Elizabeth would stamp upon English religion the features that were to endure.

While Elizabeth's religious convictions are not known for sure, she was most likely Protestant like her mother. Under Elizabeth, the Marian

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[15] A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (New York: Schocken, 1964), 253.

[16] Ibid., 261.

exiles who had escaped to Geneva during Mary's reign returned. Back also came the wives of the clergy, while a few staunch Catholics returned to the Continent.

After ridding her realm of recalcitrant Romanists, she developed a moderate Protestant church, as she perceived it to have been under her father. For Elizabeth, theology was secondary to politics, and in every respect the Church of England under the Elizabethan Settlement took the *via media*, the middle way. Whereas Henry had been Supreme Head, Elizabeth took the somewhat more conciliatory title Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity called for a revised, inclusive version of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1559). This was the third revision and remained in use much longer than either of its predecessors, until the Long Parliament of 1645 outlawed it during the Puritan Revolution. Meanwhile the church's official statement of doctrine, the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1562), also sought to steer the middle way in regard to sacraments and the doctrine of predestination.

In 1570, the pope excommunicated Elizabeth. Referring to himself as "chief over all nations and over all kingdoms," Pius V declared her "to be deprived of her pretended right to the aforesaid realm, and from all dominion, dignity and privilege whatsoever."[17] Among those who took the injunction seriously was Elizabeth's erstwhile brother-in-law and suitor, Philip II of Spain. In 1588, this champion of the Counter Reformation assembled the "invincible" Armada, only to be defeated by the English fleet and Protestant winds. The threat of any Catholic invasion from abroad had passed.

II. The Theology of the English Reformation

From the time of Henry VIII's personal and politically motivated break with Rome, various theologies were to feed into the making of the new church, producing what we know as the Church of England and some of the offspring it has spawned. We shall focus on four of them that represent the main currents of the English Reformation and its subsequent theology.

A. *Roman Catholic Tradition*

In spite of breaking with Rome and setting his country on a new religious course, Henry VIII had not completely severed ties with Roman Catholic doctrine. The rupture was more a working out of the medieval church-state issue than it was a matter of doctrine.

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[17] Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church,* 240-1.

Even with the publication of the first *Book of Common Prayer* under Edward, the service retained Catholic elements, such as the commemoration of the Blessed Virgin and prayers for the dead. [18] And after years of Protestant teaching, one minister reported in 1559 that most of his parishioners still believed "that a man might be saved by his own well doing" rather than through the work of Christ.[19] In much of England, Catholic practices such as Easter communion persisted, with only 1.3 percent of the eligible population of London not partaking in 1603.[20]

Well beyond Elizabeth's time, English Catholics kept their faith. Some, the "church papists," outwardly conformed and attended Protestant services. Others who were landowners were able to maintain priests on their property. Still others, the "recusants," openly refused to attend Protestant worship and suffered fines or loss of property.[21]

The Anglican Church is unique among Protestant churches in that it never broke with the basic organization of Catholicism, but kept its diocesan and episcopal structure. To this day, the Church of England has retained the concept of apostolic succession, claiming that its hierarchy traces its origins back to the apostles by way of the severed Roman Catholic connection.

B. Lutheran Form

Most historians, even the eminent Roland Bainton, have tended to dismiss any Lutheran influence on the English Reformation.[22] A recent popularly written history of Henry's court is typical of that dismissal, noting that after the initial exchange with Luther, Henry delegated the anti-Luther polemics to More and others, "who all very ably refuted the reformer's

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[18] Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1947), 135.

[19] Ibid., 53. Many pastors would still say that today after centuries of Protestant teaching; Lutheran theology refers to the *opinio legis*—the religion of law, the idea of salvation by works—as the natural, innate religion of man, from which he only with difficulty emerges and into which he readily relapses. (See, for example, Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1950]*,* 1:8-9.) Nevertheless, the example is striking given the explicit changes taking place in the English Church.

[20] Rosman, *From Catholic to Protestant,* 51.

[21] Diana Newton, *Papists, Protestants and Puritans 1559-1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10. Later, in the eighteenth century non-Anglicans, such as the Roman Catholic Alexander Pope (1688-1744), were unable to attend Oxford or Cambridge, an indication of the persistence of both Catholicism and anti-Catholic attitudes in England.

[22] Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans,* 249.

arguments."[23] Nevertheless, several scholars, notably Neelak Tjernagel, have carefully researched the issue and found otherwise.[24]

In spite of Henry's desires to the contrary, Lutheran ideas had been the first to infiltrate across the Channel. Several key factors linked England and Germany in the early years of the Reformation. That common interest began with Erasmus's Greek New Testament in 1516, a book that was vital to German and English scholars alike. For political reasons, Henry had more to gain in an attachment to Germany, which chafed under the rule of his rival Charles V, than to either Charles' Spain or the France of his other great rival, Francis I. Moreover, Tjernagel points out that for Henry's purposes, "Lutherans were reprehensible neither for Anabaptist anarchy nor for Zwinglian theocracy."[25]

There were many German and Lutheran connections, especially during Henry's reign. William Tyndale trained at Oxford and Cambridge, but also studied with Luther in Wittenberg. His 1525 translation of the Bible into English was printed in Germany and became a model for the King James Bible of 1611.[26] Other key English Bible translators, Rogers and Coverdale,[27] served parishes in Germany. The prominent figure in the Lutheran-English conferences of 1536 and 1538, Robert Barnes, spent three years there.

Thomas Cranmer, the single most influential figure in shaping Protestantism in England, was "Lutheran in his theology."[28] In compiling the *Book of Common Prayer,* Cranmer drew heavily from Lutheran catechisms and liturgies. One historian of liturgy notes:

> Archbishop Cranmer was the leading spirit of the commission which prepared the *Book of Common Prayer* . . . Relations between the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Lutheran Liturgy have been close and consequential . . . The English Litany followed closely Luther's revision through Hermann of Cologne . . . The orders for baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial reveal extensive indebtedness to Lutheran sources.[29]

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[23] Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court* (New York: Ballantine, 2001), 232.

[24] See Tjernagel's works cited in the footnotes, especially *Henry VIII and the Lutherans,* 249-306.

[25] Ibid., 250.

[26] See Lewis Foster, *Selecting a Translation of the Bible* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1978), 20.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Dowley, *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity,* 390.

[29] Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy,* 128.

Well into Henry's reign, then, scholars had been interested in Lutheran ideas and developed their worship services in English, just as Germans were worshiping in the vernacular. For a time, Thomas Cromwell urged Henry to join a federation with Lutherans, but Germans would not condone his divorce, and he was not willing to accept the Augsburg Confession with its vigorous presentation of Lutheran doctrine.

In 1540, Henry's chaplain Robert Barnes and secretary Thomas Cromwell were executed (for political more than theological reasons), thus dissipating much of the impact that Lutheranism might have had in England. Tjernagel comments, "When Barnes died England lost its most effective opponent of the Zwinglian and Sacramentarian tendencies which were so strong in the Antwerp circle of William Tyndale, and in the English centers where Lollardy had survived into the sixteenth century."[30] Following Luther's death in 1546, Germans were less inclined to accept English refugees for fear of Charles V. Ultimately, Charles' defeat of the Germans destroyed the increasingly fragile connection.

Yet Lutheran influence lived on, as evidenced in the wording of the *Forty-Two* and *Thirty-Nine Articles,* which reflect the Augsburg Confession in clearly asserting, for instance, justification "by only faith in Jesus Christ."[31] Lutheran wording and forms, in particular in the *Book of Common Prayer*, remained.

C. Calvinist Rationalism

In 1529, Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and other German theologians met with Hulrich Zwingli, John Oecolampadius, Martin Bucer, and other Swiss and southern German reformers at the castle of Marburg, which belonged to the Lutheran Prince Philip of Hesse. While at first glance the Marburg Colloquy seems far removed from the English Reformation, two facets of the meeting relate closely to what was or would be taking place in England.

The first has to do with Zwingli's position at Marburg. Although the two parties agreed on a number of issues, they were unable to agree on the meaning of Christ's words in the Eucharist. Zwingli's side advanced the argument that a body could not be in two places at once and that Christ was using a figure of speech when he spoke of his physical presence in the sacrament. Luther had written *Hoc est corpus meum* ("This is my body") on the table where they sat, pulled back the tablecloth to reveal

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[30] Neelak S. Tjernagel, *Lutheran Martyr* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1982), 168.

[31] Dickens, *The English Reformation,* 252.

the words, and demanded what figure of speech was involved.[32] What lay behind this stalemate at Marburg was the issue of rationalism over against an acceptance of the words of institution. The position of Zwingli and his followers has been expressed in the words, *Finitum non est capax infiniti*— that is, the finite is not capable of containing the infinite. The tendency toward rationalism was what would distinguish subsequent Reformed theology from Catholic and Lutheran thought.

The other significant aspect of Marburg was that one of the participants was Martin Bucer of Strasbourg. A mediator, conciliator, and a Zwinglian at heart, Bucer had tried to bring the two sides together. During the reign of Edward VI, Bucer was invited to England, where he gave Cranmer much advice regarding the 1552 prayer book.[33] The second edition of *Book of Common Prayer* shows a Reformed influence. In the section on communion the wording was ambiguous so as to allow for either a representational or actual presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist.

Two years after Marburg, Zwingli's life was cut short by Catholic troops at the battle of Kappel. His name was soon to be overshadowed by that of another theologian who found his home in Switzerland, John Calvin. This reformer, who had studied under Bucer, was to have an immense impact on English theology. Many of the Marian exiles went to Geneva—where the Scottish reformer John Knox had learned his theology from Calvin—and returned to England as Calvinists.

Calvinist theology is reflected in the circumspect wording of the *Thirty-Nine Articles,* in which the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation is rejected, while any reference to a real physical presence of Christ in the sacrament is vague. More than that, Calvinism is evident in the general tendency toward rationalism that would mark English thought.

D. *Arminian Humanism*

Arminianism goes back to the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (Jacob or James Harmensen, 1560-1609). His life spans the struggles of the Low Countries for independence from Spanish rule. The outcome of those struggles was that in 1607 three new countries were formed: Protestant Netherlands in the north, and Catholic Belgium and Luxemburg in the south. Both the northern and southern regions would play a part in English church history.

Arminius had studied under John Calvin's successor Theodore Beza

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[32] For a transcription of the Marburg Colloquy, see Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar* Adelaide, Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977) 151-238.

[33] Rosman, *From Catholic to Protestant,* 55-6.

in Geneva. Upon returning to Holland he became a prominent pastor and professor until he felt conscience bound to side with the heretical—that is, anti-Calvinist—side of a debate concerning the doctrine of predestination. In order to understand his doctrines and his influence on Calvinism, it helps to grasp the three basic views of salvation as espoused by Calvinism, Catholicism, and Lutheranism.

Centuries before the Reformation, Augustine had refuted the teachings of Pelagius, who had attributed to human beings the ability to work out their own salvation.[34] Over the centuries, however, Roman theology had adopted a sort of semi-Pelagianism—crediting to God the initial infusion of grace, but leaving it to man to complete the project of salvation. In his rediscovery of the gospel, the good news of full and free salvation, Luther came to see salvation from beginning to end as entirely God's work, a free gift of grace that we receive through faith, which is also a gift.[35] If, on the other hand, we are lost, it is our own doing, a rejection of God's grace. The Council of Trent (1546-63) had anathematized this concept of the justification of sinners before God, pointing out the human responsibility both in salvation and damnation.

Calvin, and more particularly his followers, had developed a logically consistent schema. Emphasizing God's sovereignty, Calvinism came to see salvation and its opposite as entirely the work of God. This is the well-known double predestination dogma. God predestines some for salvation, others for damnation.

It was against this dogma, the "horrible decretum" of election, that Arminius took a stand. He argued that God predestined to salvation those who he foresaw would remain steadfast in the faith.[36] It was a shift back toward the concept of salvation through works. Arminius was accused of Pelgaianism, [37] and the Synod of Dort posthumously condemned his

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[34] For a helpful discussion of these doctrinal issues from a historical-theological perspective, see Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

[35] Luther wrote his in monumental *The Bondage of the Will,* a response to Erasmus's *A Diatribe or Discourse concerning Free Choice,* that this was at the heart of the entire controversy with Rome, *Luther's Works,* volume 34, ed. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

[36] See Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity,* volume 2: *The Reformation to the Present Day* New York: Harper Collins, 1985, 179-83; McGrath, *Christian Theology,* 465-70.

[37] Already during his lifetime, Arminius was charged with Pelagianism; Gerald O. McCulloh, ed. *Man's Faith and Freedom: The Theological Influence of Jacobus Arminius* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 17.

teaching and developed the famous five points of strict Calvinism, with the appropriate English acronym TULIP:

T   total depravity (of sinful human nature)

U   unconditional election (without merit or achievement)

L   limited atonement (Christ died only for the elect)

I   irresistible grace (the elect are infallibly called)

P   perseverance of the saints (those predestined can in no
      way fall away)

The debate continued long after the death of Arminius (his followers were called the Remonstrants), and it had profound effects in England. Arminianism came to represent such tendencies as liberalism, the propensity to attribute some sort of innate goodness to human nature, an emphasis on man's free will, an inclination toward an intellectualized interpretation of Scripture, and a leaning toward Rome.

The theological connections between England and the Netherlands were many,[38] and Arminianism found an early fertile field among English humanists, known as the Cambridge Platonists.[39] It also found a sympathetic ear among certain eminent English divines; and in the days of the Puritans it was favored by Anglican authorities against the Puritans, who held to a stricter Calvinism. John Milton, himself a Puritan, imbibed Arminianism. Charles I had strong Arminian leanings and excluded Calvinist bishops from the royal counsels, while protecting the Arminian writer Richard Montagu.[40] After the Restoration, the trend continued, as Rosalie Colie notes: "Arminianism penetrated everywhere in England, except of course among the Presbyterians, true Calvinists almost to a man . . . the reconstructed church after 1660 became increasingly so, until in 1688 the technical triumph of Arminianism was complete."[41]

John Wesley's parents were Arminians, and his mother wrote to him: "The Doctrine of Predestination as maintained by rigid Calvinists is very shocking, and ought to be abhorred; because it charges the most holy God with being the author of Sin."[42] Wesley had the letter printed in he first issue

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[38] David W. Davies, *Dutch Influences on English Culture 1558-1625* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1964), 9-13.

[39] Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

[40] Nicholas Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution," in Todd, *Reformation to Revolution,* 65.

[41] Colie, *Light and Enlightenment*, 21, 14, 23, et passim.

[42] Quoted in McCulloh, *Man's Faith and Freedom,* 57.

of *The Arminian Magazine*. For many, the slogan was to become, "Since Wesley we are all Arminians."[43]

Today Jacob Arminius, the "grand old man of modernism,"[44] is little known. Nevertheless, his influence on English and Protestant theology has been vast.

III. The Legacy of the English Reformation

The influence of the English Reformation on subsequent English and American history has been tremendous, not to mention the ripples that continue throughout the world. The unsettled nature of English theology created an atmosphere that was consistently open to new ideas and change. Here again, four features enter the picture.

A. *The Puritan Revolution*

The persecutions under Mary had helped instill among the English a profound and lasting distrust of Catholicism. Nevertheless, with the passing of time, some Anglican clerics began to feel an affinity with Rome, in particular through the episcopacy. Whereas previous English churchmen had thought of themselves as Protestants, these clergymen were in a sense the first "Anglicans," viewing themselves as part of a unique organization with strong connections to Rome. This was also the beginning of the High Church.[45]

The propensity of Charles I toward Arminianism—and its connections with Catholicism—exacerbated a tense situation and was a major factor in the outbreak of the English Civil War, also known as the English or Puritan Revolution. Charles saw to it that Calvinist doctrines, such as that of predestination, were condemned and declared illegal and dangerous.[46] The king's intransigence led to a civil war, and it cost him his head in 1649. It also led to the complete dissolution of the English monarchy for a dozen years, until the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660.

Tired of fighting over religious issues, many clergy took an attitude of indifference. Yet there was more to the Revolution than fighting and its aftermath. Dickens points out some of the positive aspects of the Civil War, such as "an independence of outlook [and] a confidence that the future belongs to God." [47] Nonetheless, from this time on, the tendency of

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[43] Ibid., 46.

[44] Ibid., 41.

[45] See Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History,* volume 2, *From the Reformation to the Present Day* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 54-5.

[46] Newton, *Papists, Protestants and Puritans,* 38.

[47] Dickens, *The English Reformation,* 271.

English Christianity toward rationalism would gain momentum. The Puritan Revolution left in its wake a doctrinal apathy that would become known as latitudinarianism.

B.   *The Glorious Revolution*

In this bloodless Revolution (1688-89), England rid itself of the closet-Catholic King James II. Following the Glorious Revolution, Anglicanism became shot through with latitudinarianism, and the Church of England sunk into a stupor, failing to care for the souls of its people. Against this backdrop of unconcern, the Wesleyan revivals showed that Bible preaching was still alive and well in England.

The evangelical movement that followed upon the Glorious Revolution instilled into society a sense of morality that would carry well into the Victorian Age.[48] Politically involved Evangelicals such as William Wilberforce (1759-1833) spearheaded the abolition of the English slave trade and the end to slavery in English colonies.

Rather than the hoped for unity within Anglicanism, the Glorious Revolution in effect saw just the opposite. Instead of two major blocks— Conformists and Non-Conformists—a "third party" now gained considerable influence. The Toleration Act of 1689 gave Dissenters the right to form congregations and build churches. With this freedom and with the internal threat of Catholic rule gone, Puritanism splintered into numerous dissenting sects, while the High Church element grew in strength.

C.   *Overseas Connections*

The worldwide spread of the British Empire meant that its influence would encircle the globe and would include the transplanting of British religion in America and Britain's role in the rise of modern Protestant missions.

The 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* served not only the England of Elizabeth I and her Stuart successors, but it was the first Protestant prayer book used in America, brought by the Jamestown settlers and others in the early 1600s.

While Catholicism and Lutheranism have found their way in America, Calvinism, especially of the Arminian brand, left an especially noticeable imprint on the country. This is evident in the First Great Awakening (1730s-40s) initiated by Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and the Wesleys. Paralleling the Evangelical awakening in England toward the end of the eighteenth century, the Second Great Awakening (1795-1810) also

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[48] See Herbert Schlossberg, *The Silent Revolution and the Making of Victorian England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000).

made an impact in America. The evangelist Charles Finney took Arminian theology to new levels with his high pressure style of having people make decisions for Christ.

The Episcopal Church is the American version of Anglicanism. In 1789, the first edition of the *Book of Common Prayer according to the Use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* appeared.

On the rest of the worldwide front, it suffices to mention but one name, that of William Carey (1761-1834). Fired by the scriptural injunction to bring the gospel to all the world, this cobbler and self-made missionary set out for India in 1793. In so doing, he ignited a century of missions that would surpass all others: "His spirit was contagious, and it was his vision more than any other that excited the whole international Christian community to a world missionary endeavor. His ideas and his model of missions in India . . . spearheaded the greatest advance of missions in the history of Christianity."[49]

D. Intellectual Developments

Earthly institutions, including the church in its various outward forms, have the tendency to age and become rigid, and then begin to break down and decay. Within the Christian Church in England, several tendencies we have noted were to become dominant as time went on.

From the days of Henry VIII, the English Church was closely bound to the English government. With Anglicanism's tendency to be little more than an arm of the government and to allow for doctrinal disparity, latitudinarianism was a natural outcome. Into the nineteenth century the Anglican Church remained a middle way, but had to widen its doctrines considerably. This process was facilitated to a considerable degree because many upper-class Anglicans, tired of doctrinal disputes, wanted only a rational, moderate, practical religion.

Nor is it surprising that rationalism and deism were nurtured in nglish soil. Lord Edward Herbert (1588-1648), brother of the posthumously famous poet-minister George Herbert, became the father of English deism. The English emphasis on morality over doctrine provides a natural segue into rationalism. In discussing John Locke and the latitudinarians, Hennig Graf Reventlow points out that when faith is understood in a purely rational way and is conceived of simply as "holding a dogmatic statement to be true," then "rationalism and moralism are closely connected."[50] Such rationalism

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[49] Francis M. DuBose, ed., *Classics of Christian Missions* (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), 24.

[50] Hennig Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 264.

arose not only among the philosophers, but found roots in the legacy of the radical reformers as well, and resulted in a "massive outburst of popular skepticism between 1640 and 1660."[51]

The English Reformation was a blend of many and conflicting elements. It began that way, and that was its legacy.

IV. A Final Word

It is ironic that three centuries after the Reformation, Catholicism was finally and fully accepted back into England with the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829. This act emancipated Catholics, and many high church Anglicans, most notably John Henry Newman and his followers, defected to Catholicism. A century later, T. S. Eliot would turn to Anglo-Catholicism to find his spiritual bearing. Had history come full cycle? Hardly. At least not in a return to its Catholic heritage. If anything, modern England has returned to its pre-Christian pagan roots, as witchcraft and the occult flourish while the Christian churches are all but empty. [52] But that is another story.

In our overview of the English Reformation, we have seen that it was a complicated mixture of numerous elements. In many ways, theology played a secondary role to politics and as decades gave way to centuries it dissolved into the lowest common denominators of latitudinarianism, deism, rationalism, and unbelief. Already in the early years of the Reformation, the seeds of what became a generally consistent movement away from biblical Christianity were sown. At times that movement was slowed and even broken, most notably during the Wesleyan revivals and the subsequent evangelical spirituality and moral vigor of early Victorianism.

Nevertheless, even though the seeds were present and grew into the widespread unbelief of the twentieth century, Christianity was the main spiritual force animating the English people during the most glorious years of their history. Is it merely coincidental that the rise and fall of the British Empire should parallel the rise and fall of English Reformation theology? In describing the Empire as it approached its pinnacle, Lawrence James spells out the factors that contributed to British greatness, concluding, "There was also, and this was continually announced from the pulpit and set down in tracts and editorials, that inner strength and purposefulness that individuals

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[51] R. J. Acheson, *Radical Puritans in England 1550-1660* (London and New York: Longman, 1990), 78.

[52] See, for example, David W. Hoover, who contends, "In Great Britain it is estimated that 50 percent of the people are involved in some way with the occult. In contrast to this, about 2 percent attend church." *How to Respond to the Occult* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), 8.

derived from a Christian faith which set a high store on personal integrity, hard work and a dedication to the general welfare of mankind."[53]

For many people today, allusions to empire and religion in the same breath bring to mind everything they find wrong with the world. It is striking that England's chief claim to fame in the late twentieth century should fall into the hands of a pop music group called the Beatles, one of whom would envision in song a world bereft of nations and of religion:

> Imagine there's no countries
> It isn't hard to do
> Nothing to kill or die for
> And no religion too
> Imagine all the people
> Living life in peace . . .[54]

For others of us, this is not the solution. Rather, it is a matter of what kind of religion we have and what kind of nations we build. Like the British Empire, the Christian Church in England is but a shadow of its former self.

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[53] Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 169-70.

[54] John Lennon, "Imagine," Bagism: John Lennon Discography, <http://www.bagism.com/lyrics/imagine-lyrics.html#Imagine>

Christianity's Dance with Culture: Formation of Christianity within a Mediterranean Context

Thomas E. Feiertag

Introduction

The church finds itself in a battle with an ever changing culture that surrounds it. Our society seems to have little use for organized religion. The gap between church and culture appears to be wider than ever. However, after a look at what the church in the New Testament era faced, it is realized that this gap is nothing new and really isn't much of a battle at all. It's more of a dance.

The New Testament era was ripe with various cultures. There was the rich heritage of the Jewish people as well as the cultures of those striving to hold them captive. Centuries earlier it had been the Babylonians, then the Greeks and then at the time of the New Testament, the Romans. As different as these cultures might have been from each other, they all had something in common. They were all searching for something. They were looking for answers to questions that their religions just weren't providing. It is against this backdrop that God sent Christ into the world to provide what they were all looking for.

This brief paper examines the local Mediterranean cultures into which Jesus was born. It also takes a look at how the New Testament Church adapted to these cultures in some ways, and how it resisted them in others. A dance. One that continues to this very day.

I. The Intertestamental Period

It has been said that "Western civilization is like a family whose mother was Hebrew, whose father was Greek that moved away to live in Rome."[1] Although Christianity sprang out of Judaism, it was certainly influenced by the Greco-Roman cultures of that era.

If the mother of Western civilization is Hebrew, it was a shot gun wedding. She was forced into relationships with the cultures of the world powers of that time. Hellenism was forced upon them in the years before Christ. "In 168-167 BCE, the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) moved forcibly to make the Jewish people Hellenists. Even if he seems to

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[1] Paul L. Maier. *First Christmas: The True and Unfamiliar Story* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1971), 25.

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have had support from some among the Jewish leadership, his agenda for Hellenistic enculturation far exceeded the openness of most of the Jewish population."[2] The Jews responded by longing for both political and spiritual freedom. The main concern of the more spiritually minded among the Jews was, "How might the Jews remain faithful as God's people while under alien rule?"[3]

As oppressive as Epiphanes had been, things appeared to be worse when the Romans took command of the area in 63 BCE. They seemed more intolerable because the "Romans were an aloof, administrative group. They had a particular purely regulatory feeling concerning the local populations, there was no fellow feeling at all."[4] The Jews and Romans were poles apart culturally speaking. As a result, the Jews continued to long for some sort of Messiah-liberator.

Non-Jews of that era and area were likewise looking for some sort of savior-god. They longed for a deity who could appear to them in the flesh with a human personality.[5] These non-Jews had become bored with Greek and Roman polytheism. "Disenchantment with traditional religions also existed among Greeks and Romans. The reality or relevance of the official gods had been queried by the philosophers, and the ritual associated with their worship failed to satisfy the needs of those who were being awakened to greater individuality."[6]

The time was right for the Savior of, not only the Jews, but of the entire world. Even the mighty Romans were searching for some new form of religion. "By (Caesar Augustus') day the average Roman had abandoned his beliefs in the gods of Greco-Roman mythology and philosophical skepticism was growing while the more credulous joined the foreign mystery cults that had invaded the empire."[7]

These mystery cults scratched the itch for a more meaningful worship experience as they sprang up throughout the empire. They provided freedom for the body with the use of ascetic practices.[8] However, it wasn't

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2 Paul J. Achtemeier. *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 23.

3 Ibid., 33.

4 David S. Noss. *A History of the World's Religions* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 449.

5 Ibid., 476.

6 Robert Banks. *Paul's Idea of Community* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Pub., 1994), 10.

7 Maier. First Christmas, 16.

8 Banks, 23.

long before these ascetic practices had become an end unto themselves. They were not as fulfilling as anticipated. The Romans and other non-Jews were looking for something else. The time was right for Christianity and its promise of freedom and peace, not *from* death, but *through* death. They saw "resurrection as God's vindication of the faithful not *from* but *through* death."[9]

II. Jesus And The Local Cultures

John 1:14 tells us that "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (NIV) Jesus was born into the world at a specific time in a specific place into a specific culture. As Jesus embraced His humanity, He also embraced the Jewish culture that He was born into. "Jesus was more than simply human; he was a completely legitimate Jew."[10] Jesus, no doubt, learned how to walk and talk from Mary, how to cut wood from Joseph, how to play from his peers and how to read the Scriptures from His teachers at the local synagogue. He was immersed into the local Jewish culture.

Right from the start Jesus demonstrates that He is willing to go along with local rites and customs. At only eight days of age He is named and circumcised.[11] Yet years later, at the temple in Jerusalem Jesus shows how counter-cultural He could be. "Here he had been presented as a baby and redeemed by Joseph and Mary. Here too he had displayed dazzling brilliance as a twelve year old prodigy."[12] But it was also here, years later, that Jesus stood up to the corruption that become a part of His culture. Money changers and vendors had been taking advantage of foreigners in the Gentile courtyard of the temple. "This profiting on holy ground infuriated Jesus. The boisterous haggling, the clinking of coins, the groaning and bleating from oxen and sheep, to say nothing of the endless clucking of the doves, was, if anything, distracting from the solemnity of worship, quite apart from the inevitable stench."[13] Enough was enough and Jesus let it be known that, although He was a part of the Jewish culture, there was a limit to what He would condone. He was not merely 100% Jew, He was at the same time 100% God.[14]

The Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28 demonstrates how

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[9] Achtemeier, 33.

[10] Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers. *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 17.

[11] Maier, *First Christmas*, 90.

[12] Paul L. Maier. *First Easter* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), 24.

[13] Maier, *First Easter*, 25.

[14] Lingenfelter, 17.

Jesus was able to adapt to the culture, but was also able to change it for His godly purposes. With the Shelichim Jesus was willing to retain what worked within Jewish culture.

It is estimated that during the time of Christ there were 54 million people in the Roman Empire. About 4.5 million of these were Jews.[15] They needed a way to remain in contact with their culture.

> To stay in touch with Jewish settlements throughout the world, Jews developed an infrastructure that allowed the leadership in Jerusalem to transmit messages whenever there was a need – an early "Pony Express," without the horses. They devised a system of authorized messengers to provide oversight for those far away from Jerusalem. This was an essential part of the growth in Judaism, a growth that is much greater than we realize.[16]

The Shelichim were Jewish officials who were sent out to visit these pockets of Jews to keep them connected with their culture back home. They supervised teaching, they preached, they collected money and they represented the Jewish court.[17]

When Jesus sent out the Apostles with the words of the Great Commission He, no doubt, had the system of the Shelichim in mind. Like the Shelichim the Apostles taught, they preached, they collected money for the poor and they represented God. But Jesus took this system of the Shelichim and made it better in order that it might suit His godly purpose. "(In the Great Commission) Jesus commands his followers to make disciples of *Panta Ta Ethne* "all the nations" which, according to those favoring *Volkschristianisierung* must surely be interpreted as a change to found separate ethnic churches."[18]

Rather than just visit pockets of Jews or Christians in order to simply minister to their needs, the Apostles were sent to witness to all people of all nations.[19] Reaching out to all people of the world, not just "the chosen". This was truly God's plan all along which had somehow become lost to the Jewish people somewhere along the line.

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[15] Robert J. Scudieri. *The Apostolic Church: One, Holy Catholic and Missionary* (Chino, CA: Lutheran Society for Missiology, 1996), 5.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 10.

[18] David J. Bosch. "Church Unity Amidst Cultural Diversity" *Missionalia*, 10:1 (April 1982): 18

[19] Scudieri, 13.

III. The Apostle Paul Reaches Beyond Jewish Culture

The Apostle Paul is called by secular scholars the second founder of Christianity. He is said to be the one who took the small sect knows as "The Way" beyond the confines of Palestine into the heart of the Roman Empire. "(Paul) developed certain basic theological concepts for stating the spiritual effects of Jesus on the lives of his followers, concepts that enabled Christianity to win the Gentile world."[20]

Reaching beyond the Jewish culture into the multi-cultural Roman world was no easy task. "…the New Testament embodies the ongoing struggles with faithfulness to God in a Hellenistic world."[21]

In order to remain faithful to God yet be an influence to the cultures that Christianity became a part of, Paul had individual Christians meet together on a regular basis forming small Christian communities throughout the empire. "(Paul's) concern at every turn was with social interaction… his understanding of the process of salvation is integrally corporate in character."[22]

Young Christians, new to the faith, needed each other's support as they faced opposition from Jew and Gentile alike. Paul provided what they needed to hold them together. "Core beliefs, shared experience and practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper were sufficiently consistent to provide a recognizable identity and powerful bonding factor."[23]

Christians needed each other as they faced dissension from the Judaizers and their brand of legalism. Paul realized that his issue with these Judaizers was much more important than culture. It had to do with "two different understandings of salvation. It was a matter of theology, not communications theory."[24] Paul would not allow Jewish tradition and legalism to get in the way of the conversion of the Gentiles. The Judaizers needed to understand that "…the Law was a tutor only until Christ came."[25]

In the Book of Acts and the letters of Paul it is seen how controversial this really was. When it came to "the admission of non-Jews… (the question became) how much of the Jewish law they should they observe. In the time of Paul's ministry, after heated arguments, the church dropped

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[20] Noss, 466.

[21] Achtemeier, 23.

[22] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 672.

[23] Dunn, 673.

[24] Bosch, 21.

[25] Ibid.

the requirement of circumcision and modified dietary laws making it easier for Gentiles to enter."[26]

As Paul directed his outreach efforts to non-Jews, their numbers increased. "As Gentile converts increased and began to outnumber those of Hellenistic Jewish origin, it became necessary to evangelize the Gentile culture and in particular the dominant Greco-Roman culture of the Mediterranean world."[27]

The Christian witnesses needed to develop methods and strategies that would be effective in these Mediterranean cultures. This was the first time since the time of Abraham that people could "relate to God directly and not through Jewish culture."[28] So Paul uses techniques familiar with these new surroundings. "In his argumentation, too, Paul has been influenced whether directly or indirectly by the conventions of ancient rhetoric."[29]

Paul's initial strategy, when approaching a new area, was to simply go to the local synagogue and debate. "(Paul) began by relying upon his rabbinical status and using synagogues as platforms for his message."[30] This approach often gained the attention and the admiration of the local non-Jews. "It was from this base that Paul frequently communicated his message, made converts and established churches."[31]

It was Paul's intent that these congregations would reach out into the cultures in which they lived. "(Paul) may have even thought of the church of Christ as a model of what all social (and not just religious) communities should be."[32] Paul would have never considered shutting the Christian congregation off from the culture that surrounded them. "Paul takes it… for granted that there would be considerable actual day-to-day contact between the members of the Roman house churches and the wider community… Paul evidently entertained no thought of Roman Christians compartmentalizing their lives or of living their lives cut off from the wider community."[33]

Paul utilized his knowledge of these cultures to enhance the spread of the Gospel. He noted how seers and mystics arose in the years before

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[26] Noss, 497.

[27] Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 138

[28] Ibid.

[29] Achtemeier, 21

[30] Banks, 150.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Dunn, 673.

[33] Ibid., 674.

Christ. These people yearned for relief from suffering and looked for an escape through a new life. Paul played on this need as he reached out into these cultures. He often presented apocalyptic themes with a final judgment and resurrection from the dead. God's people could be vindicated by simply dying.[34]

Paul willingly went along with a new form of communication to keep in touch with established congregations and student pastors. Just like everyone else in those cultures, Paul wrote letters. This was new in the sense that there are no letters found in the Old Testament.[35]

Paul's strategies were very effective in these cultures. But there were trials and tribulations that came along with these successes. "The Christians considered themselves *in* the world but not *of* it."[36] They participated in many activities just like the people around them. However, these Christians were truly counter-cultural when it came to taking part in emperor worship. As a result, the suspicions of the Roman authorities were aroused. Rumors quickly spread about these Christians. Since they worshiped at night (after work) they were accused of sexual perversions. Because of Holy Communion they were thought of as being cannibals. They were considered anti-social since they refused to participate in the Roman games and other ungodly festivities.[37]

Paul was ever willing to present the Gospel in ways that non-Jews could appreciate and understand. However, like Jesus cleansing the temple, Paul stood up against popular cultural norms. For example, Roman culture was awash in homosexuality. So much so, Caesar Augustus was concerned for the number of male babies that would one day be needed for his armies to retain control of the vast empire. He proclaimed to male Romans, "But you aren't fulfilling duties of men."[38] He offered tax breaks and other incentives to encourage men to give up their homosexual ways and to do what is natural.[39] Paul also stood up against homosexuality, however he certainly had no concern for the size of the Roman armies. Paul presents what is right in the eyes of God despite what culture was trying to dictate.

Paul takes advantage of these cultures when it works to his advantage to spread the Kingdom of God. Paul stands up to these cultures

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34 Achtemeier, 33.

35 Ibid., 34.

36 Noss, 470

37 Ibid.

38 Maier, First Easter 18

39 Ibid.

when they hinder the Kingdom of God. He danced with the cultures, and so must the church today.

Conclusion

Christianity has had a large impact on the civilizations and cultures of the world. "As the early Christians began to spread out into the Roman world of 2,000 years ago, they could not have envisioned the powerful impact they would have on civilization. But their impact was powerful indeed."[40] However, as Christianity reached out to the cultures of the Mediterranean at the times of Jesus and Paul "...we do not see the Christian faith becoming a principle that animates, directs and unifies these cultures, transforming them and turning them into a new culture."[41]

It is intended that the Gospel of Christ enhance and purify the world's various cultures, but it would not rob them of their distinctive natures. The distinctive nature of the Post Modern culture that surrounds us is as strong as ever. To follow the example of Christ and Paul, the church today must learn to dance with it.

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[40] A. J. Schmidt, "Civilization Transformed" The Lutheran Witness, 122:6 (June/July 2003): 6.

[41] Shorter, 137.

How Christology Shapes Ecclesiology and Missiology

Theodore J. Hopkins ◄

All theology is Christology.[1] This basic dictum of theology states that Christ is the center of how we understand God—the only-begotten One reveals the Father (John 1:18).[2] It goes further than this too; the person of Jesus is not only the revelation of God but also the revealer of the church and the Christian life. In fact, all topics of theology derive from and entail the person and work of Jesus Christ. In other words, the person of Jesus stands at the center of all theology. To use the traditional imagery of the body of doctrine, perhaps we can imagine that the "body" of the body of doctrine is the body of Jesus Christ. Christology, then, is no mere single teaching among others; it is *the* teaching, which is at the center of the church's preaching, praying, and mission because Jesus himself is the center.

This essay is an exploration in how Christology affects ecclesiology and missiology. After exploring one way in which Christology and ecclesiology are intimately connected, Samuel Wells takes us one step further. Wells argues that too much emphasis on *for* in Christology has overshadowed Christ *with* us. While not losing the necessity of *for*, I contend that a robust sense of Jesus's identity as the one who became flesh in the form of a servant in and with his creation is necessary to reinvigorate the mission of the church in, with, and for the world.

I.   Connecting Ecclesiology and Christology

It is hardly self-evident that ecclesiology is intimately related to the church's teachings on the person and work of Christ. For example, in Heinrich Schmidt's compendium of orthodox Lutheran dogmatics, the broader topics within the locus of the church include the wide and narrow sense of the church, the ministry as the representative church, the laity as the collective church, and the three estates of ministry, civil authority, and

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[1] For reflections on this theme, especially as articulated in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by David Scaer, see Dean O. Wenthe, et al., eds., *All Theology Is Christology: Essays in Honor of David P. Scaer* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2000). See also David P. Scaer, "All Theology Is Christology Revisted," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 1–2 (January/April 2016): 49–62.

[2] Scaer, "All Theology Is Christology Revisted," 58.

the home.[3] These topics appear largely as self-standing theological ideas. To be sure, Christ is the crucified and risen Lord and Savior of the church, and his word is the word present in the church, but Christ stands primarily as a formal—rather than material—center of the locus on the church. Thus, the loci of Christology and the church often seem as if they are just separate topics in theology rather than in close organic connection.

Stephen Pickard, however, has shown how two "natural ecclesial heresies" are reflections of the Christological and soteriological heresies of the early church.[4] Pickard demonstrates one way in which Christology affects ecclesiology. Ecclesiology veers into problems and heresies when it fails to reflect proper Christology. Pickard calls the first ecclesial heresy "sacred inflation," or "the ungrounded church."[5] By this, Pickard means the church which builds itself up and inflates itself to the level of the divine. The church becomes ungrounded as it constructs its own foundation, focusing inward on its hierarchy, structures, and authority as its internal basis. When the church raises itself to the realm of the divine, it loses its human face so that the human struggles, sinfulness, and proper humility of the church are overshadowed and even ruled out by the ideal church. The human church is transcended by the perfection of a community that represents God, standing in his place in all things.[6] In terms of mission and relationship to the world, the inflated church appears as an ivory tower, the place for all right answers. Such a church has nothing to learn from culture or the world; the church is the place where everyone needs to go in order to find answers, not to have questions. In such a church, there is no repentance nor any mission dynamic. In Pickard's language, "The basic flow of information and energy will be from Church to world with minimal recognition that the world will have anything significant to contribute to the being and action of the Church."[7] The inflated church, like Icarus, has everything that it needs on its own.

Pickard calls the second "natural ecclesial heresy" the "desacralized

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[3] Heinrich Schmidt, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 3d ed., ed. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1899), 582–623.

[4] Stephen Pickard, *Seeking the Church: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 2012), 57–58. About the term 'natural', Pickard says, "I call them 'natural', because they function as systemic defaults for the ecclesia, which can be traced back to the doctrine of God."

[5] Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 61.

[6] Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 63–65.

[7] Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 65.

ecclesial" or the "disappearing church."[8] This is the human church no
longer oriented to God or grounded in Him and His work. In this heresy,
the church is just like any other human community, such as a social club or
sub-culture. The church may have its own rituals, language, grammar, and
beliefs, but these are understood and analyzed properly with a sociological
toolset. Pickard believes that sociology has an important role to play in
ecclesiology, but a sociological "take" on the church can easily lead to
the disappearance of the church *qua* church. Pickard concludes, "The
logic of a Church that is both regarded and indeed behaves like any other
historical phenomenon is the eventual disappearance of the identity of the
reality of the *ecclesia*. A visible concrete form remains, however, it may
be theologically vacuous."[9] Something called church may remain, but it is
nothing more than a social group. In terms of mission, the church and the
world coalesce to such a degree that mission disappears. As we have seen,
such a church is simply another manifestation of the world, and the culture
of the church is assimilated into the culture of the world. This church will
probably be involved in "welfare,"[10] but mission is unintelligible apart from
a political or social manifestation according to well-accepted societal rules
and expectations. The identity of the church as the community founded on
the person of Jesus, living by the Spirit through the Word, and called to the
mission of God has gone up in smoke.

Pickard's two "natural ecclesial heresies" set up helpful boundaries for
ecclesiology and missiology. All reflection on the church and its mission
must avoid sacralizing the church as a holy community that constructs
its own "divine" foundation. At the same time, the church must contend
against all forces of desacralization that insist the church community is
nothing more than another human social group. More importantly for my
purposes, Pickard observes that these ecclesial heresies are based in bad
Christology. The ungrounded church—sacred inflation—stems from a
docetic Christology pared "with a whiff of Manicheism."[11] The church is
closely connected to Christ, who is understood primarily as the divine
Son of God and not the incarnate man of the cross. Just as a docetic Christ
remains above the fray, unwilling to enter into the grime, muck, and sin
of life, so the church remains above such debase things. The pureness of
this divine Son of God penetrates the church and lifts it beyond and above
the mundane things of life. The ungrounded church embodies the divine
Son of God but wants nothing to do with the humiliated Jesus of the cross.

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8 Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 61.

9 Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 72.

10 Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 78.

11 Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 66.

The church's self-inflation, then, is rooted in a docetic Christology with Manichean tendencies. The disappearing church—desacralized ecclesia—is "an embodiment of an Ebionitic Christology" with a "deeply Pelagian" culture.[12] In the same way that Christ is not qualitatively different from other people for an Ebionitic Christology, the church is no different from other communities. In addition, Christ does not come to make all things new, but to help humanity on its chosen path of enlightenment. Thus, the church disappears into the culture, perhaps with a role to play as soul of the nation or opiate of the masses, but it has no distinctive mission or identity.

Pickard's observations are instructive not only for illuminating the church's "natural" tendencies toward heresy, but also because of the intimate connections among Christ, the church, and its mission. Pickard illustrates one way in which Christology shapes ecclesiology. Christology must form the boundaries of ecclesiology and missiology, helping to prevent the church from falling into heresy, whether sacred inflation or the disappearing church. I would argue, though, that the Christological connection to the church and its mission must go one step further. Christology is not only for the boundaries of the church but also for the middle. In other words, the fullness of the person of Jesus must shape the identity and mission of the church. My contention is that Christian mission needs a robust foundation in Christ not only because the impetus for mission and origin of mission are found there, but also because our understanding of the mission of the church is profoundly shaped by how we understand who Jesus is and what he has come to do. In particular, Lutheran theology has emphasized *for* in Christology, which has shaped the contemporary church's understanding of itself and its mission in a few unhelpful ways. To show this, I will examine Samuel Wells' recent work, arguing that the *for* of Christ's person and work becomes problematic for mission when it is not complemented by the *with* of our Immanuel. Finally, I will suggest a few Lutheran resources on Christology that will inform a more robust church in mission.

II. Complementing 'For' with 'With'

'For' may be the most important word in Lutheran (and Protestant) theology. For was central to Luther's "evangelical maturation" as he came to understand God's righteousness not as the impossible standard of the law's holiness but as the gift of Jesus Christ who has accomplished salvation *for* us and the world.[13] Philip Melanchthon's famous dictum also expresses the

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[12] Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, 71, 73.

[13] Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 42, 50–52.

centrality of for: "To know Christ is to know his benefits."[14] According to Melanchthon and the Lutherans, there is no objective knowledge about Jesus Christ; to know him truly in faith is to know him as one who is and has worked *pro me*, for me. Hence, Lutherans have argued that justification is the "article on which the church stands and falls." Without for, Jesus is not our Savior, and there is no church.

Samuel Wells, however, has recently challenged the dominion of 'for' in Protestantism with another small word, 'with.' While 'for' remains an important, even essential, word for theology, as Lutherans have always insisted, Wells suggests that 'for' without 'with' results in a reductive model of Christ and the Gospel, which perpetuates a faulty understanding of the mission of the church.[15] Central to Well's project is a four-fold typology of social engagement that Wells first developed with Marcia Owens in the book, *Living Without Enemies*.[16] According to Wells and Owens, social engagement falls into four categories: working for, working with, being for, and being with. The most common model today is the 'working for' model, which has dominated Christian and Western imaginations to such a degree that it has misshapen how Christians (and all Westerners) seek justice and peace in the world. The simplest way to understand this model is the world of medicine. For example, I go to the dentist because I need the dentist to do something for me that I cannot do for myself. The dentist is the professional, and I am the patient. I may chat with the dentist or the hygienist, but this is not a deep conversation between friends. Such a friendship may not even be possible in the dental office itself. I have entered into their professional space where they are the experts, and I am a patient. Wells argues that this 'working for' model of the professional and the patient/client is a dominant model for how Westerners today engage the world.[17] This model, however, is much bigger than just social engagement; it is part of our 'social imaginary,'

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[14] Philip Melanchthon, *Commonplaces: Loci Communes 1521*, trans. Christian Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 2014), 24.

[15] Samuel Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being With God* ([n.p]: Wiley Blackwell, 2015). Hereafter, page numbers are listed parenthetically in the text. For those who lived through the Cold War, Wells' title may sound ominous. Wells' work, however, is thoroughly theological, always grounded on God, the Bible, and the Gospel. Our current over-politicized milieu places every public idea into standard political categories, but that must be resisted even if Wells' title appears to be asking for it.

[16] Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owens, *Living Without Enemies: Being Present in the Midst of Violence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011).

[17] Wells and Owens write, "It's hard to overestimate the hold this conventional model has on our imaginations. Pretty much the whole of a university's professional school structure—medicine, law, nursing, engineering, environment studies—runs on this model." *Living Without Enemies*, 27.

the way in which we picture life together, social roles, and expectations.[18] When this model is applied more broadly to society and culture, the 'working for' model construes the world in terms of the haves and the have-nots, where the goal is to become one of the haves (101). The poor, then, are understood as a problem to be solved, wherein professionals are necessary to fix the problem. In this way, some people are understood primarily as a problem—akin to a cavity—to be solved by the person with the proper tools, neglecting their identity as people made in the image of God (102–4). To be clear, 'working for' is a necessary part of life—I still don't know how to fix my own cavities!—but 'working for' needs to be complemented with 'being with' (101). If someone only works for another without being with them, people are isolated from each another, the have-nots are hardly treated as fully human, and the one working can be spiritually threatened by the temptation to pride, believing that she is in power as the savior.[19]

As an alternative vision, Wells puts forward 'being with' as a different way of construing the world. Whereas working for divides and isolates, placing the one working into a different status from the one receiving, being with brings people together. Being with recognizes that not everything is a problem to be solved, but every person has a story and gifts to give to the community. Being with invites a person to enter into life with a marginalized person not from a pretense of power, but from an expectation of joy and thanksgiving, expecting to learn and receive as well as give and teach. Being with is about being present with another for companionship over time, not merely offering professional help from 9–5 on weekdays. This difference between being with and working for is rather obvious, but Wells suggests that the differences lie deeper that merely how one interacts with neighbors. Wells contends that being with inhabits a completely different theology, a distinctive ontology of the world, from the way of working for. Thus, being with challenges not just Christian ethics but the very primacy of 'for' that is so common to Protestant theology. In particular, Wells' typology of social engagement shows how a working for model of Christology and soteriology limits mission to doing mercy from a position of strength and authority whereas a robust Christology rooted in being with invites the church into the world on the mission of Christ. While Jesus is certainly for us as our Savior, he is first with us as our Immanuel, the Son of God dwelling deeply with us in the flesh. He is only for us by being with us.

For Wells, 'being with' is not only at the center of Christian ethics, but at the heart of the identity and work of God as we see it in Scripture.

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[18] On the 'social imaginary', especially modern forms of it, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[19] Wells and Owens, *Living Without Enemies*, 33, 43.

Wells especially sees being with embodied in Jesus's life in Nazareth. What would Jesus have done during his thirty years of life in Nazareth except live with and among the creation, enjoying the presence of creatures? For Wells, Jesus' life *with* creation is central to Nazareth, and the word Nazareth is emblematic of the way of being with: "God and humanity in peaceable interaction, perhaps with good work, perhaps with good food, perhaps with learning and growing and nurturing and celebrating, but fundamentally just being, because there is no better place to be and no better company to keep and no better thing to be doing" (26). In Nazareth God dwells with people in Sabbath peace, and Nazareth also signifies the wholeness of human relationships with each other and the relationship with creation as a whole. Although the Gospels do not portray much of Jesus's life pre-ministry, Wells sees evidence of the Nazareth way of being with all over the Scriptures— for example, in the Trinity, the work of God in the Old Testament, the incarnation, and the ministry of Jesus—arguing that Christians are to follow God's way of being. In fact, being with "is the most faithful form of Christian witness and mission, because being with is both incarnationally faithful to the manifestation of God in Christ and eschatologically anticipatory of the destiny of all things in God" (23).

In showing the centrality of 'being with' to God and God's work in the Scriptures, Wells illustrates how working for assumptions undergird many traditional ways of thinking about Jesus and his work. To be clear, we must not lose the 'for' of Jesus and his work—this is an essential aspect of justification—but 'with' is a necessary complement, especially for the way Christology and soteriology shape the mission of the church. The traditional Lutheran doctrine of *solus Christus* tends to assume a working for model: Jesus alone worked salvation for us. Although this is true and necessary, Wells' typology shows how reductive this understanding of Jesus can be. The risk is that Jesus is understood and imagined as Savior but not Immanuel, the one who worked for us but hardly God with us. In traditional dogmatic categories, it separates the person of Jesus from his work, at risk of reducing the full person of Jesus to an instrumental Savior. When Christ is understood in this way, the mission of the church is generally viewed as insiders (the haves) coming to outsiders (the have-nots) with mercy and forgiveness. Perhaps, it should not surprise us, then, that so many non-Christians view Christians as know-it-alls who have the answers and are not willing to listen to others or learn from them.[20] While we often blame

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[20] Thom and Joani Schultz, *Why Nobody Wants to Be Around Christians Anymore* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2014), 15. From "thousands" of interviews and discussions, Thom and Joani Schultz state, "What bothers people is that Christians act like they have all the answers. That they've arrived." This is what people mean when they complain that Christians are hypocritical.

relativism for this fact, perhaps we need to look more closely in the mirror. We have often done mission from a working-for model, which is reductive not only with regard to engagement with the world, but also with regard to the identity and mission of Jesus.

The common understanding of the *solus Christus* is indebted to working for assumptions, and so is more sophisticated theological reflection. Gerhard Forde, for example, recognizes a number of problems with atonement theories when they mask over the real life and ministry of Jesus. Forde attempts to return to the full, realistic narrative of Scripture, but he misses the 'with' of Christology. In so doing he too reduces Jesus to one who works for us.[21] Forde argues that traditional atonement theories put "roses" on the cross, covering up the reality of Jesus' murder by making the cross understandable and explainable, even attractive to us.[22] In a similar way, Wells observes, "The historic notions of atonement divide between working for and working with." The classic theory and the vicarious satisfaction theory are both working for models while the subjective theory is based on a working with model (241). These models make the death of Jesus understandable, subverting the cross and suffering (243–44). Rejecting theories that make Jesus' death attractive to us, Forde instead describes Jesus as the authoritative Son of God who showed mercy to sinners from the beginning, which is why we killed him.[23] Although Forde's turn toward the biblical narrative of Jesus is good and proper, his interpretation remains captive to the model of working for: showing mercy.

As a result of this working for model, Forde's understanding of the church and its mission is non-existent beyond the proclamation of God's word, the word of mercy.[24] Cheryl Peterson notes that Forde's ecclesiology is minimalistic, almost ignoring the church as a community.[25] Elsewhere, she blames this minimalism on an over-emphasis of "the Christological

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[21] I don't subscribe to Forde's understanding of atonement, but he is representative in Lutheranism. Furthermore, his critique is helpful in pointing away from the stories of atonement theories to the actual atonement story: Jesus was killed on a cross and rose from the dead that those dead in sin might live to God.

[22] Gerhard O. Forde, "The Work of Christ," in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 2:40–41.

[23] Gerhard O. Forde, "Caught in the Acts: Reflections on the Work of Christ," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, ed. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 90–91.

[24] Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology Is For Proclamation* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1990). This problem persists in the work of Forde's student Steven Paulson, *Lutheran Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

[25] Cheryl M. Peterson, *Who Is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 45–48, 52–54.

principle" and "the criterion of justification." For Peterson, these emphases have to be complemented, especially with pneumatology, in order to understand the church as a real community.[26] While Peterson is right to notice the ecclesiological deficit in Forde, Wells' analysis reveals a more important aspect of the problem.[27] Neither Christology as such nor an over-emphasis on Christology causes Forde's ecclesiological minimalism; rather, a Christology captured by the working-for model is the main culprit. When Christ is understood in terms of the working for model, the mission of the church as a community in and with the world has no foundation. The church primarily appears has those who have, who must come to the world that has not, with the gift of mercy. Jesus certainly is merciful—which we desperately need—but he is more than this; Jesus is God's own Son who entered into his own world in the form of a servant, lived among us, died, and rose from the dead with us and for us.

As Wells tells the story of Jesus, Jesus enters into our isolated, sinful existence *with us* to bring us to God and to one another. According to Wells' reading of the Scripture, Jesus has a choice of being with God or being with us, and he chooses to be with us, which "opens out the path of our salvation." Jesus' death, then, is the cost of Jesus' being with us, the cost of his refusal to give us up and allow us to be isolated forever. The resurrection, then, is the Father's answer that Jesus is not isolated from him, which renews the relationship with God and with us (241). The being with of the cross is especially evident as Jesus refuses to get down from it. Even as people are mocking him and torturing him, nothing can separate Jesus from us. Jesus does not right all wrongs and fix all things immediately, but bears all things on the cross *with* us. Wells—in a way Forde would appreciate—refuses to turn away quickly from the cross, reflecting on Jesus' love which "overcomes our isolation" (243).

The ecclesiological gap in the working for model is filled by Wells' *with*. The mission of the church must not lose the *for* of forgiveness and mercy, but it needs *with* in order to embody a robust sense of the church's call to mission in and with the world. To describe the social embodiment of the church, Wells does not turn away from Christology, but shows how the community of the church embodies the *being with* foundational to the Trinity and the ministry of Jesus. Wells describes how God's being with

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[26] Cheryl M. Peterson, "Lutheran Principles for Ecclesiology," in *Critical Issues in Ecclesiology: Essays in Honor of Carl E. Braaten*, ed. Alberto L. Garcia and Susan K. Wood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 150–51.

[27] Kathryn Tanner argues persuasively that Christology is the best doctrine for rooting ecclesiology and social ethics. Thus, it's not Christology as such, but the way Christ and his mission is misconstrued. See Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

entails a church that is *present* in a neighborhood, *attends* to the people and the virtues of the place, recognizes the *mystery* of community, *delights* in the gifts of all, encourages *participation* with each other, creates *partnerships*, *enjoys* and cherishes each other, and is caught up in the *glory* of God, the glory of the cross (258–65). Whereas the working for model offers few resources for how the church lives its mission in the world, the ministry of Jesus Christ opens the way to a church not only for but with the world.

III. Christological Resources for Mission *With* and For the World

Missiology and ecclesiology are tied directly to Christology and soteriology—to say nothing of the doctrine of God. As we have seen with Wells and Pickard, deficits in Christology and soteriology result in a poor understanding of the church and its participation in God's mission. If Wells is right, the working for model is part of the problem in the church today. As a result of the working for model, we tend to divide the church from the world and place the church in power as giver. As we have seen, this is rooted in a reductive Christology and soteriology that needs with to complement for. What sort of Christology and soteriology can bring forth a more robust understanding of the church's relationship to the world? Certainly, Wells is right to remind us that Jesus is not only Savior but also Immanuel. He is the God with us who enters into our world and human lives. Thus, we must see in the Scriptures not only the saving work of God in Christ, but the way in which Jesus entered into the lives of demoniacs, prostitutes, zealots, Pharisees, and normal peasants. The fullness of Jesus' person and work is central here so that we do not reduce him to an instrumental Savior who is only for us. We must preach and teach the stories of Jesus, his life in this world, and not merely think of him as the one who died for us. He did die for us, but he first lived with us.

In Lutheran theology, a number of Christological resources can inform a more robust understanding of Jesus' identity with his creation. Spirit Christology offers a helpful way forward that is both traditional (Chalcedonian) and new.[28] Spirit Christology testifies to the fact that the same Spirit who was sent to Jesus and sent by Jesus also enters into the

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[28] Leopoldo A. Sánchez, "Praying to God the Father in the Spirit: Reclaiming the Church's Participation in the Son's Prayer Life," *Concordia Journal* 32 (2006): 274–95. For Sánchez's fuller understanding of Spirit Christology, see Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., "Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit: Jesus' Life and Mission in the Spirit as a Ground for Understanding Christology, Trinity, and Proclamation," (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2003). For helpful perspective on Spirit Christology that connects Christ's offices to his church through the Spirit, see Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus: The Mystery of Christ's Baptism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986).

life of Christians, shaping the church for the mission of Jesus Christ. Thus, Spirit Christology requires a narrative mode to imagine the way in which Christ bore the Spirit in his life, sent the Spirit on his church, and calls his church to live in the Spirit, as in Acts. More traditionally, the *communicatio idiomatum* emphasizes the unity of the person of Jesus Christ as the fullness of the divine nature dwells in the man Jesus of Nazareth. On this basis, Luther was able to see the depth of Jesus' dwelling in the flesh in the Galatians commentary.[29] The *communicatio* illustrates how Jesus does not save his creation by remaining outside of it, but his mission brings him into intimate communion with his creation even in his own person.[30] In Paul's words, Jesus entered into "the likeness of sinful flesh," coming under the dominion of the law, sin, and death.[31] He certainly does this to save us, but he first came to be with us, consubstantial with human creatures. He does not save us without first entering into his fallen creation in the fullest sense, even under the burden of sin. He did not carry his own sins, but he carried the weight of our sins "from his holy birth until his death," walking under the law and in a world torn by sin with us in order to bear the burden of sin the cross and take it to the grave.[32] The author of Hebrews reminds us just fully Jesus entered into the creation and became like us: Jesus was like us in all respects, except without sin. In the twentieth century, Dietrich Bonhoeffer continued this line of thought by focusing on the humiliation and Christ as the Humiliated One even as the risen Christ who comes among us in the humble ways of Word and Sacrament. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer brings with and for together in closest proximity. For Bonhoeffer, the *pro me* of Christology is part of Christ's very person, the structure of his identity.[33]

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[29] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535*, Vol. 26 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963). See also Johann Anselm Steiger, "The *Communicatio Idiomatum* as the Axle and Motor of Luther's Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (2000): 125–58. For a recent interpretation of Luther's Christology, see Paul R. Hinlicky, *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

[30] There is also misuse of the *communicatio idiomatum* in modern theology. For example, in a recent essay Daniel Peterson travels a fascinating road, but abstracts God from the person of Jesus to the neighbor. Daniel J. Peterson, "Beyond Deep Incarnation: Rethinking Theology in Radical Lutheran Terms," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 53, no. 3 (2014): 240–49.

[31] This perspective coheres well with David Scaer's recent reflections on the Christological shape of theology, especially the centrality of Christ's servanthood and humiliation. See Scaer, "All Theology Is Christology Revisited," 58-62.

[32] Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, III, 58. The whole article is instructive. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 572.

[33] *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* "Lectures on Christology," in *Berlin, 1932–33*, ed. Larry L. Rasmussen, vol. 12 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 299–360.

To use the language of this essay, the Christ who is with us in his person is also the one who is for us. Christ cannot be reduced to for, but he also cannot be separated from it.

Conclusion

In focusing on Jesus Christ who is with us and his creation, we will not (and must not) lose the for of his work. Jesus did *the* work for us that we could never do for ourselves. We cannot copy his work; we cannot imitate it. We can only be grasped by him through his Spirit, brought to trust in him as the saving Lord. At the same time, however, Jesus and his work cannot be reduced to the working for model that Wells describes. To do that will be to lose the fullness of the Scriptural narrative, the robust Christology of the church, and a necessary perspective on the church and its mission. I have suggested a couple of ways in which Lutheran Christology already illuminates the fullness of the person of Christ. We do not need to create a new Christology or make up some new doctrine that fits our contemporary milieu. We simply need to go back to the sources, reading them with eyes open to see the fullness of Jesus's identity with us and his mission in the world. When we recognize the fullness of his mission as we are led into the Scriptures, God's Spirit is at work to revitalize our congregations in God's mission. As we have seen, mission involves more than giving the mercy of Jesus to the world—although this is an essential part. The mission of the church involves entering into life with the world, learning its problems, encouraging participation, and learning to enjoy others as God's human creatures, who are valuable in their own right. This begins as we better understand Jesus Christ, our Immanuel, who calls us to participate in his mission.

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Higher Criticism and the Legal Standard for Expert Testimony

John Warwick Montgomery

Introduction

The standard rejoinder to attempts to present the classic view that the biblical record in general is a work purporting to offer statements of objective historical fact is a confident (and often supercilious) reference to "the assured results of the higher criticism." One is told that theological faculties of mainline denominations and secular universities simply accept higher critical methodologies as normative. The implication is that true expertise in the field is thereby established beyond question and that anyone still accepting biblical accounts on their face value and employing the classic hermeneutic rule that the text should function as its own interpreter is operating is operating in a hopelessly pre-modern fashion.

Procedural law offers a new perspective on this key issue. Recent years have seen a vital change in the way in which American courts, both federal and state, have come to treat expert testimony. In this short essay, we shall discuss that change and its implications for "assured results of higher criticism."

The Modern American Law of Expert Testimony

The importance of expert testimony in both civil and criminal trials is simply immense. Writes a recent commentator in this area:

> A judge's decision whether to admit expert testimony can determine the outcome of a trial. If, for example, in a pharmaceutical liability lawsuit, the plaintiff cannot proffer an expert's opinion causally linking the drug at issue to her infirmity, she is unlikely to get the case to the jury. In a criminal trial, the admission of expert testimony questioning the reliability of eyewitness identifications may mean the difference between creating reasonable doubt or not. The standard, therefore, by which courts assess whether to admit expert testimony can be a crucial filter.[1]

Until quite recently, American courts accepted expert testimony on the

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[1] Patrick McGlone, "Time To Retire the *Frye* Test," *Washington [D.C.] Lawyer,* June, 2015, p. 27.

basis of a leading case: *Frye v U.S.,* 293 F. 1013-1014 (D.C. Cir. 1923). The Court declared " . . . while courts will go a long way in admitting expert testimony deduced from a well-recognized scientific principle or discovery, the thing from which the deduction is made must be sufficiently established to have gained general acceptance in the particular field in which it belongs."

This "general acceptance" test to recognizing expert testimony came under more and more criticism over the years. The test focuses on "counting scientists' votes, rather than verifying the soundness of a scientific conclusion."[2] The advantage to the judge was that he did not have to evaluate the scientific evidence himself; his task was essentially to count noses—determining concurrence or non-concurrence of the scientific community on the matter.

Twenty-two years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court substituted a new test for recognizing expert evidence. The *Daubert* test—named from the leading case of *Daubert v Merrill Dow Pharmaceuticals,* 509 U.S. 579 (1993)— substituted a far more rational and sophisticated approach, consisting of an examination of four non-exclusive factors: (1) whether the theory on which the presumed expert is being called on to testify has been or can be tested, (2) whether the theory has been submitted to peer review and publication, (3) the method's known or potential rate of error, and (4) whether the theory finds general acceptance in the relevant scientific community. The *Frye* test may still be relevant, but it stands in fourth place and is entirely subordinated to questions as to the *de facto* scientific value of the expert's opinion. *Daubert* became the required standard in the federal courts, for the U.S. Supreme Court construed Rule 702 of the Federal Rules of Evidence as mandating the *Daubert* approach. Most State courts in the intervening years have come to follow *Daubert.* The result has been that judges now have a more serious task before them: they must themselves evaluate the scientific (or non-scientific) basis of the proposed expert testimony; they can no longer simply play statistician with the numbers of scientists in favour of or against a particular theory.[3]

The great advantage of the Daubert approach is that is moves determination of expertise from a war of numbers to an examination of the *evidence* for or against a theory. In a recent case, Associate Judge Frederick

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[2] *Jones v U.S.,* 27 A.3d. 113, 1136 (D.C. 2011), cited in *Pettus v U.S.,* 37 A.3d. 213, 217 (D.C. 2012).

[3] To be sure, there has been resistance in some quarters to the additional burden on judges created by the *Daubert* decision; but its positive merit is now almost universally recognized; cf. "*Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals,*" in Joseph B. Kadane (ed.), *Statistics in the Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 52-65.

H. Weisberg effectively compared *Frye* with the *Daubert,* pointing up the vast superiority of the latter:

> . . . if a reliable, but not yet generally accepted, methodology produces "good science," *Daubert* will let it in, and if an accepted methodology produces "bad science," *Daubert* will keep it out; conversely, under *Frye,* as applied in this jurisdiction, even if a new methodology produces "good science," it will usually be excluded, but if an accepted methodology produces "bad science," it is likely to be admitted.[4]

Application to the Higher Criticism of the Bible

Now let us see the value of applying *Daubert* analysis to "the assured results of the higher criticism" of the Holy Scriptures.

> There is no doubt that a majority of faculty members at mainline denominational theological seminaries and in secular university and college departments of religion accept—religiously—the higher criticism. For them, it is indeed possible to reconstruct biblical materials by a literary analysis of the alleged sub-documents used editorially to create them as we have them today. The biblical critics would have no problem whatever passing the *Frye* test of "general acceptance" in their specific domain. (We leave aside here the pertinent question of why the views of faculty at conservative theological seminaries, Bible colleges, and Christian universities would be snubbed in such a nose count, but self-styled "liberals" have never been famous for their toleration for views to the right of their own.[5])

The *Daubert* formulation, however, insists that the judge *examine the underlying evidence for the given theory and its actual or potential negative effects.* It will never suffice merely to determine how many specialists agree or disagree with the theory.

So let us examine the rationality of the higher criticism. A convenient way to do this is to survey the propositional analysis of New and Old

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[4] *Murray v Motorola,* Case No. 2001 CA 008479 B, 2014 WI. 5817891, at *26 (D.C. Super. 8 August 2014).

[5] Cf. John Warwick Montgomery, "Bibliographical Bigotry," in his *Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1970), pp. 180-83

Testament higher criticism from my *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus*.[6] This we shall do in the following:

3.3 *Do not "assured results of modern biblical criticism" destroy the force of the foregoing argument for the soundness of the New Testament documents?*

3.31 Even the most radical of the biblical critics has to accept the results of the bibliographical test which establishes the transmissional reliability of the New Testament documents.

3.32 Moreover, even after the most extreme criticism has been exercised, the critics themselves have not been able to excise central, miraculous elements from the narratives (G. Habermas).

3.321 For example, the discovery of the empty tomb on Easter morning—accepted by the great majority of critics because that discovery by women would have been so unlikely a fabrication in the context of male-dominated 1st century Judaism.

3.33 How, then, in spite of having to agree with the textual (lower) critics as to the value of the New Testament texts, do the higher (form and redaction-) critics conclude that the life of Jesus, as set forth therein, is not—regardless of the asseverations of the writers—an accurate, historically reliable account, but is instead a theological product of "the faith experiences of the early church"?

3.331 The higher critics analyze the texts, identifying what they believe to be irregularities and inconsistencies in style and content; these are explained as the result of multiple authorship and the later editing and redacting of the materials by diverse faith orientations within the early Christian community.

3.34 This hypothesis faces the following insuperable objections:

3.341 No documentary evidence whatsoever exists to show the multiple authorship of New Testament books, i.e., no manuscripts of "pre-edited" material have ever been found; nor have any accounts been discovered which describe the redaction of the books by churchmen or by early Christian communities.

3.3411 Indeed, the early church and its spokesmen are uniform in their affirmations of respect for the Apostolic writings and the need to follow them without question.

3.3412 The conclusion seems inescapable that the methodology of the

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higher critic is a subjective one, dependent on the critic's views as to what constitutes a consistent literary product.

3.34121 It appears that what the critic is actually saying is that, were she to have written the book in question, she would not have written it that way; but perhaps that is why, in the ways of Providence, higher critics were not chosen as biblical authors.

3.342 Higher critical method has been weighed in the balance and found wanting when used to establish the authenticity of writings in other scholarly fields.

3.3421 Ugaritic scholarship discarded prior efforts to find multiple authorship on the basis of variation in the use of divine names (Cyrus Gordon).

3.34211 "If we applied the criterion of 'Divine names' to Ugaritic, Egyptian, or Arabic texts, we should see that the principle was not valid. I could multiply examples for all other criteria of the documentary hypothesis" (E. Yamauchi).

3.3422 Classical scholars, having attempted to locate multiple authors and establish the redaction of the Homeric poems, now conclude that "if the Iliad and the Odyssey were not written by Homer, they were written by someone of the same name who lived about the same time" (H. Caplan).

3.34221 "The chief weapon of the separatists has always been literary criticism, and of this it is not too much to say that such niggling word-baiting, such microscopic hunting of minute inconsistencies and flaws in logic, has hardly been seen, outside of the Homeric field, since Rymar and John Dennis died" (H. J. Rose, *Handbook of Greek Literature from Homer to the Age of Lucian*).

3.3423 Efforts to show the redaction of the English ballads were given up because the time span was considered too short for such a process (John Drinkwater, *English Poetry*); yet "no Gospel section passed through such a long period of oral tradition as did any genuine ballad" (McNeile and Williams, *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*).

3.3424 C. S. Lewis (essay on "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism") pointed out that interpreters of his Narnian Chronicles had not in a single instance been successful in isolating his sources, even though they were his contemporaries, employing the same language he used; Lewis then wondered why biblical critics, working with

material two thousand years old and in ancient languages, think that they can succeed in a parallel endeavour.

3.3425 "The game of applying the methods of the 'Higher Criticism' to the Sherlock Holmes canon was begun, many years ago, by Monsignor Ronald Knox, with the aim of showing that, by those methods, one could disintegrate a modern classic as speciously as a certain school of critics have endeavoured to disintegrate the Bible" (Dorothy Sayers, *Unpopular Opinions*).

3.343 Forgeries of sculptures (Scopas) and paintings (Mondrian) have been purchased—at staggering cost—by major museums, such as the Getty and the Centre Pompidou, as a result of relying on experts who have employed stylistic arguments for attribution, rather than objective, scientific analysis of paint and compositional material.

3.35 Legal scholarship, with no literary axe to grind, has found the work of the biblical higher critics "curious":

3.351 "It is astonishing that while Graeco-Roman historians have been growing in confidence, the twentieth-century study of the Gospel narratives, starting from no less promising material, has taken so gloomy a turn in the development of form-criticism that the more advanced exponents of it apparently maintain— so far as an amateur can understand the matter—that the historical Christ is unknowable and the history of his mission cannot be written. This seems very curious when one compares the case for the best-known contemporary of Christ, who like Christ is a well-documented figure—Tiberius Caesar. The story of his reign is known from four sources, the *Annals* of Tacitus and the biography of Suetonius, written some eighty or ninety years later, the brief contemporary record of Velleius Paterculus, and the third century history of Cassius Dio. These disagree amongst themselves in the wildest possible fashion, both in major matters of political action or motive and in specific details of minor events. Everyone would admit that Tacitus is the best of all the sources, and yet no serious modern historian would accept at face value the majority of the statements of Tacitus about the motives of Tiberius. But this does not prevent the belief that the material of Tacitus can be used to write a history of Tiberius" (A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*).

3.36 What of the mediating scholars, generally of evangelical persuasion (Gundry, Osborne), and particularly found in the British Isles (Tyndale House, N. T. Wright), who believe that a mild, chastened,

baptised higher criticism can be productively employed in New Testament scholarship?

3.361   This viewpoint partakes of the classic failing of "the curate's egg": the fact that a minute portion may not be bad does not warrant eating it.

3.362   If a methodology is fundamentally flawed—as is higher criticism by the inherent subjectivity of its analysis—it must be rejected per se and not employed selectively (G. Maier; E. Linnemann).

3.363   If, on occasion, the results of a bad methodology are not themselves bad, that hardly vindicates the method.

3.37   Even if it were possible to remove the anti-supernaturalistic bias from higher criticism—which is by no means certain—this would not correct its subjectivism.

3.371   We have already seen how a bias against veridical prophecy leads the higher critics to postdate Gospel materials after A.D. 70— against the full weight of evidence in favour of their having been written within a generation of the events in the life of Jesus.

3.372   The subjectivity of higher critical method is particularly evident from the fact that the critics cannot agree among themselves as to the particular "sources" behind biblical materials—much less as to where one source leaves off and another begins.

3.3721 To bypass this difficulty, the end-of-the-20th-century "Jesus Seminar" (Robert W. Funk, Gerd Luedemann, *et al.*) has resorted to *voting* on the reliability of Gospel pericopes, thus avoiding the need for unanimity—surely a damning admission as to the inadequacy of the higher critical method itself.

3.373   Computer-assisted efforts to establish the "true," underlying authorship and provenance of New Testament writings have led to most unsatisfactory results.

3.3731 MacGregor and Morton fed the "literary style" of Romans and Galatians into a computer, so as to compare them with the other New Testament letters claiming to be Pauline; their conclusion: none of these other works were written by Paul. Then the MacGregor and Morton book on the subject was itself subjected to computer analysis using parallel criteria, proving that their work was actually a product of multiple authorship.

3.374   Style and vocabulary are not sufficiently stable criteria for determining questions of authorship.

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3.3741   Parts one and two of Goethe's *Faust* would never be considered the work of a single author on the application of such criteria— but Goethe in fact wrote both; compare John's Gospel and the Revelation of St. John.

3.3742   Would the single authorship of one's love letters and academic productions survive higher critical analysis?

3.3743   "Many measures are extremely sensitive to a text's length (measured in number of words) and to its subject content. Longer texts and specialist texts prepared for expert audiences, for example, may have larger vocabularies than shorter texts and those written for general audiences. Genre, too, has an impact. A collection of newspaper articles and an autobiographical account all by the same author may differ considerably in their measurable style. Clearly, then, stylistic analyses are fallible and cannot provide positive identification of a text's authorship or literary heritage" (D. I. Greenstein, *A Historian's Guide to Computing*).

3.381   Thus, the illogic of such efforts as the so-called *Jefferson Bible,* in which the third American president (a Deistic rationalist) included only Jesus' moral teachings after excising all the miraculous elements from the Gospel accounts.

3.382   Thus also (to take but a single current example), the critics' oft-repeated comment that, after all, the Virgin Birth accounts appear only in two Gospels (Matthew and Luke) and so, presumably, can be rejected; *but* they disregard the fact that this is equally the case with the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount (a favourite of those liberal critics themselves).

3.383   As in the legal construction of documents, integrated texts are to be viewed as a whole: "Lord Justice Peter Gibson said it was possible for a court to find that part of a will did have the knowledge and approval of the deceased and that another part did not. But the circumstances in which it would be proper to find such a curate's egg would be rare" (*Fuller* v *Strum,* Times Law Report, 22 January 2002, finding that the will, in its entirety, was valid).

3.39   Do not the alleged "contradictions" in the New Testament material support the need for a higher critical analysis of the texts? Not at all, for:

3.391   The burden falls on the critic to show the existence of contradictions, and she cannot discharge that burden.

3.392　In most instances, the critic is not aware of the definition of a logical contradiction, namely, two incompatible states of affairs, one of which cannot logically exist at the same time or place, or under the same conditions, as the other.

3.393　Is it a "contradiction" when the Gospel of John records that Jesus cleansed the Temple early in his ministry, whilst the Synoptic Gospels speak of a cleansing of the Temple at the end of his ministry? *Only* if one assumes that there was one, and only one, cleansing; but that is not required by the language of the texts.

3.3931　Considering the condition of the Temple at the time, might we wonder why Jesus did not clean it out every Sabbath?

3.394　We have already noted that it is a fundamental principle of responsible literary criticism always to give the benefit of doubt to the writing; this principle is honoured only in the breach by the higher critics of the New Testament documents.

4.63　. . . One must reject the documentary criticism of the Old Testament, which modifies the plain meaning of the text by recourse to hypothesised underlying sources and supposed editorial revisions of the text.

4.631　Thus, the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen J-E-P-D theory, which held that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, as Jesus thought, but was a paste-up created from four major sources (one using *Yahweh/Jehovah* as the name for God, one using *Elohim* for the name of God, one a priestly, sacrifice-orientated source, and one a deuteronomic or law-focused source).

4.6311　What we have said previously as to the hopelessly subjective, and therefore unscholarly, character of New Testament form- and redaction-criticism applies equally here.

4.63111　No manuscripts have ever been discovered which represent any one of the supposed underlying sources of Old Testament books.

4.63112　The critics have by no means stopped with J-E-P-D; Morgenstern of Hebrew Union College endeavoured to divide a K source into K and K_1.

4.63113　"Review of activity in the field of Old Testament criticism during the last quarter century has revealed a chaos of conflicting trends, ending in contradictory results, which create an impression of ineffectiveness in this type of research. The conclusion seems to be

unavoidable that the higher criticism has long since passed the age of constructive achievement" (H. F. Hahn).

4.6312 The attempt to rearrange the Old Testament material by way of alleged sources has been deeply influenced by extrinsic, ideological considerations; thus, the naïve progressive-evolutionary thinking of the 19th century led critics to assert that "primitive" blood-sacrifice passages must have come earlier than "advanced" moral-prophetic passages (thereby allegedly showing the evolution of Old Testament religion from "lower" to "higher" monotheism).

4.632 Higher critics of the Old Testament almost universally maintain that the Book of Isaiah is actually two books, one earlier, the other (Deutero-Isaiah) later.

4.6321 One of the chief reasons for this supposition is the critic's anti-miraculous bias: if the book is a unity, written at the time claimed for it, it must contain de facto fulfilled prophecy (cf. E.B. Pusey's powerful refutation of anti-miraculous postdating [*Daniel the Prophet*]).

4.6322 One of the earliest manuscripts of and Old Testament book, a Dead Sea scroll Isaiah (*ca.* 125 B.C.), has the same text as in Bibles today, and shows no break whatsoever at the point where Deutero-Isaiah is supposed to commence.

4.633 Such examples make plain that rejection of Old Testament criticism has only one scholarly disadvantage: one will not be asked to deliver papers at the conferences of the critics.

Conclusion

If contemporary biblical scholarship were to follow the latest and best legal reasoning in the determination of valid expert testimony, it would reject *in toto* the subjectivistic methodology of the higher criticism. "General acceptance" of higher criticism by its advocates would be seen as an entirely inadequate ground for admitting its exegetical conclusions. Higher criticism as an interpretive methodology has been tested in other scholarly realms (Greco-Roman literature, Ugaritic, the English ballads, contemporary literature, computer studies) and found wanting; and its "known or potential rate of error" is gigantic. If one assesses whether the "reasoning or methodology underlying [its] testimony is scientifically valid,"[7] the only possible conclusion is a resounding negative. It is time for the mainline theological community to go beyond its myopic confines and listen to the judgment of the jurisprudents—on whose reasoning in the

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[7] *Daubert,* 509 U.S. at 592-93.

courtroom (unlike the subjective opinions of liberal theologians) societal health squarely depends.

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Holy Absolution: Reformational Turn and Evangelical Lutheran Treasure

Jonathan Mumme

Introduction[1]

"Lutheran" and "Reformation" – the adjective and the noun stand in close proximity, the former a description first of doctrine, then of a confession, and finally of a particular communion; and the later the historical event that led to this doctrine's formulation. There is no "Lutheran" without the Reformation, without a historical situation of such import that the stability and finally visible union of the western church would be paid as the price to retain such teaching. Lutherans who are Lutherans without the doctrine that gave rise to the adjective are at best schismatics, or worse a sort of church club or religious association that lacks reason for its existence beyond willful self-preservation and – perpetuation. Thus, when we discuss, and celebrate, the Reformation, we are not celebrating something ancillary to our identity, but rather something essential. The Festival of the Reformation commemorates a point in history when the Gospel, having been obscured in much of the late medieval western church's teaching and buried under a host of its abuses, came again to clearer light – *again*: Lutherans never, ever claim to be something new, but rather of a piece with the church before and the church of all ages, confessing its teaching over against error and practicing its faith in contradistinction to abuse. To say "Lutheran" is to say nothing other than "Christian" as defined by a moment in history when "Christian" had been becoming decisively unclear and came to clearer light again.

The word "reformation" signals a turn. Wherein did that turn consist? When did it happen? This great turn of early modern history had by any accounts to do with the turn of a man, a German Augustinian friar, city preacher, and university professor – Martin Luther. The date set for

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[1] For the contents of this article I am indebted to the research of my *Doktorvater*, Oswald Bayer, to the Rev. Dr. Gottfried Martens for a module on Luther"s doctrine of absolution taught at the *Lutherische Theologische Hochschule* in Oberursel, Germany in the Spring Semester of 2003, to Bishop Dr. Jobst Schöne of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany for an address to the vicars of its Practical Theological Seminar delivered in the Spring of 2004, and to the faithful undershepherds of Christ who have heard my confessions. This article was first delivered as an address at Luther-Tyndale Memorial Church in Kentish Town – London on October 26, 2012.

the celebration of the Reformation marks the day that Luther posted his 95 Theses,[2] an action that was to set ecclesial balls rolling and political dominos falling in a way that he himself could little have imagined. The posting of the theses can perhaps mark a turning point in history, but what of the turning point of the man who came to be the articulator of a clear confession of the Gospel at that juncture in history? Things like that don't happen just by setting out for a stroll to the local billboard.

If they have a picture at all, often the picture that Lutherans have of Luther's reformational turn–his hard-won insight into the Gospel as distinct from the Law–is that of the individual intently reading his Bible, alone. This picture is not without reason. In some aspects it matches an idealized picture that Luther paints of this turn or change in the 1545 preface to his Latin works. Struggling over the words "the righteousness of God" (Rm 1:17) he came to what was for him a new insight.

> At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.[3]

In the ecumenical age that was the twentieth century, an age in which Christians began to question their divisions earnestly, the very Lutheran-existential question of Luther's own reformational turn was perhaps *the* most heavily debated question of Luther scholarship. When did this turn take place? Wherein did it consist? Could the insight that Luther in 1545 attributed to Rm 1:17 in 1518 already be identified in earlier years, earlier writings? Or did the decisive insight come then, or even later? Taking the scholarship as a whole, one can hardly but speak of a period of transition. However, if there is a point to which one can point as a decisive turning

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[2] *Luther's Works* (hereafter "*LW*"), ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and others (St. Louis and Philadelphia, 1955ff) 31:25-33 = *Studienausgabe* (hereafter "*StA*"), 6 vols., edited by Hans-Ulrich Delius (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1979-99) 1:176-85 = *Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (hereafter "*WA*"), 60 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883ff.) 1:233-38.

[3] *LW* 34:337 (= *StA* 5:636,15-637,3; *WA* 54:186,3-9).

point, then that seems to be early in the summer of 1518.[4] Not only does this mean that the decisive reform of the future "Reformer" had not yet taken place when he hung his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, but that the picture is more complex than that of Luther as the individual reading his Bible, alone, which is at best a caricature of the preacher of Wittenberg's city church and professor for Old Testament at its university, who had already attained three academic degrees in theology. This turn of Summer 1518 can be marked in the way Luther comes to understand the relationship between the word (*verbum*) and faith (*fides*). Reformational – turning-point – is the insight that faith is born of and sustained by the promissory and efficacious *oral* word of God, a word spoken most concretely by the priest to the penitent in holy absolution. This means that reformational turn of the Reformer that stands behind the historical turn of the Reformation so existential for Lutherans, has to do not simply with individuals reading their Bibles, much less some sort of direct or immediate relationship with God, but rather with the Gospel coming clear of the Law in the mediate word of Holy Absolution and then in the sacramental system of the church. The Reformation was, if you will, born in the confessional.

Historical Background

If we are speaking of Reformation, as Lutherans, we are speaking at the very least of the clear word of the Gospel as absolution being put into the ears of sinners, of a word that *e*ffects what it says and gives what it promises.

To speak of "reform" is to speak of what was before, and there had been much. God alone forgives sins; as far as hamartiolgy went the Pharisees and Scribes were solid theologians.[5] It was their Christology that was deficient. The fact that divine judgment and divine forgiveness are spoken from the mouth of man hangs on Jesus Christ, on the one person in whom divine and human natures are joined. There exists that which we have come to call "Holy Absolution" because he himself entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter and the other apostles to be exercised in the church.[6] The apostles and the apostolic ministers are sent with Christ's own authority to forgive, and, if need be, retain sins. It is Christ's own doing that the gate to heaven is no further from earth than the Logos was from the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth.

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[4] Oswald Bayer, "Die reformatorische Wende in Luthers Theologie," *Zeitscrift für Theologie und Kirche* 66 (1969):115-150, p. 121.

[5] Lk 5:21: "Who is able to forgive sins but God alone?"

[6] Mt 16:17-19 and 18:15-22.

This treasure is inestimable – so precious and powerful that it creates the various vessels in which it has been contained and delivered through the intervening centuries. That is to say that there is no divinely mandated form under which the binding and loosing of sins has always gone on in the church;[7] rather we observe different forms arise out of and be revised against our Lord's mandate that such binding and loosing be going on.

The ancient church, living in an era of persecutions before the Constantinian shift, had a rather rigorous practice of penance, which by the third century had developed into a system of public penance and later restoration to the communion.[8] After the fall of the Roman Empire many of the riches of the ancient church came to rest and be preserved in the British isles; so too confession. It was in the monasteries of Ireland that the practice of individual confession and absolution developed. Then with the movement of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon missionaries to the continent the first penitential books came to Europe in the sixth century, which, with their lists of sins and graded penances, were much used and often debated during the Middle Ages. In the western church of the Middle Ages the place of absolution migrates; first it was granted only after the penance had been fulfilled, but gradually it came to be spoken after the sinner's confession. The public penance of the early church became a light, formal penance, which was now as private a matter as the confession itself.[9] The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 made annual confession to one's parish priest obligatory.[10] This led to a flourish of publication of confessors' handbooks, used also by a new army

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[7] Cf. *LC* Confession in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (hereafter "*BC*"), edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 476-80 = *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (hereafter "*BSLK*")*,* 11th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 725,30-733,24: the two forms of confession specified by the Lord's prayer lie under command, but the absolution as comfort, along with private confession (that confession and absolution to which the *LC* is here exhorting, do not. When it comes to private confession and absolution the only ones who lie under command are the clergy, who are compelled to offer this; see *LC* Confession, 30-31 (*BC* 479 = *BSLK* 732,22-37).

[8] The given sinner would be enrolled in the order of penitents for a time according to the gravity of his sin. During this time he was committed to "a severe course of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving." This could be done only once in a lifetime, and afterward the person was no longer allowed to marry. The severity of the system led to its breakdown with persons putting off such penance until shortly before their death. "Penance" in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by F. L. Cross, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 1258f.

[9] This could also be labeled "satisfaction." "Penance" is, it should be noted, an interesting part to take for the naming of the whole.

[10] In the East confession was not so intimately bound to the priesthood. Understood more as spiritual direction it was often sought from monastics, but by the fifteenth century confession to a priest had become the norm for the laity. "Penance," 1258.

of confessors in the burgeoning mendicant orders, which become a target for the criticism of many reformers.

Throughout the history one observes twists and turns that can be read as evidence of a divine gift being pulled under the workings and rubrics of the Law. In the New Testament the word that comes to be translated as "penance", *poenitentia*, is μετάνοια. The related verb, μετανοέω, means to change one's mind; it indicates an about-face in regard to how one thinks and feels about something. But as the terminology makes its way into Latin and the practice of a Latin-speaking church the controlling terminology pulls in another direction. "To repent" or "to change one's mind" (μετανοέω) comes to be "to do penance" (*poenitentiam dare*). Traced back to its root, *poena* – "punishment", that penance meant to undergo punishments. And indeed this very thought, albeit in various forms, informed the penitential practice of the church in late antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages: one *did* penance; one underwent some of the punishment of sin now rather than endure it all in the life to come.[11] It is not without reason that the whole of what we now in English-speaking Lutheran circles refer to as "Confession and Absolution" was simply called "Penance." This synecdoche is very telling; the conscience- and life-burdening aspect was chosen as the shorthand for referring to the whole. The rubric of the Law is the controlling thought, the *Oberbegriff.* Christ's atoning work was not forgotten, and yet "satisfaction" was used to refer to what sinners did in regard to their sins; they made satisfaction for them; their actions evened the accounts, at least in part. If one were expected to make satisfaction for sins one might wish a set up circumstances in which fewer sins rather than more were likely. Many chose a life of asceticism, or later the regulated monasticism of the cloister, as a means of eliminating or at least controlling the passions. As always happens when burden becomes too great, personal and systemic means of burden alleviation arise. Tangibly, strict measures of penance or satisfaction came to be commuted; what could have taken years might be reduced to a day for a certain monetary contribution to this or that churchly end. On the intangible front came the division between *culpa* (guilt) and *poena* (punishment); for the latter, the lesser, one was to make amends, either in this life or in purgatory. If one's own efforts toward the punishments/satisfaction were not enough there was the "treasury of merits," of which the church was the dispenser. For the former, the guilt, there was contrition, confession, and absolution, with the validity of the absolution being contingent on the sincerity of the sinner's contrition and on the completeness of his auricular confession.

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[11] Especially in the early church, or among the stricter monastic orders, these punishments or satisfactions could be severe: fasting, abstaining from sex, pilgrimage, and floggings.

So was the state of the divine gift of the keys at the outset of the sixteenth century – in many ways obscured under the workings and reasonings of the Law. Christ had indeed died for sinners, but he was also returning as their judge, and they lived in fear of him. Sinners must and would pay for their sins, so best to get as much of the temporal punishment out of the way as one could. In this regard the late medieval western church was omnipresent as advertiser and service provider, offering relics, pilgrimage, foundations, chantries, and not least indulgences as means of alleviating temporal punishment while financing the operations of the church, right down to the construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. For the alleviation of guilt there was private confession, but here the sinner was largely pointed to himself; his forgiveness was contingent not only on the completeness of the confession but also, and most importantly, on the sincerity of his contrition. One was only as forgiven as one was truly sorry.

A tinderbox of history had been constructed, and into it an observant Augustinian friar stepped with the match of an honest conscience. Giving up a promising career in law the young Luther sought out the most stringent religious order that his university town had to offer. Within the ranks of the Augustinians he took the requirements of confession very seriously, at times spending six hours in the confessional and working himself into ill health and quickly toward an early grave.

Luther's Reformational Turn

On October 31, 1517 Luther did not go to the castle door of the city church in Wittenberg to nail "The 95 Theses," as history later came to refer to them; he went there to post "A disputation for the clarification of the power of indulgences," for which disputation he had penned 95 theses. Even if Luther had not yet reached his critical "reformational turn," which will shortly be delineated, the context was nonetheless one dealing with Confession and Absolution. Luther's resistance to the sale of indulgences, now less than 20 miles from Wittenberg, does not amount a condemnation of indulgences as such, but rather stems from the concern that Christians would, by the way that they were being advertised, be led away from true repentance and good works.[12] In his mind true contrition may not be bypassed. On it hangs finally both the release from temporal punishments and the forgiveness of guilt. And of this Luther states that, "No one is sure of the integrity of his own contrition, …"[13] One sees in the 95 Theses tell-tale signs of an early theology of the cross that would over time go silent.

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[12] James M. Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 108.

[13] Thesis 30, *LW* 31:28 (= *StA* 1:179,7f; *WA* 1:234,35f).

According to this theology salvation comes by way of self-condemnation and -humiliation, the only surety of salvation being in the experience of its opposite: "God remits guilt to no one unless at the same time he humbles himself in all things … ."[14] "Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their head, through penalties, death, and hell; And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations … ."[15]

The firestorm that Luther's 95 theses sparked would soon have him on trial at the Diet of Augsburg (October 1518), which would mean going several rounds with one of the preeminent theologians of the day, Thomas Cardinal Cajetan. Prior to the weighty encounter, during a period when "the case of Luther" was intensifying around him, Luther was further clarifying his thoughts. In a little book to which Cajetan would refer at Augsburg,[16] *Resolutions Concerning the 95 Theses* (written in May and published in August of 1518), one may observe movement in the direction of the critical turn. Luther has not yet come free of an Augustinian-neoplatonic sign-theory of the sacraments, according to which there is always some space between the thing one hears or of which one partakes and the divine reality itself. In the resolutions there is still a noticeable space between the absolution of the priest and God's own absolution.[17] The movement toward the decisive, reformational turn consists in the fact that the sinner is now being pointed to the trustworthy word of Christ, rather than toward his own contrition and works[18] for comfort.[19]

> For if [the person who is to be absolved] is uncertain of the
> anguish of his conscience (as it must always be if it is a true
> sorrow), yet he is constrained to abide by the judgment of another,
> not at all on account of the prelate himself or his power, but on

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[14] Thesis 7, *LW* 31:26 (= *StA* 1:177,1f; *WA* 1:233,23f).

[15] Thesis 94-95*, LW* 31:33 (= *StA* 1:185,5-8; *WA* 1:238,18-20).

[16] See Bayer, 123f.

[17] *LW* 31:98-107 (=*WA* 1:539,32-545,9,); see, for example 31:99 (= *WA* 1:540,4f): " … remission is indicated as taking place on earth before it takes place in heaven," and *LW* 31:102 (= *WA* 1:542,7): "Therefore, God's remission effects grace, but the priests remission brings peace, …". Note, however, *LW* 31:105 (= *WA* 1:543,32f) : " … as long as it is somehow clear that the priest truly remits sins and guilt, …"

[18] The position that Luther is rejecting he describes like this: "More recent theologians, however, contribute entirely too much to this torment of conscience by treating and teaching the sacrament of penance in such a way that people learn to trust in the delusion that it is possible to have their sins cancelled by their contritions and satisfactions." (*LW* 31:103 [= *WA* 1:542,34-37]).

[19] However, elements of the theology of the cross, whereby a thing is experienced under its opposite, are still present as well; see various portions of *LW* 31:99-102 (=*WA* 1:540,7-542,6).

account of the word of Christ, who cannot lie when he says, "Whatever you loose on earth" [Matt. 16:19]. For faith born of this word will bring peace of conscience, for it is according to this word that the priest shall loose.[20]

It is faith in this word of Christ, i.e. faith in the word of the absolution that justifies. " … it is neither the sacrament nor the priest, but faith in the word of Christ spoken through the priest and his office which justifies you."[21] Such conclusions were laying the groundwork for a certainty that, in Cajetan's estimation, amounted to nothing less than "a new theology."[22]

However, it is first in a hitherto (at least to English speaking Lutherans) little-known set of theses for a circular disputation entitled "*Pro veritate inquirenda et timoritatis conscientiis consolandis conclusiones*" ("Conclusions concerning a truth to be investigated and terrified consciences to be comforted") that one encounters the reformationally decisive relationship between the word (*verbum*) and faith (*fides*).[23] At the end of these 50 theses and as a summary of everything that he says there Luther cites that all-important passage, to which the well-know retrospection from 1545 also calls attention – Romans 1:17: "The righteous shall live by faith." He says, "The righteous shall not live by works nor by the law, but by faith."[24] What is this faith by which the righteous person lives? To this question these 50 theses give answer.

If Luther in the May *Resolutions* had begun to point away from the sinner's contrition as grounds for any certainty, by the time he comes to these theses in the summer of 1518 he has cleared the field entirely of

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[20] *LW* 31:100 (= *WA* 1:541,1-6), first brackets JM; see also *LW* 31:195 (= *WA* 1:596,7f). The priest's judgment is not in itself efficacious; it is not, to put the matter in other terms, a synthetic justifying of the sinner that brings justice to the sinner. It is rather more an analytic judgment. The priest see the sinner desiring absolution, which means that this is what he ought then have (cf. *LW* 31:100 = *WA* 1:540,38-41). The priest's judgment to speak this word to the sinner (as opposed to binding his sins) is right, and the sinner is to find peace for his conscience in this judgment. Cf. *LW* 31:107 (= *WA* 1:545,1-4): " … the priest of the new law only declares and confirms the absolution of God, that is, points it out, and by this pointing out of his and by his judgment calms the conscience of the sinner, who is bound to believe and have peace by the judgment of the priest."

[21] *LW* 31:194 (= *WA* 1:595,3f).

[22] See Bayer, 123.

[23] *WA* 1:629-633; German translation in *Dr. Martin Luthers sämmtliche Werke* (hereafter "*W2*"), edited by Johann Georg Walch, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1880-1910) 19:760-765. The writing is not included in the first 55 volumes of the American Edition of *Luther's Works*, but is slated for publication as part of the expansion now being undertaken by Concordia Publishing House.

[24] *WA* 1:633,12.

any such notions. To rely on one's own sorrow in order to be sure of one's standing before God is nothing other than a backward way of making God's word and faith dependent on one's own work, disguised as it may be under a mask of humility and self-denigration. In other words, Luther recognises that the sinner is building himself up by beating himself up. Following the typical differentiation of lesser punishment (*poena*) and greater guilt (*culpa*) Luther states in regard to the latter: "The remission of guilt does not rest on the contrition of the sinner nor on the office or power of the priest. It rests rather on the faith in the word of Christ, who says, 'Whatever you loose, etc.' [Mt 16:19]."[25] This mandate of Christ from Matthew 16 is quoted along with John 20:23.[26] Working as promises these mandates of Christ form a sure foundation for certainty of the forgiveness of sins – not just the forgiveness of sin's temporal punishments, but more importantly of sin's guilt, which pertains to one's standing before God. Faith is born of such word of promise. Though one might disagree with the nature of the biblical theology behind the statement, Luther makes clear the relationship between faith and the word of promise clear in the forty-fifth thesis: "In the sacraments of the New Testament is present the word of Him who promises remission. In the sacraments of the Old Testament it is missing. *And thus the faith* of the one receiving remission is either present or missing."[27] *Where* the word of the promising Christ, *there* is justifying faith; the former sees to the latter.

Where is this promising word of Christ, this promising Christ to be found? Matthew 18 and John 20 have already been cited, but the promise does not stop there. There is not some *cesursa* – a 1,500-, or in our case a 2,000-year pause between the promise of Christ's mandate to his apostles and the present context of the sinner with his guilt before God. If so, the sinner might think he need crank up some faith to receive such promises. Instead, Christ has a servant there to speak these promises into that sinner's ears in the present, thereby engendering faith itself. "For nothing justifies but faith alone in Christ. For this [justifying] faith the ministry of the word through the priest is necessary."[28] And further: "The priests are … servants of the word toward faith in the remission [of sins]."[29] And of this concrete, oral word of forgiveness spoken by the priest in the sacrament of absolution

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[25] *WA* 1:631,5f. (Thesis 9).

[26] "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." See *WA* 1:632,7f (Thesis 29).

[27] *WA* 1:632,38f (emphasis JM). For the Promisser, see also *WA* 1:633,9f (Thesis 50).

[28] *WA* 1:632,15f (Thesis 33).

[29] *WA* 1: 631:33f (Thesis 23).

Luther states, "So long as you do not approach deceitfully,[30] the authority of the keys works through the word and mandate of God a certain and infallible work."[31]

Here we must pause and note the significance of what is being said and just how contradictory it is to so much of the piety and popular belief of centuries of those who would later bear Luther's name as a designation for their religious identity. One myth surrounding Luther is that he to some degree reduced the place of the sacraments, certainly the standing of the church, and absolutely the authority of the clergy in regard to Christians, which he did by making one's relationship with God solely a matter of the faith of the believing individual, upon which faith the church, the ministry, and the effectiveness of the sacraments ultimately hang. Even lay Lutherans usually have a couple of Latin phrases in their pocket. "Sola fide"–"[By] faith alone! – That's us!" "*Ex opere operato*" – "By the work being worked" or "automatically"[32]–"That's the Catholics! As if things just work without faith! Ha!" But if we look carefully at that twenty-fourth thesis from the summer of 1518 in this document that documents the decisive reformational turn by relating faith to the spoken word of promise as this faith's foundation, we see that it is precisely this position that so many Lutherans reject, out of hand, as a matter of their Lutheran heritage – that this is the very position that Luther is taking, radicalising! A certain and infallible work is worked through the word and mandate of God when the priest speaks the absolution. Oswald Bayer puts it this way, "In the sense of '*ex verbo dicto* [by fact of the word being spoken]' Luther clings to the validity and infallibility of the sacrament of penance *ex opere operato* more trenchantly than had ever been the case before him."[33] Twelve years later Luther would state the matter yet more clearly and emphatically in a masterpiece of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, his treatise "On the Keys" (1530):

> But if you say, as the fanatics and the sophists do, "Sure, many hear the binding and loosing of the keys, but it doesn't make for any kind of a turn for them, and they remain unbound and unloosed. Thus something more than the word and the keys needs to be there.

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[30] "*nisi sis dolosus*": literally, "if you are not deceitful." What is most likely meant is one coming to a priest for confession and absolution for reasons other than to confess and be absolved; the penitent's being there would then be a rouse.

[31] *WA* 1:631,35f.: "*Potestas Clavium operatur verbo et mandato dei firmum et infallibile opus, nisi sis dolosus.*" (Thesis 24).

[32] An inaccurate oversimplification!

[33] Bayer, 127. See also Heiko A. Oberman, "The Preaching of the Word in the Reformation," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 25,1 (October 1960): 7-18, esp. 14.

… Do you think he is not bound who does not believe the binding key? He shall certainly learn in due time that the binding key was not of no avail, nor did it fail, because he did not believe [it]. Thus also he who does not believe that he has been set free and his sins forgiven shall also in due time certainly learn just how surely his sins have been forgiven him right now, and he didn't want to believe it. Saint Paul says in Romans 3, 'God will not fail because of our lack of faith.' So [you see] we're also not talking here about who believes the keys or not. We know very well that few believe. Rather, we are speaking about what the keys do and give.[34]

The keys do what they do. The word of absolution gives what it says. Christ is the guarantor of that. Justifying faith does not precede this reality; it follows, being born of such word of Christ spoken through the mouth of the priest.

The decisive point or turn to which the 50 theses of the circular disputation from the summer of 1518 bring us is that the word (*verbum*) is understood as the ground of faith (*fides*), at which this word aims. That word of God, which is the ground of faith, is not just any word, but a *promissio*, a verbal or spoken promise of God which effects certainty in the one to whom it is spoken. In other words, what we see happen here is that "penance," "the sacrament of 'penance,'" or (as we English-speaking Lutherans say) "confession and absolution" comes Law/Gospel clear. No longer is certainty of one's standing before God to be found in the acceptance of the judgment of God as experienced in one's own contrition (i.e. in feeling sorry); it is not to be found in the constant exercise of confessing one's sin and pleading mercy (i.e. in beating oneself up for it); it comes rather as a gift, in the word of absolution spoken by God through the priest. This word is a word of promise that gives what it says and thereby leaves the conscience comforted. The spoken word of promise, as found in Holy Absolution, is that word to which justifying faith clings. "The righteous lives by faith" [Rm 1:17] in the word of the absolution.

Subsequent Lutheran History

With the reformational turn we have observed, in which "the righteousness of God" is a matter of certain faith born of the oral word of absolution, we have just entered upon the period where Luther becomes most valuable. But given the constraints of this piece we must leave Luther here, without comment on subsequent and theologically more significant works, not least of which are his catechisms.

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[34] *StA* 4:437,21-438,3 (= *WA* 30/II:498,31-499,3); cf. *LW* 40:366f.

If the Luther that we encounter in the summer of 1518 looks a bit foreign to us we may blame that fact on nearly 500 intervening years of history. Confession and absolution flowered, as did many things, during the period of Lutheran orthodoxy, and yet the shadowed side of the thriving practice was that it became mechanised, in a way, and in part got obscured by the catechetical instruction and questioning that came to be tied to it. A reaction to orthodoxy among the Lutherans of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries was pietism, which set its theological accent on the inner experience of faith and the believer's practice of personal piety. Though pietism would also prove a reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, it shared this in common with that other "-ism" of the age: neither pietism nor rationalism had much place for God's mediate dealing with man through tangible means found in the institutional church. Evangelical confessionals soon went into disuse, or were outright torn out of the Lutheran churches.[35] The champion of German Protestantism in the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher, theologically advocated an inner religion according to which the Christian's relationship to God was immediate and direct; the church and its sacraments came subsequent to faith. The reformationally decisive relation between the oral, sacramental word of promise and faith had, again, been flipped.

Holy Absolution Today

Any historian will tell you that theirs is a field filled with ironies. The history of the Christian church and of theology is no different, and as is the case with ironies some of them are sad. A sad irony of the Lutheran church is that pietism, in a sense, returned confession and absolution to what it was before the Reformation, namely nothing more certain the inner contrition that the given person felt, or didn't; both the late-medieval western church and Lutheran pietism referenced the sinner in his sin back to himself. A sadder and related irony we notice in the fact that the very reality, namely private confession and absolution, which shaped Luther right down to the defining reformational turn of his theology, is a reality which the vast majority of those called "Lutherans" at the outset of the twenty-first century have never experienced.

Reformation begins at home. That was true of Wittenberg and electoral Saxony at the outset of the sixteenth century. And for Lutherans who would be other than a sectarian, religious, social group, I hazard the guess that this must be true at the second decade of the twenty-first century as well: reformation begins at home. How many of you who hear this have ever had the joy, the heaven-on-earth joy, of having Christ literally speak

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[35] An Evangelical-Lutheran confessional can still be viewed in St. Peter's church in Görlitz, Germany.

you, you in particular, you alone, forgiven for the failings, shortcomings, and blatant wrongs that weigh on you? How many of us might be willing to talk with our pastor about a problem, perhaps seek him out for a bit of advice and a prayer, but would never dream of puking the darkness of our existence out before him to be seen for what it is, and forgiven? How many Lutheran congregations have regular times set and published for private confession and absolution – without hiding the divine reality as some subset under a jargon of "counseling" or other more Protestant-ly palatable tags? In the theology of the late-medieval western church sacramental grace belonged to those who did not place an obstacle in the way of its working.[36] In the practice of the modern Lutheran church, what obstacles do the clergy put in the way of this work of grace, simply by making people ask for private absolution if they want to have it, as if it were something extra, rather than the bread and butter of what Christ means every Christian to have, regularly? Reformation begins at home.

But the message of this lecture, as it closes, is not, "Private confession is Lutheran, so go confess," although that is true. Nor is it, "Hey pastor, hurry up and implement this in your congregation," although that's not a bad idea. As Luther's own Large Catechism teaches us, there's no bringing this gift under a "Hey, do this," or "You gotta do that," and still have it be the gift it is.[37] The best that can be done is to extoll the gift for what it is.

For that I'll take a little impetus from the Augustinian friar of Wittenberg, who going with his theses to the Castle Church's door ended up going somewhere he never imagined. How about imaging, for a moment, someplace you'd perhaps never go? Imagine, for a moment, going to confession and being absolved: Imagine silence. Imagine stillness. Imagine the gentle light of candles. Imagine the freedom to be still. Imagine looking at yourself. Imagine honesty, about you, about who you are and how you are to others. Imagine honesty about what you are not. Imagine kneeling. Imagine no rules of etiquette, no social constraints. Imagine getting to say exactly how it is with you. Imagine telling it just like it is. Imagine no polite little Band-aids being put on your real wounds. Imagine being before God as you are. Imagine nothing in front of your eyes, but Christ, on the cross. Imagine him silent, letting your honesty stand for what it is. Imagine him looking at the mess you've spewed out and taking it up. Imagine his being

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[36] See, for example, *LW* 31:106f (= [especially] *WA* 1:544,38). Cf. Gottfried Martens, "Ex opere operato – Eine Klarstellung," in *Einträchtig Lehren: Festschrift für Bishof Dr. Jobst Schöne*, edited by Jürgen Diestelmann and Wolfgang Schillhahn, 311-23 (Groß Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung Heinrich Harms, 1997), esp. 313-15.

[37] Cf. *LC* Confession, 20-35; *BC* 478-80 (= *BSLK* 730,14-733,24).

the only wounds in the room. Imagine him saying, "This crap, your crap, all that you just said, it's mine now." Imagine him laying his hand on your head. Imagine him making the sign of his cross over you. Imagine your beating yourself up over; your trying to squeeze sorrow out of yourself done. Imagine going from heavy to light. Imagine crying the best of tears. Imagine standing. Imagine the world a new place. Imagine going free.

Just imagine what a turn that would be!

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Coming into Existence, the Universe, and God

Stephen Parrish with J. W. Wartick, a former student

Arguments for the existence of God continue to intrigue both philosophers and theologians. One argument which is increasingly considered by both, yet which is fairly unknown, has roots in medieval Islamic scholasticism—the Kalam cosmological argument. The Kalam Cosmological Argument (KCA) is usually expressed something like this:

(1) Whatever comes to be had a cause of its coming to be.

(2) The universe came to be.

(3) Therefore, the universe had a cause of its coming to be.[1]

It should be noted that granting both (1) and (2) may establish the existence of a cause of the coming to be of the universe, but does not by itself, establish the existence of God. More argumentation is needed for that. The next step in the argument is to argue that the cause of the universe's coming to be is God, or at least a god. We shall keep things simple by just referring to this set of options as God. Let us add another step here to make this plainer.

(4) The universe came into existence, and the cause of the universe's coming into existence is God.

Perhaps the majority of the discussion of the KCA has been about (2), the concept that the universe necessarily had a beginning in time, while less has been focused on (1), and the related issue of (4). Two additional points need to be made here.

First, when we say that the universe came into existence, we will normally mean that it came into existence *ex nihilo*, without being composed of any previously existing matter or other "stuff." There is a possible exception to this, however, as will be shown below, and that is, if the universe is caused by the physical "stuff" of another universe.

Second, we say what is meant by the word "universe." Some have defined the universe as everything that exists. This definition is misleading. According to this definition, if there were a transcendent God, he would still necessarily be part of the universe. We think that most people, theists or not, would not include such a God as being part of the universe. So,

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[1] Mark Nowacki, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument for God* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2007), 13.

that definition either assumes the non-existence of God, or else the term universe becomes synonymous with "everything that exists." This clearly does not coincide with common usage of the term.

It also does not fit very well with the notion that there may be other universes. These other universes would be other collections of physical objects, perhaps with a different set of physical laws, constants, or other differences, that are not directly connected to our universe. That is, any other universe could not be reached from ours, no matter how long or far one traveled. Since it seems that both the notion of a transcendent God and of other physical universes is coherent, universe is not a synonym for existence.

Therefore, the term universe is here defined as the totality of physical entities and events that exist together in space and time, with a common history. It is this entity, or collection of entities, that is said to have come to be, and by (3) and (4), had a cause of its coming to be.

The philosophers who have been most concerned to deny (1) and (4) have been philosophical naturalists, who believe that the natural physical universe is all that exists, or hold that if there are other universes, they, too, must be natural and physical. The concept of a transcendent creator God is ruled out, for the obvious reason that, were it to be accepted, they would no longer be naturalists, but theists.

If one does not believe that some sort of God created the universe some finite time ago, there are three ways to avoid premise (4). They are,

(5) One may believe that the universe has existed eternally.

(6) One may hold that it was caused to come into existence by some other natural entity, such as another natural physical universe.

(7) One may believe that it came into existence *ex nihilo* uncaused—for no reason.

However, these three options may be further divided, according to several factors. With further clarification, we get the following;

(5a) One may believe that the universe of necessity has existed eternally.

(5b) One may believe that the universe has contingently existed eternally.

(6a) One may believe that the universe came into existence *ex nihilo* with a necessary cause (other than God).

(6b) One may believe that the universe came into existence *ex nihilo* with a contingent cause (other than God).

(7a) One may believe that the universe came into existence *ex nihilo* without any cause contingently.

(7b) One may believe that the universe came into existence *ex nihilo* without any cause necessarily.

These three strands of (5), (6), and (7), each with a subdivision, seem to be the only alternatives to theism. We shall examine them one by one.

Taking the last (7b) first, we think we have an alternative that may be dismissed without much consideration. If something came into existence necessarily but without an external cause, it could only be because of an internal necessity. In short, it would have to be a necessary being. But if it were a necessary being, then it would necessarily exist and could not come into existence. So, by definition (7b) seems impossible and may be dismissed.

(5b) may also be quickly eliminated, though for a different reason. (5b) is indeed contradictory to (4), but not to theism. Some theistic philosophers, such as Aquinas, have argued that God could have created the universe eternally, though in fact he didn't. (5b)'s real opponent is (2), which we will not discuss in this paper.

Before going on, we should explain what we mean by "absolutely impossible." This is the concept that something cannot exist in any possible world. This basic concept called "absolutely impossible" by Bob Hale is often named "metaphysically impossible," or what Plantinga has called "broadly logically impossible." To prevent confusion, I will henceforth call this "absolutely impossible."[2] "Absolutely necessary" and "absolutely possible" are similarly defined.

The four other options are not so easily discarded. Indeed, it will take some work to examine them all, partly due to the fact that the different options contradict each other as well as theism. For example, (4) might be challenged by using a principle that *necessitates* either (5a) on the one hand, or (7a) on the other. In other words, the critic of (4) may affirm either

(8) That it is absolutely impossible that the universe came into existence *ex nihilo*, which is the option (5a).

(9) That it is possible that the universe came into existence with some cause other than God. These are the options (6a) and (6b).

(10) That it is possible that the universe came into existence *ex nihilo* without a cause, which is option (7a).

Of these, it seems to us that with (8) and (10); we are presented with an

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[2] Bob Hale, *Necessary Beings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 98-115.

attack on (4) from two opposite directions. (8) argues that it is impossible that the universe had a beginning, (which not only attempts to rebut (4) but also (2), (6) and (7)), while (10) argues that it may have had a beginning, but without a cause, which thereby excludes the possibility of the universe's being caused by a deity.

(9) agrees that the universe had a cause of its coming to be, but that the cause was something other than God. By (6a) and (6b) we will mean the theory that the universe, our physical universe, was brought into being by another physical universe or some other physical entity or entities. For example, if our universe came out of a "white hole" from some either universe, or perhaps was caused by some relativistic quantum field vacuum state (which presumably existed eternally) out of which our universe randomly sprang, these would be coherent with (6a) or (6b), even though in these two cases the universe in which we live did not itself exist forever. This cause would be either necessary (6a) or contingent (6b). This is the exception to creation *ex nihilo* that was mentioned above. We will examine these options one by one.

With (5a), we have the proposition that the universe has existed necessarily from eternity, which entails that it is impossible that it came into existence *ex nihilo*. Either it has always existed, or else was caused to be, perhaps by another universe, with the "stuff" that was the beginning of our universe, somehow coming from the earlier one.

One way to challenge (4) would be to embrace (5a) and some form of everlasting physical material. It could be held that it is absolutely impossible that something could arise out of nothing, and that since physical objects exist, the matter out of which they are composed is necessarily eternal. There are several ways that this could be expressed, but one way would be to argue that the concept that something comes into existence without any prior existing materials would employ the law of the conservation of energy (LOTCOE).

The law of the conservation of energy, also called the first law of thermodynamics, can be simply defined as, "[T]he fact that energy can be neither created nor destroyed."[3] No matter how the energy is arranged, or what form it takes, the amount of energy will always remain the same. It should be noted that this is a scientific rather than a philosophical principle.

Indeed, the use of science to explain a topic that properly belongs to metaphysics is itself improper. This does not mean, however, that it has not

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[3] Peter Atkins, *The Laws of Thermodynamics: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 35.

been used by philosophers for that purpose. For example, Adolf Grunbaum writes,

> [T]he eighteenth-century French chemist Lavoisier showed there is, indeed, matter conservation (or matter-energy conservation) in a closed finite system on the medium-sized macroscopic scale *qua spontaneous, natural, unperturbed behavior of the system.* And if so, Descartes was *empirically* wrong to have to have assumed that such conservation requires the intervention of an external cause. Therefore, if he was thus wrong, his claim that external divine intervention in particular is needed to keep an object from disappearing into nothingness was based on a false presupposition.[4]

The quote from Grunbaum shows that he is relying on a scientific law to explain something metaphysical, and thereby commits a category mistake. Grunbaum does not even attempt to answer the question as to why that scientific law or principle is true, given a universe that is ultimately reducible to brute fact. Why are there any natural laws at all? Why do they apply across the whole of space and time? What Grunbaum is really saying is that things remain in existence because they remain in existence, which is no answer at all.

Looking at the objection from scientific law angle first, it can be seen that the form of the statement given here has a kind of necessity—energy cannot be created or destroyed. But what kind of necessity is being used here? It should be noted that the "can neither," in the thermodynamic law statement is a concept of physics. That is, what it is really stating is, according to contemporary science, we may describe the universe and the entities that exist within it by saying that energy never comes into, or goes out of, existence. The necessity attached to the statement here is thus nomological rather than absolute. So why would LOTCOE be true, let alone necessarily true?

There are perhaps two fundamental ways of looking at the ontological status of the natural laws. The first is the Humean way. According to Hume, the causality is really merely *constant conjunction*. Since most of natural laws have to do with causation, what this amounts to is saying that the laws of nature are really just the way that things do in fact happen.

There are well-known problems with this view. The problem that we want to focus on is that the Humean theory gives no reason as to why

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[4] Adolf Grunbaum, "No Explanation Needed," in John Leslie and Robert Lawrence Kuhn, eds., *The Mystery of Existence* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 59.

there is constant conjunction. With constant conjunction, the law of gravity really comes down to the fact that material objects are consistently drawn to each other. Things fall down when they are released, and there is, granting Humeanism, no DEEPER explanation for this. If there is no reason why certain things always happen in a certain manner, then there is no logical problem with their happening in a different manner.

There are alternative theories to the constant conjunction thesis wherein there is some sort of necessity to natural laws. As David Papineau writes, "The alternative, non-Humean strategy rejects the Humean proposition that laws involve nothing more than constant conjunction, and instead postulates a relationship of 'necessitation' or nomic necessity which obtains between event-types which are related by law, but not between those which are only accidentally conjoined."[5]

The problem with this is that in spite of the fact that in these theories natural laws are necessary, rather than merely constantly conjoined; the source of the necessity is not revealed. That is to say, if the necessity is nomic but not logical, the question arises as to why there is necessity. It is one thing to say that there is necessity involved, it is another thing entirely to explain why there is necessity involved. Absolute necessity cannot be had on the cheap: one must have a reason why something is necessary. By the nature of absolute necessity, for something to be necessary means that its denial entails a contradiction.

If some law *L* has nomic but not logical necessity, there is no contradiction in denying it. E.g., there seems to be contradiction involved in thinking that the speed of light, or the force of gravity or the strong nuclear force be other than they are. In which case, the question may still be rationally asked as to why the laws of nature apply to the universe, or even why they apply to any particular event in the universe. Is proclaiming a purely nomic necessity really anything more than saying that events happen with constant conjunction, and that not only do they do this, but they must do this, but wherein the force of the 'must' involved is left unexplained? David Armstrong writes concerning this:

> But if explanation has to stop short of the Absolute, then we have to accept brute fact, that is, contingency, at some point. …
> The system of connections may be simplified, and brought under higher-order laws. But when all of this has been done, is here any

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hope of demonstrating the necessity of the ultimate connections? I do not believe that there is. Necessity can be asserted, but it cannot be demonstrated or even made plausible.[6]

The laws of logic, on the other hand, are such as they are because they can be none other. To "break" a law of logic, is to entail a contradiction. With the laws of logic, the nature of the necessity involved is understandable, as the laws of identity and non-contradiction are basic laws of thought and being, and could not be other than they are. They are necessarily true.[7]

LOTCOE is a law of nature, not of logic. Further, as we have seen, any natural law judged on a metaphysical basis is also not a law of logic. In both cases their necessity is nomological, in that it apparently applies universally to all the energy in the universe, with possible exceptions that will be described below. There appears to be no contraction entailed when the any alleged necessity to the necessity of the laws of nature is denied: There is no other source of necessity readily available in non-theistic naturalist theories, wherein the natural universe is considered to be ontologically ultimate. No deeper entities that can be appealed to so as to explain why the universe exists in the manner that it does. The question as to why a law of nature is true, and universally true, is a legitimate question. Given naturalism, there are no deeper explanations, because given naturalism the physical universe(s) is all that there is.

We will expand on this last point. In theism, there are two levels—God as the fundamental level of reality, and the physical universe at the

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[6] David Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 159.

[7] There is a fairly recent theory among philosophers that denies the necessity of the law of non-contradiction. It is called paraconsistent or dialethic logic. We, along with what we think are the majority of philosophers, deny paraconsistent logic. However, even given the truth of this theory of logic, it does not undercut our position. Write James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "[D]ialetheism remains highly counterintuitive. Furthermore, even though dialethists reject classical logic, whatever logical laws they advocate *in place of* the classical lawas are typically held to be necessary rather than contingent truths" (James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Noncontradiction: An Argument for God from Logic," *Philosophia Christi*, 13 (2011), 321-338, p. 326).
Actually, it should be seen that were dialetheism granted, it would not weaken our case. For if there really could be contradictions, then it could be the case that the universe could not come into existence without any prior existing material, and that it did. However, besides the fact that we reject this, it seems that even dialetheism does not hold that JUST any contradictions can be true—that God can simultaneously not exist and yet be omnipotent and omniscient, and be the creator of the universe, revealed himself to mankind, etc. For the dialethicists, only in a comparatively few instances can contradictions exist. (See Alvin Plantinga, *Does God have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), 159.)

secondary level. In naturalism, there is only one level of concrete reality. Given naturalism, why does the universe have the laws that it has, or any natural laws at all for that matter? It cannot be because there is a deeper level of reality (e.g., God) that causes them. Abstracta in Plato's heaven do not seem to do the trick either. For one reason, they are usually considered to be acausal. Whatever possible world is instantiated is therefore instantiated by chance. If there is no necessity in the laws or in the universe themselves, then they are contingent.

Further, it has long been taken for granted that the law of the conservation of energy is true. Indeed, it has a status as one of the fundamental principle of physics. However, the LOTCOE is not considered in contemporary physics to be universally true, as there are exceptions within theories of relativity and quantum physics.

The basic reason that LOTCOE does not universally apply to special relativity is because there is no preferred frame of reference in that theory. Different frames of reference will show different amounts of energy in the same situation. This means that in a particular situation, wherein the energy of some material object is being measured, there is no one privileged frame of reference, all of them being equally valid. Therefore one cannot meaningfully speak about the energy involved in that situation, as the different frames of reference will show different amounts of energy, because there is no intrinsic, non-relational amount of energy.

With general relativity, the problem is more complex, but somewhat similar. Writes physicist Robert Wald, "In general relativity there exists no meaningful local expression for gravitational stress-energy and thus there is no meaningful local energy conservation law which leads to a statement of energy conservation."[8] Again, since energy cannot be precisely determined, there is no meaningful LOTCOE.

As Collins writes, "[T]hese quantum correlations are not merely some minor 'technical exemption,' within physics, but are pervasive throughout the microscopic world, playing a fundamental role in the operation of nature."[9]

Indeed, both relativity and quantum physics are fundamental in today's physics, and as they both are apparently not compatible with LOTCOE, it should be said that LOTCOE is not universally or necessarily true, and that the reasons for this are scientific, not philosophic.

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[8] Robert Wald, *General Relativity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 286, cited in Robin Collins, "The Energy of the Soul" in *The Soul Hypothesis*, ed. Mark Baker and Steward Goetz 123-133 (New York, Continuum, 2011), 123.

[9] Robin Collins, "The Energy of the Soul", 133.

We could then move the argument from physics to metaphysics. That is, instead of using LOTCOE, one could instead employ the concept that it is absolutely impossible that things could come into existence. Let us abbreviate this as AITTCCIE.

Taking this principle literally seems to lead to absurdity. One could counter by noting that those who make this objection are pressing a position of extreme skepticism which they themselves almost certainly do not actually hold. The claim that "nothing begins to exist" entails "there are no composite objects." How does this follow? The assertion that "nothing begins to exist" undermines the claim that "John begins to exist." John, being a living person, has a measurable life. One can say at *t1* that "John lives" while noting at *t2* "John dies." Now, if one were to accept the assertion that "nothing begins to exist," one must accept that what is meant by saying "John lives" at *t1* is reducible entirely to "matter is arranged John-ly at *t1*." This of course marks a remarkably reductionist account of the nature of persons, objects, and, in fact, anything which exists. If nothing begins to exist, then for any object in existence, it is false to say that it is a distinct object. For, really, any material thing would be just a rearrangement of pre-existing matter. Thus, those who wish to make the argument that "nothing begins to exist" must hold to a radically skeptical position which entails that they themselves do not actually exist. They have no beginning or end points.[10] Therefore, the objection "nothing begins to exist" is self-defeating. If that is the case, then the defender can discharge the objection and turn to the search for an explanation of things which begin. So AITTCCIE fails. But, it might be argued, there is a more plausible move for the denier of creation *ex nihilo*.

This is one that argues that it is absolutely *impossible that objects come into existence without any prior existing materials*, and that therefore the universe could not. Further, there would have to be a good reason for thinking that the principle is true. But no such rationally justified principle seems to exist. There is of course an ancient principle that nothing can arise from nothing. The problem is that to deny the possibility of creation *ex nihilo*, one needs to show that there is some contradiction in positing it—that holding that something may come into existence without any prior existing materials entails a contradiction. However, though it may be impossible to strictly prove that there is no contradiction, it is difficult to

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[10] One could easily press this argument further and further, noting that if one utters "John exists" then, at least in the ordinary sense by which we refer to "John," this statement is false, given that "nothing begins to exist." After all, John is a human being, and so we associate him with a birth, growing up, and dying. But because John did not begin, there really is no referent meant by "John" other than "matter arranged John-ly."

see where there is one. So the burden of proof rests on the denier of creation *ex nihilo*.

Finally, the denier of creation *ex nihilo* may press the point and argue that while one may establish that individual entities may need prior existing materials for their coming to be, it is unclear how it may apply to the universe as a whole. Graham Oppy argues thus, "Nothing in experience bears on the question of the causal antecedents of objects that begin to exist at t+0 [the beginning of time, *ex nihilo*]."[11] Such a counter-argument places emphasis on the distinction between something's coming into existence *in the universe* as opposed to the universe's coming into existence *as a whole*.

The problem here is that there seems a priori no reason to think that creation is absolutely impossible. To give a positive reason for thinking that creation *ex nihilo* is possible, we will present the following argument.

Suppose that there are *N* number of fundamental particles in the universe. Whatever number *N* might be, it seems arbitrary. That is, there is no necessity in the number of fundamental particles existing. *N* is no more necessary that $N + 1$, or $N - 1$, or any other number. However, if so, then it seems that the number of fundamental particles in existence is contingent— there could have been more or less. And if this is true, then it follows that the existence of each particle is contingent—it might not have existed, and there might have been more particles in existence than actually exist. This being the case, it seems that having a purely contingent existence, they could come into or go out of existence. And it seems to follow, given this, that there is no reason in principle that the universe as a whole could not come into existence.

One might argue that this commits the fallacy of composition. Even if all the parts of which the universe is composed are contingent, this does not automatically mean the universe itself is contingent. However, it seems that modal status is not subject to the fallacy of composition. If every entity of which the universe is composed is contingent, and there is nothing outside of the universe upon which it is dependent, where would absolute necessity be derived from? Nowhere, it seems. So (8) fails.

Moving to (10), there have been attempts to try to have the universe come into existence out of nothing, and for no reason. One of these is by the physicist Lawrence Krauss. Krauss presents his argument for the notion that a universe can indeed come from nothing. He writes, "[I]t is *extremely significant* that a universe from nothing—in a sense I will take pains to describe—that arises natural, and even inevitably, is increasingly consistent

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[11] Graham Oppy, *Arguing About Gods* (New York: Cambridge, 2006), 149.

with everything we have learned about the world."[12] His argument is that the universe did indeed come from nothing. After asking again whether something can come from nothing, Krauss states that "The short answer… is 'quite plausibly yes.'"[13] His argument is therefore one which seeks to undercut the notion that there must be a cause for something coming to be—it is an attack on (1). But how, exactly, is it that Krauss proposes that something came from "nothing"? Krauss's argument rests almost entirely upon a redefinition of nothing. He writes "the very meaning of the words involved has so changed that the sentence ["Why is there something rather than nothing?"] has lost much of its original meaning."[14] Krauss clarifies his position earlier in the work noting that "By *nothing*, I do not mean nothing, but rather *nothing*—in this case, the nothingness we normally call empty space."[15] Later, as he is arguing for the supposition that the universe did come from nothing, he writes, "I want to be clear about what kind of 'nothing' I am discussing at the moment. This is the simplest version of nothing, namely empty space."[16] Krauss continues by arguing that this sense of nothing can provide the "free lunch": "we can get something from this kind of nothing—the ultimate free lunch."[17] The process Krauss utilizes to explain something from nothing is one in which the expansion of the universe causes an influx of energy into "nothing"—here meaning empty space—which later "gets turned into an energy of real particles and radiation, creating effectively the traceable beginning of our present Big Bang expansion."[18]

The defender of (1) or (4) doesn't have much to do in order to dispense with this argument. It is clear from the outset that Krauss has conflated the meanings of the terms involved in the question "why is there something rather than nothing?" For, as he says, he has taken nothing to mean empty space. Of course, empty space is, itself, *something*. As Krauss himself admits, "'nothing' is every bit as physical as 'something…'"[19] So Kraus fails totally to explain how something can come out of *nothing* without a cause.

However, there have been attempts by philosophers to do the same thing. A proponent of (10) is Quentin Smith, who argues that the universe

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[12] Lawrence Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing*, (New York: Free Press, 2012), 142.

[13] Ibid, 145.

[14] Ibid, 143.

[15] Ibid, 57.

[16] Ibid, 149.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid, 150-151.

[19] Ibid, xiv.

caused itself to begin to exist. He begins with the assumption that the universe began to exist in a Big Bang singularity. A singularity entails the break-down of physical laws, with the result that even given a beginning of the universe in time, there is no first moment of time. He writes,

> [T]he universe causes itself to begin to exist in the sense that (a) each instantaneous state S is sufficiently caused by earlier states and (b) there are no instantaneous states that exist earlier than some finite number of equal-length, nonoverlapping intervals. For example, all of the states are such that each state is caused by earlier instantaneous states but no state exists earlier than 15 billion years ago.[20]

What Smith is saying is that for any instantaneous universe state (*IUS*) there is a previous *IUS* that explains it. Even though the universe is finite in age, there is no first *IUS* which cannot be explained by a previous *IUS*. Thus, for Smith, the universe is self-explanatory. By IUS what is meant is the existence and position of all the objects and properties that exist in the spatio-temporal universe.

The notion that the universe is self-explanatory has been challenged by Robin Collins,[21] but we will take a different tack. This will be to challenge Smith's assertion that in the situation he describes, any particular *IUS* is explained by the previous *IUS*.

Suppose that some *IUS1* happens at time *t1*, while the very next *IUS2* happens at *t2*. In what sense does *IUS1* explain *IUS2*? It does so in the sense that given *IUS1* and the laws of nature as they are, *IUS2* will follow. Had there been some other set of laws of nature that obtained, then some other universe state than *IUS2* would have followed at *t2*. E.g., suppose that the law of gravity was twice what it is in the actual world, In that case, the *IUS* that followed would not be *IUS2*, but rather some other, such as *IUS3*.

Thus, the mere existence of *IUS1* does not completely explain the existence of *IUS2*. At the least, the existence of *IUS1* plus the laws of nature are required to explain it. But what explains the laws of nature? The mere existence of *IUS1* does not. For, the existence of *IUS1* is compatible with an infinite number of set of laws. So why do the set of laws that are instantiated exist, rather than some other set of laws or no laws at all?

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[20] Quentin Smith, "A Cosmological Argument for a Self-Caused Universe," 2008 http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/quentin_smith/self-caused.html.

[21] Robin Collins,"Objections to Smith's Cosmological Argument," 2008 http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/robin_collins/not-self-caused.html

We can think of two responses that Smith might make to this. The first is to say that the laws of nature are included in *IUS1*, and thus *IUS1* at *t1* can serve as a full explanation as to why *IUS2* follows at *t2*. The general idea is that all the entities that exist at IUS1 have natures, and because of these natures, *IUS2* will inevitably follow.

However, this seems wrong. For, as was stated above, the existence and arrangement of the physical entities in the universe is compatible with an infinite set of laws, or no laws at all. That protons, for example, exist in the number and arrangement they do, with the properties they have at *t1* does not explain why gravity will have the same strength at *t2* that it has at *t1*. The existence of the set of the laws of nature that obtain is thus unexplained, and so the move from *IUS1* to *IUS2* is unexplained.

A defender of the (10) might simply attempt to swallow this, and hold that the existence of *IUS2* is a brute fact, that is unexplained and inexplicable. On this theory, the existence of the universe in the manner that it exists is brute, and this "bruteness" is quite compatible with the universe's coming into existence out of nothing for no reason at all. We think that this attempt fails, but showing how will take some analysis.

One way to deny (4) via (10) is therefore to assert that the universe came to be as a brute fact. Now suppose that things which begin to exist themselves exist simply as a "brute fact": they just do. Brute fact entails a kind of "chanciness." For, on brute fact, there is no reason something has the properties it does, nor is there any reason it exists; it just does have those properties and it just does exist. Consider an object, *x*, which comes to exist at *t1* due to brute fact. Now there is a relevant property of *x*, *N*, such that without *N*, *x* would not exist, or would at least be something that is no longer *x*.[22] Further, suppose *x* came into existence only due to brute fact. Now it seems clear that there was an infinite array of possibilities for *x*, given brute fact as its origin. Why shouldn't *x* have had *N2* instead of *N*, or why not have *N3* and *N4* instead of *N* or *N2*? It must be asserted that *x* has *N* only due to chance. It was a cosmic mistake that *x* was instantiated with *N* instead of any of the other infinite possibilities which would either change it to *x2* or not *x* at all.

Brute fact must contend with this problem, but the issue is more complex when one considers the condition of such an object persisting. In that case, not only was it infinitely unlikely that x would exist at *t1*, but at *t2*, it is even more improbable that *x* would still exist for it is merely a brute fact that *x* exists at *t1*, and at *t2*, it is merely by brute fact that *x* continues to

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[22] There are any number of things that could satisfy the conditions of N. For example, a neutron would no longer be a neutron if an electron were added to it.

exist. For no reason at all, x came into being at $t1$ and then at $t2$ persisted in existence, despite having no reason to exist. Suppose that the "odds" for the existence of x might have are one half. In that case, for x to exist at $t1$ the probability is $1/2$. But then at $t2$, the probability is no longer $1/2$ but rather $1/2^2$. At $t3$, then, the probability is $1/2^3$, etc. The persistence of an object, then, from moment to moment, becomes startlingly more improbable as time continues.[23]

Indeed, at one point in his career at least, Smith saw the problem. In his book *The Felt Meanings of the World*, he wrote,

> At each moment the world could either *happen* or *not happen*, and I marvel that the world happens, and continues to happen, and voids the possibility of not happening. At each moment, the world-whole stands before the abyss of nothingness, but it does not vanish into this abyss; it continues, and in doing so continuing it overcomes again and again the possibility of nonexisting. It is miraculous that the other possibility, the possibility of plunging into nothingness, is not realized, for this is *equally as possible* as the possibility that it is realized.[24]

If one really held this position, that at each moment there is a fifty percent chance of the universe vanishing into nothingness forever, one probably wouldn't make any long range plans. And, I would argue that given philosophical naturalism, Smith's thought that the likelihood of the universe vanishing into nothingness is basically correct, but that instead of the universe as a whole vanishing into nothingness, it is much more likely that individual objects would vanish into nothingness.

Nothing that Smith writes in his later paper really deals with this. In fact, for *IUS2* to exist Smith needs not only *IUS1* and a set of consistent laws, he also needs some principle that makes contingent beings, when they are in existence, to remain in existence. There is nothing in his ontology that can do this, because, being a naturalist, there is nothing deeper than brute fact nature that exists to cause or be this principle. Given his ontology, it is indeed a miracle that at every instant the universe, or at least parts of it, does not simply vanish into the nothingness whence they (or they) came.

The radical contingency of the persistence of objects lends credence to

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[23] See Stephen Parrish, *God and Necessity: A Defense of Classical Theism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 188-189.; see also David Braine, *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 178ff.

[24] Quentin Smith, *The Felt Meanings of the World: A Metaphysics of Feeling* (West Layfayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1986) 181-182.

the idea that they are caused. Whether one takes the universe-as-a-whole as one entity or argues about individual objects, the astonishing, or as Smith says, miraculous continuance of existence cries out for explanation. Given brute fact, things which continue to exist are phenomenally improbable. But consider the situation if things which begin to exist are caused; if they are caused, then the cause itself could select[25] from a range of objects and properties and cause those which do, in fact, persist. Therefore, the fact that we do, actually observe things which continue to exist underscores the notion that they are caused.

This is not a popular thought these days. For example, in his recent book, Herman Philipse states, "[W]hy should we assume that an abyss of nothingness threatens each entity at every moment of its existence, and endorse the PNCN [Principle of the Natural Collapse into Nothingness]? As long as no convincing arguments for this devilish assumption are put forward, we should reject it out of hand."[26] But how about this argument: no contingent being has the reason for its existence internal to itself, contained in its existence, and so unless it is caused by something else, there is no reason for it to exist. Why then does it continue to exist, moment after moment, for no reason? Philipse ignores, for example, the whole of Thomism and scholastic metaphysics.

An objection one might raise is that one could make an argument parallel to the one offered against brute fact, against the persistence of caused objects. It is possible, it may be argued, that whatever caused the objects we observe to begin caused them with circumstances such that they would persist for an amount of time, *T*. Call this notion, "brute cause." But then, the argument utilized above could be used against the notion of a caused object as well, because there is an infinite multitude of degrees of continuance the cause could have given to things which persist. That is, when caused, the object in consideration could have not only been caused to come into existence, but caused to be for some period of time. Initially this rebuttal may appear strong, but only if one does not allow consideration of

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[25] Assuming, for the sake of argument, a personal cause.

[26] Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 238.

the *nature* of the cause in question. And this is a central aspect of the (4), which we have been assuming.[27]

However, it seems impossible that a cause could make a contingent object exist for a time without also further causing it to exist at every moment it does. Contingent beings do not have their existence as part of their nature. For them to exist, their being needs to be actualized at every moment they exist. And since they cannot actualize themselves, they need either a cause of their existence at every moment they exist, or else continue to exist, at every moment they do, simply as a brute fact. As stated above, the first alternative of a cause of their existence at every moment that they exist cannot be adopted by the naturalist, as there is nothing in a naturalistic ontology that can bring into, and maintain in, existence out of nothing. The second alternative of brute fact simply is a restatement of the problem.

Thus, acceptance of (10) entails that one must hold that it is more likely that $1/2^n$ (where n is the number of individual moments, however measured, from the beginning of time until the present moment, a number which has increased exponentially while one read this paper) is more plausible than terminating the randomness in a causal agent. One must accept that it is a miracle of chance that one continues to exist, that the objects with which one interacts continue to operate in ways one believes they will, and that the universe itself continues to exist from moment to moment. It is important to note that the belief in brute fact here is not merely holding onto a "naturalistic miracle" over a supernatural miracle; rather, for every moment that passes, the "naturalistic miracle" becomes even more improbable. Each moment that passes increases the improbability. On the other hand, the causal agent offers an alternative explanation which provides a rational basis for believing that things will continue to exist. Therefore, in order to maintain (10) one must give up rationality and cling to a vanishingly improbable principle of nearly infinite improbability.

Now we come to the last alternative—that the universe was caused to come into existence by something other than God. For example, Stephen

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[27] William Lane Craig, in his presentation of the KCA, concludes that the argument leads "to a personal Creator of the universe…" (William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1979], 152). Such a conclusion may be a bit ambitious, but it seems clear that from our previous discussion it is not unwarranted. The cause must be personal, for in order to overcome the brute cause objection, it must be capable of selecting for a certain state of affairs—that in which things continue to exist—to obtain. But it also must be such that it would desire that state of affairs obtain, for otherwise it would not select that state of affairs and the persistence of objects would once more be in question. Now this does not, on its own, hint at omnibenevolence or lead to the inevitable conclusion that theism is true. It does, however, provide some rational basis for believing that some of the core beliefs of theism about God are true.

Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow say, "Because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing"[28] This statement is confusing, as it seems to say that the universe came into existence from nothing, but that there was also gravity that caused it to come into existence. For purposes of discussion, we will assume that they mean that gravity existed and brought the universe into existence.

Really, Hawking's and Mlodinow's statement is amazing, since it apparently is a serious attempt to show how the universe could begin without God. Let us try to show the problems with it. First, taken literally, the statement is blatantly self-contradictory. Something cannot create itself—for if it did it would have to already exist, and if it already existed, then it could not bring itself into existence.

Second, if there were such a thing as gravity, then something would exist and there wouldn't be "nothing." The question therefore would be— why is there gravity? And, granting the existence of gravity, why it has the strength that it has — after all, there could be gravities with different strengths. Gravity is contingent, and trying to explain the existence of one contingent thing by another contingent thing, still leaves one with something unexplained. This is alright if one is merely trying to explain the existence of one contingent entity, but when one is trying to explain the existence of all contingent things, it is a failure.

Third, it is hard to see how a law could explain the mere existence of anything. If gravity is taken as a law, then it is an abstract entity. Abstract entities are on most accounts, acausal, so it is hard to see how the existence of a law of gravity could cause physical things to come into existence. Indeed, since the law of gravity merely describes one way in which nomologically physical entities interact with each other, how could this cause them to come into existence in the first place?

If, on the other hand, gravity is taken to be part of the nature of physical things, then it is impossible to see how gravity could cause these physical things to come into existence in the first place. As far as we can see, Hawking's and Mlowdinow's theory is hopeless. This may be a result of their belief that "philosophy is dead"[29] —since it is apparent that they do not understand even basic philosophical reasoning. So let us turn to a philosopher. We will look at a proposal by Graham Oppy. He writes,

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[28] Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2012), 180.

[29] Ibid, 5.

[L]et "N" be the property of necessary existence; and let "*S*1",…,"SN" be the essential properties of the INITIAL STATE of the INITIAL SINGULARITY. If we suppose that objective chance is operative in causal reality from the INITIAL STATE of the INITIAL SINGULARITY, then we can suppose that that is sole absolutely (metaphysically) necessary state; all parts of causal reality other than the INITIAL STATE of the INITIAL SINGUALIRTY are absolutely (metaphysically) contingent.[30]

In short, Oppy holds (or at least theorizes) that the initial state of the universe was necessary in the strongest sense of the word. It was absolutely necessary, and everything else in the universe, either necessary or contingent, came from this necessary initial state.

But does the existence of a necessary physical entity make sense? We do not think so. For something to be absolutely necessary, to deny it entails a contradiction. And from the denial of the existence of a physical initial state of the universe, no contradiction arises. Indeed, it is difficult to see how a physical thing could be absolutely necessary. Any physical entity must have properties such as size, mass, various forces, etc. Each of these properties must have some value; i.e., a certain size, a certain mass, a certain amount of entropy, a certain strong nuclear force, etc. It seems clearly impossible that any particular value will be absolutely necessary.

For example, suppose that the initial state that Oppy postulates has an entropy value of *E*. Why would it be absolutely impossible that it exist with a different value? Wherein would the contradiction lie? If there is no contradiction in denying it, then it cannot be absolutely necessary. The same could be said for any other value of any other aspect of the singularity, or any other physical entity for that matter.

Again, even were it granted that there could be an absolutely necessary physical state of the universe, and that suffices to account for the creation of the universe, it does not account for the continued existence of the universe. That is, say one thousand years after the creation of the universe, why do the physical things of which the universe is composed continue to exist? That an absolutely necessary initial state caused them to come into existence does not explain their continued existence, whereas an absolutely necessary God can.

So it seems that Oppy fails—no physical entity can be absolutely necessary. Although I will not argue it here, I have written elsewhere that

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[30] Graham Oppy, "The Shape of Causal Reality: A Naturalistic Adaption of O'Connor's Cosmological Argument," *Philosophia Christi* 12 (22010): 281-287.

only God of all concrete beings can be consistently thought of as absolutely necessary. It appears that a contingent being cannot explain the coming into existence of the universe, for its coming into existence would have to be explained, and the continued existence of the universe would be unexplained. Further, the concept of a necessarily existing physical entity seems incoherent. So, all other alternatives to God's creating the universe fail.

The proposition (4) has been the focus of our defense. It has been argued that there are three ways to deny (4); one may deny the possibility of the universe's coming into existence (8), or that something other than God was the cause (9), or one may hold that the universe began merely as a brute fact (10). Against (8) it has been shown that it is not absolutely impossible for the universe to begin to exist, and that one would have to argue for a metaphysical principle in which the only way for anything to come into existence is via prior material objects, which has itself not been established.

Against (9) it has been argued that no natural entity can plausibly account for the coming into existence of the universe, or for its continued existence. Although we have not covered every possible rival, we think that from the principles we have developed, they can all be answered.

Against (10) it has been contended that two ways of supporting this contention have failed. Furthermore, it has been argued that (10) is vanishingly improbable in comparison to (4). If that is the case and (2) is sound, then it follows that the universe had a cause of its coming to be, and that cause was God.

So, both (1) and (4) are vindicated. Not only are those established, but the notion that God must be a continuing cause of the universe is also vindicated.

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The Hand of God Comes to Mount Sinai

Charles Schulz

Among the early icons housed at St. Catherine's monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai, only one seems to depict the Deity directly. In the sixth century icon of the Virgin between St. Theodore and St. George, an open hand appears from the center top of the frame. [See the very top of illustration[1]] From the hand a solid white cone of light rays extends to the nimbus of the enthroned Virgin directly below. In her lap, she embraces the Christ Child and at her sides the two saints stand as able sentries. In the space between, both behind and above these foreground figures, two ethereal angels turn themselves to gaze up beyond the divine hand. The divine hand thus provides the central dynamic element of the work and is key to understanding the piece as a whole. At the same time, the appearance of the divine hand poses a range of philosophical, religious, and historical problems concerning the portrayal of divinity. Finally, the meaning of this particular image draws on the full scope of the nature and function of the hand of God motif in early Christian and Jewish art.

The problem of the hand of God

The appearance of the hand of God in a Christian icon is in itself problematic. While the incarnation provides a theological justification for painting Christ, he is capable of depiction precisely because he became man in a way which cannot be said of the Father, the Spirit, or of "divinity" in general. Theophanies, such as the angels which appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre (Gen. 18) and the descending dove at the River Jordan (Matt. 3:16), remain inseparably bound to their specific historical instantiations.

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[1] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Encaustic_Virgin.jpg
 as public domain. Accessed 11/30/2016. Also in Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons*, vol. 1 (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976), plates IV-VI, XLIII-XLVI.

Such symbols retain their propriety only within these contexts. Apart from the incarnate Son, God provides no other absolute images of himself.[2] Christians understand God to be invisible and thus "imageless" in his divine nature.[3] In the second century, Justin the Apologist argued that God was without shape. More specifically, Aristeides contended that God was not "composed of organs."[4] In this icon, since the Second Person of the Trinity sits on the lap of the Virgin, there remains no other divine Person to whom the hand might appropriately belong.[5]

In addition to this initial problem of an appearance of a divine hand *per se*, the icon also raises the question of its function and meaning in this particular work. The hand appears from heaven and bestows rays of light toward the Virgin Mother and Child. Certainly, the gesture expresses divine favor and benediction. But further implications of the image can only be recovered from the history of the hand image itself.

The history of the hand of God image

Within the scope of the Judeo-Christian tradition, "the hand of God" began not as an iconographic but as a literary image. The expressive and creative capability of the human hand makes it apt for symbolic interpretation. The ancient Hebrews, like those in many other ancient cultures, understood the hand as a physical manifestation of the individual spirit, of personal expression, and of strength and power.[6] With over two hundred references in the Hebrew Bible, the hand of God refers to divine ability and activity in general.[7] The earliest accounts in the Biblical narrative often depict the divine hand raised against or weighing heavy on an individual or group to effect

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[2] Cf., Col 1:15: "He is the image of the invisible God."

[3] "Already here, however, I should emphasize that the attribute of 'imageless' is not unambiguous in Greek and Roman discourse. It may mean that God cannot be seen at all, somewhat similar to the biblical assumption; but it may also mean that God has no human form." Moshe, Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 50. For a New Testament statement on the invisibility of God, see 1 Tim. 1:17.

[4] Justin, *Apology*, I,9; Aristeides I, 5; quoted in Barasch, 103.

[5] At the end of a long history of theological reflection on icons, the Great Council of Moscow maintained that the two assertions, that the Son can be properly depicted in the flesh and that the invisible Father cannot, are by no means incompatible. Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, trans. by Anthony Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 371, passim. Ouspensky, 373, notes that the divine hand does not in all cases unambiguously refer to the Father.

[6] Theodor Klauser and Ernst Dassmann, eds, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1986), s.v. "Hand II (ikonigraphisch)," 403.

[7] Job 27:11, Num 11:23 provide examples of such a general usage.

divine punishment.[8] Later writings extol creation and its beneficial ordering as God's handiwork.[9] The uniquely Hebraic understanding of salvation as divine intervention in history on behalf of God's people could naturally be explained as the deeds of God's hand. Thus, the biblical narrative references to God's hand multiply in the story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt[10] and with respect to both her contemporary history and her future consummation.[11] The image of the divine hand expands from specific acts of intervention to include the connotations of "divine grace," God's nearness to his covenant people.[12] Isaiah 66:14 promises that "the hand of the Lord will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes." This antithetical parallelism clearly equates the divine hand with blessing and favor. By the close of the Old Testament, the original tendency to associate the activity of divine hand with wrath and punishment has been completely reversed.

The divine hand can also indicate God's relation to and activity through an individual. It would rest upon the prophets, such that their ecstatic experiences were akin to divine possession.[13] Their words thus became the first-person speech of God himself.[14] The kings who reigned in Jerusalem, whose palace literally stood "on the right hand" (south side) of the Temple, were also under the protection and blessing of the divine hand.[15] By extension of this association, later texts depict how royal blessings bestowed by the hand of God also accrue to the people of God collectively.[16] Even private individuals attributed the good and evil that befell them to the hand of God. In a positive sense, the divine hand resting upon a human life indicated "the salutary nearness of Yahweh to the individual"[17] and an "indivisible communion with God."[18] In the first historical instance of an iconographic image of the hand of the God of Israel it is this association of the hand with personal blessing which appears. In a group of Iron Age tombs at the village

[8] 1 Sam. 5:11, Jer. 21:5, Job 19:21, Ruth 1:23, Judges 2:15, Josh. 22:31, cf., Karl Gross, *Menschenhand und Gotteshand in Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1985), 345. The divine hand offers the cup of punishment in Jer. 28:7, 32:17 and Ps. 74:9.

[9] Psalm 19:2, 104:26, Is. 40:12, Jer. 27:5, Eccl. 2:24, 9:1, cf., Gross, 343.

[10] Ex. 3:19 ff., 9:3, 13:3-16, 15:6,12; Gross, 344.

[11] 2 Chron. 30:12, Is. 41:20.

[12] Gross, 342.

[13] Ez. 1:3, 8:1, 40:1; 1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 3:15 ff., cf., Gross, 348.

[14] Gross, 440.

[15] Psalm 89:2, 98:1, 20:7, 21:9, 110:1, cf., Gross, 346.

[16] Is. 62:3, Wis. 5:16.

[17] Gross, 349.

[18] Psalm 73:23ff., Gross, 350.

Khirbet el-Kom, west of Hebron, a hand is carved below a grafitto inscription from the 8th-7th century BCE. One line of the inscription reads "Blessed be Uriahu by Yahweh."[19]

Old Testament theology links together divine activity and divine speech, for God's speaking accomplishes His purposes. As a consequence, the "hand" as an instrument of activity also becomes an indicator of divine speech. Karl Gross aptly summarizes the Old Testament data: "On the basis of the hand's ability to act and speak, the divine hand shows the work of God in *Heilsgeschehen* or his speech to his chosen one."[20] Moving from the literary to the iconographic history of the hand image, Jewish developments again remain a determining factor for later Christian usage. Although hands do appear as a Greco-Roman religious symbol for divine power, they appear independent of any narrative. Furthermore, polytheistic contexts required additional attributes and inscriptions in order to associate the symbol with a particular god or goddess. Only with the Judeo-Christian presupposition of monotheism does the hand as such come to represent God.[21]

Significant iconographic employment of the hand image in Judaism begins only in the Rabbinic period. In the second century, diasporal Judaism appears to have liberalized its employment of figurative motifs.[22] Paintings and floor mosaics begin to decorate the synagogues and, as mere decoration, could appropriate biblical imagery as well as symbols borrowed from the surrounding culture. The wall paintings of the synagogue in Dura Europos from the mid-third century provide a rich illustration of this development. In five biblical scenes, the hand of God appears as a disembodied element floating in mid-air and playing a part in the scene.[23] Two of the scenes [see below]—Elijah reviving the son of the widow of Zarephath and Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones–link the hand with the life-giving power of God, who miraculously raises the dead.[24]

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[19] Rachel Hachlili, "A Symbol of the Deity: Artistic Rendition of the Hand of God in Ancient Jewish and early Christian Art," in *Case Studies in Archeology and World Religion: The Proceedings of the Cambridge Conference*, edited by Timothy Insoll, 59-70, BAR International Series 755 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999), 60.

[20] Gross, 435.

[21] Klauser and Dassmann, 425.

[22] Hachlili, 59.

[23] Hachlili, 62.

[24] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elijah_and_widow_of_zarepheth.jpeg and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hand_of_God_%28art%29#/media/File:Ezekiel_3.jpeg as public domain. Accessed 11/30/2016

Other scenes in which the hand appears include the sacrifice of Isaac and Moses at the burning bush [see below].[25] Jewish artifacts, such as clay lamps and the mosaic of the Beth-Alpha synagogue, demonstrate the persistence of the hand image, particularly in relation to the sacrifice of Isaac.

Other instances from Judaism show the hand as a symbol of divine power, protection and blessing.[26]

When the hand of God image emerges in the Christian tradition two centuries after the painting of the Dura Europos synagogue, the form and context reflects a dependence on Jewish precedent.[27] Not only does the hand appear in narrative scenes as in Jewish art, but the Christians particularly included it in illustrations of Old Testament stories, specifically the sacrifice of Isaac and the giving of the law to Moses.[28] The Great Berlin Pyxis (ca. 400 CE, possibly from Moselle) depicts the sacrifice of Isaac and includes the hand of God issuing from an heavenly arc. The same type of image, with Abraham looking to the hand, has been found on an early fifth century fresco at a cemetery in Thessaloniki. The Brescia casket, made of ivory in the fourth century, places a hand of God above the burning bush.

This borrowing indicates that Christians, like Jews, did not employ the image to suggest that God possesses a physical form. Both Augustine in the West and Chrysostom in the East admonish their audiences against imagining that God had physical hands.[29] Rather, the hand functions as a symbol of the divine voice and activity.[30] The symbolic aspect comes to the fore again in a painting at the Maius cemetery in which the hand appears with the three young men in the fiery furnace. The biblical text (Dan. 3) reads that one "like a son of God"[31] joined them in the fire, a turn of phrase which Christians could understand as the Second Person of the Trinity. Although the text implies that an entire person appeared, the painting represents this form only with the divine hand, here a sign of divine presence and protection.[32]

Once Christians appropriated the hand image, however, they slowly began to employ it in uniquely Christian scenes. The expansion of applications can largely be grouped into New Testament scenes, Christian imperial imagery, and trinitarian images.

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[26] Hachlili, 68.

[27] "It seems reasonable to assume that this formula [from Jewish art] influenced the rather later artistic convention of Early Christian biblical scenes in paintings, reliefs, and mosaic ornamentations." Hachlili, 69. Pierre Prigent remarks on the obvious borrowing from Judaism. Pierre Prigent, "La main de Dieu dans l'iconographie du paléo-christianisme," in *La Main de Dieu/ Die Hand Gottes*, edited by René Kieffer and Jan Bergmann (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1997), 141.

[28] Klauser and Dassmann, 426. Prigent, 145.

[29] Augustine, Civ. Dei 12,24; Chrysostom., hom. in Joh. 61, 2 (PG 59, 338).

[30] Klauser and Dassmann, 427-428.

[31] Dan. 3:25, Vulgate: "similis filio Dei."

[32] Klauser and Dassmann, 429; Prigent, 144.

Since seven out of the eight New Testament allusions to the (right) hand of God refer to the ascension of Christ,[33] it comes as no surprise that the hand appears relatively early in portrayals of the ascension.[34] A famous fourth century ivory plaque shows Christ grasping the divine hand which issues from the heavenly arc. [See illustration]

The Baptism of Christ and the Transfiguration also regularly incorporate the hand motif.[35]

In both of these biblical stories, the divine voice speaks from heaven to declare the unique sonship of Christ.[36] Consistent with the Old Testament theology and Jewish imagery, the hand thus functions to depict the voice of God and iconographically symbolizes the invisible God who speaks from a cloud.[37] The depiction of the right hand of God, already linked with kingship (Ps. 110:1), fittingly appears at the Baptism and transfiguration of Jesus, where his kingship is declared, and at his ascension, when he enters the full exercise of his kingly rule. The hand of God also appears with important biblical saints. The sixth century Rabula codex from Syria shows the hand of God over the Virgin Mary, receiving the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost.[38]

Christian imperial iconography employed the hand motif to assert the divine approval of the emperor. Regularly on coins, a heavenly hand,

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[33] Mark 16:19, Acts 2:33, 7:55-56, Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1, Heb. 10:12, 1 Pet. 3:22. 1 Pet. 5:6 also mentions the hand of God, but in terms of the activity of divine correction.

[34] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ac/Reidersche_Tafel_c_400_AD.jpg
 as public domain. Accessed 11/30/2016.

[35] Klauser and Dassmann, 436.

[36] Klauser and Dassmann, 438.

[37] Klauser and Dassmann, 439; André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*, Bollingen Series, no. 35 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 115.

[38] Gross, 437. Reiner Sörries, *Christlich-Antike Buchmalerei im Überblick*, (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1993), 4b.

sometimes holding a victory wreath, appears over the ruler.[39] The divine hand, already a symbol of God's lordship and power, thus serves to legitimate the earthly authority. Even here the form of the hand itself is derived from Middle Eastern Jewish art, though the wreath is appropriated from the image of the goddess Victory.[40]

Closely related to the imperial image are those scenes which depict the enthronement of Christ or Mary with the Christ Child. Often in the apse of a church, Christ the Pantocrator sits enthroned under the blessing hand of God.[41] As an important parallel for our image, the apse of the sixth-century Church at Parenzo built by Bishop Eufrasius portrays the enthroned Virgin and Child between two archangels. The hand of God extends a wreath over the seated Mother and Child.[42]

Ioli Kalavrezou notes that this image typifies one of the earliest depictions of Mary in Christian art, namely, as the enthroned queen. She observes that such non-narrative representations aim to illustrate Mary as the Theotokos, and are consequently formal, always showing Mary from the front, unemotional and distant from the Child she holds.[43] The Cleveland Tapestry also shows Mary and Child enthroned between archangels, but above them appears a seated figure whose hand gestures a blessing. Kalavrezou interprets this heavenly figure as duplicate reference to Christ.[44] A hand extending a wreath also appears over the image of Christ in the apse mosaic of the Church of saints Cosma and Damiano (sixth century). There Christ stands in a heavenly Jordan, which flows through the clouds. It thus mingles two scenarios in which the hand of God usually appears—the baptism of Jesus and his ascension.

Images of the Baptism or enthronement of Christ become trinitarian

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[39] The consecration coin of Constantine I provides a notable example. Cf., Grabar, 40.

[40] Klauser and Dassmann, 422-3.

[41] Engelbert Kirschenbaum, *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 2 (Rome: Herder, 1970), S.v. "Hand Gottes."

[42] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Croatia_Porec_Euphrasius_Basilika_ BW_2014-10-08_10-44-45.jpg
 as public domain. Accessed 11/30/2016

[43] Ioli Kalavrezou, "Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became Meter Theou," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, no. 44 (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Library and Collection, 1990), 168. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tapestry_Icon_ of_the_Virgin_and_Child,_500s_AD,_Egypt,_Byzantine_Period,_wool_-_Cleveland_ Museum_of_Art_-_DSC08440.jpg
 as public domain. Accessed 11/30/2016. Exhibit in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, USA. Photography was permitted in the museum without restriction. This artwork is old enough so that it is in the public domain.

[44] Kalavrezou, 168.

when alongside the image of the hand there appears a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit.[45] The mosaic of the Baptism of Christ in the Cathedral baptistry in Ravenna already illustrates this tendency.[46] The Rabula codex, dated 586 CE, provides another example. A Palestinian ampulla combines a number of images to express the Trinity.[47] It shows Christ suspended in mid-air on a throne supported by four angels. Below the throne a hand emerges, shining with rays of light. Below that, the Spirit descends as a dove to the praying Virgin and Apostles on the day of Pentecost. The ascension, the baptism of Christ, and the annunciation merge together. Another tendency, seen at the basilicas of Nola and Fundi, was to depict all three Persons of the Trinity symbolically, so that Christ is represented by a cross or a lamb just as the Father is expressed by a hand and the Spirit by a dove.[48] In Byzantine art, the connecting ray of light, so often accompanying the descending dove, became an important element in later Byzantine efforts to express the doctrine of the Trinity.[49]

Christian development of the image of the divine hand thus moves beyond the limitations of its appearance in Judaism. Although Christians, like their Jewish contemporaries, could employ the hand image to depict divine speech-acts in the earthly realm, Christians also applied the image in non-narrative scenes which communicated something of heavenly realities. Because the history told in the New Testament was understood to reveal the Triune nature of God, scenes such as the Baptism of Christ became windows into eternal intra-Trinitarian relationships. Enthronement scenes, too, do not portray a single past event so much as a continuing heavenly reality. Perhaps related to this deepening iconography, the Christian hand image does not appear disembodied or severed as in its Jewish counterparts. It normally extends from a cloud, perhaps to suggest that the hand is not, after all, a mere symbol, but an image that directly leads to the heavenly reality to which it points.

The Hand of God at Sinai

The icon of the Virgin between St. Theodore and St. George integrates many of the Christian elements generally associated with the hand image. As an early work produced in the East—Kurt Weitzmann posits a provenance in Constantinople on account of its artistry—it also employs the image with bold freedom.

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[45] Klauser and Dassmann, 441.

[46] Grabar, 122.

[47] Grabar, no. 275.

[48] Gross, 438, cf. St. Paulinus of Nola, Epistula XXXII to Severus, cited in Grabar, 114-115.

[49] Klauser and Dassmann, 440.

The characteristics of the hand in this icon [see top of illustration] fit naturally into traditional Judeo-Christian usage of the time. It is the right hand which is shown, the strong hand to indicate divine power. The right hand is also the hand of honor in Near Eastern culture, since unclean acts were to be performed with the left.[50] Iconographically speaking, God has no left hand, no unholy hand. As Christian images usually show the hand appearing from a blue or red cloud or arc, this hand emerges from a blue arc. The mosaic in the nearby apse of the Sinai monastery likewise shows a hand issuing from a blue arc.[51] The icon shows the hand drawn slightly larger than the human hands below, though comparable in size to the angelic hands. This may follow Jewish practice, which usually drew the divine hand overly large. The gesture is open and pointing downward, a Jewish form not without other parallels in Christian iconography.[52] The hand here emits a heavenly light toward the Virgin. Though such a direct beam of light has few parallels, rays like lightning bolts are often associated with the divine hand or the heavenly dove it sends forth.

While the individual elements of the hand composition and its context are not unusual, interpreting its meaning within the many-streamed tradition proves difficult. Certainly, however, it serves as a symbol of God the Father. The juxtaposition with and above the Son recalls trinitarian images in which the hand refers to the Father. The archangels, who seem to react to the appearance from above, reveal their reverence and godly fear in their facial expressions. That they are actually looking above and beyond the hand further suggests the consciously symbolic function of the hand. The One who is indicated actually exists beyond the sight of the viewer.

Certainly the image builds on the iconography of Christian imperialism. The royal throne with the blessing hand indicates divine authority and legitimacy. But who here is enthroned? Is it the Child who, as Messiah,

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[50] Hachlili, 61.

[51] Klauser and Dassmann, 431.

[52] Hachlili, 69.

receives his royal kingship as the true and final Son of David? Or is it the Virgin, who also occupies the throne and takes her place in the heavenly sphere as the Mother of God? After all, the rays extend to her nimbus and not that of the Child. Most likely, the icon lends itself to both interpretations. The icon reflects the relationship between the Father and Son (and both the eternal and the economic aspects of that relationship) as well as the relationships between the Virgin and God, the saints, and the cosmos. The extending hand bestows divine favor and blessing on both mother and Child in different ways. From eternity, God the Father begets the Son out of the fullness of his love, bestowing the fullness of his deity on the Son. Likewise in time, Jesus the Son of God receives the abundance of the divine favor. The Virgin as the instrument of the incarnation in a certain way comes "between" the Father and Jesus. As the medium of divine favor, she also receives from its abundance and, as the Mother of the Messiah, receives royal status from him. As Elizabeth once exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" (Luke 1:42).

The hand is not static in indicating these sublime relationships. As the symbol of divine speech, it recalls the other Christian iconographic settings in which the Father declares the sonship of Jesus. The attentive turn of the angels suggests something of this verbal dynamic. As in the scenes of the baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus, the appearance of the hand here functions to declare the sonship of Christ. Furthermore, against any unorthodox Adoptionism,[53] this icon asserts that Jesus already possesses this sonship from birth. The viewer thus experiences an epiphany, as he is allowed to glimpse through the earthly manifestations into the heavenly reality, the true identity of Christ and his relation to the Father.

The hand can symbolize action as well as speech, just as divine speech and action are themselves inseparable. Thus, the hand indicates not only divine presence, but the bestowal of a divine gift. This is actually the central purpose of the hand image, which appears for the sake of demonstrating the gift it bestows.[54] The action of bestowal can be read both as the eternal begetting of the Son as well as the sending the Son into the world. As the beam of light extends from the hand to the enthroned pair, Christ is thus depicted as having been born as "Light of Light" in accordance with the

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[53] The doctrine of Adoptionism, popular among some early Christians, maintained that Christ became the Son of God only with his reception of the Spirit of God at his baptism. While the traditional images of Christ receiving the Spirit simply conform to the Biblical account, they do not preclude an adoptionist interpretation.

[54] "The hand itself represents only the offering or manner, the main weight falls on the real or symbolic item in the hand which as a divine gift naturally maintains an exalted rank." Klauser and Dassmann, 442. Similarly, Prigent notes that the hand is a favorite symbol of divine *action*.

words of the Nicene Creed. The image of the Virgin Mother is so closely associated with the incarnation that it is tempting to understand the light as the Spirit which "hovers over" the Virgin (Lk 1:35) to conceive the Christ Child within her. The iconographic link between the Spirit-dove and rays of light further supports this possibility. If the beam of light is allowed to indicate the Holy Spirit, whose illuminating function was well celebrated among the Church Fathers,[55] then the icon comes to confess a fully trinitarian Christianity.[56]

One further resonance with the history of the hand image deserves mention. Weitzmann speculates that the icon was painted during Justinian's reign "when the monastery must have received gifts from its imperial founder."[57] The fact that this icon with its rare depiction of the divine hand appears at Sinai might imply that the work was designed with this location in mind. The image of the divine hand appeared in relatively few iconographic contexts in early Christian art, but one of the dominant images was the giving of the law to Moses on Sinai. Christians of the Patristic period were also keenly aware of the claims and attraction of Judaism. This icon, then, might visibly portray the Christian assertion of John 1:17, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." The light, now suggesting the grace and truth brought by the illumination of the Spirit, thus replaces the tablets of the written law once given to Moses on Sinai itself.

The icon at Sinai manifests the eternal relationship between the Father and Son, perhaps together with the Holy Spirit, and its intersection with God's saving purpose in sending his Son. By the appearance of the divine hand, the Son sits revealed as a Son, though also as the incarnate Son, the Son of the Blessed Virgin. The Father begets the Son and enriches him with the full abundance of divinity. The successful performance of the divine plan, through the Virgin and in the person and life of Jesus of Nazareth, leads to their glorious exaltation and enthronement in the heavenly realm. The icon confronts the viewer with the mystery of God in the flesh and so invites the viewer to worship.

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[55] E.g., Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical lecture XXVI.

[56] One might even suggest that it in some way anticipates the insights of Gregory of Cyprus ("The Holy Spirit shines forth through the Son") and St. Gregory Palamas ("the Spirit proceeds from the Father to rest on the Son") Dumitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 1980, chapter 1.

[57] Weitzmann, 21.

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Book Reviews

Maschke, Timothy. *Called To Be Holy In The World*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2016. 355 pages. $47.00 paper.

Review by Daniel Paavola

To describe all of Christian history in under 400 pages is a daunting task. Timothy Maschke's recent text does an admirable job of a near-impossible assignment. His work is the fourth in the series by Wipf & Stock which covers Old Testament, New Testament and Christian Doctrine especially for the American college student in a Lutheran university. For that target audience and use, the text provides a concise summary of the Church history with a focus which fits what is expected by most students and teachers.

Ideally, a history of the Christian Church would have several volumes so that the each one could specialize in a single era and region. However, given the need to cover the topic adequately in one class with one text, Maschke adopts a distinctive approach of using one chapter for each century from the birth of Jesus to the present day. This approach expands with three chapters for the 16th century Reformation era, as one would expect of a Lutheran text. This approach works well for the student who has to remember simply that chapter 2 covers the years 100-200 AD, and so on. One particular challenge of this approach is with those major characters and movements that straddle two centuries. In the case of Augustine and Jerome, for example, their early years are described in chapter 4 and continued in later sections in chapter 5. However, this is a small challenge in light of the advantage of gathering all the events of a century into one memorable chapter.

Most of the history is told through the key people in each century. Headings for the one to two page sections are generally the name of the major actor in that time frame or within that era. Larger issues such as Gnosticism (17), and Donatism (39), which exceed a single person have their own appropriate heading. This stress on the people of the history will make this a more memorable text for university students and will give instructors easy points on which to expand with further information on either the person or the larger movement that comes from his work. Besides the expected theological leaders for each century, Maschke includes many other important leaders within a century such as the scientists Kepler, Bacon, and Copernicus (207-208), and others as wide-ranging as Joan of Arc (193) to Michelangelo (206). These short biographies remind the student of the larger historical context in which the Church's faith lives.

Devotion to good teaching is seen in other ways beyond the biographies found throughout the text. Maschke has been a Concordia University Wisconsin professor for many years and this experience shows in the concise headings and relatively short sections used throughout the book. There are five discussion questions at the end of each chapter which allow the student a measure of self-examination and which the instructor can use to begin a larger discussion. Also excellent sidebars throughout the text give a visual break with brief expansions on people and key works. These sidebars are happily unpredictable in that one can be a necessary definition such as the meaning of transubstantiation (163), while another is a brief account of John Wesley's conversion (273). As with the brief biographies of key people, these sidebars give instructors the chance to expand on those people and events which strike them as especially interesting.

Another two aspects of the book that reflect the expected Lutheran university use are the illustrations and maps. Relatively small pictures, generally of the key men and women being discussed, appear throughout the book. The variety of the images and the number of five or more for each chapter gives a pleasant variety to the reading. Maps also are quite frequently found and are generally helpful, though sometimes they are either quite small (255), or are a bit unclear when lacking a key to the shading techniques or boundary lines that are shown (135). However, given the size and the desired cost of the book, this is understandable. It is a softcover textbook, not a historical atlas.

No single text can cover the breadth of the history of the Church, certainly not one of 355 pages. Several regions of the world, such as the Church in Africa and South America, and specific activities over time such as missions throughout the centuries could all claim more time and space. But given the intended American Lutheran readers, this history provides them a concise and useful overview of the Christian faith come to life. It will guide instructors and students through the centuries of God's faithfulness to his people, called to be holy in the world.

Helmer, Christine, ed. *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. 326 pages. Hardcover with CD. $39.00.

<div align="right">Review by Timothy Maschke ◀</div>

Judging from the number of publications about Luther and the Reformation over the past several years, this present assemblage of articles is just the tip of the iceberg. Christine Helmer (PhD, Yale), Professor of Religious Studies at Northwestern University, gathered a diverse group of international scholars to look at Luther from a variety of perspectives in order to provide provocative insights and contemporary applications. In the five major sections of this book, readers will explore a diversity of understandings and treatments of Luther's thought, particularly in the area of sociological and political studies, although historical and theological issues do arise in several chapters. Helmer's goal was to demonstrate the interdisciplinary and global impact of Luther's writing and influence for contemporary society in an eclectic and worldwide context.

According to her introduction, Helmer challenges her readers (as she apparently did her collaborators) to "take intellectual risks" (1). As she notes regarding Luther's own theological engagement with contemporary issues: "Life's opacity to rationality, reality's coldness, and God's mysterious silence are described alongside glimpses of God's undying love for human persons" (7) in much of Luther's work.

Section one presents Luther's "global impact" in light of literary motifs, intellectual, and liberation theology. Risto Saarinen's "Luther the Urban Legend" describes similarities and differences in Luther's conversion account to that of Paul and Augustine, Shakespeare and Kierkegaard. He notes that Luther's "search for a merciful God is, in light of this affirmation, an anti-individualistic, cross-cultural and, finally, a global challenge" (30). Peter Hodgson looks at "Luther and Freedom" through a Hegelian approach as evidenced in the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. "Beyond Luther—Prophetic Interfaith Dialogue for Life" by Munib Younan sees Luther as an initial resource before moving beyond him to a post-Luther view of liberation theology under the First Article of the Apostles' Creed.

Observing Luther's understanding of suffering, the authors in section two, "Living in the Midst of Horrors," view Luther's theology more in psychological terms or at least applications. James Jones' "Luther and Contemporary Psychoanalysis—Living in the Midst of Horrors" is more psychology than Luther, but he does provide some insights on original

sin and several opportunities to apply Law and Gospel appropriately. Volker Leppin's chapter is probably the best in the book as he discusses "God in Luther's Life and Thought—The Lasting Ambivalence." Leppin allows Luther to speak from his medieval European context to the twenty-first century's "dark sides of reality" (94). The next chapter in this section addresses "Suffering and Love—Martin Luther, Simone Weil, and the Hidden God," by Krista Duttenhaver. Duttenhaver has produced an interesting comparative enterprise which demonstrated a perceptive recognition of Luther's theology of the cross for contemporary consumption. Jacqueline Bussie affirms a Christian hope in a general way in her chapter, "Luther's Hope for the World—Responsible Christian Discourse Today," but she seems to have missed the Christocentric nature of Luther and the Christian faith both for the present and forever.

Noting that emotion and reason are "key dimensions of being human" (129) Helmer's third part deals with "Language, Emotion, and Reason." The chapters in this section provide a variety of experiences, including a related recording (included with the book). Birgit Stolt's chapter on "Luther's Faith of 'the Heart'—Experience, Emotion, and Reason," explores the profound linguistic and aesthetic/affective dimensions of Luther's writings, giving a very positive and uplifting conclusion on "Luther's experience-based spirituality" (150). Paul Helmer, Christine's brother, provides a nuanced analysis of Luther's worship music and "Catholic" heritage in the context of medieval and early modern devotional compositions. His recording of Luther's hymn, *Christ lag in Todesbanden* is an interesting contribution. Hans-Peter Grosshans' "Luther on Faith and Reason—The Light of Reason at the Twilight of the World" highlights "the differences in tradition, culture, human feeling, aesthetics, authority, the execution of power, religion, and how religion shapes morality" (173).

Luther's "Theology for Today" is the focus for Part Four. For me, this was the most enjoyable of the chapters, perhaps because of my own broader theological interests, although this section is not without controversial issues. Theodor Dieter's chapter (translated by Christine Helmer) deals with justification particularly by looking at Luther's recognition of sin as being 'curved in upon oneself,' which can only be resolved by seeing Christ. Dieter notes, "No one can definitely reach the bottom of self-certainty by introspection. …[Thus,] Luther's doctrine of justification has special relevance in view of the contemporary fascination with psychology" (201). Antti Raunio addresses the supposed passivity of Lutheranism's social theology and reiterates specific aspects of Luther's understanding of works as sanctification and Christian vocation, which grow out of an awareness of divine love flowing through the believer to "actualize the personal good of the neighbor" (227). Luther's "theology of

the cross" is explored by Ronald F. Thiemann as he seeks to address other religious traditions, particularly in the area of "truth."

As the socio-political aspect of our global economy rises, so also are the issues of power and politics increasingly being discussed in Luther studies. The biblical concept of the universal priesthood of all believers as Luther reintroduced it during the Reformation is the subject of Allen G. Jorgenson's chapter, "Contours of the Common Priesthood." He suggests that Luther's idea is best expressed by a focus on the community of the faithful who "concretize" the voice of Christ as it is "gathered around word and sacrament for the sake of the world" (249). Peter J. Burgard uses Luther's address *To the Christian Nobility* as an example of Luther's "Masterful Rhetoric," by which Luther was able to speak dual, yet conflicting messages to the nobles and the peasants, resulting in the disastrous Peasant's War. A similar work, albeit not as problematic, was his *The Freedom of a Christian*, which also resulted in a paradoxical conundrum for its recipients, argues Burgard (282). The final chapter is this section deals with Luther's "two kingdoms doctrine," which Victor Westhelle suggests is an amplification of the Platonic and Aristotelian divisions of the vocations of nourishing (home), protecting (government), and teaching (church). Luther's contribution in this area is in his distinguishing of the household and political realms by differentiating the material and formal causes and using the metaphors of instrument and mask interchangeably (296).

Not every aspect of this book is worthy of commendation. Contextualizing Luther to address contemporary issues is commendable, yet problematic in several ways. The theological foundation for much of Luther's life and activity was either ignored or at best not recognized as significant for several authors. Other authors seemed to forget that Luther lived in the sixteenth, not the twenty-first century. Luther's worldview was much different than that of most twenty-first century global citizens. His biblical understanding was much more thorough and his appreciation of Gospel-freedom was more central than some of the authors recognized or at least asserted. While struggling with Luther's occasionally overstated comments, one can never forget that Luther's perspective of a gracious God who gives and forgives through Christ was always central to his motivation and actions.

Entering a conversation with notable scholars is always an engaging experience. Readers will not be disappointed with this absorbing book. While the chapters are not uniform in their appreciation of Luther, all of them find Luther as the foundation for their proposals or critiques. In anticipation of the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, this book will challenge and provoke as intended.

Duty, Ronald W., and Marie A. Failinger, eds. *On Secular Governance: Lutheran Perspectives on Contemporary Legal Issues.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. 382 pages. $45.00 paper.

Review by Jeff Walz

There may be no better time than the present for a volume on the intersection between Lutheranism and current legal controversies. In the United States, the Supreme Court's 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision not only recognized same-sex marriages, but has led to heated discussions of sexual orientation and rights in a host of public contexts. Globally, nation-states likewise have been grappling with the legal contours of a plethora of social issues. Editors Ronald W. Duty and Marie A. Failinger bring together an impressive group of scholars – predominantly at Lutheran institutions – to try to sort out what the law says about a number of issues, and to dig into how Lutheran theology may intersect with these issues. Even as the volume makes a noteworthy contribution to answering these queries, it needed to provide a more cohesive Lutheran framework, a better integration of Lutheran theology with the issues, and be more intentional in suggesting how lay people may use "Lutheran thinking" to tackle these issues in today's increasingly secular society (3).

The volume was based on a 2014 conference at Valparaiso University's Chicago location at the Lutheran School of Theology, which brought together the volume's editors and authors "to bring more Lutheran voices to the pressing legal issues" in the United States and many English-speaking countries (1). Perhaps the volume's most impressive achievement is the tremendous diversity of issues and countries addressed by scholars who know the topics and nation-states they address. Rather than focusing on hot-button issues like, for example, abortion and gay marriage, the contributors examine challenging and contentious legal issues that at times fly below the scholarship radar: property, water rights, human trafficking, immigration, welfare, fiduciary duty, and military chaplains in the United States; with case studies from Denmark, Rwanda, and Nigeria. Internationally, Sven Anderson and Morten Kjaer's chapter is a fascinating portrait of Denmark, where "the state is still legislator in all matters, including ecclesial ones," unlike the situation in Germany and the Nordic countries (265). Domestically, Mary Gaebler's chapter emphasizes the environmental consequences of overlooking interdependency in U.S. property law. These are merely two examples of the impressive array of issues addressed here.

There are, however, three areas where the book may have benefited

from a closer collaboration among editors and contributors. First, the book's framework needed to be much stronger at the outset, so readers would have a better theoretical and theological point of departure. What is the foundation for Lutheran engagement in these crucial legal issues? Is there a Lutheran premise or framework for investigating these topics? The first few pages discuss the Lutheran two-kingdom theology, the importance of reason in addressing these issues, and rightly suggest that "Lutherans can be politically divided" on issues such as this even "without being theologically divided about what is at the heart of our faith" (2). Part I is titled "Framing the Problems of Law and Theology," yet the three chapters here focus on what appear to be three distinct issues: authority and interpretation to establish a connection between civil law and Lutheran social ethics; religious freedom; and African Americans and secular law. A better approach may have been a chapter on the key elements of a Lutheran approach to the issues to come, and to then integrate this framework in the subsequent chapters.

Moreover, for a volume intent on synthesizing a Lutheran approach with various legal issues, this integration is done unevenly in most chapters. In several of the chapters, there is extensive discussion of the issue, and then almost as an afterthought, a shorter section at the end speculating on how Lutheran theology and beliefs may intersect with the issue. A noteworthy exception to this is Leopoldo A. Sanchez's chapter, "Bearing So Much Similar Fruit: Lutheran Theology and Comprehensive Immigration Reform." Here, Sanchez provides a theological framework for assessing Lutheran approaches to immigration, follows with a goodly amount of evidence, and then concludes by speculating how this may apply to the Lutheran church and to its members. More chapters needed such an integrative approach, especially in suggesting how a Lutheran perspective on the specific issue may impact Lutherans in the pews who, led by the Holy Spirit, contribute to the public square through their citizenship vocation.

Even with these suggestions, or perhaps because of them, the volume leaves unanswered a number of key queries. Was the lack of an organizing framework at the outset an omission of the volume, or does it suggest the two-kingdom theology is very hard to apply to a number of these issues, at least with greater specificity? A hallmark of American Lutheran political engagement has been to equip parishioners with the knowledge and confidence to be contributors to the public square, so perhaps the volume's chief accomplishment is not in providing answers to all of these questions, but in simply getting them on parishioners' societal radars. Finally, what is the best way for Lutherans to be heard on these issues? Is it the institutional church, or are the individual members the better route to societal influence? In his provocative conclusion, which seems unconnected to the

earlier chapters, Robert Benne offers some excellent food for thought. Benne concedes that "Lutheranism has had a bad reputation when it comes to its public role in shaping just secular law, but "as Lutherans take their vocation as citizens seriously, they will become leaven and salt in that quest for those small steps forward" (336). So, even with the volume's limitations, its greatest contribution to the church and its members may be its urging to consider not only how Lutherans can best contribute publicly, but in what issues those contributions should be based. The editors and contributors to this volume should be commended for taking these first, hard steps in making Lutherans and Lutheranism relevant in the 21st century American and international legal landscape.

Allison, Gregg and Chris Castaldo. *The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants after 500 Years.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 171 pages. $16.99. Paper.

Review by Timothy Maschke

Martin Luther's sixteenth century reformation continues to reverberate and reinvigorate theological and denominational conversations. Yet, one of the burning issues at this moment is the division that began 500 years ago and continues to this day between Roman Catholics and Protestants (especially those who followed Calvin and Zwingli). Allison and Castaldo seek to address this void by providing topics for continued discussion.

Unfinished? Unresolved? Those are two questions posed by these two evangelical authors and pastors of active Protestant congregations regarding the Reformation. Allison is Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky. Castaldo, a former Catholic (albeit inactive—C&E attendance at Mass), was active at Wheaton College before becoming pastor of a former Congregational church in suburban Chicago. The point of the book is to bring about a sensible, sensitive, and substantive theological dialogue. The goal is commendable, but the perspective is clearly from a strongly evangelical-oriented stance.

Marginalizing "the other," whether Catholic or Protestant, from theological dialogue seems to be the norm for most doctrinal debates. The book's Introduction gives a brief overview of the history of the Reformation and it's continuing relevance for American Christianity in light of *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love,* to cite Cardinal Walter Kasper's book title (24). Allison and Castaldo point out, however, that such Catholic piety should never trump biblical doctrine, and that's the point of this present book.

Marking two foundational distinctions between Catholics and Protestants, the authors begin by pointing to the different bases of theological authority (the Church and it's ministerium as interpreter of Scripture versus Scripture alone) and the process (Catholic) or proclamation (Protestant) of justification for salvation. Noting the LCMS' denunciation of the *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification* (40) accepted by the Lutheran World Federation and representatives of the Catholic Church, Allison and Castaldo acknowledge that a critical divide remains over these

two fundamental issues.

Essential beliefs that unite Catholics and Protestants are articulated in the longest chapter of the book. Subtitled, "Ten Commonalities," this chapter shows the basic Christian doctrines of the Trinity, God's attributes, revelation, Christ's person, Christ's suffering (especially His crucifixion and atoning sacrifice), the Holy Spirit, humanity and original sin, salvation by divine initiative, ecclesiology (God's people as one, holy, catholic, apostolic, and the church's purpose), and the hope of eternal life. Yet, even here subtle distinctions and differences are noted in anticipation of the later chapters in the book.

Justification by grace through faith because of Christ would be a natural distinction between Catholics and Lutherans; however, that is not central in the next four chapters, which focus on what evangelicals see as "Key Differences between Protestants and Catholics." Chapter 3 deals with scripture, Tradition, and biblical interpretation. Chapter 4 discusses the image of God, sin, and Mary. Chapter 5 returns to the doctrine of the Church and then discusses the sacraments, acknowledging that Protestants are not all agreed on the necessity of the sacraments. This is a helpful chapter for Lutheran readers in that Lutherans are clearly not in the majority of Protestant teachings with our deeper understanding and greater appreciation of the sacraments as means of grace. Chapter 6 is subtitled, "Salvation," but deals almost exclusively with purgatory and the place of good works.

One note of hope is given in chapter 7 as the authors perceive a subtle change in Catholic terminology regarding justification as evident in the JDDJ, where there was mutual agreement on "justification by faith alone" (145-146). They propose the question of Catholicism's orthodoxy and conclude that it "presents a deficient gospel" (148). However, in light of "developments in contemporary theology," such as the JDDJ, they conclude that this moment "should be cherished as an opportunity to affirm the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as our ultimate sufficiency" (148).

No one can answer the authors' ultimate question, "Is the Reformation Finished?" While they enigmatically give "Yes. No. No, but…" answers to their question, Allison and Castaldo seek a renewed dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. There is certainly much that can be affirmed as Christians, yet also much that must be discussed in light of biblical revelation and Christ's saving work by grace alone through faith alone! Lutheran readers will benefit from this book, not only for the insights on contemporary Catholicism, but also on our evangelical Protestant neighbors.

Posset, Franz. *Unser Martin: Martin Luther aus der Sicht katholischer Sympathisanten.* **Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte. Band 161. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, 2015. 177 pages. $36.00. Hardcover.**

Review by Jason D. Lane

The historian is never purely objective. Each of us has something at stake when we turn to the historical data. It is why we ask questions in the first place. We also have hunches that lead us to look for the facts to substantiate what we thought may be true. Franz Posset has had a longstanding hunch that the confessional lines between Lutherans and Catholics in the early phases of the Reformation were not as sharply defined as scholars today would have them. We accentuate the differences, categorize, and assume that we have the whole story figured out. One of my seminary professors chided our class for blindly oversimplifying the events of the sixteenth century: "You guys think that Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the castle door, everyone started singing *A Mighty Fortress*, and the Reformation was over!" Posset's study does not make this mistake. He complicates the story we all thought we knew, convincingly showing that there were theologians who remained Catholic and who nevertheless claimed Luther as "our Martin," "our apostle," "the savior of Germany," and "the most genuine herald of the evangelical truth."

The book is divided into four chapters. With each chapter, Posset introduces one of Luther's sympathizers who lived in and around Augsburg, Germany. Posset gives a biographical sketch and then investigates how these Roman Catholics supported Luther. In chapter one, he examines the aging Bernhard Adelmann (1457-1523), cathedral capitular in Augsburg, who sided with Luther in the debates with Johann Eck. Adelmann called Luther fondly "our Martin" (*unser Martin*). Unlike the other theologians Posset examines, Adelmann was the only to have met Luther personally and to have received letters from Luther, although none are extant. He is also the first to wear the title "*Lutheraner*" positively, even though Eck used the same label to smear Adelmann. Posset gives some insightful details here about Luther's exchange with Eck and Eck's exchange with Adelmann. He even suggests that Adelmann may have set Luther and Eck on a collision course, because he was responsible for delivering Eck's *Annotationes* or *Obelisci* ("little spear") on the 95 Theses to Luther. Posset portrays Adelmann as a careful thinker who grew in his evangelical conviction by collecting and carefully studying Erasmus's exegetical works and anything available to him from Luther.

In the longest chapter of the book, chapter two, Posset introduces readers to the gifted Hebraist, humanist, and Augustinian, Caspar Amman (1450-1524), who was the first Roman Catholic in the sixteenth century to translate the Psalter from Hebrew (1523), without consulting the Vulgate, and who titled Luther "our apostle." Despite his admiration for Luther, his translation apparently did not impress Luther or else Luther was not aware of it. Whatever the case, his psalter did not gain any serious readership due to the prominence of Luther's own translation the following year. As he does throughout the book, Posset successfully shows—by way of archival research and a study of the personal correspondence and individual libraries of these theologians—how many humanistic and Catholic thinkers worked ecumenically toward common goals and read broadly. Posset gives, for instance, a list of Luther's writings that were in Amman's possession on pages 66-68. Curiously missing from his library are some of Luther's now most famous writings: *The Address to the German Nobility* and *The Babylonian Captivity of the* Church, both from 1520.

In chapter three, the reader meets the Benedictine monk, Vitus Bild (1481-1529), who praised Luther for showing him "the evangelical truth" and called him the "savior of Germany." It becomes clear that Bild's awakening through Luther came from his study of Luther's exegesis and sermons on the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer (1519). According to Bild's handwritten catalogue of books (Posset includes a clear photograph of the original), he owned, among other pamphlets, Luther's early lectures on Galatians (1519), *Resolutiones* (1519), and sermons from St. John (1523?).

In the final chapter, Posset shows the sympathies of Kaspar Haslach (1485?-1541), who privately called Luther "the most genuine herald of evangelical truth," but when put to the test in a hearing in 1522 before the general vicar in Augsburg, distanced himself from Luther's teachings. Over and against some evidence and scholarly opinion that Haslach had turned to the theology of Zwingli in his latter days, Posset makes a case that he remained in his heart with Luther.

This book is a valuable contribution to Luther studies by giving us an honest and complicated picture of how the evangelical message of Luther found an audience among even Catholics. Reformation scholars and anyone interested in Luther, if they have the ability to read German, will benefit from a careful study of Posset's research. His thesis, namely, that the evangelical truth had its way with many outside of Luther's circles, is indisputable. His examples of Adelmann, Amman, Bild, and Haslach, men who never had serious contact with Luther, demonstrate however that it was not Luther the man who engendered such sincere loyalty. As Posset puts it: "It was Luther's concentrated engagement with the 'evangelical truth' that won him sympathizers from Augsburg" (163). May we all become sympathizers with Luther for that same reason!

Tewes, Kevin. *WHY GOD ALLOWS US TO SUFFER: The Definitive Solution to the Problem of Pain and the Problem of Evil.* **Chapel Hill, NC: Trinity Publishing Group, 2015. 136 pages. $9.00 paper.**

Review by Gregory Schulz

First, a word from God, who is referenced in the title of this book: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). We'll come back to this apostolic admonition.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, this book, from its hubristic title to its concluding unphilosophical postscript-ing of Soren Kierkegaard, ought to be ruled inadmissible to the discussion of the Problem of Evil. It is not serious. It is not philosophical. It is not theological.

1. Not many of us should presume to write on the Problem of Evil. Let me put this in philosophic terms and in the words of the philosopher D.Z. Phillips.

Philosophizing about the problem of evil has become commonplace. Theories, theodicies and defenses abound, all seeking either to render intelligible, or to justify, God's ways to human beings. Such writing should be done in fear: fear that in our philosophizings we will betray the evils people have suffered, and, in that way, sin against them. Betrayal occurs every time explanations and justifications of evils are offered which are simplistic, insensitive, incredible or obscene.[1]

Now, the logic of *Why God Allows Us to Suffer* does not rise to the level of the theodicies and defenses that Phillips identifies as "simplistic, insensitive, incredible or obscene"; notwithstanding, the content of the book is a transgression, as is its title. We have to agree that there is a minimum requirement of intellectual seriousness for anyone of us who presume to teach in the classroom or preach from the pulpit or go into print regarding the Problem of Evil. Why? Because it is human beings who suffer. It is obscene to deploy real-life examples in the service of an incoherent "final solution" to the Problem of Evil and Suffering – the book's final solution to the Problem of Evil, as far as I can make sense of it, is that "experiences of friendship-love" outweigh pain, suffering and death – as this book does, for

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[1] D.Z. Phillips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God* (London: SCM Press, 2004), page xi, Introduction: On Telling the Problem of Evil.

example, in a chapter headed "God is All Wise":

Is the experience of love so valuable that it outweighs our experience of pain, injustice, fear and death? … Consider the following example. A double amputee who lost his legs in combat asserts that he would not exchange his experiences of wartime friendship for the ability to undo the terrible suffering that he has endured as a result of his battlefield injuries (47).

It is not just those of us who minister to our injured veterans, but injured veterans themselves, including those who are men and women of faith, who find such a quasi-real-life anecdote obscene and unbelievably simplistic. For a real-life and deeply meditative and philosophical book on soldiers and their comradery and honesty in light of death, pain and suffering, there is J. Glenn Gray's *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*. The present book offers no solution to our honored veterans' pain and suffering and questions about evil and suffering. No comfort whatever.

2. When you have a look for yourself (which I am not necessarily recommending), you will recognize that this book reads like nothing so much as a hand-me-down PowerPoint presentation of what is, to be sure, a central, perhaps even *the* central (agonizing and transgenerational) Problem for philosophy and theology. For example, the author lists the propositions that he believes constitute the logical structure of the Problem in his Introduction. But his list is an inexplicably idiosyncratic three-point outline. His augmented outline of the logic of the Problem is even more oddly skewed. His logical outlines are skewed toward his notion that pain is a necessary condition, allowed by God and also somehow generated by our "sinful form" of life, for us to be in a loving friendship with God. Inexplicably, his reasoning does not include the standard proposition about God's goodness; only His raw power (5).

The author does not seem to recognize the jarring effect of his idiosyncratic logical outlines up against even the brief, brief quotes from Hume and Epicurus included in this book. Although the back cover of his book claims that he "spent years of studying the works of thinkers who claimed to have insights into the reasons why God allows us to suffer …" there is no evidence that the author is aware of the contributions these philosophers actually made (helpful or not) to our handling of the Problem. Although, according to his title, his introduction, and the back cover of his book, he means to present "the definitive solution" over and against theirs, he has neither accounted for their reasoning nor put forward a coherent, much less a philosophically superior, line of reasoning himself. He does not seem to be aware that the "God" of Epicurus text is not the God of the Bible, but a placeholder for a sort of deistic norm advanced by Stoic philosophers,

leaving us to wonder whether he was reading the philosophers he evokes during the years he spent studying the Problem that he tells us he alone has solved.

At other times, the book reads like the product of an online keyword search for quotes by philosophers. But the quotes are never unpacked and the philosophers are often are – not misrepresented, exactly, but – never actually presented at all. For example, Alvin Plantinga's *freewill defense* is mentioned disparagingly, apparently (the reader cannot tell). The author adverts to it by opining, "[A] more common reason why many people fail to understand the seriousness of the problem of pain is a false belief that a comprehensive solution has been provided by the so-called 'free-will' argument" (7). Plantinga is neither named nor cited. There is no evidence that the author has read him, or even caught the fact that Plantinga's writing does not present his free-will defense as an answer to the Problem, but as a defense of the relative reasonableness of God's visitations of suffering. Had the author read Plantinga – on whom he nonetheless seems to rely for his passing references to free-will in his book – Plantinga could have spared us all, author and readers alike, some grief. This self-proclaimed subtitle promises us readers *The Definitive Solution to the Problem of Pain and the Problem of Evil*, remember. But Plantinga carefully and helpfully teaches us, after explaining the difference between a Free Will Theodicy (that would be a philosophical way of justifying God in the face of evil) and a Free Will Defense (Plantinga's more modest project of showing that the existence of evil is not inconsistent with God's goodness), this pearl of wisdom in regard to the Problem:

> [In] the present context [that is, the context of investigating the consistency of God's goodness with the existence of evil] the latter [that is, a Free Will Defense] is all that's needed. *Neither a defense or a theodicy, of course, gives any hint to what God's reason for some specific evil – the death or suffering of someone close to you, for example –* might *be. And there is still another function – a sort of pastoral function – in the neighborhood that neither serves.*"[2]

In other words, the Problem may be treated not logically or philosophically, but pastorally, with the Word of Christ and the means of grace to comfort people in the midst of their suffering.

One more point regarding the author's regular use of terms such as *human free-will* in the course of his alleged "definitive solution to the

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[2] Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), see Part 3. Can We Show That There is No Inconsistency Here? The bracketed interpolations and the italics are mine.

Problem," and his manifest failure to read the major philosophers that he spent years studying. The assumption that human freewill is essentially our human exercise of free choice is itself a relatively newfangled understanding of *freewill* that comes from Kant and the European Enlightenment. To read this understanding of freewill as autonomy vis-à-vis God, assuming that it is the God of the Bible who is at issue in *Why God Allows Us to Suffer*, is a significant matter of chauvinistic anachronism, a reading of a modernist notion back onto God and His Word. A reader of Augustine would be aware of the traditional Western understanding that the human will is free only to the extent that it harmonizes with God's will. Otherwise, as Augustine explains, for example, in his *On Free Choice of the Will*, the will is enslaved, either to oneself or to the devil and the world. Again, the problem is that this author footnotes Augustine, to be sure, but treats the philosopher's writings in a pro forma manner. The author does not provide us any evidence that he has in fact been reading Augustine in the course of formulating "the definitive solution to the Problem."[3]

So, on the one hand, *Why God Allows Us to Suffer*, is philosophically superficial – which is to say that it is not philosophical – in its approach to this deeply human Problem. On the other hand, this book is theologically trivial – or, better, it is not theological in the least. Think again of James 3:1. Next, notice the title of the book under review. I honestly cannot discern an argument leading to his conclusion that God allows us to suffer, except that the author seems to feel that, just as friends depend on suffering in order to trust each other, so we ought to trust God, who is "All Powerful," "All Loving," "All Wise," and "All Just," yet who is the One that allows us to suffer. Somehow, this is supposed to be *the* solution to the problem of why we suffer. Here and there the author also asserts that we certainly should not blame God for our suffering because all pain and suffering derives from the sinful form (whatever exactly this means) of life

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[3] At a minimum, those who write about *free will* in regard to the Problem of Evil owe their readers clear definitions. This is why I have introduced the recognition that there are two competing definitions of *free will*. The options here are (1) the biblical, Augustinian and classic or pre-modern understanding of *free will as a will in harmony with God's will* and (2) the post-Kantian, modern understanding of *free will as individual autonomy*. C.S. Lewis's 1940 book, *The Problem of Pain*, is sometimes referred to as "the classic free will argument." However, while it may be fair to refer to it as "the classic 20th-century argument," Lewis's working understanding of free will is not the classic, traditional, pre-modern Augustinian view. Rather, it is the post-Kantian modernist view. The assumption that free will is essentially a matter of individual autonomy, although it is our default definition today, is only two centuries old and is not at all biblically-informed but is a product of the Enlightenment project.

in this world.[4]

3. Just as there is no philosophical substance to this book that nevertheless claims in its subtitle to provide *The Definitive Solution to the Problem of Pain and the Problem of Evil*, there is no theological content at all. Despite an afterthought of a few Bible references in the book's meandering Conclusion (99-112) and an offhanded reference or three to our Lord's Name, *there is no there there*. No philosophical thinking, no theological substance, no authentic understanding of our actual suffering, no Christ in evidence. What are we to do with such a book that announces itself to provide us with *The Definitive Solution to the Problem of Pain and the Problem of Evil*?

Let me return to my "sermon text" for this book review. "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). Since this book mentions friendship frequently, let me frame a recommendation in terms of friendship – not any hackneyed notion of friendship, but being actual friends to one another.

The author of this book, together with his editor and his publisher (although I fear that this may be all one person) should practice friendship toward one another and spend a year or two actually talking this through, with their Bibles open and fuller texts of the philosophers and theologians who have addressed the issue philosophically and theologically in play. Write some essays, share them with a few thoughtful friends outside your immediate circle. Friends don't let friends write bunk. The title of this book as well as its listing under "Religion / Christian theology / Apologetics" is unwarranted. More importantly, there is James 3:1. Those of us who preach or publish ought to be aware from the get-go that we are accountable to God and to His people, indeed toward all our listeners and readers as human beings.

4. There is no more vitally human question for us as thinking persons or as believers in Jesus of Nazareth, God in the flesh, who suffered for all people, who prayed Psalm 22 while dying for all people, who gave us Psalm 22 to pray with one another as we suffer. "Why?" we cry out as suffering and grieving human beings. "My God, my God, why …?" we cry

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[4] Readers looking for apologetic and theological engagement with the Problem of Evil will find grist for their thinking in John Feinberg's important studies, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Crossway, 2004) and his recently published *When There Are No Easy Answers: Thinking Differently About God, Suffering and Evil, and Evil* (Kregel Publications, 2016)

out in our laments to our Father in heaven.

It is wholly inadequate and trite to teach people that "God allows us to suffer" in light of His words to us, first in the Person of His dear Son Jesus Christ and secondly in His written Word and in the Sacraments that He has instituted in that Word. Have we actually read Job, as the text stands? Then there are the psalms of lament, the words of the prophets regarding *evil*, the Gospel record of the man blind from birth, Romans 8, and more.

Philosophy can and does help us not to be trite, in much the way that Phillips describes his own aim in his philosophical writing (xii):

> [Not to serve as] an exercise in religious apologetics, or anti-religious polemics. It does not seek to establish *the* proper response to the problem of evil. Philosophy possesses no criterion of its own by which this can be done, although it is concerned with the exposure of any conceptual confusion present in the responses that may be advocated.

This is why it is good to read the texts of philosophers who take the problem of evil seriously. I've mentioned above why it's important to read and digest Plantinga's actual text on the free will defense. For a second example, consider the concluding lines of David Hume's *Dialogs Concerning Natural Religion*. These lines were written three days before the philosopher's death.

A person who has a sound sense of the imperfections of natural reason will eagerly fly to revealed truth, while the haughty dogmatist, persuaded that he can erect a complete system of theology with no help but that of philosophy, will disdain any further aid and will reject this help from the outside. To be a philosophical sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian …[5] In other words, after eleven chapters of dialog showing the faults and fripperies of solutions to the Problem of Evil, every thoughtful, educated person (or "man of letters") will ***learn to be skeptical of reasoning our way to a solution of any kind to the Problem of Evil and immerse himself instead in the Scriptures***, which Hume calls "revealed truth."

Speaking of immersing ourselves in the revealed truth of God's actual, written words to us, another extremely worthwhile philosophical text is Kiekegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, an extended philosophical meditation on Genesis 22 by way of John the Silent's personal engagement with the personal God.

Particular chapters in God's revealed truth for the Christian

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[5] See Hume's text at *http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hume1779.pdf*.

response to the Problem of Evil and Suffering (which is not a final solution of anyone's making but *Christ Himself*) are Psalm 22 and indeed all the psalms of lament, Romans 8, and the Gospels, particularly the chapters in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John on Jesus' death and resurrection.

A concluding biblical recommendation: Psalm 6, with Luther's commentary on The Seven Penitential Psalms open, as a way to push us past the theologically vapid claim that "God allows suffering" to the reality that, as Luther writes,

> First. In all trials and affliction man should first of all run to God; he should realize and accept the fact that everything is sent by God, whether it comes from the devil or from man. This is what the prophet does here. In this psalm he mentions his trials, but first he hurries to God and accepts these trials from Him; for this is the way to learn patience and the fear of God. But he who looks to man and does not accept these things from God becomes impatient and a despiser of God.[6]

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[6] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works 14: Selected Psalms iii,* Jaroslav Pelikan, editor, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 140.

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Chapel Sermons

CUW Campus Pastor - Steve Smith

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." (ESV)

Friends in Christ,

Disclaimer: This is not a political statement or endorsement of any candidate. The Republican National Convention earlier this summer ended with the longest rambling acceptance speech of a Republican candidate in recent times. As soon as Donald Trump finished his speech, do you know what song was played? The Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want"!

A number of people thought it was ironic or hilarious or a political jab. Many people did *not* want Donald Trump to have the nomination but he got it. The Rolling Stones made a public statement that they didn't want to be associated with him or want him to use their song. But, hey, they said it in the song…you can't always get what you want. So he used the song.

It's a song that's pretty well-known in the annals of classic rock. Many think it's a statement about the end of the turbulent 1960's culture—written in 1969. That culture of excess couldn't go on forever. Maybe many people quote that line because it's so true—in life: "you can't always get what you want." Lots of things happen that you might not want to happen.

But did you ever think about that line in relation to God? If I asked you, "Does God always get what He wants?" you might think an obvious,

"Of course. He can do whatever He wants. God controls everything."

I find fascinating the verse in our text that reads, "God our Savior wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." God wants all to be saved and yet all are not saved! So apparently God doesn't always get what He wants but maybe Donald Trump does…? I want to unpack that with you for a few minutes.

These verses are in the context of Paul advising Timothy on propriety in worship—as they gathered. So he talked about prayer first and encouraged regular prayer for all people and for those in authority. Prayers are encouraged for a world where people can lead "peaceful and quiet lives."

In the midst of our lives, we all carve out things we like and that we want like family and a career. We don't always get the job we want or the spouse we want or the family we want.

Professors don't always get what they want…

Students don't always get what they want…

Packers fans don't always get what they want…

We don't always get what we want because we are in a sinful world where we don't naturally choose what's best for us. Our sinful nature makes us want things—whether it's selfishness or just feeding our desires.

What God wants is what's best for us, but he doesn't force a relationship with Him upon us. **That's really the reason that God doesn't always get what He wants—because He doesn't force His love on His creation and allows for free will.** God has promised that He will always love us. But we are not forced to love Him. We can reject His love.

Think about if you want a relationship with someone and try to force them to love you. That ends up being called stalking and will land you at Campus Safety. Because it's the Law that sometimes has to intervene to stop forcing your way on someone when it is unwanted.

But the way of the Gospel is very different. God shows His love for us in a Savior—the mediator the text speaks of—Jesus Christ. He came to live a life where God's will—what the Father wanted, spelled out a life of suffering for the sin and selfishness and finally death. Dare we say it? It wasn't a Rolling Stone but a stone that was rolled away from Jesus' grave that shows that we are saved from death. He is the Rock, the Living Stone

for our faith and life.

When we pray with our wills aligned more to God's, we'll find that we don't always get what we want. But we get more than we deserve—a life filled with hope and promise and peace in the midst of all the difficult things we might want but don't need.

We want lots of things in life. But we really only need one—the mediator Jesus Christ—in whom we are saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. That's what God wants.

So, I don't know who's going to be president. But I know who's in control of the world. And that's the kind of world I want. In Jesus. Amen.

September 2, 2016

Text: Old Testament Reading for Proper 17 (C Series) Proverbs 25:2-10

CUW Campus Pastor - Steve Smith

Text is verse 4a "Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel." (ESV)

Friends in Christ,

Do you know about dross? It's not your everyday word. Chemists or people who know metallurgy or large scale metal refining are familiar with the term. It's when metals are heated up—melted—and the impurities are removed—the dross—so that the metal is more pure and better. I learned that dross is different from slag in that slag is liquid and dross is when the impure leftovers are in a solid form.

Outside of that specific process related to metals, dross is not really used—except twice in the Bible and a couple of times in hymns—like in verse 4 of the hymn we just sang [LSB 728 "How Firm a Foundation"— "your dross to consume and your gold to refine"]. *It's an analogy for faith and how when we go through difficulties it can refine and strengthen our faith.*

Wikipedia says about dross: "The most popular modern usage is as an adjective for poorly written or even plagiarized journalism." I don't know…that seems like kind of a "drossy" statement to me….

But since the Bible verse addresses dross and since it includes my name (Smith) in the passage—I feel compelled to talk about it this morning. I assure that this is not plagiarized except for the parts I took straight from the Bible.

This passage from Proverbs in general is talking about kings and their glory and God and His glory and humility, as a bottom line. It parallels the Gospel reading for this week about not taking a more important place than is yours to have. In other words, don't present yourself as something you're not. If you're not pure silver, don't pretend to be.

It's Jesus who came in all humility and showed Himself to be the only pure and perfect One—whose life removed the drossy sin from our lives and whose blood is more precious than silver or gold.

Back in the Middle Ages there were people who practiced what was called "alchemy." Alchemy was the belief that in some mystical or magical way you could turn base metals into precious metals like silver or usually gold. The concept to me is still fascinating. History tells us that plenty of people tried it but I'm pretty sure there's no record of anyone succeeding—at least according to Wikipedia.

Alchemy gave way to chemistry which looks at how metals and elements of the earth combine and help to create so many amazing alloys and compounds that we rely on for all of our lives.

But to make something out of nothing—to take that which is impure or imperfect and make it golden—that's God's work. A smith/craftsman—maybe even a guy like me or you—could make something if we have perfect material to work with. But even that we don't get right.

We take God's perfect Word and we speak it and obscure it by our actions and on our best wordsmithing days, we don't really add anything to what is perfect and beautiful truth. Truth be told, even a seemingly obscure verse like this from the book of Proverbs is more important than anything you or I could ever say—because it is God's Word.

But as we become the embodiment of living out and showing God's love to others, even our imperfect actions and our impure motives can be redeemed by God so that people can possibly see Him through us.

So what will we make of this year? Just a few days in, maybe we're trying to fashion the year into something that makes us look good and glorifies us. People in the Old Testament did that, you know, making gold into idols and calves and statues to glorify themselves. We still do it whether figuratively or literally.

But what can God make of this year? Oh, he can take junk metal and make it into silver or gold. He could even take on our flesh and become one of us—seemingly so ordinary and make it into a life like no one had ever seen before, a perfect life and a sacrificial death and then give the reward of heaven and hope and eternal life and joy to us. *Jesus' blood poured over us is more mysterious than alchemy.*

Are you trying to get into a rhythm of making it all work? First, remember that you're not God. A dose of humility makes us rely on Jesus to get through each day. But he has made us all "smiths" of a sort—with skills and abilities and words and actions that can be a vessel for people to see God and for us to know His love.

I pray that this year is one of looking to and receiving that which we need every day. In Jesus' name. Amen.