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THE  
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Missouri Synod

**Witness Always**



From the President

# A SIGNIFICANT MEETING FOR WORLD LUTHERANISM



WITH AS MANY ROUTINE MEETINGS as I attend in a year, rarely do I identify a gathering as a “significant meeting.” Yet, this is how I described the 25th (10<sup>th</sup>) World Conference of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) held Sept. 23–26, 2015, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. World church leaders from 33 countries attended the conference from almost every continent in the world. The theme of the conference was “Bringing the Reformation to the World.” (You can read about the conference here: [goo.gl/MKATnb](http://goo.gl/MKATnb)).

The meeting was significant in part because the world leaders attending the conference represented about 15 million Lutherans worldwide. The papers presented discussed the Gospel, the Sacraments, the Church and the Office of the Ministry. The preaching at the services was Christ-centered and properly divided Law and Gospel. The ILC events provided “mutual conversation and consolation of brethren” (Rom. 14:9 and Smalcald Articles III, Art. IV, “The Gospel”).

The ILC’s World Conference was significant because the group decided to take seriously the idea of “Bringing the Reformation to the World.” The ILC is the premier group representing Lutheran churches that subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions (“quia”) because they are a pure exposition of the Holy Scriptures. This is a gift to bring to the entire world.

With the decline of Lutheranism in Western Europe and North America due to the rejection of biblical, moral standards (acceptance of same-sex marriage and practicing homosexual clergy), Lutherans around the world have become more interested in the ILC because of its commitment to the Holy Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions. World Lutheranism is looking for an organization that represents their beliefs and holds to their values.

In order to seize the opportunities for world Lutheranism, the ILC, of which the Missouri Synod is

a founding member, has decided to implement a bold, strategic plan to strengthen, encourage and support Lutherans around the world to increase their confessional commitment and their Lutheran identity. One way that the ILC is seeking to increase its impact is by publishing articles, reviews and materials to expound and explain their position. The publication of this edition of the *Journal of Lutheran Mission* with articles from the ILC World Conference is a part of this effort. The ILC will be updating its website ([ilc-online.org](http://ilc-online.org)) in the coming months as well as expanding its web presence to increase awareness of its work.

The ILC World Conference also elected and appointed an executive committee to carry out these initiatives. The ILC executive committee consists of the Rev. Dr. Hans-Jörg Voigt, bishop of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (SELK), ILC chairman; the Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee, president of Lutheran Church Canada, ILC vice-chairman, North American representative; the Rev. Gijsbertus van Hattem, president of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium, ILC secretary; the Right Rev. Christian Ekong, archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, ILC Africa representative; the Rev. Antonio Reyes, president of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, ILC Asia representative; the Rev. Jon Ehlers, chairman of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, ILC Europe representative; the Rev. Norberto Gerke, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay, ILC Latin America representative; and the Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III, director of Church Relations for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, ILC executive secretary.

May the Lord grant strength and resources for this goal to be achieved.

*In Christ,*  
Matthew C. Harrison  
PRESIDENT OF THE LCMS

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# PREFACE

by Robert Bugbee

**T**HE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL (ILC) is growing. That was clear at the Council's most recent World Conference, held Sept. 24–27, 2015, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where the ILC rejoiced to receive new member church bodies from places like Russia, Norway and Nicaragua. One must freely admit that the new member churches are not overly large, statistically speaking, but they form just a portion of the steady stream of Lutheran churches and leaders expressing new interest in involvement with the ILC. Beyond that, the Buenos Aires meetings included guests holding leadership posts in some of the largest Lutheran groups in the world from places like Tanzania and Ethiopia. The common theological convictions and fraternal warmth that bound both member churches and guests leads me to imagine that these contacts will expand significantly in the next several years.

The ILC is growing. This is not only true from the perspective of membership numbers and statistics. There is a rising urgency within the Council to become more vigorous in its goal of extending the reach of a truly confessional Lutheran witness to additional places throughout the world. The Council's leadership is currently grappling with concrete plans to bring that about.

The ILC is growing. It was a special joy in Buenos Aires to be welcomed both by the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (IELA) and by its Seminario Concordia. Not only were ILC World Conference participants privileged to visit the seminary campus — also building and

growing, by the way! — but Argentine professors were very active in providing Bible study opportunities and lectures on the conference program. The Lord of the Church is blessing confessional Lutheran seminary education as it is being carried out, not just in a few countries with a longtime Lutheran and academic heritage, but in fresh places where scholarship is deepening and the zeal of those involved is a needed encouragement to us all. You will find some of their contributions in this issue of the *Journal*.

The ILC is growing. If this growth had only to do with a human agency, its structures, personnel and funding, it would be of little moment to those who care deeply about the mission of Christ's church in the world. For us, the happiest news flash is the one St. Paul identified long ago when he wrote his friends of "the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing" (COL. 1:5–6). That's the real story, the one that laid hold of the hearts of the Colossians, the confessors of Luther's day, and of a

new generation of confessing followers of Christ in our own time.

The Lord bless our efforts to bring that glad, saving Good News to the far corners of the earth!

Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee,  
PRESIDENT, LUTHERAN CHURCH—CANADA  
AREA REPRESENTATIVE—NORTH AMERICA  
INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

There is a rising urgency within the Council to become more vigorous in its goal of extending the reach of a truly confessional Lutheran witness to additional places throughout the world.

# INTRODUCTION

by Albert B. Collver III

**F**ROM 24-27 SEPTEMBER 2015, the International Lutheran Council (ILC) held its 25th / 10th World Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Hans-Jörg Voigt, chairman of the ILC, in his report to the ILC explains how this conference in Buenos Aires can be both the 25th and the 10th World Conference (it involves a name and organizational change). Planning for this conference began 18 months prior to the conference date. A goal was to hold the conference in the Global South, where Christianity appears to be on a somewhat different trajectory than it is in Europe and North America.

The conference theme, “Bringing the Reformation to the World,” seeks to present the Reformation truths to the contemporary world. Essays were presented on Articles IV–XI of the Augsburg Confession, covering the themes of justification, the Holy Ministry, the Church, Confession and Absolution, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Each of the essayists was from member churches of the ILC. The essayists wrote from the perspective of their own churches in Europe, North America and South America; some of those views do not come from the same perspective as the Missouri Synod. The final essay about Vladislav Santarius was not even presented at the ILC World Conference but comes from a conference on diaconia held in Silesia in October 2015. The original essay was

given in Czech, but the author, Dr. Martin Pietak, gave us permission to include it with the ILC essays.

In addition to the essays, this special ILC edition of the Journal of Lutheran Mission includes some of the sermons used for worship at the conference. The issue includes two other items of note. The first is the report of the ILC chairman to the ILC. It includes helpful history about the ILC and an indication of its future direction. The second is a statement of the ILC on the Lutheran World Federation’s (LWF) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity’s (PCPCU) document “From Conflict to Communion.” The ILC’s statement on “From Conflict to Communion” also served as part of the ILC’s information dialogue with the PCPCU. The document signals the ILC’s engagement with the broader ecumenical church as it brings the Reformation to the world.

The publication of these essays marks a goal of having the ILC issue a journal at least once a year. We hope you find the essays helpful and theologically thought provoking.

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*Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III,*

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN  
COUNCIL

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With the lawyer, we ask, “And who is my neighbor?”

# SERMON FOR INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

2015 WORLD CONFERENCE, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

by Hans-Jörg Voigt

**J**UST THEN A LAWYER STOOD UP to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the

We don’t obey Him  
when we do nothing  
for the human beings  
robbed today by Islamist  
terror groups and others.

Jesus comes to you as  
the Good Samaritan on  
His donkey.

robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:25–31).<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Dear brothers and sisters, Ahmad U’s flight from Syria took 71 days. It cost 3000 Euro, which his parents had given him after the neighbor’s house was lost in a shell crater and they were afraid to lose their lives also.<sup>2</sup> He wore through seven pairs

of shoes. “On a checkpoint of the government in Syria we got a beating till somebody of our group revealed who the criminal escape agent was. He had to give them 50.000 Syrian pounds, (at least 250 Euro) and then we were allowed to go. On other checkpoints we all had to pay some money,” reports Ahmad U. When they went from Turkey to Greece, the small group of refugees feared they would die. “We were on some sort of raft — with 36 persons! Shortly after we started the escape agent said we should hold the direction. Then he jumped into the ocean and swam away.”

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.” Dear brothers and sisters, as you know, there is in these days the large disaster of people leaving their homes and becoming refugees. Therefore, I have chosen in this devotion to talk about the well-known example of the Good Samaritan.

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Nach einem Artikel von Raniah Salloum, *Spiegel*, Online vom 03.05.2015

## Falling into the hands of robbers

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.” The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was frequently used, but it was known to be dangerous. It took more or less a day to manage the 27 kilometers downhill. Directly after the Mount of Olives, the desert begins. The ancient historian Strabo tells how the Emperor Pompeius drove away the robbers there. That happened in about 50 B.C., but his success was a short one.

The story of Ahmed. U is such a story about robbers today. Criminal escape agents and lawless soldiers took away the money his parents had saved. Then he was left alone on a raft, and it was more or less a lucky chance that he and his group are not laying on the floor of the Mediterranean Sea. This summer, the Austrian police found 71 dead people smothered in a truck on an Austrian highway. They had no chance. It is hard to see such things. Where there is no law, where people don't know God and His commandments, robbers rule.

But now back to the example: “Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.” I thought Jesus wanted to criticize the Jerusalem establishment at this point. But that is not all; this is a much heavier problem. The priest and the Levite did what they were supposed to do according to God's Law. In the third book of Moses it says: “A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die ... He must not make himself unclean for people related to him” (LEV. 21:1, 4).<sup>3</sup>

The priest and the Levite had done their service in Jerusalem. Now they were on the way home. They would have had the time to help. They reflect: “Should I help? Oh yes, I should. But what if the man is dead? I will become unclean. A priest must not to go to a dead person. I can't hold a service if I am unclean.” Both had good and pious reasons to leave the man alone. I did not realize this before. But they both lose by giving away their humanity in the end.

Dear brothers and sisters, perhaps there are reasons among us for hesitating to help refugees. You may ask what will happen because of Islam and how it will perhaps

change our society, a society that does not know much about the Christian faith. But Jesus also commands us to love our neighbors. We don't obey Him when we do nothing for the human beings robbed today by Islamist terror groups and others. I know there are good reasons, perhaps very pious and Christian reasons, to pass on the other side like the priest and the Levite. But if someone is lying there on the ground, Jesus does not want us to pass by on the other side and to continue on as if nothing has happened.

## The Samaritan's help

“But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” It is well known that the Samaritans were disliked as enemies by the Jews. They knew they did not believe in God in an orthodox way. They were strange, and nobody wanted to have much contact with them. And one of these people is moved with pity. This word *σπλαγχνίζομαι* means “to be moved, to be emotionally involved.” You can translate it as “it goes through his stomach.” Jesus was also often moved with pity.

Luke as a doctor gives us an idea of the way medical help was given in these times. They indeed used wine and oil to cure wounds. The famous ancient doctor Hippocrates said so.<sup>4</sup> We get to know more: “The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” That was good money; with one denarius a family could live for a day

We, too, in our days have to be moved with pity. We don't want to accept all of the good reasons not to help or these feelings of strangeness. In the past weeks I always felt that pity when I read my newspaper. It makes me feel ill — *σπλαγχνίζομαι* — it moves me to pity. So I think it would be good if the churches united in the International Lutheran Council (ILC) gathered for a conference on worldwide disaster response, as the Missouri Synod suggests.

## In closing

In my mind, I am sitting beside you and trying to take my own words seriously. That does not make me very

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996 (electronic ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Ulcer., 881, in Bovon EKK III/2, S. 91.

happy. I see how little I do and how much I have not done that would have been possible. I think of the lawyer, who answered from God's Word: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And then I see my small love for God and my neighbors. Perhaps you and your church need help for yourselves. You have reached the end of your strength and courage and love, and now you have to hear such a sermon!

At the end of this sermon, Jesus comes to you as the Good Samaritan on His donkey. He comes with His wounds, and He is wearing the robe of a shepherd ("Samaritan" translated means "shepherd"). He stops beside you and sees your wounds and, full of love, puts you on His animal. Then He brings you to the inn and pays for you with His life and feeds you with bread and wine, His body and blood.

I hope this conference may help us to strengthen one another and show you that Jesus' love will give you new strength. Amen.

---

*The Rev. Hans-Jörg Voigt is bishop of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany and chairman of the International Lutheran Council.*

# AUGSBURG CONFESSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CONFESSING THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

## BRINGING THE REFORMATION AS BRINGING CHRIST

by Alexey Streltsov

THE OVERALL THEME OF THE 2015 INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL (ILC) conference has been designated as “Bringing the Reformation to the World.” In this time of globalization in the 21st century, the world seems to be a smaller place than in the previous centuries, resembling at times the spirit of the ancient Roman Empire. While the local contexts and concerns of the conference participants may be of somewhat varying natures, nevertheless the processes that transpire in the countries with a historic Lutheran presence affecting the Lutheran Church there will impact in one way or another Christianity and Lutheranism in all other areas as well.

There is a temptation to view this task of bringing the Reformation to the world as a quasi-academic exercise, or simply put, as a demonstration of Lutheranism as yet another strange and rare animal in the global religious zoo.

The original Reformation of the 16th century as a movement was intended for the Church as the Bride of Christ, who was impeccable in the eyes of God because of the purifying blood of the Lamb, yet on her surface had obvious stains that had to be taken care of. So it was an enterprise that took place within the Church. In other words, the Reformation did not begin a new Church; our Church was not born on Oct. 31, 1517, or June 25, 1530, for that matter. Johann Gerhard specifically made this point while confronting accusations of his Roman Catholic opponent Bellarmine about Lutherans not being the Catholic Church:

No matter what happens, the Church will survive. The Holy Scripture will still be there. Our Lutheran Confessions will still be there. And at least two or three Christians will always stay here or there. That is the promise of Christ.

[Luther] pointed out and repudiated from the Word of God papal errors newly introduced into the church and called us back to the ancient catholic faith. ... Therefore we are named, or rather permit ourselves to be named, after Luther, not a teacher of a new heresy (as Arians formerly were named after Arius, the Nestorians after Nestorius, etc.) nor as the inventor of a new rule (as the Franciscans are named after Francis, Dominicans after Dominic, etc.) but as the asserter of the ancient faith, the overthrower of Papism, and the cleanser of the churches, whom God raised up.<sup>1</sup>

The external environment of the Reformation was post-Constantinian Christendom as an established socio-political framework in which people found themselves for centuries. Envisioned reforms were of an internal nature to be applied in the already existing Church with the goal that her calling more closely conform to the apostolic Scriptures. An intrinsically ecumenical piece, the Augsburg Confession specifically relegates articles on abuses to the second, relatively minor part of the document, letting the positive affirmation of the Church's beliefs stand in the main place. The thrust of the Augsburg Confession was to claim that “nothing has been accepted among us, in teaching or ceremonies, that is contrary to Scripture or the catholic church.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces, On the Church*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 160, 295–296.

<sup>2</sup> Augsburg Confession, Conclusion, 5, Latin text.

Priorities that the Augsburg Confession regards as central for the life of the Church remain the same; they never change: Christology, justification, Church, Sacraments.

However, today we face a markedly different situation from that of the 16th century. In much of Europe and in the Western world in general, there is no longer Christendom in the earlier traditional sense. While in the Reformation debates some crucial things were at stake, nevertheless the opponents agreed on basic theistic and Christian presuppositions such as the existence of God, the Trinity, creation, Christology and the like. In today's Western world, a more typical frame of reference would be something like "The God Delusion" of Richard Dawkins, which moves us several levels behind in terms of suppositions on which we can agree with what seems to the mainstream of our opponents, thus making our task much more challenging.

It has become commonplace to assert that the global move of Christianity to the South would radically change the demographic map of Christianity in the next decades.<sup>3</sup> However, much of this rapid growth in the Southern Hemisphere may be claimed by Pentecostal movements of various kinds. Whether or not Pentecostalism in its different facets has become a major expression of modern Christianity may be a matter of debate, but the trend is unmistakable, and as such it presents a certain shift in focus compared to the religious scene of the original Reformation. This is not to say, of course, that Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and historic Reformed churches and groups are going into oblivion but rather this is a major new influence that we have to take into account.

Along with that, as we rapidly approach the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation, a certain question is raised en masse among many members of the Lutheran churches that pay attention to developments of recent times: Is there anything still to celebrate? Do the people designating themselves as Lutherans really stand in the tradition of the Church of the Reformation as she is expressed in *Confessio Augustana*? The general sentiment is inescapable that we cannot help but deplore the current state of affairs in the Lutheran Church worldwide. And those of us who at times become boastful about our strength and perseverance in some areas of doctrine and

practice prefer to ignore those areas where we would not come out as strong (e.g., sanctity of marriage, internal practical struggles in the churches and way of their resolution, etc.).

Thus "bringing the Reformation to the world in the 21st century" assumes a threefold task. This task is to evangelize (in some cases re-evangelize) the world outside the Church. It is to continue to testify of the truth of the original Reformation to the other Christian confessions. And it is to correct errors that we may find in our own midst.

While this activity may seem to be different in form, in its essence it is the same, as it has to do with "confessing the faith once for all delivered to the saints."<sup>4</sup> The author of the Augsburg Confession is Philip Melancthon, yet from the very outset this production was not intended as his personal document. In the words of one of Melancthon's biographers, "he was for the time the common consciousness, the surrogate of his party. His

object was ... to state ... what was held and taught in the churches of the subscribing princes and cities."<sup>5</sup>

We must be clear that bringing Reformation to the world is not equal to forcing on the world some peculiar system or ideology. Rather, in every case and every context we are to bring Christ to the world — a task that is best expressed by St Paul: "We preach Christ crucified ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."<sup>6</sup> Likewise Martin Luther asserts that "the entire gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article" (LC II, 33).

The task is thus to bring Christ who makes Himself present solely in the Church through the rightly preached Word of the Gospel and correct administration of the Sacraments. All of our churches are to do this in those places where God has put us, in all the different contexts where we happen to be. If this task is properly understood, then the notion and admission that Christianity is a relatively insignificant part of the world now (at least in some former traditionally Christian areas), and Lutheranism is

What matters is that the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments stay in the center of what the Church is doing.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Jude 3.

<sup>5</sup> James William Richard, *Philip Melancthon: The Protestant Preceptor of Germany 1497–1560* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1898), 206.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. 1:23–24.

a relatively minor statistical part of modern Christianity, while still disconcerting, will at the same time be viewed as secondary. What matters is the ongoing reality of the presence of Christ with His faithful, which Christ Himself has promised: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”<sup>7</sup>

### Salvation and its prerequisites

While our treatment of the Augsburg Confession at this conference properly begins from Article 4, a word must be said concerning the first 3 articles, given the very coherent presentation of the doctrine by our fathers. After all, we cannot speak about justification without understanding why, from what and by whom we must be justified.

Thus, Article 1 speaks about God, which is an entirely appropriate theme to begin the treatment of doctrine. Without the notion of God, we may not speak about anything else. Here the Reformers firmly establish themselves as descendants of the ancient Church of the Nicene Council. At the May 2015 International Conference on Confessional Leadership in Wittenberg, Germany, Dr. Paul Kofi Fynn, the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, exclaimed, referring to the degradation of Western Christianity in the last decades: “What has gone wrong?” Article 2 of the Augsburg Confession provides an answer: the fall into sin. This is what has gone wrong! Once it got so wrong, it kept on getting wrong in all subsequent human history, including, alas, the history of the modern church. Disagreements on the doctrine of justification can usually be traced back to different perceptions of the extent and pervasiveness of the original sin. Finally, Article 3 already speaks of justification, as it speaks of Christ, and we know no other justification than the one where Christ is active and which subsists of Christ. The language of the article itself provides intimate connection with Article 4 by way of its claim that Christ died “that he might reconcile the Father to us and be a sacrifice not only for the original guilt but also for all actual sins of human beings” (AC 3, 3). Indeed, one of the largest problems in appropriation of Article 4 results from its treatment in isolation from original sin and Christology. Then the Gospel risks becoming “any good news for any particular bad situation.”

People tend to think that saying the “justification through faith” cliché by itself signifies faithful adherence to Reformation heritage, as though this phrase were some

kind of magic. Do not get fooled. Watch the hands carefully; this game may be not a clean one. Last summer one episode in particular gave me a shock when one of the Lutheran World Federation higher-ups actually used the language of “justification through faith,” including all the routine niceties like “the article by which church stands or falls” and so forth, against people who opposed gay marriages. He called them “legalists,” implying that they were the ones who did not fully grasp the teaching on justification!

This is not to claim that the doctrine of justification has lost any of its significance or actuality. Whether or not the question “How can I find merciful God?” is still fashionable in the 21st century does not nullify the fact that now, just as 500 years ago, people are still sinners in need of forgiveness. This is an objective reality that we get to know through divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures, and it does not depend on it being a “felt need” or not. Modern commercials have excelled in making people believe they need some goods or services even if they are totally irrelevant. On the contrary, it is possible to abide in illusion in this life of being “content” and “healthy,” have one’s felt needs resolved and then still go to hell as “content” and “healthy.”

Articles 5, “On Ecclesiastical Ministry,” and Article 6, “On New Obedience,” are basically ramifications and implications of Article 4 and so must be interpreted through the lens of justification. Even the sentence structure used therein does not allow us to treat them independently: “So that we may obtain *this faith*, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted” (AC 5, 1), “*this faith is bound to yield good fruits*” (AC 6, 1).

Article 5 repudiates all modern popular trends that pretend to be able to grasp authentic divine things directly, immediately, in the realm of pure spirit. “Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to men without the external Word” — amazingly these words have not lost their significance over the course of centuries. All acclaimed positive and ecumenical thrust of the Augsburg Confession stops short of encompassing this immediate engagement with the Holy Spirit, the one that happens “without the external Word.”

Article 6 demonstrates intimate connection between faith and works as good fruits of the saving faith. In the matter of good works, Lutherans may not allow themselves to lose any ground. In a country where I come

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 18:20.

from, the popular propaganda of the predominant confession sometimes describes Lutherans as those who “do not want to do good works because they think they are saved through faith alone.” Thus, Dr. Alexey Osipov, professor of the Moscow Spiritual Academy of the Russian Orthodox Church, in his critical discussions of Lutheran soteriology, makes the observation that Lutherans are the ones who refuse to climb the ladder of spiritual ascent and instead want to get everything at once by getting in the spiritual elevator that immediately takes them to the top floor. How easy and convenient, sarcastically comments Osipov.<sup>8</sup>

It bears a very profound misunderstanding of key issues of soteriology. First of all, we don’t climb to heaven in this life. The apostle Paul may have been to the third heaven in his lifetime, but his would not be a typical experience. Rather, Christ has come down to earth and He brought heaven right here where He meets us on our level. Second, good works do matter. Using Osipov’s analogy, it is much more fruitful to quickly use the service of the elevator in order to further dedicate all efforts to the works of love and mercy done for other people rather than concentrate on personal spiritual climbing all the time. Fortunately, while dealing with people it is not very difficult to demonstrate that historically, Lutherans have been very active in doing good works. In fact, they were pioneers in the matter of opening public hospitals, shelters and schools in Russia and many other places. Doing good works is not optional. The works of mercy, both on the institutional and personal level, continue to be yet another important way of bringing the Reformation to the world.

### The place of salvation

The logic of the Augsburg Confession follows the traditional maxim of St Cyprian of Carthage: “Outside the church there is no salvation.”<sup>9</sup> The saving faith of Article 4 is delivered to people through the public ministry of Article 5, and that happens precisely in the Church as the locus of this activity of God. That said, in the Augsburg Confession, the Church is not viewed through the lens of the hierarchy of the bishop of Rome, but rather as the congregation of people who hear the Word and receive

the Sacraments: “The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly” (AC 7, 1).

This classical definition is met with approval in modernist Lutheran ecumenical circles, although it may get butchered, being effectively reduced to just an activity of preaching some type of Gospel and administering some kind of sacraments.<sup>10</sup> However, St. Paul markedly disagrees with this approach when he says, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”<sup>11</sup>

The Augsburg Confession further delineates the boundaries of the Church, or rather, the proper forms that the Church takes in Article 14 with its careful wording that “no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called.” The efficaciousness of the Sacraments, however, does not depend on the personal moral qualities of the priests, as Article 8 boldly proclaims to eliminate the Donatist option.

Another liberating assertion of Article 7 that was a breath of fresh air in time of the Reformation was its allowance for the usage of various ceremonies in the church. Numerous cultural changes that have taken place in the church since the Reformation with regard to the uniformity and multiplicity of the ceremonies, as well as the shifts within ceremonies themselves, would require a separate lecture to give them full credit.

One predominant secular idea that permeates the fabric of today’s politically correct thought is the implied equality of cultures. That rather naïve perception cannot be historically substantiated. Some cultures are outright evil and the world will only do better without them. Take, for example, the culture of women’s circumcision; how will modern Europe handle it when it is increasingly practiced in the cities by the people for whom it remains just a part of their culture? Hardly anybody would claim that the culture of the so called Islamic State, promoting torture, live executions of prisoners and human trade and slavery has the same validity as any other culture. And if it is too exotic for some of us, how about some of our own cultures that condemn unborn babies to die without giving them any chance to defend themselves?

G. K. Chesterton made the point that God destroyed

<sup>8</sup> «Проф. А.И. Осипов. «Лютеранство», Lecture course on “Western confessions” at the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy, 2005–2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ra4H2zT86eA>, accessed on Sept. 13, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter LXXII, Ad Jubajanum de haereticis baptizandis*.

<sup>10</sup> Institute for Ecumenical Research, *Lutheran Identity* (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research, 1977). Omission of words “purely” and “rightly” changes the whole meaning of definition of the church in AC 7.1.

<sup>11</sup> Gal. 1:8.

Phoenicians on purpose as an evil culture immersed in child-sacrifices: “For Carthage fell because she was faithful to her own philosophy and had followed out to its logical conclusion her own vision of the universe. Moloch had eaten his own children.”<sup>12</sup>

What will happen to the Church that succumbs to the culture? The answer is obvious. The language of different ceremonies in Article 7 was not meant to imply the cases of religious syncretism, doctrinal irresponsibility or liturgical absurdity.

People in today’s world are in search of tradition and beauty, which the Church can readily supply to them! Rather than trying to chase the culture train that moves with an ever-increasing speed, its fashion changing every year, the Church would do better to remember her heritage and adorn her worship with the ceremonies that are pious and readily understood by the people after succinct explanation. And, yes, particular features should not be the same everywhere, and they can’t be! What matters is that the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments stay in the center of what the Church is doing.

### The means of salvation

The Church is a place of salvation, and as such she a living organism, which lives and acts. The Church speaks through the mouth of her bishop or pastor who is called to do just that. The Church gives birth to her children and washes them in the unique washing that retains its everlasting, purifying character. It is to this washing that the Church returns her children when they become dirty and filthy. It is the selfsame water that cleanses every time, as it is purified by the blood of Christ. Finally, being a careful and nourishing mother, the Church feeds.

Unlike numerous subsequent textbooks,<sup>13</sup> the Augsburg Confession does not begin with a formal definition of the Sacrament. Instead are we simply presented

with what goes on in the Church according to dominical institution: Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, Confession. Attention is given to the individual Sacraments rather than to the general notion of the Sacraments. To be sure, Article 13 will pick up the topic of the relation of faith to the sacraments,<sup>14</sup> and in the Apology Melancthon further elaborates this theme in his discussion of the essence and number of sacraments, but all this is done in response to the Roman notion of *ex opere operato*, which the Lutheran party wholeheartedly rejected. That is, such rhetoric was caused by external factors. Rejection of *ex opere operato* did not imply rejection of the external forms; Holsten Fagerberg is undeniably correct in his claim that Lutherans also viewed the Sacraments as “the external means whereby God carries out His work of salvation”<sup>15</sup> and that the antithesis between the

Roman and the Lutheran parties is rather “based upon different opinions concerning grace and justification.”<sup>16</sup> Still, it is the positive teaching concerning the Sacraments as a description of those specific works of God in His beloved Church that occupies the main attention of the Augustana.

The question to ask is whether we correspond in our doctrine and practice to the high stan-

dard provided in the Augsburg Confession. Do we let the sacramental gifts stand in the center of our worship? How is it reflected in our preaching? What about private Confession and Absolution in our churches? And if (as is the usual case) few if any people come to the private Confession in our churches, do we preach about its value and do we encourage people to use this benefit of Christ for their good?

The centrality of the Sacraments in the life of the Church means that the Sacraments are not to be thought of as outward forms pointing to some higher ethereal realities or containers of some elevated spiritual philosophical truths that we are to attain along with participation in

Once the Church has returned to the purity of the Gospel as it was proclaimed in the Augsburg Confession, then the task becomes preserving this confession and not letting the Church fall away from it.

<sup>12</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks01/0100311.txt>, accessed on Sept. 15, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., in the classical “Christian Dogmatics” of F. Pieper, 117 pages are dedicated to the “Means of Grace” and 37 pages to “Holy Baptism.” This is just one example.

<sup>14</sup> “The sacraments are instituted ... also as signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us in order thereby to awaken and strengthen our faith. That is why they also require faith and are rightly used when received in faith for the strengthening of the faith,” CA 13.1-2, German version.

<sup>15</sup> Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confession 1529–1537*, 170.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

the sacramental acts.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, the Sacraments are vital precisely as they are. No Zwingli-like parallelism or dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual is appropriate when dealing with Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Confession and Absolution. Sacraments are of Christ; they proclaim Christ and they give Christ precisely through physical means.

As we partake of the Lord's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, our inner psychological feeling, that is, how we rationalize what is going on or how intensely we think of our "spirituality" at the moment is really of secondary nature. What is important is that Christ comes to us right there, that His body and blood are orally consumed by the partakers of the Sacrament. Stanley Hauerwas once observed that "one of the great enemies of the gospel is sentimentality,"<sup>18</sup> which is not meant to prohibit any feelings but rather indicate that must not be the basis of our doctrine. The Gospel is a concrete external reality, which is made available through those specific acts that Christ Himself has instituted.

And this is the objective message that we are to bring to the world: that salvation is *extra nos* (outside of us), that Baptism "is necessary for salvation," that "the grace of God is offered through baptism," that "the body and blood of Christ are truly present and are distributed to those who eat the Lord's Supper" and that the Holy Absolution is a great treasure that "should be retained in the churches."

There is a sense of irony in the fact that an article on Baptism, designed to be irenic in tone so as to not alienate the Roman party beyond measure, now stands in stark contrast to the current trends of contemporary popular evangelical culture. Yet bringing the Reformation to the world includes also subscription to and insistence upon the *damnant anabaptistas* statement. And even if we agree with concession of Wilhelm Maurer that the Augsburg Confession uses "guarded expressions" and "pastoral terms" such as *improbare* (disapprove), in 10.2 in relation to some parties of the time like the one of Zwinglians, nevertheless it unrestrainedly condemns Anabaptists as heretics.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, people who take the grace of God away from little children and do not allow them to become

Christians through being born again of water and the Spirit are in danger of denying the core of the Christian faith, replacing it instead with some rationalistic and moral system based on obedience to the rules and prescriptions of the outside authority.

### **The 21st-century world is global and so is the Augsburg Confession.**

The globalization that we increasingly experience in different spheres of modern life gives a new perspective to the words of St Paul: "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."<sup>20</sup> What goes on in one part of *una sancta*, is echoed in one way or another in the other parts of the Church.

And in this large and strange world there all kinds of mixed situations: large churches once healthy, with the Gospel now stifled, small and dying churches, which were not able to retain their young, quickly-growing churches, which may struggle to establish or preserve their confessional identity. One cannot claim that the situation is reversed compared to how it appeared 150 years ago, but on the whole the picture has become much more fuzzy. Some smaller or poorer churches can be helpful to the larger and wealthier churches in teaching them about the radicalism of Christian commitment. Some younger churches can call upon the older churches to come back to their roots from which they have long since departed. The churches of the ILC share one crucial feature in common: They all claim to adhere to the Lutheran Confessions as "a single, universally accepted, certain, and common form of doctrine ... from which and according to which, because it is drawn from the Word of God, all other writings are to be approved and accepted, judged and regulated" (FC SD, The Summary Formulation, 10). So let us learn from each other at this conference and at similar occasions where we get together.

As Lutherans we do not quite feel comfortable with the Reformed concept of *Ecclesia semper reformanda*. Large-scale reforms are needed when things have gone wrong. Once the Church has returned to the purity of the Gospel as it was proclaimed in the Augsburg Confession, then the task becomes preserving this confession and not letting the Church fall away from it. No change is required for the sake of change. The focus of the apostolic admonition is to confess the faith once for all delivered to the saints, that is, to preserve this faith in its integrity and pass it on.

Priorities that the Augsburg Confession regards

<sup>17</sup> For these emphases the author is indebted to the observation of Dr. Pavel Butakov, expressed at his presentation, "Problem of the universals in theological context," delivered at the Reformation Conference of Theological Seminary of SELC in Novosibirsk on Nov. 23–24, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press), 35.

<sup>19</sup> Wilhelm Maurer, trans. H. George Anderson, *Historical Commentary on the Augsburg Confession* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 50.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor. 12:26.

as central for the life of the Church remain the same. They never change: Christology, justification, church, Sacraments. When failing to reflect such priorities in our Christian communities, in our liturgy and our mission work, we also fail to bring the authentic Reformation experience to the world. Some Lutherans are convinced that for the Church to advance we must look for popular cultural trends, catch where the wind is blowing and be right there with the flow.

To be sure, some cultural changes are inescapable. In many countries, if today's preacher delivers sermon in the same style and with the same length as it were customary 150 years ago, today's younger generation would probably find it at least mildly bewildering. However, if we depend on surrounding culture to look for "trends" in order to move forward and if we overemphasize cultural relevance at the expense of things that are to retain their central character, then what would be the point of coming to church, just to find there all the same things that the world offers anyway in perhaps a better package?

The beauty of the Scriptures is that Christians can be recreated time and again from those divine words. The beauty of the Lutheran Confessions is that this correct doctrine may be resumed even in those places where it was once abandoned. The life of the Lutheran Church is in the Holy Scriptures as they are interpreted and explained by the Confessions. And so faith can be rekindled through the mouths of faithful ministers of the Gospel who do not fail to publicly teach and confess the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

The bishop of the church I represent, at the time of Soviet spiritual barrenness, traveled for thousands of miles to be catechized and baptized. If something like this could happen locally in a Communist environment, it can happen in other regions and other contexts as well. Well, who knows, maybe decades from now we will need to specify that it can happen even in the West, as strange as this sounds, with so many churches still worshipping, seminaries operating and books being published.

Fyodor Dostoevsky said prophetically over 140 years ago:

It very well may be that ... the purposes of all the modern guides of progressive thought are philanthropic and grand. But one thing seems certain to me: if these modern high-class teachers gain an opportunity to destroy the old society and build a new one, then it will result in such darkness, in such chaos, something so crude, blind, and inhuman,

that the whole building would fall down under the curses of humankind before it is completed. Once the human mind rejects Christ, it can reach astounding results. This is an axiom.<sup>21</sup>

No matter what happens, the Church will survive. The Holy Scripture will still be there. Our Lutheran Confessions will still be there. And at least two or three Christians will always stay here or there. That is the promise of Christ.

So, how does one bring the Reformation to the world? To the world, which is broken, our Christian message remains a message of hope, of the life to come, life that is revealed even now in the Church, through the preaching of the Gospel, through the life-giving cross. The modern world may have thought to overcome pain; nevertheless, the suffering in this life is inescapable, and so understanding of the purpose of suffering may by itself bring relief to the suffering individual, as Umberto Eco observed recently in his public lecture at the Science Academy of Palliative Medicine in Bologna.<sup>22</sup> Well, our Lutheran theology of the cross provides a way out for the secular mindset that desperately attempts to arrange autonomous life on this earth that would be free of pain and suffering.

The Early Church, which had known suffering, persecution, chaos and even betrayal and apostasy made much use of the ancient legend of the Phoenix as the symbol of resurrection.<sup>23</sup> Decay and decomposition of this world will surely be followed by regeneration. And this is also how we may think of the Church. She will survive all attacks from the inside and outside. The church buildings may lie in ruins or be converted to vegetable storage places, swimming pools, movie theaters or, to bring it to more contemporary scenario, mosques, but this is not the end. The end has already come on the cross, it has reached us in Baptism and this end for us at the same time has marked the new beginning that will remain ours in this life and in the life to come. And it is this end — and the new beginning that it presupposes — that we are to share with the world as we acquaint it with the Reformation.

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<sup>21</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Writer's Diary* 1873.

<sup>22</sup> Umberto Eco, *Riflessioni sul dolore* (Bologna: Asmera Edizioni, 2014), 40, 47.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Clement 25–26 contains the first Christian reference of this type (ca. 95 A.D.). Other writers including Tertullian, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Ambrose of Milan followed suit.

# CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL REPORT

by Hans-Jörg Voigt

## 1. What constitutes the International Lutheran Council?

Most honoured assembly, dear brothers and sisters! I am delighted to be allowed to be a guest here at Buenos Aires, and it is my pleasure to give this report to you. I want to embrace the opportunity to express my gratitude to our host, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, especially to President Nagel and Professor Pfaffenzeller and to all helpers. I also want to say a special thank you to Mrs. Catharine O’Neil and to our executive secretary the Rev. Dr. Albert Collver.

Since our last conference in Niagara Falls in 2012, the International Lutheran Council (ILC) turns either 20 or 50. Both are jubilees that will have to be celebrated belatedly. “In 1963 by a third meeting in Cambridge, England, where the name ‘International Lutheran Theological Conference’ was chosen for these informal international gatherings. The ILC as a council of church bodies officially came into existence in 1993 in Antigua, Guatemala with the adoption of a constitution by representatives from Lutheran church bodies from all six continents.” This would be a possible way to read an abstract of our history.

If we humbly agree to restrict ourselves on celebrating the 20th anniversary of the ILC, 1993–2013, we shall still have ample reason to thank our Lord and Savior for His protection and His guidance.

The International Lutheran Council holds the Holy Scripture to be God’s infallible Word and the center of all cooperation. Our constitution formulates: “The International Lutheran Council (ILC) is a worldwide association of established confessional Lutheran church bodies which proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of an unconditional commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the inspired and infallible Word of God and

to the Lutheran Confessions contained in the *Book of Concord* as the true and faithful exposition of the Word of God.”

“Unconditional commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the inspired and infallible Word of God” — thus, commonly we describe the authority of the Holy Scripture and its high significance for our member churches. In Western societies — and, as far as I perceive, more and more in the Eastern and Southern Hemispheres too — authority is less and less conclusively justified by itself. The challenge to our churches and to the ILC as a whole

will more and more be to substantiate why, to us, the Holy Scripture is an infallible authority.

First and foremost we have to quote the Holy Scripture’s own testimony: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”<sup>1</sup>

The apostle Paul, too, knows about this authority, founded on the

Holy Ghost, when he says: “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup> A bishop of one of the German *Landeskirchen* said concerning this problem: “A biblical text is not automatically relevant to a congregation, just because it is from the Bible.”<sup>3</sup>

As ILC churches, such words make us stand up and defiantly cry, “But it is.” It is my strong personal conviction that biblical texts are relevant especially because they are written in the Bible. But if we are honest, we will have

The challenge to our churches and to the ILC as a whole will more and more be to substantiate why, to us, the Holy Scripture is an infallible authority.

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, 2 Tim. 3:16.

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, 2 Pet. 1:21.

<sup>3</sup> Landesbischof Dr. Ralf Meister in einer Vortrag 2014 vor der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Missionarischer Dienste (AMD).

to admit that we do have to use modern ways of justification in quite a few of our congregations. In other words, the people of our time who are quick to question authorities — that of a physician just as easily as that of a lawyer — more than ever need the theological justification, the theological substantiation, as to why the Holy Scripture is the authority.

It is not enough to claim this authority, it needs to be constituted and justified. This has to be done from the Holy Scripture itself and is only possible through the faith generating power of the Holy Ghost.

Where the Holy Scripture, as the “vehicle” of the Holy Ghost, no longer is a self-substantiating and self-interpreting authority, the Confessions of the Lutheran Church necessarily lose part of their importance as means to interpret the Holy Scripture.

This is why I see the churches of the International Lutheran Council, according to the constitution of the ILC, as churches of the authority of the Holy Scripture and as churches of the unrestricted validity of the Lutheran Confessions.

## 2. Where we are going

Allow me to remind us again about the tasks of the ILC, quoting our constitution:

“The International Lutheran Council is an organization of its member church bodies which enables them, through their authorized representatives, to share information, study theological questions and concerns together, issue statements when asked to do so by its members (e.g., in addressing contemporary questions facing the church), discuss effective and coordinated means of carrying out the mission and ministry of the church, nurture and strengthen their relationships with each other, and work toward the closest possible joint expression of their faith and confession.”

This conference is going to give us the necessary freedom to do so and I am looking forward to the different papers and Bible studies every bit as much I am looking forward to the different encounters and talks in our business meetings and during the breaks. And to no lesser extent it is important that we bishops and presidents serve as multipliers to our churches; the catholicity of

the Church includes its teaching, but also its worldwide prevalence.

The “statement of purpose” reads: “to foster, strengthen, and preserve confessional agreement which manifests itself at the altar and in the pulpit.” The great challenge remains, to develop and evolve the pulpit and altar community of our member churches.

From May 22–25, 2014, the European Lutheran Conference (ELC) is meeting in Bleckmar, Germany, for its 23rd conference. The conference follows on the heels of the International Lutheran Council’s (ILC) European world region conference, also held in Bleckmar, on May 21. Under the headline “Living in an Ecumenical World,” the conference discussed the ecumenical challenges of our days.

We finalized a paper with following conclusion: “His church is one. We also live as pilgrims in a fractured church where the confession of God’s Word is significantly different and at a time when our society increasingly marginalizes us. Our understanding of Church means that we will be scrupulous about the truth of God’s Word (what it says and doesn’t say) and aware of our own history as church bodies. Confident of our confession we are confident in our mission — not arrogantly but always in love — and eager to maintain the

unity in the bond of peace (EPHESIANS 4:3).”

It is my opinion that, on a global level, the ILC will have to deal more and more intensively with the question of ecumenical relations. It is not enough to have a hidden agenda: “No women’s ordination and no same-sex relationships.” We do stand by this agenda, but the theological issues we are going to tackle during this conference are, by far, more important.

## 3. Events and developments since the last ILC conference in Canada (2012)

➤ **ILC welcomes new editor** — The ILC has announced that Mathew Block will serve as the editor of its news service going forward. Mathew Block is currently communications manager for The Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) and editor of *The Canadian Lutheran* magazine, positions he will continue to hold in addition to his new

Representatives  
from 41 countries  
representing 23 million  
Lutherans worldwide  
converged at the  
very cradle of the  
Reformation not long  
before 2017, when  
Lutherans will celebrate  
the Reformation’s 500th  
anniversary.

duties as ILC editor. He comments, “It’s a great pleasure to begin serving world Lutherans in this capacity.”

➤ **Vatican City** — In November 2013, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the ILC, an organization for the purpose of encouraging, strengthening, and promoting confessional Lutheran theology, met to discuss the possibility of extending local and regional informal discussions into an informal ecumenical dialogue process on the international level. The meeting between the PCPCU and the ILC primarily occurred after several informal discussions between some ILC members and Roman Catholic organizations resulted in positive outcomes, especially those held between the Lutheran Theological Seminary Oberursel of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) and the Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute for Ecumenism in Paderborn, Germany. Other informal discussions that contributed to the meeting between the PCPCU and the ILC included those held between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Archdiocese of Saint Louis and the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, and those between Lutheran Church Canada (LCC) and representatives of the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops.

After a productive discussion, it was proposed that the local and regional informal discussions may be extended to an informal international dialogue process between the ILC and the Roman Catholic Church. These international series of consultations would be delegated to the ILC executive committee and to the Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute for Ecumenism. The goals of these discussions would be to define more unity between the churches represented by the ILC and the Roman Catholic Church and to offer a deeper understanding of the work already accomplished by the Lutheran — Roman Catholic dialogue on the international and regional level. A first meeting is scheduled for Oct. 7, 2015.

Cardinal Koch and Bishop Voigt expressed gratitude for the meeting and looked forward to a deepening of relationships between member churches of the ILC and the Roman Catholic Church.

➤ **Philippines** — On Nov. 8, 2013, a devastating typhoon rocked the Philippines. Destruction was widespread throughout the country. More than 6,000 people were

killed and 4 million people were displaced. Members of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP) did not escape unscathed. Three LCP churches were severely damaged — “one totally flattened,” noted the LCP’s President James Cerdeñola at the time — and countless people were left homeless, both members of the church and their neighbors.

➤ **Brazil** — The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (Igreja Evangelica Luterana do Brasil — IELB) celebrated its 110th anniversary as a church in Brazil at its national convention, May 1–4, 2014.

➤ Representatives of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), and the LCC met at the LCC’s synod headquarters in Winnipeg, June 24–25, 2014. This is the first time the meetings have taken place in Canada.

➤ Following an invitation from the Bishops’ Conferences of the Mission Provinces of Sweden, Finland and Norway, I visited Helsinki in September 2014 as chairman of

the ILC and as presiding bishop of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany.

➤ A new protocol agreement signed in September by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cambodia (ELCC), the LCC and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will guide the next three years of confessional Lutheran mission and ministry in Cambodia. President Vannarith Chhim of the ELCC hailed the agreement, calling it a “great blessing” for his “small church from a small country” to partner with the LCMS and LCC in ministry. In particular, he stressed the Cambodian church’s thanks for the aid North American Lutherans will continue to offer in theological training. Despite having 32 congregations and approximately 3,000 members, the ELCC has only six ordained pastors.

➤ **The Evangelical Lutheran Church — Synod of France (ELCSF)** held its synod Nov. 9–11, 2014, in Schillersdorf, Alsace, in France. The convention opened the morning of Sunday, Nov. 9, and the French church officially established altar and pulpit fellowship with a group of confessional Lutherans in Switzerland.

➤ **Representatives and leaders from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) and The**

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big challenge.

**Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod met Nov. 10–13, 2014**, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the Mekane Yesus Seminary, the EECMY headquarters and the Gudina Tumsa Wholistic Training Center to discuss the relationship between the two church bodies, revise an extended working agreement and make plans to strengthen theological education within the Mekane Yesus Church by creating a relationship between the church bodies' seminaries.

► On Jan. 14, 2015, **representatives of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) met with representatives of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Geneva** for regular meetings.

As is customary with these meetings, the ILC and LWF took time to highlight important work taking place in each of their organizations. How each intends to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was a key topic for discussion, given that the anniversary will take place in 2017. The ILC noted its appreciation for the document *From Conflict to Communion* (prepared by the LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), indicating that the ILC intends to engage in further study of the document.

The meeting also addressed areas that continue to be challenges between the two groups. In particular, differing understandings of the theology of mission and disagreements over the concept of the unity of the church were frankly addressed, with plans to follow up on these topics in the future.

Representing the ILC were Chairman Hans-Jörg Voigt, bishop of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany); ILC Secretary Rev. Dr. Albert Collver; ILC Representative for Africa Archbishop Christian Ekong of Nigeria; and ILC Secretary Gijsbertus van Hattem, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belgium. Representing the LWF were General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations/Director for the Department for Theology and Public Witness Rev. Dr. Kaisamari Hintikka, Director for the Department for Mission and Development Dr. Carlos Gilberto Bock and Area Secretary for Africa Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure.

The LWF and ILC signed a memorandum of understanding in 2005 that has led to regular meetings between the two bodies since then. This was the fourth regular meeting since 2011. The ILC and LWF agreed at their most recent meeting to continue holding annual meetings

in the future. The next meeting will be hosted by the ILC and will be held Feb. 25–26, 2016.

► **The executive committee of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) met Jan. 15–16, 2015**, at the St. Cuthman's Retreat Centre in Coolham, West Sussex, just south of London, England. The Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast, president of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind., facilitated intensive planning sessions for the executive committee as they strategized for the future and analyzed both strengths and weaknesses of the Council's existing form and function.

► **Mozambique** — Mozambican Lutherans celebrated a major milestone on Aug. 9, 2015, as Concordia Lutheran Church—Mozambique celebrated its first graduating class of eight pastors. The event drew significant local and national attention; more than a thousand people gathered in the Vila de Sena for the ordinations, including local dignitaries, and national television gave ten minutes of coverage to the event.

► **Wittenberg, Germany** — On May 3, we celebrated the dedication of the Old Latin School in Wittenberg. Confessional Lutheran church leaders from every continent except Antarctica attend this marvelous event, which was led by President Harrison.

► **Confessional Lutheran church leaders** discussed burgeoning churches in the global South and East as well as challenges in the West, during the International Conference on Confessional Leadership in the 21st Century here May 6–7.

Representatives from 41 countries representing 23 million Lutherans worldwide converged at the very cradle of the Reformation not long before 2017, when Lutherans will celebrate the Reformation's 500th anniversary. Under the theme "Celebrating the Reformation Rightly: Remembrance, Repentance, Rejoicing," discussions ranged from the challenges of spreading the Gospel in Western countries to its rapid growth in places like Africa, South America, the Far East and many others.

#### 4. Challenges

Finally, I want to elaborate on the special challenges we have to face:

► Especially in Western societies, the number of people who confess their belief in Jesus Christ is drastically decreasing. To proclaim the Gospel of God's love into this time has to be our foremost task and duty. We may not remit.

- 
- ▶ The worldwide persecution of Christians is increasing. A free from fear, substantial and — if need be controversial — dealing and arguing with Islam is and will be important to many of our member churches.
  - ▶ A high degree of ability to differentiate, in order to distinguish appropriately between peaceful Islam and radical Islam, is called for. Here, especially, it will be necessary to proclaim the accomplishments of Christianity, for example, the diaconal culture and the doctrine of the two kingdoms anew and stress their importance.
  - ▶ Global refugee streams have to be mastered. We, in Europe, are right now confronted with a big challenge. The fact that we as ILC are reacting to worldwide catastrophes is part of our challenges.
  - ▶ Dr. Collver, the executive secretary, will inform you about the ILC executive committee's strategic planning.

May God endow us with His love, clarity of thought and His wisdom.

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*The Rev. Hans-Jörg Voigt is bishop of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany and chairman of the International Lutheran Council.*

## STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL ON THE DOCUMENT

# “FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION:” LUTHERAN—CATHOLIC COMMON COMMEMORATION OF THE REFORMATION 2017

**I**N PREPARATION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE REFORMATION IN 2017, the Lutheran — Roman Catholic Commission on Unity has elaborated the document “From Conflict to Communion” on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). The International Lutheran Council (ILC), in contact with the LWF through annual meetings of their executive committees and in consultation with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) by an informal dialogue of three years duration, on the occasion of its conference taking place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Sept. 24–27, 2015, has commented on this document as follows:

### 1. Basic assumptions

- We acknowledge that in the face of the divisions within Christianity and in the light of the Lord’s declared intention “that they may all be one” (John 17:21), there is no alternative to sound and solid theological endeavors, based on the authoritative function of Holy Scripture for all the Church’s doctrine and life, to overcome those disruptions.
- We embrace the historical research exerted concerning the 16th-century schism within Western Christianity (35–90). We approve the result that, due to contributions of medieval scholarship and Roman Catholic Luther studies, many traditional prejudices on both sides could be dispelled.
- We appreciate the position that the RCC wants the history and the legacy of the split of Western Christianity to

be “viewed through the lens of the actions of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965)” (90).

### 2. Particular observations

- We observe that the theological scholarship is focused on the theology of Martin Luther (chapter IV).
- We acknowledge that the issues of “justification, eucharist, ministry, and Scripture and tradition” are indeed areas of eminent importance in the realm of Luther’s theology.
- Nevertheless, we wish to indicate that the Lutheran churches are less obligated to Martin Luther’s theology as such, than they are bound to the doctrinal decisions taken in the Book of Concord.

#### 2.1 JUSTIFICATION

- For the major part, we agree with the predications on “Luther’s understanding of justification (102–118), particularly on the “Word of God as promise” (103–106), on the “*extra nos*” of salvation in Christ (107, 108) and on the forensic character of justification (115).
- We wish to point out, however, that righteousness attributed to the sinner for Christ’s sake, must be understood forensically, (i.e., as God’s judgement, which does not change even the believer ontologically) (108). We wish to emphasize, in addition, that within the undeniable connection between “becoming righteous and being renewed” (113), the renewal of Christian life has to be considered strictly as a consequence to justification.
- In the conversations on justification that led to the Joint

We acknowledge that the issues of “justification, eucharist, ministry, and Scripture and tradition” are indeed areas of eminent importance in the realm of Luther’s theology.

Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) of Oct. 31, 1999, signed by the LWF and the RCC, we see an important element in the bilateral relations between Lutherans and Catholics (122–139). Statements have already been issued from the ranks of the ILC member churches. (The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective*, St. Louis, MO, 1999; Werner Klän: Einig in der Rechtfertigungslehre? Anfragen an die „Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre“ aus konkordienlutherischer Sicht, in: Uwe Swarat, Johannes Oeldemann, Dagmar Heller [Hg.]: Von Gott angenommen — in Christus verwandelt. Die Rechtfertigungslehre im multilateralen ökumenischen Dialog, Frankfurt /M., 2006, 95–124).

– We cannot, however, assent to the result that JDDJ has reached a “consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification,” although we recognize valuable rapprochements between the two parties involved.

– Major reasons for this evaluation from a confessional Lutheran perspective are these: The topic of Law and Gospel is not represented in JDDJ. On the other hand, Lutheran positions in the doctrine of justification are sketched within the framework of the process-related and personal scheme of the Christian walk of life as formulated in the decisions of Council of Trent.

– The eschatological dimension of justification is obviously underexposed; God’s twofold action in Law and Gospel does not aim, in the first place, at the empowerment of the sinner to act responsibly, rather it confirms the sinner’s salvation from the Last Judgment here and now and grants to him participation in the resurrection of the dead.

## 2.2 EUCHARIST

– We endorse the expositions of “Luther’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper” (141–148), particularly in terms of accentuating the real presence of Christ’s body and blood “in, with and under” the elements of bread and wine and of underscoring the *unio sacramentalis* along the lines of the *unio personalis* in the person of Christ (143), as well as the description of Luther’s position in criticizing the sacrifice of the Mass (146–148).

– We regret, however, that the chapters, “Catholic concerns regarding the eucharist” (149–152) and “Common understanding of the real presence of Christ” (154–156),

do not speak about the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in a more precise manner but are content with expressions of personal presence. Here Lutherans and Catholics ought to have much more in common and may easily express convergence, e.g., along the lines of the Formula of Concord (Ep VII, 6): “We believe, teach, and confess that in the Holy Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, truly distributed and received with the bread and wine. / *Credimus, docemus et confitemur, quod in Coena Domini corpus et sanguis Christi vere et substantialiter sint praesentia et quod una cum pane et vino distribuantur atque sumantur.*”

– We consider it approvable that in the celebration of the Eucharist according to Christ’s institution, the Lord’s self-sacrifice is rendered effective. We may even agree that in such a celebration according to Christ’s institution the once-for-all (*eph hapax*) event of the Crucifixion is present “in a sacramental modality” (159).

– We object, however, that in any case the crucified and risen Lord is and remains exclusively the only subject of this representation, performing it by His Word.

– We support the position “that the celebration of the Eucharist involves the leadership of a minister appointed by the church” (161).

– We thereby adhere to the position that such an appointment is conferred by ordination including a lifelong obligation and reemphasize that a mere commission on behalf of the Church is not sufficient (cf. 181).

## 2.3 MINISTRY

– We regard the chapter, “Luther’s understanding of the common priesthood of the baptized and ordained office” (162–172), to be delineated in widely appropriate fashion. In this realm we count the differentiation between “priest” and “pastor” (163), the accentuation of the Office of the Ministry as being related to the service towards the whole Church (165), the divine institution of the ordained ministry (166), God’s activity in bringing a person into the Office of the Ministry (168), the openness to claim a sacramental dimension in the Office of the Ministry (169) and the oneness of the ordained ministry (172).

– We acknowledge the valuation attributed to the Church as God’s people by the Second Vatican Council and see ourselves in the position of comprehending the convergences between Lutherans and Catholics resulting from this perception of the office of the ministry.

- We consider the remaining “Differences in understanding the ministry” to be depicted correctly.
- At the same time, we regret that the verdict made by the Second Vatican Council that the Lutheran churches are subject to “*defectus sacramenti ordinis*” could not be overcome by now.

## 2.4 SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

- We approve the exposure of “Luther’s understanding of Scripture, its interpretation, and human traditions” (195–200).
- We deny, however, that Holy Scripture be just “the witness to God’s revelation” (198). Rather it is in itself, being God’s Word, God’s revelation, albeit in human words.
- We share the opinion that the “*sola scriptura*” principle does not invalidate the binding character of the ancient Church’s creeds and dogmas, nor of the Lutheran Confessions as laid down in the Book of Concord (1580/1584). In this regard, the Lutheran Church may also accept some kind of a “structure of norms.”

We affirm that especially confessional Lutherans are obligated to cooperate in overcoming the divisions within Christianity in the spirit of biblical truth and Christian love.

- We maintain, nevertheless, the Holy Scripture is “the only rule and guiding principle according to which all teachings and teachers are to be evaluated and judged” (FC, Ep, Summary 1). The Confessions, as adopted by the Church, thus do hold derivative authority but do so because (*quia*) they align with the Scriptures. In this respect, the Confessions may be regarded as “legitimate tradition” in the Lutheran Church.
- Explicitly we endorse the affirmation made by the Second Vatican Council, “that the teaching office of the church is not above the Word of God but stands at its service” (203).
- We question, however, whether or not the structure of decision-making in the Roman Catholic Church does sufficiently protect and preserve the prevalence of Holy Scripture as ultimate standard, even over against the Church (201–207).
- That is why we ask whether or not “an extensive agreement” can be maintained in this issue between Lutherans and Catholics (209–210)

## 2.5 THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH

- We consent to the proposition that between Lutherans and Catholics, major differences still exist regarding ecclesiology and the theology of the ministry; therefore we see an urgent demand for dialogue (218).

## 3. Consequences

With regard to our ecumenical partners on the world level we assert:

- In Holy Baptism, we acknowledge the Sacrament of Christian unity (cf. 219–222)
- We consider it a valuable fact that Lutheran and Catholics regard it necessary to come to terms with the history of their division; in the same way, we appreciate that at the beginning of the 21st century the commemoration of the Reformation is realized in ecumenical responsibility (223–224).
- We affirm that especially confessional Lutherans are obligated to cooperate in overcoming the divisions within Christianity in the spirit of biblical truth and Christian love (225–227).

- It is only with sorrow that — in addition to competing for the biblical truth of the Gospel — we see multiple non-theological factors to have contributed to separations among Christians. We confess that on the side of the Lutheran Reformation unjustified judgements were rendered as well (233).
- We are well aware that particularly in those parts of the world where Christians form a minority only, a witness of Christian churches, as common as possible, is required.

Therefore, we ask the ILC executive committee:

- to yield this statement on “From Conflict to Communion” into the ongoing consultations with the LWF executive committee,
- to search for ways of applying apt measures to the treatment of issues still under dispute between the ILC and the LWF and
- to authorize the ILC representatives in the informal dialogue with the PCPCU to introduce this statement into the upcoming conversations.

# SERMON ON ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

SEPT. 24, 2015

by Albert B. Collver III

*“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*  
(LUKE 10:20)

THE READINGS APPOINTED FOR THIS EVENING, for St. Michael and All Angels, are written to give us certainty in an uncertain world. The readings appointed for today, especially the Gospel reading, give us certainty about our future. In the readings, we are told that Satan and his evil angels will be defeated. The Lord, through His servant Michael and his angels, will defeat Satan and his cohorts. Victory is certain. The Lord’s enemies will be defeated. When we look around the world today and see war, poverty, suffering, disease and death, sometimes it doesn’t seem as if the Lord has obtained victory. If the Lord has won the war, why are there so many hardships and problems in our world? Yet even though there are times when our security in this life seems uncertain, rest assured that your Lord has obtained victory over His enemies. Satan is defeated. Your future is certain with the Lord.

Today many people deny that Satan and evil spirits exist. In Africa it is a little different. Once on a trip to Africa, a group of us were driving to church on Sunday morning with the bishop. Suddenly, the tire on the vehicle went flat. The bishop got out of the van and said, “The devil is trying to thwart our celebration of the holy day.” I got out of the car and looked and thought to myself, “No, a nail in the tire is trying to ruin the holy day.” Yet you see, the bishop was exactly correct. The devil desires nothing more than for us to curse or swear falsely in God’s name. He desires nothing more than to cause us to forget to thank and praise God in worship. In Africa, the Christians can more readily see the working of the evil one, while in the West we would tend to regard the

perspective of the bishop who saw the devil’s activity in the flat tire as superstitious.

On the other hand, angels and all things about them tend to be pretty popular. Most Westerners do not need to be convinced that angels exist. Unfortunately, many ideas about angels do not agree with the Scriptures. The

readings for today speak clearly on the existence of Satan and his evil hosts. They also speak about the role of angels. Angels are the Lord’s messengers who proclaim His Word. No angel would ever speak anything contrary to Holy Scripture. The angels, in fact, fight Satan with the Lord’s Word. When Satan was cast down out of heaven, the text from Revelation says, “They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their

Live daily in your  
Baptism; live daily in the  
forgiveness of sins. Do  
not live as if you were not  
baptized, for your Lord  
bought you with a price.  
In your Baptism, your Lord  
Jesus gave you a certain  
thing. He wrote your name  
in heaven.

testimony” (Rev. 12:11). Satan and his evil angels are defeated not with the sword or battle tactics as we understand war strategy, but they are defeated by the blood of Jesus and His Word. The angels of God didn’t defeat Satan because of their own might, their power or their greater numbers. They didn’t defeat Satan because of their better war tactics. You see, the angels of God are merely the instruments He used to defeat Satan; the angels proclaimed Christ’s Word and Satan was defeated.

Satan is still defeated today by the Word of God just as St. Michael and his angels defeated him with the Lord’s Word. Every time the Lord’s Word is preached in truth and purity Satan is defeated. Satan is the accuser who speaks against us. The Lord’s Word silences his mouth and casts him from heaven so he can no longer accuse you before the Lord’s throne. In the Gospel lesson, Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Jesus said this in response to the preaching of the

72 disciples. These 72 disciples were sent out by Jesus to proclaim the arrival of the kingdom of God in His name. Demons were cast out in Christ's name. Satan's kingdom was literally being torn apart by the preaching of Christ.

Jesus also told His disciples that they would have authority over all the power of the enemy. This power Jesus speaks of is His Word that conquerors Satan. His disciples would tread over snakes and scorpions. Yet we do not hear in the Gospels that the disciples trampled over snakes and scorpions. In the Book of Acts, we do hear how St. Paul was bitten by a poisonous viper and lived. Jesus wasn't only talking about the snakes and scorpions that wander the earth. His word to trample over snakes and scorpions isn't a license to tempt God. We shouldn't bring a bunch of poisonous snakes into church to test whether or not the members have enough faith not to get bitten or enough faith to survive a deadly bite. When Jesus told His disciples they had authority over snakes and scorpions, He was telling them that they had authority over Satan and his demons because of His name. Just as our Lord Jesus had authority over the snake, Satan, the Great Dragon, Jesus, protects us from the snake. He can no longer hurt us. When the serpent led our parents Adam and Eve into sin, the Lord God promised a deliverer. He promised that one would come who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, Satan was defeated. Jesus' death crushed the head of the serpent; Satan's power over us was destroyed. Jesus' blood shed on the cross defeated Satan.

The most comforting words Jesus speaks to us are recorded in the Gospel lesson for today: "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). This is a sure thing; it is something you can count on no matter what life throws your way. Your Lord Jesus guarantees and secures that your name is written in heaven. Your future is certain, for your Lord has told you that your name is written in heaven. This word from your Lord silences Satan's lying accusations. When Satan harasses you, introducing doubt into your mind, remember the promise your Lord made to you: "Your name is written in heaven." Your Lord's Word will drive Satan away. Believe and trust in your Lord's promise that your name is written in heaven; this gives you the hope to endure whatever insecurities

and troubles you face in this life. While your temporal life on earth may be uncertain at times, your eternal life in heaven has been secured for you. It is a sure thing.

How can you be certain that your name is written in heaven? Quite simply, because Jesus has told you so. Jesus told you that your name was written in heaven when you were baptized. Everyone who believes and is baptized shall be saved, and Baptism now saves you. In your Baptism, Christ Himself baptized you through the instrumentality of His called servant. There Christ washed away your sins. There He put His name upon you; there the sign of the cross was placed upon your head and upon your heart, for you were baptized into His cross. At your Baptism, Christ became your brother. He shares in your sufferings and you share in His glory. The suffering, insecurities and troubles we face in this life pale in comparison to the glory Christ will share with us. At your Baptism, Christ Himself wrote your name in heaven.

Each and every day remember your Baptism; remember what Christ has done for you. When you witness a Baptism into the name of the Holy Trinity, rejoice that another name has been added to the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice that your Lord has done this for you out of his great mercy. Cling to your Lord's promises, "But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1). Because your name is written in heaven, your Lord will deliver you from this vale of tears to "shine like the brightness of the sky above... like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

Live daily in your Baptism; live daily in the forgiveness of sins. Do not live as if you were not baptized, for your Lord bought you with a price. In your Baptism, your Lord Jesus gave you a certain thing. He wrote your name in heaven. May your Lord's promise to you give you hope and comfort in the midst of life's uncertainties. In your Lord's name your future is certain; the enemy has been defeated.

Go in peace. Amen.

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*The Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III is LCMS director of Church Relations and assistant to LCMS President Matthew C. Harrison.*

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As soon as we abandon the Lutheran Confessions as our sure boat to navigate Scriptures, we cannot avoid being carried about by every wind of doctrine that may blow.

# OUR CONFESSION IN AUGUSTANA IV–VI

by Sergio Adrián Fritzler

*Editor’s note: This paper is written by a member of an LCMS partner church. His views may not necessarily reflect those of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.*

## Introduction

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you (1 COR. 16:23).”  
Amen.*

I’m grateful for the invitation to lecture on this central topic of the Christian faith and on the current challenges for the Lutheran Church around the globe.

I will pursue a double objective: (1) to reaffirm what “we believe, teach, and confess” as confessional Lutheran leaders, gathered by means of the International Lutheran Council (ILC); and (2) to reflect upon certain current concepts and practices in our churches that are related to the proposed articles.

It is assumed that the church leaders here present are pastors who have subscribed to the Book of Concord of 1580 unconditionally, as the “faithful exposition of the Word of God and a right articulation of the doctrine of the Lutheran Church” (i.e., a *quia* subscription),<sup>1</sup> as our lens for approaching and understanding the Word of God. However, to be honest, today we have a difficult time accepting that we should have a rule or norm (*regula fidei*) for reading Scriptures (*norma normans*), since there are many who like to establish on their own what is good and acceptable for their ears, there are many who like to participate, that is to say, to be themselves the subjects of the interpretation of the Bible, whereas this *norma normata* proposes a different kind of approach (i.e., to be the object of that interpretation) that is not quite acceptable for the man today. This becomes evident in every aspect of the life of the Church: her liturgy, her ways of making

Justification is the center of all the other biblical doctrines.

decisions, her understanding of the mission, including also her position regarding the office of the ministry.

As soon as we abandon the Lutheran Confessions as our sure boat to navigate Scriptures, we cannot avoid being carried about by every wind of doctrine that may blow as a sign of the times, so that, in a slow and unnoticed way, we end up distancing ourselves from the Scriptures, while inventing new reinterpretations of the universal, Christian doctrines and practices. An example of this is the enthusiastic proposal of *Ablaze!* that was suggested to the confessional Lutheran churches around the world as a way

of focusing on mission. *Ablaze!* challenged the churches to search for new strategies and to think the “outside”<sup>2</sup> of the Church (deprived of the Means of Grace). Thus, a new ecclesiology and a new understanding of the ministry of the proclamation was being proposed, one that defined the “within” from the perspective of the “outside.” This example exposes the Church as accepting and subscribing to the Confessions quatenus.

Ascribing the *Confessio Augustana* its proper place as *regula fidei* (what implies a *quia* subscription), the confessors write:

Once again we wholeheartedly confess our adherence to this same Christian Augsburg Confession, solidly based as it is in God’s Word, and we remain faithful to its simple, clear, unequivocal meaning, which its words intend. We regard this confession as a pure, Christian creed, which (after the Word of God) should guide true Christians in this time, just as in earlier times Christian creeds and confessions were formulated in God’s church when major controversies broke out. To these documents the faithful teachers and their hearers confessed their

<sup>1</sup> The *Ritual Cristiano* used in Latin America adds: “Will you preach and teach the Word of God in accordance with the Confessions of the Lutheran Church?” (128).

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that many churches accepted *Ablaze!* because of LCMS World Mission’s financial support depended on its acceptance. As the saying goes, “The one that pays, the one that mandates.”

adherence at those times with heart and mouth. By the grace of the Almighty **we, too, are resolved to abide faithfully until our end in this oft-cited Christian confession**, as it was delivered to Emperor Charles in 1530. **We do not intend to deviate in the least from this Confession either in this document or in any other, nor do we intend to submit any other, new confession** (SD, *Definitive Repetition and Explanation*, 4–5, emphasis added).

Justification takes place apart from the law, genuinely by grace, for the sake of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, through faith.

analysis (AC IV–VI) form a unity under the concept of faith (faith as imputed righteousness): “We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ’s sake through faith” (AC IV), the way the justifying faith is obtained: “the Office of Preaching” (AC V) and what justifying faith produces: “good fruits and good works” (AC VI).

**Faith as imputed righteousness (AC IV)**

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (EPH. 2:8).

The three articles that were proposed for our

IV. Concerning Justification	Artikel 4. Von der Rechtfertigung	Art. IV. De Iustificazione
<p>Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ’s sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3 and 4.</p>	<p>Weiter wird gelehrt, daß wir Vergebung der Sünden und Gerechtigkeit vor Gott nicht erlangen mögen durch unser Verdienst, Werk und Genugtun, sondern daß wir Vergebung der Sünden bekommen und vor Gott gerecht werden aus Gnaden um Christus willen durch den Glauben, so wir glauben, daß Christus für uns gelitten hat, und daß uns um seinetwillen die Sünden vergeben, Gerechtigkeit und ewiges Leben geschenkt wird. Denn diesen Glauben will Gott für Gerechtigkeit vor ihm halten und zurechnen, wie St. Paulus sagt zu den Römern im 3. und 4. Kapitel.</p>	<p>Item docent, quod homines non possint iustificari coram Deo propriis viribus, meritis aut operibus, sed gratis iustificentur propter Christum per fidem, quum credunt se in gratiam recipi et peccata remitti propter Christum, qui sua morte pro nostris peccatis satisfacit. Hanc fidem imputat Deus pro iustitia coram ipso, Rom. 3 et 4.</p>

This is the central article of the Christian faith (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*), this is the doctrine of the Gospel itself. Justification is the center of all the other biblical doctrines, for it is the great principal star that, just as with the sun, all the other articles round about it are in a vital dependence of its warmth. Luther affirms:

This doctrine is the head and cornerstone. She only engenders, nurtures, builds, preserves, and defends God’s church; and apart from her God’s church cannot exist for one hour ... For no one that may not adhere to this article — or, to use Paul’s expression,

this “healthy doctrine” (TIT. 2:1) — is able to rightly teach in the church, or to successfully resist the adversary ... This is the heel of the offspring that opposes and bruise his head. At the same time, for this reason Satan cannot do anything else than to persecute her.<sup>3</sup>

Justification takes place apart from the law, genuinely by grace, for the sake of the redemption that is in Christ

<sup>3</sup> Ewald Plass, ed., *What Luther Says: An Active In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 2195.

Jesus, through faith.

The Scripture's language for redemption is justification: "'Justify' is used **in a judicial way** to mean 'to absolve a guilty man and pronounce him righteous,' and to do so on account of **someone else's righteousness, namely, Christ's**, which is communicated to us through faith" (Ap IV, 305, emphasis added). Just as Paul affirms: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 COR. 5:21).

Justification is through faith, faith as a divine gift and not a human work, that appropriates Christ's gifts:

Because the righteousness of Christ is given to us through faith, therefore **faith is righteousness** in us by imputation. That is, by it we are made acceptable to God because of God's imputation and ordinances, as Paul says (ROM. 4:5), "Faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Ap IV, 307, emphasis added).

For faith does not make people righteous because it is such a good work or such a fine virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy gospel. For this merit must be applied to us and appropriated through faith if we are to become righteous through it. Thus, the righteousness that out of sheer grace **is reckoned before God to faith** or to the believer **consists of the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ** because he has satisfied the law for us and paid for our sins (SD III, 13–14, emphasis added).

There is nothing that man is or performs that can contribute, not even in the least sense, to his salvation before God (*coram deo*), just as the article says: "We cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions." It is God who imputes Christ's work to the sinner:

Christ remains the mediator. We must always be sure that for his sake we have a gracious God in spite of our unworthiness. Paul clearly teaches this when he says (1 COR. 4:4), "I am not aware of anything against me, but I am not thereby justified." But he believes that he is accounted righteous by faith for Christ's

sake, according to the statement (Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:7), "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." This forgiveness is always received by faith. Thus also the imputation of the righteousness of the Gospel is through the promise. Therefore, it is always received by faith; we must always hold that we are accounted righteous by faith for the sake of Christ (Ap IV, 163).

The *Solid Declaration* reaffirms the foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith confessed in AC IV:

Regarding the righteousness of faith before God, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess on the basis of the general summary of our Christian faith and confession expressed above that poor sinful people are justified before God, that is, absolved — pronounced free of all sins and of the judgment of the damnation that they deserved and accepted as children and heirs of eternal life — without the

least bit of our own "merit or worthiness" [SC, Creed, 4], apart from all preceding, present, or subsequent works. We are justified on the basis of sheer grace, because of the sole merit, the entire obedience, and the bitter suffering, death, and the resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness (SD III, 9).

God forgives our sin, considers us upright and righteous, and grants us eternal salvation. This righteousness is conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit through the

gospel and in the sacraments. It is applied to us, appropriated and accepted through faith. Therefore, believers have reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, and God's grace, and are children and heirs of eternal life (SD III, 15b–16).

During the last years, new metaphors for describing and announcing Christ's redemption have been incorporated with the intention of somehow eliminating the form of the biblical theology that has its center in the Pauline doctrine and in our confessions: justification as a forensic act and within a judicial context.

The Old Testament already speaks in judicial terms about the "covenant" as a legal concept. It is in this context (in relation to the covenant) that the Ten Commandments

Justification presents the cross as the main place of divine revelation to the human being, and that is strongly rejected by our reason, because it is the most unimaginable folly in the entire human history, since it contradicts our flesh.

were revealed as God's Law. The New Testament, on its turn, refers to the vicarious expiation in legal terms, as a *satisfactio vicaria*. The Holy Spirit is named παράκλητος: one who functions as a lawyer (a defender). The Lord's Prayer describes our sins not only as offenses, but as "debts" toward God and the neighbor. The end of times is, in the same connection, portrayed in terms of "final judgment."

Justification is a judgment both to absolve and to condemn. It is the Judge's verdict that imputes Christ's works to one who has a death warrant, in order to liberate him from his prison, on account of Christ having been condemned in his stead. Martin Chemnitz affirms:

But it must be diligently considered why the Holy Spirit wanted to set forth the doctrine of justification by means of judicial terms. Worldly, secure, and Epicurean men think that the justification of the sinner is something easy and perfunctory, therefore they are not much concerned about sin and do not sincerely seek reconciliation with God, nor do they strive with any diligence to retain it. However, the peculiar nature of the word "justify" shows how weighty and serious an action before the judgment seat of God the justification of a sinner is. Likewise, the human mind, inflated with a Pharisaical persuasion when it indulges in its own private thoughts concerning righteousness, can easily conceive a high degree of confidence and trust in its own righteousness. But when the doctrine of justification is set forth under the picture of an examination and of the tribunal of divine judgment, by a court trial, so to say, those Pharisaical persuasions collapse, vanish, and are cast down. Thus the true peculiar nature of the word "justify" preserves and defends the purity of the doctrine of justification from Pharisaical leaven, and from Epicurean opinions. And the entire doctrine of justification cannot be understood more simply, correctly, and appropriately, and applied to serious use in the exercises of penitence and faith, than through a true consideration of the judicial meaning of the word "justify," as the examples of many fathers show.<sup>4</sup>

Redemption is about God in His disposition of grace toward human beings through the work of Jesus Christ.

To preach this cornerstone doctrine, it is necessary to distinguish Law and Gospel. Many of the current efforts to say the same thing, but in a more acceptable way, are motivated by a rejection of the Law and the judgment of God. There are preachers who do not expose the Law in its second use (to kill any attempt of the human flesh), thinking that the Law can be inferred out of the general context of the exposition, or that people already come [to Church] bearing the Law because of [the consequences of] their sins, as if they were mere victims, and not responsible doers of the sin, in need of dying to rise again with Christ. Just as Melancthon puts it: "People cannot by their own powers live according to the law of God and because all are under sin ... [they are] guilty of eternal wrath and death" (Ap IV, 40). Only that one who preaches God's judgment and condemnation can also preach the Gospel and salvation in Christ through faith, for if the Law is minimized, then the preaching of the Gospel has no effect.

It is also heard that "people should not be attacked" through the preaching, that is to say: It is necessary "to be able to say things in a way that may not hurt the hearer." However, this eagerness to please others moves one to call evil good and good evil (*Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 21),

making him a theologian of glory (*theologus gloriae*).<sup>5</sup> Luther says: "Preach one thing: the wisdom of the cross!"<sup>6</sup>

Justification presents the cross as the main place of divine revelation to the human being, and that is strongly rejected by our reason, because it is the most unimaginable folly in the entire human history, since it contradicts our flesh.

What man regards as good may be sin in the sight of God, as for example, the striving for virtue by moralists following Aristotle and Kant. What human wisdom thinks to be luck and therefore desirable for man — health, wealth, success, victory — precisely that may be regarded by God as hurtful for man and therefore denied to him. In the judgment of God, sickness, failure, poverty may be much more precious; and this judgment of God is right even if it contradicts all human reason. Confronted by an incurable sickness which after years of suffering

<sup>5</sup> AE 31, 40.

<sup>6</sup> WA 1, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer, vol. 1. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 476–477.

leads to a painful death, our human judgment sees something definitely negative. But as God sees it, such unreasonable fortune may be something quite positive. Thus Luther in *The Bondage of the Will* ventures to say: “When God brings to life, he does so by killing; when he justifies, he does so by accusing us; when he brings us into heaven, he does so by leading us to hell” (WA 18, 633). He makes alive by killing! — that is the adequate way to speak of the unreasonable way God acts.<sup>7</sup>

Our current world prefers the theology of glory in its multiple expressions that function in accordance with the principles of contextualization and missions, over against the theology of the cross that is expressed in terms of the forensic justification of the sinner through the cross. This is not a mere academicism or intellectualism with which we “rationalize” Christ’s redemption, but it is the real way God reconciles us to Himself. To change redemption language to speak about God’s forgiveness not using the judicial or legal framework of Scriptures amounts to despise the high price of the gratuitous grace that is given through the work of Christ in His death of the cross. This doctrine gives consolation and security to the believer for the forgiveness of his sins. If it is not spoken in this way, it is released to God’s good “humor,” who grants us an amnesty out of sheer goodness. This sets apart the work of God that is centered in the cross of Christ, and gives the centrality to God’s goodness (in terms of “good humor”). Osiander took the teaching of justification “as cold as ice.”<sup>8</sup> But adding “human warmth” is to locate the human being as subject instead of object of his redemption. This [i.e., the pure teaching on justification] is a doctrine that brings ineffable peace and joy to the souls of people, because it is God’s own love in action.

Suffering and afflictions are not part of justification, as [if they were] a fragment of Christ’s work, but they are intended to mortify our flesh:

Even though we still have troubles, Scripture

By faith, the human being is nothing but the receiver of His (Christ’s) favor.

interprets them as the mortifications of present sin, not as a payment for or a ransom from eternal death ... So afflictions are not always punishments or signs of wrath ... afflictions have other more important purposes, lest they think that they are being rejected by God since in the midst of such afflictions they see nothing but God’s punishment and anger. They must consider these other more important purposes, namely, that God performs his “alien work” in order to do his **proper work** (Ap XII, 157–158, emphasis added).

Then, it is added:

Thus Paul says [2 COR. 12:5, 9], “The power of God is made perfect in my weakness.” Thus, in accord with God’s will, our bodies ought to be sacrifices to show our obedience, not to pay for eternal death — for which God has another payment, namely, the death of his Son (Ap XII, 160).

Afflictions are followed by repentance, and, even if death comes, the work of Christ is totally fulfilled, since “God imposed bodily death on human beings, and even after the forgiveness of sin he did not eliminate it for the sake of exercising righteousness, namely, in order that the righteousness of those who are sanctified might be exercised and tested” (Ap XII, 161).

The theology of the cross renders God’s stuff hidden for our fleshly eyes (*sub cruce tectum*). The Church of Christ is hidden, just as believers are and the Means of Grace are: God’s own Word hidden under the words of the ordained minister, Christ’s own body and blood are hidden in the Eucharist under the earthly elements. The theology of the cross is not about a mere symbol, but about God’s own reality in action.<sup>9</sup>

Forensic justification exposes the objective basis on which redemptions depends: it is *extra nos*. Upon the sure basis of AC IV is confessed the following article that describes the manner God established His gift to be conferred.

<sup>7</sup> H. Sasse, “La Teología de la Cruz” [Carta a los pastores luteranos No 18, Jubilate 1951] en: Confesamos A Jesucristo (Vol. 1). Traducción del alemán al inglés: Norman Nagel; Traducción del inglés al castellano: Martin Teigen; Corrección del texto castellano: Roberto Bustamante, 2008), 8. The letter can be found in English Sasse, H. (1951). “Luther’s Theology of the Cross” in <http://www.wlssays.net/files/SasseCross.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> *El Marco Legal del Evangelio*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> H. Sasse, “La Teología de la Cruz,” 8.

## The way justifying faith is obtained (AC V)

“For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (MAL. 2:7).

V. Concerning the Office of Preaching	Artikel 5. Vom Predigtamt	Art. V. De Ministerio Ecclesiastico.
<p>To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching [Predigtamt], giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ’s merit, when we so believe.</p> <p>Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the external word of the gospel through our own preparation, thoughts, and works.</p>	<p>[oder Von der Erlangung des Glaubens durch die Gnadenmittel] Solchen Glauben zu erlangen, hat Gott das Predigtamt eingesetzt, Evangelium und Sakramente gegeben, dadurch er, als durch Mittel, den Heiligen Geist gibt, welcher den Glauben, wo und wann er will, in denen, so das Evangelium hören, wirkt, welches da lehret, daß wir durch Christus’ Verdienst, nicht durch unser Verdienst, einen gnädigen Gott haben, so wir solches glauben. Und werden verdammt die Wiedertäufer und andere, so lehren, daß wir ohne das leibliche Wort des Evangeliums den Heiligen Geist durch eigene Bereitung, Gedanken und Werke erlangen.</p>	<p>Ut hanc fidem consequamur, institutum est ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta. Nam per Verbum et sacramenta tamquam per instrumenta donatur Spiritus Sanctus, qui fidem efficit, ubi et quando visum est Deo, in iis, qui audiunt evangelium, scilicet quod Deus non propter nostra merita, sed propter Christum iustificet hos, qui credunt se propter Christum in gratiam recipi.</p> <p>Damnant Anabaptistas et alios, qui sentiunt Spiritum Sanctum contingere sine Verbo externo hominibus per ipsorum praeparationes et opera.</p>

God has instituted the Office of Preaching in order to confer the gifts of salvation that Christ [obtained] through His bitter passion, death and resurrection, through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments (these forms of the *externum verbum* as *instrumenta prima*<sup>10</sup> — MATT. 10:1–15; 28:18–20; MARK 16:15–16; LUKE 9:1–6; 10:1–24; 24:45–49; JOHN 20:21–23; 21:15–17; ACTS 20:28; AC V, XIV, XXVIII). Christ locates Himself in the Gospel and the sacraments for the forgiveness of sin. “If you want to have God, then mark where He resides and where He wants to be found.”<sup>11</sup>

Together with the Means of Grace, as part of the same office of preaching (the ministry as *instrumentum secundum*), God established those who were to give

and administer these means. Since it is an institution of Christ, it is He who determines the “what,” the “how,” the “who,” and the “for what purpose” of the ministry (*iure divino*). It is not the Church who does it.

**[T]he power of the keys or the power of the bishops is the power of God’s mandate** to preach the gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer the sacraments. For Christ sent out the apostles with this command [JOHN 20:21–23]: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you. . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (CA XXVIII, 5–6, emphasis added)

“To obtain such faith:” It deals with the justifying faith that was referred to in the previous article. The office

<sup>10</sup> Gerhard (Loc. XXIII 20:14).

<sup>11</sup> AE 23, 121.

exists to bestow the gifts of the Gospel. That is why this doctrine is in intimate connection with the justification by faith (the *articulus stantis*). Without the office there is no saving faith. Christ has not given us the Holy Scriptures; “Christ rather gave the office of the proclamation of the Gospel.”<sup>12</sup>

The task of pastors is the same task that Christ entrusted His apostles (MATT. 28:18–20; LUKE 24:45–47). They were to distribute what Jesus had bought through His bloody death and His resurrection. The authority they received is transmitted throughout the history of Church. It is the authority of the Office of the Keys that is publically exercised by a pastor in the congregation, when he preaches the Gospel, pronounces the absolution and administers the sacraments. His authority does not depend on the dignity of man, but on the power of God, on the authority of the Word and on the work of the Holy Spirit (JOHN 20:19–23). These words of Jesus are an ongoing mandate. It is for this reason that the pastor says: “In His stead and because of the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you.” Keys are all this is about.

The Office of the Holy Ministry is an administration in the stead of Christ (*in persona Christi*). The apostle Paul writes that he is an ambassador “on behalf of Christ” (2 COR. 5:20), and that it is for this reason that he can deliver his proclamation in the name of Christ (*in persona Christi*) in speaking to his audience (“We implore you ... be reconciled to God” [2 COR. 5:20]). To be placed into the office of preaching is to be under the office of Christ. There is no personal search, but it is Christ Himself who participates in those whom He calls and establishes in the office. That is why Jesus says to the apostles: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (JOHN 20:21). This is a public and official commission. Melancthon affirms that those who are in the public office “**do not represent their own persons,**” since “they represent the person of Christ on account of the call of the church.” Therefore, “[w]hen they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them **in the stead and place of Christ**” (Ap VII, 28, emphasis added; see also Ap VII, 47). The minister is not to be confused with his Lord, but he has to understand that he is in the office because the Lord has called and commissioned him to preach redemption. He responds to the purposes of God and serves those that he has under his care by means of the Word of God.

<sup>12</sup> Hermann Sasse, “The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry,” in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters* (1941–1976), vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 124.

*Schwabach Article VII*, written by Luther in 1529, is the “type” of AC V, the “antitype.”

To obtain such faith or to give it to us human beings, God has instituted the preaching office or **spoken Word** (that is, the Gospel), through which he has this faith proclaimed, along with its power, benefits, and fruits. God also bestows faith through this Word, as through an instrument, with his Holy Spirit, when and where he wills. Apart from it, there is no other instrument or way, passage or path, to obtain faith. Speculation [about what happens] apart from or previous to the spoken Word, as holy as good as they appear, are nevertheless useless lies and errors (emphasis added).

And the following article says:

With and alongside of this spoken Word, God has also instituted external signs: Baptism and the Eucharist. Through these, alongside the Word, God offers and gives faith and his Spirit and strengthens all who desire him.

So that it may be heard, God instituted the Office of the Ministry (*ministerium ecclesiasticum*). God wants people to have certainty that it is His Word. This is why He has instituted this Office (Amt). It is not “a Catholic remnant.”<sup>13</sup>

God decided that justifying faith may be produced through the oral preaching of the Gospel (the *externum verbum*). “Denial of the external word is then denial of the gospel.”<sup>14</sup> No preaching, no Gospel; no Gospel, no faith. The principal work (*opus proprium*) of the Office of the Ministry is the preaching and administration of the sacraments (*ministerium porrigendi sacramenta*), both together. Sasse asserts: “The Gospel is this and nothing else: that in Jesus Christ there is forgiveness of sins, in him alone and nowhere else in the world, but also truly in him. A sermon that did not say that, a sermon in which this real Gospel was not mentioned would not be a Christian sermon.”<sup>15</sup>

Extra nos is then both the way in which our salvation was achieved and the way in which it is delivered: “as through means,” *tamquam instrumenta*. Both *instrumentum* and *externum* confess and guard the gospel and the dominical certainty that it is the Lord

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>14</sup> Norman Nagel, translated into Spanish by Roberto Bustamante, “Externum Verbum,” *Logia*, 6:3 (1997): 28.

<sup>15</sup> Sasse, “The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry,” 125.

who is saying, doing, giving out his gifts. Where gifts happen, there are two involved: the one who gives the gift and those to whom the gift is given. The Lord does not leave us unlocatedly in doubt about his giving to us of his gifts.<sup>16</sup>

What opposes the *external*, opposes the Gospel and goes according to AC IV's "through our merit, work, or satisfaction." Therefore, it is also opposed to the affirmation of the justification through faith that goes together with the exclusive articles.

Not being certain about God's call or about the conferral of Christ's gifts without a call is to step into sinking sands, for in this way one tries to validate the Means of Grace on account of their efficacy, regardless who performs it, that is to say: without a regular call (*rite vocatus*).

To speak and act in the stead of Christ and having been called provides the certainty that it is God who speaks and acts. *The Large Catechism* affirms: "To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by human beings but by God himself. Although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act" (*Baptism*, 10). The opposite of this is "as something that we do" (LC, *Sacrament of the Altar*, 7; see also *Baptism*, 12).

God works through external means, as Luther says:

Yes, it must be external so that it can be perceived and grasped by the senses and thus brought into the heart, just as the entire gospel is an external, oral proclamation. In short, whatever God does and effects in us he desires to accomplish through such an external ordinance (LC, *Baptism*, 30).

If this doctrine is not believed, doctrine, comfort and the certainty about God's forgiveness are lost.

In these matters, which concern the spoken, external Word, it must be firmly maintained that God gives no one his Spirit or grace apart from the external Word which goes before. We say this to protect ourselves from the enthusiasts, that is, the "spirits," who boast that they have the Spirit apart from and before contact with the Word. On this basis, they judge, interpret, and twist the Scripture or oral Word according to their pleasure (SA III 8, 3).

Hermann Sasse warns that if the [preaching of the] Gospel in the mission field goes without the Sacraments, it is not a Church that will be constituted, but a society with a Christian worldview: "The proclamation of the

Gospel would die away like a voice in the wind if those who came to faith were not baptized and the baptized did not celebrate the Lord's Supper. Why this is so, we do not know."<sup>17</sup> In that same place, Sasse also confronts the position that holds that Scriptures are the only and supreme Means of Grace, in detriment of the Sacraments that are thus taken as mere "duplicates or appendages to the Word of God."<sup>18</sup>

The phrase "hear the gospel" must not be interpreted too narrowly so as to mean listening to the reading of the Bible. The Latin version speaks of the ministry as a "ministry of teaching the gospel" (*ministerium docendi evangelii*). The German version calls it the "office of preaching" (*Predigtamt*). The Schwabach Articles described the "office of preaching" as "the oral Word, viz., the gospel." The Apology even includes reading under the hearing of the gospel. The Holy Spirit therefore accompanies any communication of the truth of the gospel. The Marburg Articles had agreed "that the Holy Ghost gives this faith or his gift to no one without preaching, or the oral Word, or the gospel of Christ preceding."<sup>19</sup>

There is only one ministry (*unum ministerium ecclesiasticum*). Grades and differences (*gradus in ecclesia*) are established by the Church. "That which distinguishes a bishop from his youngest pastor are rights of purely human origin."<sup>20</sup> Any difference that may be established or any discharge of administrative tasks in those who preside the congregation do not encroach the office.

Augustana XIV defines those that are regularly called and ordained, in the same way as the Small Catechism affirms in asking: "What do you believe according to these words?: I believe that **when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command**, ... this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, **as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself**" (SC, *Confession*, emphasis added). Those who have been called and ordained into this office by the Church are these "duly called by Christ ... in accordance with his divine command" (1 TIM. 4:14; 2 TIM. 1:6; AC XIV). This is the pastoral ministry as the Holy Scriptures understand it (JOHN 10:7-21; 1 TIM. 3:1-7, TITUS 1:5-9). For this reason, the apostle Paul affirms:

<sup>17</sup> Sasse, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry," 127.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>19</sup> W. D. Allbeck, *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), 74.

<sup>20</sup> Sasse, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry," 128.

<sup>16</sup> Nagel, "Externum Verbum," 28.

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 (1TIM. 2:3-7).

The content and purpose of the ministry is Christ given to the sinner. It is not possible to speak about the ministry outside its institutional reality (*de iure divino*) and its Christological matrix that emanates out of the cross. The office of preaching depends on Christ (the Church's Head), the one who calls, and on the Church, Christ's Body (that is under the Head). Christ constituted "some as ... and some as" (EPH. 4:11). It was the Holy Spirit who "has made you overseers" (ACTS 20:28). The office also depends on the Church that, as Christ's Body, issues the divine call, has to externally sustain the public office among the baptized, and also has to exhort her pastor and verify the right doctrine, since it is she who knows the voice of Christ (LUKE 10:16).

Sasse affirms: "For everything which we today can be, say, and do in the service of the church is completely dependent upon how we understand our office."<sup>21</sup>

The doctrine of the ministry is one totally different from the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. Certainly they are related to each other, since both of them form part of the same reality of Christ in his Church. However, the priesthood of believers is not included in the ministry, as many times people try to force. Not any [biblical] text has a direct application to any person. For instance, Matt. 28:18-20, the so-called "Great Commission" text (under a Calvinistic conception), is connected to the apostolic ministry, since it mentions that [Christ speaks it] to the "eleven."

Jobst Schöne narrates the metamorphosis that the doctrine of the priesthood of believers suffered along the years. Roberto Bustamante reproduces Naomichi Masaki's summary of this story as follows:

- (a) **Luther** (16th century) defended the doctrine over against two different distortions in Rome: the synergist idea of "indelible character" and the doctrinal and administrative tyranny of Rome;
- (b) **Pietism** (17th century) uses it as a category to define a "true Christian";
- (c) **Modernism** (19th century) fills in this term

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 120.

with the new connotation of a shift in governmental system (from oligarchy to democracy); (d) the **Ecumenical Movement** (20th century) promotes the new identification of this doctrine with the concept of laymen's apostolate ("everyone a minister").<sup>22</sup>

Establishing the differentiation between the priesthood of believers and the office of preaching, C. F. W. Walther affirms:

Although Holy Scripture attests that all believing Christians are priests (1 PETER 2:9; REVELATION 1:6; 5:10), at the same time it teaches very expressly that in the Church [*Kirche*] there is an office to teach, feed, and rule, which Christians by virtue of their general Christian calling do not possess. For thus it is written: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? **Are all teachers?**" (1 CORINTHIANS 12:29). Again: "How are they to preach unless they are **sent?**" (ROMANS 10:15). Or: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (JAMES 3:1).<sup>23</sup>

Today people try to re-interpret the Confessions from the vantage point of the practice [of the Church], what triggers a *quatenus* subscription. Positions are established out of practices that attempt to innovate, claiming either that it is about "cases of necessity" and not of doctrine (of faith), or that it is "all a matter of interpretation,"<sup>24</sup> in order to make innovation the best option.

These reinterpretations title AC V as "Concerning the Work of the Holy Spirit" or "Concerning the Means of Grace," instead of "Concerning the Office of Preaching." It is held that this article that speaks about the pastoral ministry, but AC XIV, disconnecting in this way the foundational character of the Means of Grace in relation to the ministry and the Christological character of the same ministry. It is as if Christ instituted the means, and now it is His Church that takes the decision regarding those means: regarding who it is (or who are those) that will perform the task that Christ ordered to be done. This is a functional position that amounts to a Calvinist one, since both are the same. The Spanish edition [of the Book of Concord],<sup>25</sup> includes a footnote that affirms: "The text of this article demonstrates that the Reformers thought of

<sup>22</sup> R. Bustamante (2015). *Documento de posicionamiento*. (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 2015), 4.

<sup>23</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *The Church & The Office of The Ministry*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 152.

<sup>24</sup> Nagel, "Externum Verbum," 31.

<sup>25</sup> The only edition in the world that has reserved copyright.

‘the office of the ministry’ in other than clerical terms.”<sup>26</sup> This reading promotes a clergy versus laity reading of the text and comes from the notes in the Spanish and Portuguese editions of the Book of Concord.<sup>27</sup>

This clergy versus laity understanding of the office of preaching affects all the Article V, what ends not bestowing the justifying faith (AC IV). It becomes evident in the following aspects and topics on which we should reflect:

**1.** The creation of a department on Missiology in theological education, disconnected from Systematic and Pastoral [Theology], that seems to sustain the idea that these are two distinct — and for instance divorced — aspects: practice and doctrine. This dualist conception of Christian life makes us value the practice in the Church as “the mother of theology,” instead of allowing the doctrines to establish the practices, just as the Christian Church has sustained since [the time of] Christ. Doctrine also is rendered flexible because “we have to be pastoral” in our approach. We end denying the doctrines that are held, “erasing with the elbow what we wrote with our hand.”

**2.** The previous point moves us to the disconnection between missionary strategies and the Means of Grace (*externum verbum*). It is social culture; cultural anthropology, phenomenology of religion, business management and psychology are established as the starting point. Then it is concluded, in this train of thought: “God left a mission, and it is the Church who takes the turn that Christ left behind; so, each one has to consider how, according to his gifts, is to ‘take Christ’ to the people; and, to obtain [positive] results, we need to do [our task] in a creative and innovative way.” At the end of the day, everyone is a minister under this conception.

**3.** From this, it is derived that the main function of the pastor is to “equip the members in [the use of] their gifts,” coordinating and leading different tasks and groups. This represents a Church [that lives] for herself, that, as any society, has different activities and needs to establish her goals, strategies and projects that barely have to do with the Means of Grace, and usually with “being active” in the Church. There is a *status quo* that has to be fed.

**4.** The democratic conception of congregationalism gets

empowered with this laical understanding. The Means of Grace are taken as functions/tasks that somebody has to perform. Thus, the congregation has to select someone who has “the [necessary] conditions” for this; just as a waiter who brings the food to the customers in a snack-bar, [this person] brings Christ’s food. In this way, the ministry is [taken as] functional (anyone whom “the congregation authorizes” can perform it), and no longer Christ’s institution, but the congregation’s. The “tasks” are distributed among those whom the congregation “authorizes.” A pastor is established together with a team (board of directors, Bible school teachers, etc. — as if these were “minor offices” within the very office). This is not a “gifts company,” but the Christ’s own ministry for the forgiveness of sin. We are not to mistake the “gifts of the Spirit” for the Means of Grace: the former belong to the fruits of faith for a service of mercy to the neighbor (AC VI; ROM. 12:3–12; 1 COR. 12), the later belong to the external Word by means of which Christ comes to serve us, bringing us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation (MATT. 28:18–20; JOHN 20:19–23; ROM. 10:14–16).

**5.** Out of the previous idea, it is asserted that if it is true that the pastor is the only one that is called by God to bestow the gifts of grace, the proclamation of the Gospel gets limited. This leads to the belief that the Gospel is in the Church’s hands and not in her Lord’s hands. The work always remains as God’s work, since it is the Holy Spirit who “calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith” (SC, *Creed*, 6). God does the work in spite of both human limitations ([our] financial and human resources) and of the manifest sins that divide the Church. To believe that this limits the Gospel is to put the Church and the very Gospel in human hands, and not to believe that this is the work of God Almighty, the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

**6.** To sustain the argument that AC V speaks about the Means of Grace and not about the *Predigtamt*, the categories of “abstract” (general) and “concrete” (particular or proper) were superimposed on it. Thus, AC V speaks about a general referent regarding the way in which God works through the Means of Grace, whereas AC XIV presents the concrete mode of doing it. This is to believe in an abstract ministry of Christ, what is not admissible, since the ministry is in the person of Christ. This concept goes in opposition to the doctrine of Incarnation: Christ as a human being. The office or the ministry deals with persons, therefore, it is no abstract something. Otherwise,

<sup>26</sup> A. A. Meléndez, ed. *Libro Concordia Las Confesiones de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana*. (San Louis: Editorial Concordia, 1989), 29 note 25.

<sup>27</sup> The Preface of the Spanish edition indicate that footnotes were taken from the Portuguese version (Dr. Arnaldo Schüller’s *Livro Concórdia*). However, this particular note is not there in the Portuguese edition. [Translator’s note: The discussed note is a modification of footnote 4 in Tappert’s edition (p. 31).]

Jesus would neither have chosen His apostles, nor ordered them to administer the Means of Grace.<sup>28</sup>

**7.** The concept of “emergency” for the administration of Holy Baptism or private Absolution (in a situation in which a person needs one of them or is in doubt about his salvation), has allowed the dividing line between the office of preaching and the priesthood of the baptized to be displaced, on the basis of a lack of pastors or because of the financial situation of a congregation. Thus, lay preachers are permitted (*Nothelfer*, those who help in a situation of emergency), with the argument that things are being done in accordance to AC XIV, though it is interpreted as [referring to] an “authorization” and not as it has been historically understood (that is, treats about call and ordination — *rite vocatus*).

**8.** In this context, preaching becomes *synergist*, just as any other kind of normal human communication, instead of *monergist*, in accordance with the doctrine of the efficacy of the Word. It is as if it were necessary to “help” the Word in its efficacy, even though this very efficacy is brought up over against the necessity of the ministry. The pastor is established as a function of the Means of Grace. Therefore, he has no authority apart from them, but only that one that the means grant him: it is the very authority of the Gospel and the Sacraments.

Chemnitz affirms:

Because God Himself deals with us in the church through the ministry as through the ordinary means and instruments. For it is He Himself that speaks, exhorts, absolves, baptizes, etc. in the ministry and through the ministry. Lk 1:70; Heb 1:1; Jn 1:23 (God crying through the Baptist); 2 Co 2:10, 17; 5:20; 13:3. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the minister as well as the church have sure proofs that God wants to use this very person for this His ordinary means and instrument, namely the ministry.<sup>29</sup>

The doctrine of the pastoral ministry does not annul at all the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, but places each one in his own vocation. The pastoral ministry, matrimony (the offices of father and mother that come about from the same institution), and the secular authority are the divine offices instituted by God. These are the “holy orders” the *Small Catechism* refers to. The whole life is based upon them. Any authority that has

been established by God represents God Himself. Thus, at home, father and mother speak in the stead of God and exercise His authority. In AC V, the priesthood of all believers is connected with the phrase “in them that hear,” since “faith comes from hearing” (ROM. 10:17). It [the priesthood] is defined here in a passive role, not in an active one, as it is required today. The believers’ active role is located in AC VI, not in AC V. No one can serve himself the gifts; he needs the beautiful feet (ROM. 10:15).

“Condemned are” asserts Article V in its second part. In our postmodern times, no one is condemned. Every position is accepted, but all of them become mere opinions. Biblical doctrine is not the result of clarification of different positions among people, nor the result of agreements and decisions taken in conventions, but it comes “from above” (“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” [MATT. 16:17]). Thus, to clarify positions is not to expose opinions, but [to expose] the biblical doctrine revealed in Holy Scriptures. To clarify positions, God Himself has given the rule of faith through the apostolic writings. Therefore, new doctrines do not exist: “Listen to him” (MATT. 17:5).

“The Anabaptists and others” (AC V) are those who think that God works apart from the external Word and from the office of the ministry; those who oppose that which God established.

Speaking about the office of preaching, Luther distinguishes it from the diaconate:

See how far the glory of the church has departed! The whole earth is filled with priests, bishops, cardinals, and clergy; yet not one of them preaches so far as his official duty is concerned ... The duty of a priest is to preach, and if he does not preach he is as much a priest as a picture of a man is a man ... It is the ministry of the Word that makes the priest and the bishop ... However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.) ... And the diaconate is the ministry, not of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but of distributing the church’s aid to the poor, so that the priests may be relieved of the burden of temporal matters and may give themselves more freely to prayer and the Word.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The argument based on the *Confutatio* [fails at not understanding that this text] is not a hermenutical key to read the Lutheran Confessions.

<sup>29</sup> Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, 29–30.

<sup>30</sup> AE 36, 110–112.

Hermann Sasse affirms:

Then the humble preaching of the Gospel and the administration of these simple Sacraments are the greatest things that can happen in the world. For in these things the hidden reign of Christ is consummated. He himself is present in these Means of Grace, and the bearer of the *ministerium ecclesiasticum* actually stands in the stead of Christ. That certainly puts an end to any clerical conceit. We are nothing. He is everything. And that means that the terrible sin of pessimism, which is the pastor's greatest temptation, is finished with as well. It is nothing but doubt and unbelief, for Christ the Lord is just as present in his Means of Grace today as he was in the sixteenth or the first century. And "all authority in heaven and on earth" [MATT 28:18] is just as much his today as it was when he first spoke that promise to the apostles. And it remains so into all eternity.<sup>31</sup>

To conclude our analysis of AC V, let's hear Luther once again:

For we must believe and be sure of this, that baptism **does not belong to us** but to Christ, that the gospel **does not belong to us** but to Christ, that the office of preaching does not belong to us but to Christ, that the sacrament [of the Lord's Supper] does not belong to us but to Christ, that the keys, or forgiveness and retention of sins, do not belong to us **but to Christ**. In summary, the offices and sacraments do not belong to us but to Christ, for he has ordained all this and left it behind as a legacy in the church to be exercised and used to the end of the world; and he does not lie or deceive us. Therefore, we cannot make anything else out of it but must act according to his command and hold to it. **However, if we alter it or improve on it, then it is invalid and Christ is no longer present, nor is his ordinance.**<sup>32</sup>

The doctrine of the ministry is a gift of God to be celebrated and thanked for!

### What justifying faith produces (AC VI)

"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (MATT. 25:40).

<sup>31</sup> Sasse, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry," 139.

<sup>32</sup> AE 38, 200.

VI. Concerning the New Obedience	Artikel 6. Vom neuen Gehorsam	Art. VI. De Nova Obedientia
<p>It is also taught that such faith should yield good fruit and good works and that a person must do such good works as God has commanded for God's sake but not place trust in them as if thereby to earn grace before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says [Luke 17:10]: "When you have done all [things] . . . , say, 'We are worthless slaves.'" The Fathers also teach the same thing. For Ambrose says: "It is determined by God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved and have forgiveness of sins, not through faith alone, without merit."</p>	<p>Auch wird gelehrt, daß <i>solcher Glaube gute Früchte und gute Werke bringen soll</i>, und daß man müsse gute Werke tun, allerlei, so Gott geboten hat, um Gottes willen, doch nicht auf solche Werke zu vertrauen, dadurch Gnade vor Gott zu verdienen; denn wir empfangen Vergebung der Sünden und Gerechtigkeit durch den Glauben an Christus, wie Christus selbst spricht, Luk. 17: „So ihr dies alles getan habt, sollt ihr sprechen: wir sind untüchtige Knechte.“ (Al)so lehren auch die Väter. Denn <i>Ambrosius</i> spricht: „Also ist's beschlossen bei Gott, daß, wer an Christus glaubt, selig sei, und nicht durch Werke, sondern allein durch den Glauben ohne Verdienst Vergebung der Sünden habe.“</p>	<p>Item docent, quod <i>fides illa debeat bonos fructus parere</i>, et quod oporteat bona opera mandata a Deo facere propter voluntatem Dei, non ut confidamus per ea opera iustificationem coram Deo mereri. Nam remissio peccatorum et iustificatio fide apprehenditur, sicut testatur et vox, Christi Luc. 17, 10: <i>Quum feceritis haec omnia, dicite: Servi inutiles sumus</i>. Idem docent et veteres scriptores ecclesiastici. Ambrosius enim inquit: <i>Hoc constitutum est a Deo, ut, qui credit in Christum, salvus sit sine opere, sola fide gratis accipiens remissionem peccatorum</i>.</p>

*Sola fide* is the doctrinal principle that comes out of Christ's work. But then comes faith as active in works of love. As Luther affirms "He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love."<sup>33</sup> Melancthon reaffirms: "Therefore we must first receive the forgiveness of sins by faith before we keep the law, although, as we said above, love follows faith because the reborn receive the Holy Spirit and therefore begin to keep the law" (Ap XII, 82).

First, God gathers people to Himself through grace, bringing them into the faith, and then He sends people out to the world in order to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 PETER 2:9). This is the rhythm of Christian life, just as breathing: inward, outward; a centripetal and a centrifugal force. With this article the unity of faith is completed, bearing fruits, what justifying faith produces. However, those works do not contribute to salvation.

Dr. Jack Preus III affirms in a categorical way: "Christians are people that move from the inward to the outward." Thus also Luther says: "A Christian lives not in himself" (if he lives in himself he is not a Christian at all).

These are the two different ways by which a Christian lives: by faith and by love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor. Christian always lives outside himself: he lives in God and in his neighbor. If he lives in himself he is not a Christian at all. Living in oneself is the all form that has been left behind; now there is the new life, living oneself for the others.<sup>34</sup>

Christian vocation in love to the neighbor is the adequate answer to this God who mercifully deals with people. This answer called "service" does not take place under coercion, but it is given freely. And this because our works have no merit before God, since it takes place around faith and not works. Some people think that if they perform good works, then God will approach near them. If good works are thought to have any kind of meritorious character, then the gratuitous dimension of salvation in Christ is totally destroyed (AC IV). Redemption is about God in His disposition of grace toward human beings through the work of Jesus Christ. By faith, the human being is nothing but the receiver of His favor.

Even though usually a Church is evaluated on account

of her "good works," these do not determine her reality as Church. This, as it was already said, is always hidden to human eyes. When it is human eyes that establish the assessment parameters, they will be established in terms of good works, and certainly this is a mistake. It also is not a cause of pride, even when our old man loves pretending to contribute something to "feel himself useful." This should never be the parameter of Christian service.

We have to be careful regarding overemphasizing Christian life even above Christ's own work. The way to do it, as our article affirms, is to say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty" (Luke 17:10). This also can be related to preaching, if we speak more about what people can do, rather than what God has done for us in Christ. Then, we are justifying ourselves.

Preaching is more *kerygmatic* than *didactic*. This is one of the main differences with Calvin and with his friend Spener (who, in fact, never met each other). In Reformed theology, the Law in its third use is regarded as leading and motivating Christian life. And this Reformed understanding of the Law has reappeared in contemporary evangelicalism.<sup>35</sup> Christian service is always focused in love toward the neighbor. God works by means of good works in the different walks of life of people that work as masks of God (*larva dei*). It is His creative work that still remains present in human vocations (*creatio continua*).

When Luther said that Christians are little "Christs" to the neighbor, he was pointing Christian vocation in love toward the neighbor. This means that when people see Christians around the world, they see Christ. Just as the apostle Paul affirms: "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all" (2 COR. 3:2). This is what it means to be Christian: It means that the believer lives just as He lived, not for himself but for others.

Regarding our service to the neighbor, God says, "Do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you" (1 SAM. 10:7), "as we have opportunity" (GAL. 6:10). Christian service is circumscribed to the context and the emerging necessities, considering at the same time one's own human limitations. "The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so **that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works**. These things are excellent and profitable for people" (TITUS 3:8, emphasis added).

<sup>33</sup> AE 31, 375.

<sup>34</sup> J. Preus, *Christian Vocation*. Foro de Uruguay (Sin publicar). Apuntes, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> David P. Scaer, *Ley y Evangelio y los Medios de Gracia*. trans. José Pfaffenzeller (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 2012), 81.

But conscience also grasps its own good works and sustains regarding them that they **should gratuitously be done** only for the neighbor's good and for body exercise and in no way to proportionate righteousness, peace, satisfaction for and remission of sins. Because **conscience looks for these things only in Christ's work** and it is there that it finds them in an enduring faith, as it sees that Christ has gratuitously fulfilled his works for our good and for the use of his body according to God's will.<sup>36</sup>

Enough now of freedom. As you see, it is a spiritual and true freedom and makes our hearts free from all sins, laws and commands, as Paul says, I Tim. 1[:9], "The law is not laid down for the just." It is more excellent than all other liberty, which is external, as heaven is more excellent than earth.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

The articles here assessed give us peace and comfort in the faith, just as the certainty that we have a God of grace and mercy, who on account of Christ's passion and death gives us all that we cannot attain by ourselves: forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. They also provide us certainty that it is God who bestows it on us through those He calls into the office of preaching. This, in turn, gives the Church confidence that God speaks and works through the pastor's beautiful mouth, hands and feet.

As long as the world remains, these articles will be always despised and negated by our enemies, the world, our flesh and the devil. Therefore, we know that they will be always objects of scorn and controversy. In the face of it, if these fundamental articles are obscured, then comes into the reign of free thought that wishes to satisfy one's flesh (reason and practice) and to accommodate things to the world, thus serving in this way the devil.

The promise is that Christ's true Church will remain forever and that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (MATT. 16:18), and this not on account of ecumenical agreements, but because Christ's work will remain forever. It is not because of our work, but because Christ is the Head of the Church, who will lead her work forever. This puts us into the perspective of AC VI, "We are worthless slaves" because we have been incorporated into his body, to do his work (EPH. 2:10).

May the triune God comfort us always in Christ's work! May this be the main and only goal of our churches! And finally, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 PETER 5:10-11).

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<sup>36</sup> Martín Lutero, *Obras de Lutero*, (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1967-1985), OL 1, 134.

<sup>37</sup> AE 31, 375.

# DEVOTION ON MATTHEW 6:24–34

## INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL — 2015 WORLD CONFERENCE, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

by Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.

The Sermon on the Mount, while it challenges us to live a certain kind of life, defines that life first of all in the person and work of Jesus Himself.

**Y**ESTERDAY MORNING BISHOP VOIGT pointed us to the story of the Good Samaritan and opened our hearts to the challenges and the needs that surround us. Reverend Streltsov then noted the challenges that the Lutheran confession faces in the world today. In line with those presentations and the conversations that have followed, I think it would be appropriate for us to consider this text from Matthew 6. This is a *most* fitting text for a gathering of the International Lutheran Council (ILC). Please hear it once more:

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we

eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his

righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

The context for our text today is a familiar one. The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most beloved sections of the Gospels — of the whole Bible — and one of the most

challenging. If you take the Sermon on the Mount as simple instruction in ethical living, you will quickly find that what it demands are beyond what you can accomplish. What Jesus requires of us here is something that is beyond the capacity of sinful human beings. For example, earlier in His sermon, Jesus spoke the beatitudes:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Well, I’m pretty poor, spiritually and monetarily. So I must be doing okay.

“Blessed are the meek.” Well, if you know me I’m not all that meek, but I’m trying.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” Sometimes I hunger for these things but not as often as I would like.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Now things are getting serious. I’m not very merciful.

“Blessed are the pure in heart.” Okay, now I am unmasked. I am not pure in heart. As I look into myself, I see that I do not have a pure heart. And all too often the

Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for all your tomorrows are already established in the unwavering promise of Christ.

impurities of my heart express themselves in thoughts, words and deeds that are at odds with God's Law as He reveals it in the Scriptures.

But Jesus doesn't stop there. He goes on in His sermon to expand on the fullness of keeping the Law by, among other examples, telling us to love our enemies and not to call people idiots, because that is equal to murder. In the face of these words, even my small efforts at the victorious Christian life begin to fade. You would think that would be enough. But chapter 6 extends the commentary by teaching us how to pray, instructing us on how to fast (when's the last time you did that voluntarily?) and challenging us to lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven.

At the end of all this comes our text. "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." This is the bottom line. Jesus successfully shows that my heart is divided and that I am at war within myself. I do not serve God with my whole hearts and I do not love my neighbor as myself. In fact, I serve myself.

Then, strangely, Jesus completely changes course: "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Given all that we've heard, how is it that I cannot be anxious?

Personally speaking, I am anxious about many things. I am anxious about the well-being of the seminary I serve as president, Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. I am anxious about the future of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. I am anxious about the state of culture in the United States and the western world as a whole. And I am anxious about the orthodox Lutheran confession in this troubled and confused world.

We are surrounded by the cares and trials of this world, and the temptation is to become so entwined with that we miss the gracious provision and care that God so richly pours out upon us each and every day, feeding us with His Word, giving us His body and blood to eat and drink and clothing us in the righteousness of the Crucified and Risen One. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for all your tomorrows are already established in the unwavering promise of Christ. This is Christ's promise to each of us here at this meeting and to each person in the

churches under our care. God is using this conference as a blessing to us as we gather to learn and hand over the faith once delivered to the saints.

That is not to minimize the challenges. For we serve in a rapidly changing cultural context — one that is increasingly *indifferent* to the Church and the message Christ has entrusted to it; indeed, as we hold up Christ it is more and more likely that each of us will find ourselves persecuted for our confession. As that happens to you, remember the words of Jesus on this point from the beatitudes: "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

So be of good cheer! For in the end, the Sermon on

the Mount, while it challenges us to live a certain kind of life, defines that life first of all in the person and work of Jesus Himself. He is the one who, though He was rich, became poor. He is the one who mourns over His broken people and who meekly went to the cross in our place because of His hunger and thirst that we might be declared righteous. He is merciful and pure in heart and by His death and resurrection makes peace with God, so that we, who are persecuted by the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh, know that the kingdom

He is merciful and pure in heart and by His death and resurrection makes peace with God, so that we, who are persecuted by the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh, know that the kingdom of heaven is indeed ours.

of heaven is indeed ours.

Therefore, my friends in Christ, "Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you?" God has clothed you in the righteousness of Christ and now His life shapes and transforms your life into one of service in His name.

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# AUGUSTANA VII: THE CHURCH AND FELLOWSHIP

by Albert B. Collver III

*“Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever. The Church is the congregation of saints [Psalm 149:1] in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered. For the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree about the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.”<sup>1</sup> — Article VII of the Augsburg Confession*

**T**HE 1530 AUGSBURG CONFESSION brought the Reformation to the world in multiple ways. Here, we want to see how in particular Article VII of the Augsburg Confession brought the Reformation to the world. Prior to the Augsburg Confession, Article VII, the Church confessed in the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe in the holy Catholic Church,”<sup>2</sup> and in the Nicene Creed, “[We believe] in one holy catholic and apostolic church.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>The German translation of the creed renders “catholic” as “Christian.” Apart from the creeds, no specific confession or doctrinal loci existed on the Church until the Augsburg Confession (AC), Article VII. <sup>4</sup>The Augsburg Confession brought a definition of the Church to the world, to which, at least in some ways, the Western church has been commenting or reacting

The Church always has been under the cross of one sort or another since the day of Pentecost. Yet it is from the cross that the Lord delivered salvation.

ever since. At the heart of Augustana VII’s definition of the Church is the Gospel. Most recent discussions on AC VII have focused on what the confessors meant by the Gospel. This has far-reaching implications both for the definition of the Church and for church fellowship. Is the Gospel narrowly defined to mean “the forgiveness of sins” or does the Gospel mean “all articles of Christian doctrine that are revealed in the Holy Scriptures”?<sup>5</sup> The

answer to this question divides the ecumenical world and gives a basis for understanding the division certain ethical positions have caused within the Church today.

Hermann Sasse observed that from around 1830, “a generation was captivated by the question of the church and experienced a living interest in the church.”<sup>6</sup> Sasse connects the beginning of the ecumenical movement to “the collapse of the churchless Enlightenment and in view of the increasing urgency of the social needs of a modern world, all Christendom began to weigh anew the question concerning the essence and the reality of the one church of God.”<sup>7</sup> The captivation over the question of the Church, beginning in the 19th century, continued through the ecumenical movement of the 20th century and into the 21st century, where people are asking what the Church looks like in a post-denominational era. In the present era, a force similar to the

<sup>1</sup> Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 34.

<sup>2</sup> “Credo ... sanctam ecclesiam catholicam.” *Triglotta*, 30.

<sup>3</sup> “εις μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν.” “The Nicene Creed — Agreed at the Council of Constantinople in 381.” Early Church Texts. Accessed September 20, 2015. [http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/nicene\\_creed.htm](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/nicene_creed.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Werner Elert, “Die Kirche,” in *Der Christliche Glaube: Grundlinien Der Lutherischen Dogmatik* (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1956), 397. “Die System der mittelalterlichen Theologie kennen keinen besonderen Abschnitt von der Kirche. Aber die mannigfachen Kundgebungen der Päpste wie ihrer Gegner beweisen ebenso wie die von den Systematikern den Dogmen der Kirche beigelegte Autorität, daß über dem Ganzen der Geist Augustins schwebte... Auch Melanchthons Loci von 1521 kennen noch keine Lehre von der Kirche.”

<sup>5</sup> Francis Pieper, “On Unity in the Faith 1888,” in *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 572.

<sup>6</sup> Hermann Sasse, “The Question of the Church’s Unity on the Mission Field,” in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters* (1941-1976), 2:179–195. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), Kindle location: 4940.

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Sasse, “On the Problem of the Union of Lutheran Churches,” in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors, Volume 1: 1948–1951*, ed. Matthew Harrison, trans. E. Reim (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), Kindle Location: 5038.

churchless Enlightenment, the rise of neo-paganism and godlessness in society, drives a desire for unity among the churches.

The 20th century increased the pressure to unite the churches. Werner Elert, reflecting on this pressure, said, “It is proclaimed in hundreds of different variations that the greatest sin of Christianity is to split churches. To resist the unity of all the churches that is being called for means to resist the will of God. Confessional segregation is as opposed to the unification of churches as sin is to good works.”<sup>8</sup> This desire for unification drove the union in Germany and later in North America.

Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, a notable Lutheran in 20th century North America, stated, “It may appear tautological to say that unity in the church will be achieved if we could agree on the nature of the church.”<sup>9</sup> The way to agree on the nature of the Church is to agree on the Gospel. Dr. Frederick Mayer noted, “Fundamentally one’s ideas about the church are determined by one’s position toward the Gospel.”<sup>10</sup> This is particularly true when considering what the “doctrine of the Gospel” means in AC VII. Simply put, the Gospel shapes ecclesiology and ecclesiology shapes the Gospel. An incorrect understanding of the Gospel will cause a malformed or distorted the image of the Church. An incorrect understanding of the Church will lead to a different definition or different image of the Gospel.

These sorts of relationships in theology have other parallels. For instance, a Nestorian doctrine of Christ, that is, a doctrine of Christ that separates the natures, produces a Pelagian anthropology in the doctrine of man. These relationships form a hermeneutical circle, where one input produces an output that further feeds the input. A reductionist Gospel produces a reductionist church, whereby the bar or standard for church fellowship is lower. This is why unionism, either by force or desire, of churches with different confessions reduces the definition or understanding of the Gospel to the lowest levels. Ultimately, “where the confession of the Reformation falls, as always,

the *sola Scriptura* falls as well.”<sup>11</sup> When the Church falls away from the Reformation confession of the Church, the teaching that the Scripture is the inspired, inerrant Word of God also falls. This explains what has happened in so many church bodies that now teach doctrines and ethical positions such as same-sex marriage that would have been unthinkable to their forefathers.

Hermann Sasse explains the relationship between doctrinal loci in this way:

The article of justification cannot be rightly taught where the great articles of the Apostles’ and the Nicene Creed are not kept. The denial of the Virgin Birth leads to a false doctrine of the incarnation. A false doctrine of the incarnation leads to a false understanding of justification and of the sacraments. Thus the article of the standing and the falling Church keeps together all articles of the Christian faith and illuminates them. For Lutherans the consensus required should always be regarded as the doctrinal content of the Book of Concord.<sup>12</sup>

Any reduction or alteration to this view of the “doctrine of the Gospel” results in a different understanding of the Church, for the Church is the place where the “Gospel” is found.

During the past century and a half, four primary interpretations of AC VII’s “doctrine of the Gospel” (*doctrina evangelii*) have emerged.

Each of these four interpretations of the “doctrine of the Gospel” affects the shape and understanding of the Church, and consequently, the standard for church fellowship. If the Gospel is compromised, the Church will be compromised. If the Church becomes compromised, over time the Gospel also becomes compromised. Dr. Roland Ziegler summarizes these four interpretations:<sup>13</sup>

**1.** Emphasis on the “Gospel” and not on “doctrine.” The “doctrine of the Gospel” does not mean unity in teachings or in the Lutheran Confessions. Ziegler identifies Albrecht Ritschl as developing this model:

From the cross, Jesus spoke, “It is finished.” All the sins of the world were atoned for. Salvation had been accomplished, the work was finished.

<sup>8</sup> Werner Elert, “Ecclesia Militans Three Chapters on the Church and Its Constitution,” trans. Karl Böhmer, *Logia* 20:4 (2011), 31.

<sup>9</sup> Conrad Bergendoff, “The True Unity of the Church,” *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* 12:3 (1939), 266.

<sup>10</sup> F. E. Mayer, “Voice of Augustana VII on the Church,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 34: 3 (March 1963), 135.

<sup>11</sup> Hermann Sasse, “On the Problem of the Union of Lutheran Churches,” Kindle location: 5276.

<sup>12</sup> Hermann Sasse, “Theses on the Seventh Article of the Augsburg Confession,” *The Springfielder* 25:3 (1961), 16.

<sup>13</sup> Roland F. Ziegler, “Doctrinal Unity and Church Fellowship,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 78:3–4 (2014), 59–79.

For Ritschl, AC VII does not mean that agreement in all the articles of the Augsburg Confession is necessary for the true unity of the church. Ritschl wants to emphasize *doctrina evangelii*, not *doctrina evangelii*. For him, the confession and the word of God are not to be equated. Confession is a human product; the word of God is the power of God. The word of God is not identical with human knowledge of it.<sup>14</sup>

Ritschl argued against the Confessional Lutherans of his day in the 19th century, such as Theodosius Harnack, who believed doctrinal agreement was necessary for fellowship. Harnack writes, “It is the essence of the Lutheran church to be a church of the Confession, and based on the Word of God, to be the church of the scriptural confession.”<sup>15</sup> The problem of the union prompted much discussion in German lands over the nature of the Church and what was necessary to bring the churches together. Eventually, the arguments for joining Lutheran churches together made their way to North America and finally around the world.

**2.** The second school of thought on the meaning of AC VII sees the necessity of a doctrinal consensus, not just an agreement in the preaching of the gospel, but restricts it to a consensus on what the gospel (in the narrow sense) and the sacraments are. This is the interpretation and the ecumenical model that was first proposed by some theologians of the Prussian union and much later by the Leuenberg Agreement (1973), by which the churches that subscribed to it entered into full church fellowship.<sup>16</sup>

Mauer’s interpretation in commentary on the Augsburg Confession seems representative of Leuenberg Agreement when he writes on the Gospel, “The heart of this doctrine does not refer to Christ’s rules about what

we should do and permit; it refers to the gospel with its promise of grace.”<sup>17</sup> His view on the Sacraments also seems representative when he says, “In addition to the pure Word, to ‘administer the holy sacraments in accordance with the gospel’ is a constitutive sign of the one holy church. In this case, therefore, it is a matter not of a formulation of doctrine but of a proper administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as they were instituted.”<sup>18</sup> He concludes his section on AC VII by saying, “The unity of the body of Christ rests on the faith of those who accept the gospel and the sacraments; this bond of faith cannot be broken.”<sup>19</sup>

**3.** “A third interpretation of AC VII states that the required consensus consists in ‘recognizing the Holy Scriptures as the norm and standard of teaching and in regarding the Lutheran Confessions as the correct exposition of the Scriptures — that much and not more.’ This

means that other questions that are not addressed in the confession should not be divisive.”<sup>20</sup>

**4.** “A fourth understanding of AC VII is that the consensus necessary for the unity of the church consists in everything that the Scriptures teach.”<sup>21</sup> Francis Pieper of the Missouri Synod proposed this approach in his essay, “On the Unity of the Church,” where he connects AC VII and FC SD X. Pieper writes, “By unity in the faith we understand the agreement in all articles of the Christian doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture.”<sup>22</sup>

The approach taken in the interpretation of AC VII will determine how much agreement is needed for church fellowship. Although the *satis est* of AC VII was discussed a great deal in the 19th and mid-20th centuries, the question seems settled for many Lutheran communions, either because it was decided by their predecessors or because it

The Augsburg Confession was written under the very real threat and possibility that those who confessed would be wiped out of existence. In the midst of this threat, AC VII clung to the promise that “one holy church is to remain forever.”

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Theodosius Harnack, *Die Kirche, Ihr Amt, Ihr Regiment* (Nürnberg: Bertelsmann, 1862), 88. “*Es ist der lutherischen Kirche wesentlich, Kirche des Bekenntnisses zu sein, und sie ist sich dessen aus Gottes Wort gewiß, die Kirche des schriftmäßigen Bekenntnisses zu sein.*”

<sup>16</sup> Ziegler, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Wilhelm Maurer, “The Church and Its Sacraments,” in *Historical Commentary on the Augsburg Confession*, trans. H. George Anderson. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 385.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>20</sup> Ziegler, 64–65.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Pieper, 572.

was inherited by a church body through the mission work done during this period. For example, Gustav Aulén said, “The unity of the Christian church is not a uniformity in doctrine. The Gospel is the unifying factor for the church, but it is not a finally formulated, doctrinal authority.”<sup>23</sup> This view would influence some of the Swedish mission work in places such as Africa. The large African churches, such as those found in Tanzania and Ethiopia, were the products of mergers and unions of the various mission efforts begun by the Scandinavians and Germans of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These churches often uncritically accepted the approach toward fellowship left to them by the missionaries.

The position that the *satis est*, that the unity of the Church consists in everything that the Scripture teaches, is frequently tied to FC SD X, 31, which says there can be differences in ceremonies “as long as they are otherwise agreed with one another in the doctrine and all its articles, and also in the right use of the holy Sacraments.”<sup>24</sup> For historical reasons not every Lutheran church has subscribed to the Formula of Concord. In and of itself, this is not a problem so long as its teachings are not rejected, as the Formula of Concord sees itself as an interpretation of the Augsburg Confession, not something in addition to the Augsburg Confession. At the very least, it would not seem that the Augsburg Confession would understand AC VII as agreeing with less than is contained in the other articles of the Augsburg Confession. Thus, it would seem that the agreement in the doctrine of the Gospel and the Sacraments would have to accord with what the Augsburg Confession says about the Gospel in AC IV, V and VI, and what it says about the Sacraments in AC IX (Baptism), X (the Lord’s Supper) and XI (Confession). This would seem to eliminate the possibilities of the first and second interpretations outlined above, which limit agreement to where the Gospel, that is, the forgiveness of sins, is preached despite other possible errors or disagreement in doctrine, and to where the sacraments, that is, where Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are carried out even if they are carried out in a symbolic way or in a way that denies baptismal regeneration or the

Now is our moment  
to bear witness and to  
confess, for the Word of  
the Lord does not return  
empty.

presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper.

The 2014 publication of the Lutheran World Federation, *Communion: On Being the Church*, brings together the first, second and third interpretation mentioned above regarding Augsburg Confession VII. This document is the report of the dialogs between the Lutheran World Federation and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. It builds upon the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973. The publication is intended for the preparation of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and it laments the divisions that the Reformation caused between the Lutheran churches and the Reformed churches.<sup>25</sup> The document states that matters that were once dividing are no longer dividing

with new articulations and understandings. The document states, “For instance, we no longer regard our distinct insights into the way in which Christ is present in the Lord’s Supper or the operation of God’s grace in predestination as divisive; there is no longer any need for our continued separation. We

celebrate that in many parts of the world Lutheran and Reformed churches live in communion with one another while churches in many other locations are also moving in this direction.”<sup>26</sup> Differences in teaching on the Lord’s Supper or predestination are not church dividing. What is important is that the Sacraments take place in both churches.

*Communion: On Being the Church* also provides a definition of the Church. “The church is wherever the marks of baptism, the Lord’s Supper and true preaching are. Christ is its only head. For the unity of the church to be visible, certain structures are required; these, however, are not a matter of divine right (*iure divino*). Wherever the gospel is preached, all who take part in this office are equal and no special office such as the magisterium or a

<sup>23</sup> Gustaf Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), 341.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 602.

<sup>25</sup> *Communion: On Being the Church* (Geneva, Switzerland: The Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, 2014), 5. “This Commission has done its work as our communions prepare to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. We have found much to celebrate in our common legacy. Nevertheless, as we approach half a millennium, we recognize that our Reformation history has also had inadvertent consequences. Frequently we have formed divisive habits in the face of difference, disagreement or difficulty and have been content to live apart. Even within our two communities we have been divided.”

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

particular hierarchy are required.<sup>27</sup> The language sounds similar to Augsburg Confession, Article VII. The Church is wherever the marks of preaching the Gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are. Any church that preaches the Gospel, administers Baptism and the Lord's Supper under this definition can and should be in fellowship with each other.

*Communion: On Being Church* also offers guidelines for church Communion. It says, "Unity in Word and sacrament is based on agreement on the understanding of the gospel. This agreement begins with the common understanding of the gospel as the message of God's justifying action in Christ through the Holy Spirit. If this is achieved, then churches, previously separated, recognize in one another the true preaching of the gospel and the true celebration of the sacraments of the one church of Jesus Christ."<sup>28</sup> Note Communion can be achieved if there is agreement in the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. As long as those activities go on in the various churches but not necessarily agreement in all their doctrinal points, it is enough for fellowship.

*Communion: On Being the Church* also includes the third interpretation discussed above, namely that the Holy Scriptures are the norm and standard of teaching. The document says, "Holy Scripture is the decisive source of criteria for the life, work, faith and order of the communion of believers, which is the church ('the rule that rules' *norma normans*)."<sup>29</sup> The document further defines what it means in saying the Holy Scripture is the standard of life, work and faith. "Holy Scripture shall be read, heard, interpreted and applied at every time and in every context and for each time and each context anew."<sup>30</sup> Note the Holy Scripture must be interpreted and applied "for each time and each context anew." It becomes nearly impossible to say "thus says the Lord" for all time, because each time and context requires a new interpretation. Thus, an interpretation appropriate to the time and context of Europe and North America in the 21st century might be different from an interpretation for Africa or Asia in the 21st century. It might allow the blessing of a same-sex marriage in Europe and North America, while at the same time due to the context found in Africa or Asia only allow the blessing of a marriage between a man and a woman. According

to *Communion: On Being the Church*, such differences would not necessarily be church dividing since the Gospel is being proclaimed and the Sacraments are being administered. Not only do differences in doctrine cease to be divisive but also differences in the ethical application of the Scriptures. The document states, "Christian doctrine and ethics seek to articulate the gospel of Jesus Christ in and for a given context."<sup>31</sup> The context drives the understanding of the Gospel and the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

If the Holy Scriptures are to be interpreted within the time and context in which they are read, so too, must a church's confessional documents. *Communion: On Being the Church* also provides an understanding for the Lutheran and Reformed confessional documents. It says, "Confessional writings witness to collective interpretations of the Bible at specific moments in the history of the church. They convey the gospel of Jesus Christ under specific theological, historical, sociological and economic conditions."<sup>32</sup> According to *Communion: On Being the Church*, the confessional documents in the Book of Concord are an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures at a given moment in history. This interpretation or expression of doctrine need not be agreed with today even if the Confessions are accepted by a given church. The guiding principle for interpreting a church's confessional writings is the Gospel. The document states, "Insofar as confessional writings convey the gospel of Jesus Christ under specific conditions, their authority is rooted in and as a consequence of Holy Scripture. Therefore, the nature of the authority of confessional writings is essentially mediated." The keyword here is "insofar as." "Insofar as the confessional writings convey the gospel of Jesus Christ" they convey the authority of the Scriptures. As one's interpretation of the Gospel or contextualized Gospel for a time and place changes, so too does the authority of the confessional writing. Thus, the doctrine confessed by a confessional writing is mediated or limited by the current or present contextual understanding of the Gospel. Former doctrinal differences evaporate under a common understanding of the Gospel. "If one understands the mark of the church, 'preaching the Gospel,' only in the narrow sense, then some doctrines could be eliminated from the basis of church union, thus resulting in an

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 35–36.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

arbitrary decision on the part of man as to which doctrines are essential for such union.”<sup>33</sup>

The Lutheran World Federation’s *Communion: On Being the Church* is the culmination of more than a century of thought on how to interpret Augsburg Confession VII, beginning in the 19th century through the beginning of the 21st century. It allows for fellowship to be established among Lutherans with different doctrinal understandings, as well as with Reformed churches, so long as the Gospel is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered. *Communion: On Being the Church*, along with *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, seem to indicate that the Reformation in 2017 will be the first so-called ecumenical Reformation celebration with the Lutherans and Reformed celebrating in the common Gospel and administration of the sacraments, and with Rome in a common understanding of the Gospel found in justification.

Where does this leave the churches of the International Lutheran Council (ILC)? This past year, the churches of the ILC have held two major conferences on the Reformation. The first was held in May 2015 in Wittenberg, Germany, with the theme, “Celebrating the Reformation Rightly.” The second is this conference in September 2015 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with the theme, “Bringing the Reformation to the World.” What Reformation are we bringing to the world? The difference in approach between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the ILC was reflected in the LWF’s greetings to the ILC for this conference by Dr. Martin Junge. He writes, “Yet, as I reflected deeper on the theme of your conference I could also detect that we seem to have different approaches between the LWF and the ILC — not really a surprise, isn’t it? Because while we in the LWF pledged to emphasize that ‘Reformation is a global citizen today,’ thereby underlining that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is today read, understood, lived out and proclaimed according to the Lutheran confessions all over the world, ILC seems to see this as a reality that lays ahead of us and requires our work.”<sup>34</sup>

The difference in approaches to celebrating the Reformation between the LWF and the ILC comes down

to an understanding of the Gospel and what is enough (*satis est*) for fellowship. The two have a different understanding of what the Church is. The recognition of differences should not cause us sadness, for where differences can be recognized honestly, there is hope that dialog can be fruitful. This is, in fact, how the ecumenical movement began, by discussing differences with honesty and integrity. The recognition of differences is an opportunity to confess.

The recognition of differences has provided the ILC and the member churches a tremendous opportunity to bear witness to the Reformation understanding of the doctrine of the Gospel and to the Church which proclaims that Gospel. The seeking of unity and fellowship on the basis of doctrinal agreement is hard work. In fact, it is not a good work of the Church or even a work that the Church can do on her own. Rather, it is a gift of God that flows from the Gospel of Jesus. Unity and fellowship are not made; they are recognized by the Church. It is recognized in the pure preaching of the Gospel, that is, agreement in every doctrine the Scripture teaches and in the administration of the Sacraments. Where this occurs the Church is found and fellowship should be recognized, no matter how small or how large the church is. Both large and small churches are drawn to the voice of their Shepherd, Jesus. Where the voice of Jesus is heard, the Church will gather.

As the voice of the Scriptures and the confession of the Church become weaker and less clear in some places, now is the time for the ILC and the member churches to give a bold witness and proclamation to the world. Now is the time to speak clearly, but with kindness and genuine concern, the truths of the Scriptures with the full force of the Law that condemns the sinner and with the full comfort of the Gospel that delivers forgiveness to the troubled conscience. Now is the time to speak clearly regarding sexual ethics, marriage and the family. In the West, a cloud of darkness has overshadowed society and has even in some cases made the Church’s message indistinguishable from what is heard outside the Church. In some places, new persecution arises, or the threat of persecution, for those who speak against the trends in society. Now is the time for bold confession and an exchange of gifts the Lord has given the churches in the West and to the global South. The mutual encouragement of the brethren will benefit both and help continue the pure proclamation of the Gospel around the world.

<sup>33</sup> A. Aijal Uppala, “‘Is It Enough’ — ‘Satis Est,’” trans. Gerald Hoenecke, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* XLIV (1968). <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1488>, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Junge, “Greetings from the Lutheran World Federation to the 25th Conference of the International Lutheran Council” Geneva, Switzerland: Lutheran World Federation, 2015.



The Church always has been under the cross of one sort or another since the day of Pentecost. Yet it is from the cross that the Lord delivered salvation. From the cross, Jesus spoke, “It is finished.” All the sins of the world were atoned for. Salvation had been accomplished, the work was finished. The Augsburg Confession was written under the very real threat and possibility that those who confessed would be wiped out of existence. In the midst of this threat, AC VII clung to the promise that “one holy church is to remain forever.” The Church that confesses the doctrine of the Gospel will remain. Although our efforts seem weak and ineffective, although the ILC appears small and insignificant at times, now is our moment to bear witness and to confess, for the Word of the Lord does not return empty. Where everything the Scripture teaches is proclaimed, the Church of Christ stands. Christ promises His Church will endure forever. This is how we bring the Reformation to the world.

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# BRINGING THE REFORMATION TO THE WORLD: THE MEANS OF GRACE

## AUGSBURG CONFESSION, ARTICLES 9–10

by Hans-Jörg Voigt

### Introduction

**E**STEEMED BRETHREN IN CHRIST, my sincere thanks to you for the opportunity to use this next hour or so to talk about the Means of Grace that Christ has entrusted to His Church. In preparation for this world conference, the executive committee considered how we can adequately prepare the jubilee of the Reformation in 2017. We all agreed that not Luther as a person but rather the Lutheran Confessions should be the center of our attention, which, of course, bear Luther's strong imprint. We are strongly convinced that just as Luther severely criticized an exaggerated cult of the saints in order to lead us back to the core of the Gospel, so in our time Luther's person can only be of secondary importance; the pure Gospel of Christ, which the Confessions expound so clearly, must be our primary emphasis.

Today's presentation will deal with the Means of Grace, as they are set forth in Articles IX and X of the Augsburg Confession (AC).

Article IX: "Concerning Baptism, our churches teach that Baptism is necessary for salvation (MARK 16:16) and that God's grace is offered through Baptism (TITUS 3:4-7). They teach that children are to be baptized (ACTS 2:38-39). Being offered to God through Baptism, they are received into God's grace. Our churches condemn the Anabaptists, who reject the Baptism of children, and say that children are saved without Baptism."

Article X: "Our churches teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present and distributed to those who eat the Lord's Supper (1 COR. 10:16). They reject those who teach otherwise."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul Timothy McCain, ed. *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*. 2nd ed., (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 35.

My remarks begin with the thought that Article IV on justification in the Augsburg Confession pre-supposes that it is implemented and applied in the distribution of the Means of Grace. After that, I should like to take a look at the individual Means of Grace, always with the distinction of doctrine and practice. I will try to give a reason for making this distinction.

### 1. The Means of Grace are the practical application of the doctrine of justification.

#### 1.1 The doctrine of the Means of Grace

It was Lutheran orthodoxy in the 16th and 17th century that molded and filled the concept of the "Means of Grace" (*media salutis*) in reference to the Sacraments and the preaching of the Word of God. The concept itself derives from Augsburg Confession, Article V: "So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given."<sup>2</sup> From the word "instruments" — in German *Mittel*, that is, "means" — the concept of the "Means of Grace" developed.

The "Means of Grace," or the sacraments, are sacred acts "*qui habent mandatum Dei et promissionem gratiae, quae est propria novi testamenti*" — "for these rites have God's command and the promise of grace, which is peculiar to the New Testament" (Ap 13.4).

Properly, we say that the doctrine of justification is the chief article of the Christian faith. Luther says in the

The act of justification takes place in the distribution of the Means of Grace. Another way of putting it: The Means of Grace makes the doctrine of justification happen.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

How are the Means of Grace the practical application of the doctrine of justification?

Smalcald Articles: “Nothing of this article can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and everything else falls (Mk 13:31).” That sentence gave rise to the statement about the “*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*” with which the Church stands or falls.

But if we read carefully then, Article V stands within this context, something with which the Church stands or falls, because it refers directly to Article IV: “So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted.” This relative clause explains how the doctrine of justification comes to us human beings, that is, through the Office of the Ministry that distributes the Means of Grace.

Therefore, this is how we could define it: The act of justification takes place in the distribution of the Means of Grace. Another way of putting it: The Means of Grace makes the doctrine of justification happen. To observe the jubilee of the Reformation can therefore only mean that we distribute, teach, emphasize and celebrate the Means of Grace!

## 1.2 The Means of Grace in practice

This is specific to the Means of Grace, that they are practiced and implemented. That’s the reason I consider it necessary that we consider how we practice the Means of Grace in our churches. That’s the reason why in this presentation I chose to make a distinction between doctrine and practice. When Jesus Christ instituted the holy Supper He said: “This do ...”

For that reason we should not be too quick to insist on the freedom in ceremonies as they described in Article XV, for ceremonies are human ordinances, but the practice of the Means of Grace is by institution of Christ.

In this connection we hear the old church statement *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which was originally formulated by Prosper of Aquitaine. The liturgical order of worship must correspond to the faith we believe. In other words: The worship service of the church (*Gottesdienst*) is the prayed confession of faith and justification in practice.

## 2. Holy Baptism

### 2.1 The doctrine of Holy Baptism

Article IX of the Augsburg Confession speaks of Baptism

as necessary for salvation. In the Small Catechism, Luther quotes Titus 3:5–7: “God saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

The Augsburg Confession briefly and succinctly approves the practice of children’s Baptism, which is not disputed today in the Roman Church but certainly was at that time.

And in the Large Catechism, Luther takes up the questions posed by the Anabaptists, and he explains what it is with the faith of children. Luther clearly states that children believe because faith is worked by the Holy Spirit. Yet that is not the reason why we baptize, rather because Christ commanded it. For Luther, this is at all times the decisive criterion: that Christ commanded it; nothing else counts! We read in the Large Catechism: “Further, we say that we are not very concerned to know whether the person baptized believes or not. For Baptism does not become invalid on that account. But everything depends on God’s Word and command ... So we do likewise in

infant Baptism. We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith. But we do not baptize it for that reason, but solely because of God’s command.”

In our own time the disputes about infant Baptism have increased greatly.

1. Baptist and Pentecostal churches are growing strongly in Latin America, and as they sow doubts about our doctrine of the faith they influence our own congregations.

2. The importance of infant Baptism increases in significance because the beginning of our faith life greatly influences what gives support and certainty to the end of our life. I am writing this with the awareness of the increasing sickness of dementia in our societies. I have visited church members who are increasingly mentally weak and in old age are unable to pray the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed and finally not even a

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heard.”

hymn verse. What is the spiritual foundation on which we can stand if at the end of our life we lose our entire faith knowledge (*notitia*)? The answer: “We pray that God may grant faith. But we do not baptize for that reason, but solely because of God’s command.” This confession from the Large Catechism accompanies me on my visit to those suffering from dementia. It is a confession that is scriptural and fit for our time.

## 2.2 The practice of Baptism

In individual cases, doubts may arise about the legitimacy of someone’s Baptism. I’m thinking of the case where someone was baptized by Baptists or other denominations “in the name of Jesus” but not in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Since it was not certain whether that was a valid Baptism, we baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.

Our Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (SELK), together with ten other churches, have subscribed to an ecumenical declaration for the mutual recognition of each other’s Baptism. We agreed to this statement:

There we recognize as valid every Baptism according Jesus’ command performed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by the sign and action of submersion in the water or the pouring of water over the person that is baptized. This mutual recognition of Baptism is an expression of our bond of oneness in Jesus Christ (EPH. 4:4-6). A Baptism performed in this manner is unique and not repeatable.

Here the criteria for a validly performed Baptism are clearly stated: the Trinitarian Formula and the submersion in or the pouring on of water.

## 3. Repentance and confession of sin

### 3.1 The doctrine of the confession of sins

It is quite noteworthy and yet sad that especially the Lutheran Church stands in danger of losing the rite of Confession, even though the Confession and Absolution is the clearest event of justification in our life. Forgiving sins is justification handed out and delivered. Absolution

is, in fact, justification distributed, because as the minister forgives in the name of Christ, your justification is forensically declared before the heavenly Judge Himself. We confess in the Formula of Concord, Article III, the righteousness of faith before God: “We believe, teach and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word *justify* means, in this article, ‘to absolve’, that is, to declare free from sin.”

And for that reason the confession of sins and absolution is properly called a sacrament, as our Confessions indeed do. In Apology XII, we read that great sentence: “According to Luke 10:16, ‘The one who hears you hears me’. Therefore, the voice of the one absolving must be believed no differently than we would believe a voice from heaven. Absolution can properly be called a Sacrament of repentance.” And that the Sacrament of the Confession and Absolution is a voice from heaven we can also read in Article XXV.

Luther emphasizes this view in his Large Catechism. As he does in the Small Catechism, Luther connects contrition and repentance with Holy Baptism when he writes: “Here you can see that Baptism, both in its power and meaning, includes also the third Sacrament, which has been called repentance.”

In the practical life of church members and in our teaching the view of Confession and Absolution as a sacrament has not been generally accepted or recognized, probably because Augustine’s definition of a sacrament is frequently cited, which defines a sacrament as an element joined to the Word. The Lutheran Confessions do not make a hard a fast definition of a sacrament, sometimes using Augustine’s formula while also allowing for a broader definition that includes Absolution because it is instituted by Christ and delivers the forgiveness of sins. That Christ Himself instituted Confession and Absolution, there can be no doubt. “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld” (JOHN 20:21-23).

Martin Luther said, “If thousand or many thousand worlds were mine, I would lose all rather than have the least piece of confession be left out of the church. For the forgiveness of sins is spoken by the priest in God’s stead

There is no essential difference between the Christ lying in the manger and the Christ who under bread and wine gives us His very body and His very blood.

and therefore it is nothing other than God's Word with which he consoles our heart."

### 3.2 Practicing Confession and Absolution

The increasing disuse of individual confession at the end of the 19th and the 20th century is decried in many churches today. In our old Lutheran churches in Germany, we now practice chiefly the General Confession, also called confessional devotion. In most of our congregations, General Confession takes place 30 minutes prior to the Sunday Communion service (*Hauptgottesdienst*). In other congregations, Confession is at the beginning of the main service.

The order for the General Confession usually begins with the Greeting of Peace, followed by the words in which Christ instituted confession and absolution. Christ says to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (MATT. 16:19) And to His disciples Jesus says: "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld'" (JOHN 20:22-23).

This is followed by the reading of a penitential psalm and the reading of the Ten Commandments or a confessional address by the pastor. And then people in silence confess their guilt and speak Luther's confessional prayer or another prayer.

After that they come forward to the altar and the ordained pastor (and only the ordained pastor) lays his hands upon their head and pronounces: "Your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

In my pastoral work, it has repeatedly happened that such a general Confession and Absolution led to the practice of private confession. When people experience a particular sense of guilt at a certain time and seek to talk about it, then I can take it from that point and tell them: "After this confession I can, if you wish, pronounce God's forgiveness in Holy Absolution." We should never underestimate this.

We really are in need of Confession and Absolution, as is indicated by a story from Luther's life. With Justus Jonas he happened to be in Eisleben at the barber shop. And as

his hair was being cut, he said to him: "Man's original sin is like the beard of a man, which even if it were trimmed off today so that the chin would be smooth, it would still have regrown into a beard by the next morning. Such growing of the hair and beard does not stop while man lives, yet when the shovel is brought into action, then this process stops. So also original sin remains in us and is active whilst we live; yet one must constantly resist it and cut off such hairs."

We should teach more and more about the holy Sacrament of Confession. And the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses," should not be put in opposition to the Absolution. Certainly God hears the petition for forgiveness; there can be no doubt about that. But the Absolution, instituted by Christ Himself, grants an even clearer measure of certainty of forgiveness at the very judgement seat of God.

Adherence to the  
Lutheran Confessions is  
essential to the Church  
at all times and at all  
places.

#### Excursus on ordination

Again, depending upon how a sacrament is defined, we also could call ordination a sacrament, because it

was instituted by Christ. And the Words of Institution for this are the same as for Absolution. "He breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit." In Article XXVIII, the Augsburg Confession says just that about the office of bishops, which of course refers to the ordained office: "Our teachers' position is this: the authority of the Keys (MATT. 16:19) or the authority of the bishops — according to the Gospel — is a power or commandment of God."

Remember what we heard in Article V: "So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted." The English translation is obviously reflecting the Latin text. But it is the German text that is authoritative, and this is what it says: "To obtain such faith God has instituted the office of preaching" (*Solchen Glauben zu erlangen hat Gott das Predigtamt eingesetzt*).

Thus, I have absolutely no understanding for the fact that in some German territorial churches (and not only in them) ordination is simply understood as an administrative act (*Ordnungsakt*), and this apparently derives from a false understanding of the term *rite vocatus* in Article XIV, where it says: "Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the church or administer the

Sacraments without a rightly ordered call.”

In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, we read (13, 11f): “But if ordination is understood as carrying out the ministry of the Word, we are willing to call ordination a Sacrament.”

## 4. About preaching

### 4.1 The doctrine of preaching

In a systematic-theological sense, the doctrine of preaching and of the Holy Supper are closely connected because they both distribute the forgiveness of sins. Preaching and Sacrament form a unity. They are rather like the focal points of an ellipse, “for the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (JOHN 1:14). This means that in Christ, the Logos, the Word and flesh and blood are united.

Hermann Sasse wrote, “Both are one: the Sacrament, the *verbum visibile*, and the Word, the *sacramentum audibile*; the Sacrament that can be heard and that is heard.”

Thus the preached Word authoritatively identifies sin by the Law of God, and it comforts and pronounces authoritatively forgiveness through the one Word, Christ, which is also at work through Baptism, Absolution and the Lord’s Supper. That is why preaching is intimately bound to ordination, and we need to distinguish it from the many other forms of proclaiming the Gospel like home devotions, Sunday School, in classrooms and in various other devotional forms, as well as our reading services.

### 4.2 The practice of preaching

Preaching in our time seems to suffer from a lack of distinguishing between Law and Gospel, especially in our Lutheran churches, where we really were taught to know about this distinction.

The sermon seems to be quite clear when the Law is used to identify sin; we refer to that as the *usus elencticus*. In this regard, the preacher today has sufficient explanatory material at his disposal, for sin is wherever people are, and we read and see a great deal about it.

The pronouncement of forgiveness through the sacrificial death of Christ has a firm theological place. However, the preaching of the Gospel tends to become flat and drab, because the love of God in Christ is really without parallel. And this point we should invest a great deal of effort into our preaching.

But a real difficulty arises when we follow the preaching practice of the New Testament and address the congregation of the redeemed and baptized with words of admonition and correction. Here we must remember three things:

1. Biblical admonition corresponds to the Third Use of the Law. This means preaching Law. The Formula of Concord teaches us, “Because of these fleshly lusts, God’s truly believing, elect and regenerate children need the daily instruction and admonition, warning and threatening of the Law in this life” (FC SD VI, 9).
2. Such admonition, according to the Third Use of the Law, can be heard by terrified Christians as the Law that identifies sin and kills spiritually.
3. The preacher, in the midst of all frustrations of everyday parish life, must ask the decisive question: “From what source do I expect a change to the better in the life of the congregation and in my own life? From the preaching of the Law, or from those Christian admonitions that also require the deeds of people, or is it the preaching of the Gospel that works change in the life of the hearers?”

I am going to quote the answer from the Solid Declaration: “The Law indeed says it is God’s will and command that we should walk in a new life. But it does not give the power and ability to begin and do so. The Holy Spirit renews the heart. He is given and received, not through the Law, but through the preaching of the Gospel (GAL 3:14).”

In the end, it is through the preaching of the Gospel that life in the congregation is changed. This is a sacramental statement of faith, and it often seems contradicted by our experience in the world.

## 5. Concerning the Lord’s Supper

### 5.1 The doctrine of the Lord’s Supper

When we talk about the Lord’s Supper we are talking about the other high point of the Lutheran service. Here we have the heartbeat of the Lutheran Church. In the following section, I want to present the doctrine of our church by pointing to the practice of the Sacrament.

There seems to be very little disagreement among us about the doctrine of Holy Communion. The Formula of Concord takes up Article X of the Augustana and says: “Article X has been approved in which we confess the

following: We believe that in the Lord's Supper Christ's body and blood are truly and substantially present."

This confesses not less but more than the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation as formulated by Thomas Aquinas. Luther rejects all philosophical explanation attempts with their distinction between substance and accidents. And ours is not less than the Roman transubstantiation; it is more than that.

There is no essential difference between the Christ lying in the manger and the Christ who under bread and wine gives us His very body and His very blood. Luther writes: "And it is not a spiritual nor an imagined body and blood. But it is the proper, natural one coming from the holy, virginal really human body of Mary, but now seated at the right hand of God in majesty, and as a divine person, which Christ Jesus is now called as proper, true and eternal God, from which he was born before all eternity."

## **5.2 The practice of Holy Communion**

Sometimes I do have my doubts whether the clarity of our Confessions really are reflected in the life of our churches. The way we practice the Lord's Supper seems to show this, and we can see that in the way we celebrated Holy Communion.

### **5.2.1 The duration of the real presence and the consumption**

Let me begin with some practical considerations at the end of a Communion celebration. What happens with the precious gifts of the body and blood of Christ that were not distributed and used? The Scriptures do not define the precise time when the body and blood of Christ joins with the elements and when that sacramental union ends. The Scriptures are clear that the intention is to eat and drink the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

Luther put the greatest emphasis on the fact that we do what Christ commanded. And He said to "eat" and "drink." Christ said nothing about keeping His body and blood in reserve. He also did not say that after the end of the celebration His Word is no longer valid. Thus we should eat and drink and fully consume the body and blood of Christ.

Should larger quantities remain, then we should consume them with some elders after the service in the sacristy.

### **5.2.2 The practice of consecration**

If we believe "that in the Lord's Supper Christ's body and

blood are truly and substantially present," and that this happens because of the power of the divine Word, then it must be clear what elements we put under God's Word, what we will consecrate. We need to be quite clear about the question: What is to be consecrated and what not?

It is good Christian practice to put the elements to be consecrated on a corporale, a white cloth. We should try to ascertain the approximate number of wafers and the amount of wine presumably needed. This is then put in the middle of the altar, while additional containers like pyxis and flagon are set off to the side. If the latter are consecrated, they should also be in the center.

### **5.2.3 Second consecration**

If during distribution the consecrated elements run out, then we would certainly have to consecrate the additional bread and the wine brought to the altar. Where this does not happen, mere bread and wine are distributed. In accord with the Lutheran doctrine of Holy Communion, it is absolutely necessary to consecrate bread and wine brought to the altar additionally. And it is false doctrine for such additional bread and wine to be distributed without consecration.

This second consecration takes place by interrupting the distribution and then speaking the words of consecration over both the additional bread and the additional wine.

### **5.2.4 Purification**

If we as Lutherans believe "that in the Lord's Supper Christ's body and blood are truly and substantially present," then this would require a careful cleaning of paten and chalice. This is referred to as purification. The crumbs remaining from the body of Christ are wiped into the chalice, and the chalice should be cleaned with water or with non-consecrated wine. Then dry the chalice with an appropriate cloth (purificatorium).

Just before his death, on his last trip to Eisleben, Luther made a stop in the city of Halle because the river Saale was flooding. While there Luther conducted a mass. Because of his age and illness he was rather frail and infirm, and during distribution some wine spilled on the floor. And in full vestments the old man knelt down and sucked what had been spilled from floor; nothing of the precious blood of Christ should be stepped on. The whole congregation — so it is reported — observed this with many tears and loud crying.

### 5.2.5 Communion linens

The linens we used for the celebration of Holy Communion are very illustrative, and they have only symbolic meaning. We already mentioned the corporale, a white linen. On it we place the communion vessels. It symbolizes the shroud at the burial of Jesus.

And according to ancient custom, a purificator is placed on the chalice and it can remind us of Jesus' swaddling clothes that the angel expressly mentions as a sign of the Incarnation to the shepherds in Bethlehem: "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (LUKE 2:12).

The veil of the chalice in the colors of the Church Year together with the stiff square kind of form a tent. It could be useful to preach a sermon about this tent to which St. John refers in the Revelation: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (REV. 21:3). The reference here is to a tent, and what John sees is already fulfilled where Holy Communion is celebrated. God is tenting among us.

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Who was Rev. Vladislav Santarius and why does he remain a precious model of enthusiasm about and for Jesus Christ?

# FAITH, ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE THOUGHTS AND WORK OF PASTOR VLADISLAV SANTARIUS

by Martin Piętak

*Editor's note: This essay was written by a theologian in the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (SECAC).<sup>1</sup> The origins of this church date to the 16th century, when Luther's ideas came back to Silesia by students who were studying in and near Wittenberg. The church suffered persecution under the Counter Reformation and during Communist times in the 20th century. The church has strong pietistic tendencies but considers itself Lutheran and seeks a stronger Lutheran identity. The SECAC has a partnership with the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) of Germany, a partner church of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in diaconal matters. The SECAC and the Missouri Synod also signed a working agreement in Fall 2010, which entails cooperation in the following areas: regular contact between the church leadership, collective theological work to strengthen the work of pastoral ministry (e.g., in the form of pastoral lectures and pastoral convention) and reciprocal invitations to theological presentations. The SECAC and the Missouri Synod are not in altar and pulpit fellowship. This essay was presented at a conference on the development of diaconal work in the SECAC in Cesky Těšín on Oct. 10, 2015. The purpose of presenting this paper is to familiarize International Lutheran Council members with the work of some Lutherans during the Communist era and among church bodies they are less familiar with.*

In the 20th century, the region of Těšín Silesia was very diverse in terms of ethnicity and social structure. Religion, faith and service in the Church, therefore, easily became a part of the problem rather than their solution. Vladislav Santarius<sup>2</sup> was a true son of the region, and he was very well aware of this danger. He was born and grew up in a period of escalating ethnic tensions. As for social background, his family was rather poor, quite large (he had six siblings) and mostly working in the mines, which was typical for the region at those times. In terms of ethnicity, he was Polish. At home, his family spoke a Polish dialect, but after finishing the first cycle of primary education at a Polish school in Stonava, he started the second cycle at a Czech school in Horní Suchá. Afterward, his

secondary studies took place at the Czech grammar school in Český Těšín and after school-leaving exams, he continued at Evangelical Theological Faculty in Bratislava in Slovakia.<sup>3</sup> As far as religion is concerned, he grew up in an evangelical family and he was strongly influenced by the “awakening” movement led above all by parson Kulisz. In the regional context, both the language and the religion were generating considerable tensions in 20th century. Our aim will be to analyze in what manner it was possible to re-conciliate and relatively peacefully develop these aspects of human life that are the most frequent causes of conflicts and wars. We will treat them in an order reflecting life priorities: faith, social issues and ethnicity.

On the basis of his studies of Scripture and Reformation documents, [Santarius] sought an integral, Christocentric and active Christianity as an opposite to a spiritless religion.

<sup>1</sup> For information on the Lutheran churches in the Czech Republic, see David Jurech, “Global Lutheranism Finding the Lutherans in the Czech Republic,” *Lutheran Forum* 45, no. 2 (2011), 26–29.

<sup>2</sup> Editor's note: Vladislav Santarius is known for being one of the leading Christians in Czechoslovakia during the Communist times. He was persecuted for his Christian faith but not imprisoned.

<sup>3</sup> Allegedly, he started to attend the Czech grammar school because it was a state institution and therefore free of charge. The Polish grammar school was a private institution and a fee had to be paid, which his family could not afford. This situation was nevertheless undoubtedly the result of a strong Czechoslovak nationalist policy in the Těšín region and local Polish population must have perceived it as harm.

## Faith and religion

As far as faith is concerned, the situation was explosive in three aspects. On one hand, there was the traditional Church that was — among others — willing to collaborate with the Communist authorities. On the other hand, there were revival movements with partially separatist tendencies aimed at leaving the Church. Finally, there was also the official Communist atheism of the Czechoslovak state that considered the faith an anachronism, planned to abolish the Church and liked to use internal conflicts within the Church to achieve its own goals.

The faith in the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ was the absolute essence of the thoughts and life of Pastor Santarius. On the basis of his studies of Scripture and Reformation documents, he sought an integral, Christocentric and active Christianity as an opposite to a spiritless religion. His programmatic documents and also his implementation of basic theological points in his pastoral work prove how much he wished to return to a simple biblical Christianity — the one with apostles and reformers, based on personal relation with God and manifested in an active and practical love and inclusion of all believers in the service of the Church. He refused spiritless traditionalism and routine bigotry where nothing echoed in the real life. His thoughts were thus a continuation of the traditional Silesian Lutheranism that was influenced by Pietism and the awakening movement.<sup>4</sup> His home in Stonava is a good example. There were three neighboring houses, and in each of them, Bible classes of a different awakening movement were organized, namely Christian Fellowship, Salvation Army and the Blue Cross. This led him among others firmly to refuse the servile attitude of the Church and its passive reconciliation with the aggressive boom of atheism. He, therefore, got into conflict with both the official leadership of the Church and the state authorities. For this reason, his activities

He considered the service of mercy as the essential practical manifestation of living the Gospel. It was not just a facultative matter or an option to him; it was the vital need of a living Church.

could certainly not be considered as non-conflicting. You can say that this was the main battle line. Vladislav Santarius was convinced not only about the fact that the Church needed an internal renewal but also about the fact that such renewal would really be possible (many people had already ceased to believe in it). Although his own church disappointed him many times, he decided never to leave it and instead freely to implement his own visions formulated in a visionary and a slightly idealistic way in his extensive project “Free Church of Unification,”<sup>5</sup> written during his theological studies.

He actively worked for the unification of various renewal initiatives within the Church. When the tensions between Association of Resolute Christians, Christian Fellowship and the Church escalated, he — as the chairman of Christian Fellowship and on behalf of both movements — elaborated a conciliatory “Project for Solution of Internal Problems of Mission Movement in Těšín Silesia” (May 1947).<sup>6</sup> However, the superintendent of the church, J. Berger, rejected the project without any discussions.<sup>7</sup> The unification of the Church and renewal movements failed and the members of Association of Resolute Christians seceded from the Church. This was a considerable disappointment for many people, including Vladislav Santarius.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, he never gave up the struggle for the renewal. He found encouragement in various examples from Church history, but he also carefully watched the evolution in the new secession churches and maintained occasional contacts with their representatives.

Vladislav Santarius, thus, remained faithful to his denomination. He considered himself Lutheran, and you

<sup>4</sup> For more information (in Czech) about the theology of V. Santarius: PIĘTAK, Stanislav, *Teologie pastora Vladislava Santariuse*. In VV. AA., Vladislav Santarius, *Svobodný v nesvobodě. Konference ke 100. výročí narození*. Sborník. (not published yet) and articles in ŘÍMAN, Karel, ed. *Pane, Ty jsi povolal... Vladislav Santarius - Boží dílo skrze jeho život a službu. Český Těšín: Slezská církev evangelická a. v.*, 2001. ISBN 80-238-7873-5, especially the articles *Zakotvení ve své církvi* (V. Volný, s. 111–118) and *Teologické důrazy* (S. Piętak, s. 119–126).

<sup>5</sup> W. Wolny *Kościół Zjednoczenia Santarius. Ruch zjednoczenia chrześcijańskiego. Chrześcijaństwo miłości. Charakterystyka i organizacja*. Manuscript; no further data (1940?), 34.

<sup>6</sup> In Karel Říman, ed. *Pane, Ty jsi povolal*, 44–50.

<sup>7</sup> *Pane, Ty jsi povolal*, pp. 39–43. Such acting was perceived as a mistake also by his secretary, parson Jiří Wařach (as he mentioned in a personal interview at the end of 1990's — Martin Piętak).

<sup>8</sup> For more information about the relations between Christian Fellowship, Association of Resolute Christians and Evangelical Church: e.g. SPRATEK, Daniel. *Vznik Křesťanského společenství - impulsy, důvody, události, význam*. In: *Mezinárodní vědecká konference „Evropa Ducha — pietistická hnutí v církvi a ve společnosti ve XX. a XXI. století“* [online]. 2005. Available at: [http://www.academia.edu/2362250/Vznik\\_Křesťanského\\_společenství\\_-\\_impulsy\\_důvody\\_události\\_význam](http://www.academia.edu/2362250/Vznik_Křesťanského_společenství_-_impulsy_důvody_události_význam).

can say without hesitation that he was a rigorous one, especially in comparison to the Czech Brethren and other Christian groups around him.<sup>9</sup> From the perspective of a confessional Lutheran, some of Vladislav Santarius' points of view were unorthodox (perhaps having been influenced by the Czech Brethren).<sup>10</sup> Overtime, Santarius rejected his former views as his practice became more Lutheran. In any case, he was acquainted with Luther's thoughts better than many of his colleagues. Although the leadership of the church did not give him much space in printed matters published by the church (*Friend of People* magazine, *Evangelical Calendar*),<sup>11</sup> they used to contact him when more expert (Lutheran) dogmatic issues were to be treated.

He was very proud of the Lutheran Reformation heritage. It must be said that this pride was sometimes quite close to stubbornness, for example, during conflicts with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren concerning the existence of a congregation of the Augsburg Confession in Ostrava. Pastor Santarius demonstrated quite ostentatiously that it was a Lutheran congregation of the Augsburg Confession, for example, by putting the portraits of Luther virtually in every room in the congregation premises or by having the inscription "Dedicated by Jan Michalik, Evangelical Parson of Augsburg Confession" carved on the Baptism font. This certainly was not the best strategy to achieve heartfelt relations with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. Sometimes his human features simply couldn't keep pace with his spiritual principles.

Despite this, his work is an example of the best tradition of Lutheran evangelism constructively combined with dynamic missionary activities set into new conditions. Thanks to the emphasis he put on missionary work,

<sup>9</sup> Editor's note: Vladislav Santarius considered himself a Lutheran, especially in contrast to the Czech Brethren. The Czech Brethren is a union church that accepts both the Augsburg Confession and the Helvetic Confession. Santarius saw himself in contrast to the Union Church background.

<sup>10</sup> For example, the Czech Brethren replaced the altar with a simple table. Santarius seems initially to have agreed with this position and others on Baptism and confirmation from the Czech Brethren.

<sup>11</sup> He had a folder in which he filed all his articles that the redaction refused to publish.

he was able to gain respect of many preachers from other churches, and he was also invited to preach in a large-scale evangelization meeting organized by Snaha movement in Zlín. Even today, people far beyond the denominational boundaries of his own church body remember his service with respect.

### Social issues

His fervent faith was nevertheless not floating in some kind of spiritual vacuum, far from real social and material needs of particular human beings. He was born into a family of miners and experienced forced labor both during World War II and during Communist rule,<sup>12</sup> so he had a special gift for establishing close relations with ordinary people and gaining their sympathies. He had a natural sense of fair play<sup>13</sup> and a

deep compassion for human misery. During War II, he participated in aiding Russian captives, and he acted in a similar way in 1964 when he organized material support for families of imprisoned representatives of Association of Resolute Christians after their unsuccessful demand for being recognized as an independent church.

He fully expressed and developed his social feelings when he was appointed manager of Betezda and Sarepta charitable institutions in the village of Komorní Lhotka. He did this job from 1948–1957, and he ensured the best care possible — both in terms of physical health and spiritual needs. He had large-scale renovation works done and practical equipment delivered. He also acted as pastor along with running the above mentioned institutions — first in Komorní Lhotka (from the very beginning of his service), since 1950 in Třanovice and since 1953 in Ostrava and Bohumín. This was extremely demanding as far as office work and time management were concerned. One hardly believes how much he was able to manage under the given circumstances; he was tough as a bulldog.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Because of political reasons, he had to work manually in a demolition and re-cultivation company from 1963–1965.

<sup>13</sup> At a young age, he organized a petition in his home in Stonava in order to make sure that both the Catholic and the evangelic parson were present during the sanctification of the fire engine; this objective was accomplished.

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed description of his social activities, see the article written by his son Česlav Santarius: Sociální citění a přístup k teologii

If the question of God's Kingdom is supposed to be the priority, the issue of nationality and language must be handled in such a way to make sure that Gospel is spread and Christians remain united.

He continued to serve elderly and ill people even after the Betezda and Sarepta institutions had been nationalized. He selflessly used to see ill people, often in their homes, and he organized Bible classes and involved many of his co-workers in these activities. He taught them that it's necessary to satisfy physical needs as first, in order to make sure that the Word of God is afterward preached in a trustworthy way. He was renowned for his lightning fast few-minute visits of patients. Though very brief, these visits used to bring much consolation and encouragement, and they also showed a proof of faith to atheist patients.<sup>15</sup>

If we tried to make a summary of his attitude to social issues, there would be two main theses: (1) He considered service to needy people as the essential task of all believers. However, he neither drowned in social activism, nor did he sacrifice his faith for social welfare. (2) He had a vision of a largely stratified institutional diakonie that he, unfortunately, could not bring to life under the given circumstances, but he knew that the crucial aspect would consist in enthusiastic volunteers able to implement basic Christian services even without a suitable institutional background.

### **Service to fellow neighbors as essential manifestation of living faith**

He considered the service of mercy as the essential practical manifestation of living the Gospel. It was not just a facultative matter or an option to him; it was the vital need of a living Church. The urgency of this mission along with a self-critical point directed against contemporary work of the Church are expressed in quite a resolute way in his vision "Characteristics of Christianity in Years to Come," especially in articles 17–19. It is worth it to quote this text in its full extent as a demonstration of how wide the range of his thoughts was (see the emphasis put on cooperatives) and how detailed they were:

Ethnicity was very important to him, but he also wanted to make sure that it would not hamper spreading the Gospel.

17. The Eternity starts already here on Earth. That's why Christians have to live their lives fully already on Earth, without postponing things for afterlife. Such a man is called by an act of love to spread God's kingdom on Earth.

18. Christianity has to implement the programme of social renewal. It must not keep tolerating preachers' 'chitchat' about welfare in Heaven that will come after death. The issue of daily bread exists only on Earth and we have to solve it here. Alms are the shame of man; we need to establish suitable social conditions including all relevant institutions in order to allow people to keep their human dignity. Christianity can't be based on individuals - it must be based on general public. Christianity must not take off and fly to heaven, forgetting about the misery of workers; it must work on the unification of humanity. The supreme type and form of democracy are concerned.

19. Christianity is a thoroughly social matter and in its original form it enables socialization and cooperative approach not only in material and economical matters, but also in the world of spirituality and ideas. The idea of cooperativeness should reflect in the whole spiritual organization, including the preaching pulpit. Christianity is the leader of humanity; it exists for people, not for gods or saints. Its task is to unveil spiritual hypocrisy, 'bigotry and casuistic moralizing everywhere they exist; it should openly look in the eyes of human life and penetrate into its deepest secrets. It has to reach the deepest depths of human life; it must not formally decide about human beings and their value. Christianity doesn't know any templates; it uses the latest outcomes of research.<sup>16</sup>

Today we consider emphasising merciful service as a natural mission of the whole Church. However, in real life we can observe a tendency toward a more comfortable transfer of some services to professionals. For this reason, one thing is up-to-date even today, namely the emphasis that Vladislav Santarius put on the need of the Church (or actually its congregations and their individual

diakonie (křesťanské službě lásky) v teoretických úvahách i v praxi. In Pane, *Ty jsi povolal*, 98–110.

<sup>15</sup> His nephew remembers that Pastor once visited him at hospital where he was sharing room with several miners who used particularly rough language. Pastor spent about five minutes at the room, handed out sweets to everybody, uttered a few words and, in the end, prayed aloud. His departure was followed by approximately 30 minutes of silence; nobody dared to ask who that man had been. And no rough word was pronounced till the evening, not even whispered.

<sup>16</sup> Charakteristika křesťanství v příštích letech, In Pane, *ty jsi povolal*, 38.

members) to be actively taught and led toward accepting merciful services as their mission in this world, regardless of possibilities or limitations of institutional diacony. In real life, this means, on one hand, the development of individual and congregational diakonie (in the context of church congregations), and on the other hand, the need to develop volunteerism ensured not only by foreign trainees but also by local members of the Church (in the context of diacony). Last but not least, it also means to encourage young believers to study related professions and to work in social, charitable and humanitarian services. Congregations have to learn how to consider the service in institutional diakonie as their proper feature. Both the congregations and the diakonie must therefore cultivate the elements of diaconal movement, which is based on enthusiastic volunteers “full of faith, Holy Ghost and wisdom.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Spiritual dimension of diacony**

Despite a strong emphasis put on satisfying the social needs of people, Vladislav Santarius never slipped into superficial social activism or, even worse, into giving up the service to Church and replacing it by Socialism in which the faith would dissolve. To be quite exact, not all his fellow pastors were able to do the same.<sup>18</sup> It is true he recognized the equation “Christianity = (automatically) social activity,” but the contrary — “social activity = (automatically) Christianity” — did not apply to him, of course. He considered Jesus Christ too precious and 100 percent needed and sufficient in this field; Christian services simply could not do without him.<sup>19</sup> Merciful service is expression of the essence of Christianity, but not its essence itself. Jesus

He was far from being flawless in his acting and judging, but he remains a precious model of enthusiasm about and for Jesus Christ.

Christ and His Gospel are the essence. That’s why the evangelical basis of the faith is so important.

When the secretary of the Communist party responsible for ideology tried to convince him that in the perfect welfare of the Communist society, people will no more need to believe in God, Pastor Santarius argued that the contrary would be true: “The better off people are here on Earth, the more reluctant they will be to depart from this world. The death will remain a great mystery and it will perturb them, making them think about supernatural things. They will be searching for answers and this will lead them to the Church.”<sup>20</sup>

Today we can’t but confirm the truthfulness of this argument. Communism collapsed along with its specific concept of welfare and its generalized social guarantees. In spite of this, we are living in a great welfare, a rich society, where the exceptions prove the rule. And we can’t but confirm that the need of supernaturality did not disappear. The question is whether we, as the Church of Christ, are ready to provide trustworthy answers and authentic spiritual background; we must indeed compete with many new spiritual movements.

### **Service to fellow neighbours and diakonie today**

The collapse of Communism brought new unexpected possibilities for the development of diaconal work. Thanks to the efforts of Pastor Santarius, there were projects to be continued and people to implement them. Visions of Pastor Santarius came true to a considerable extent, including far-reaching international influence. Today, Slezská Diakonie employs hundreds of people and runs dozens of centres. But we’re also facing completely new challenges. The biggest ones are not related to the question of how to extend the range of diaconal services. The question is rather how to preserve the truly diaconal, service-oriented, Christocentric and free nature of diakonie and how to maintain the spirit of selfless serving and cooperation in the Church, both within and beyond the framework of institutional diacony.

In this context, the emphasis put on the spiritual dimension of diaconal service, on its evangelization and missionary tasks, and on the participation in the spiritual

<sup>17</sup> See characteristics of people performing “diaconal tasks” mentioned in Acts 6:3, 5, 8.

<sup>18</sup> The unbelievably sad words of Parson K. Kyjánek (included in 1951 Annual Report of SECAC Congregation in Ostrava and recorded in the SECAC archives) do not refer directly to the social services of the Church, but they do give us an idea of to what extent some people in the Church gave up their spiritual service. The local choir fell apart because choir conductors altered frequently and choir members lacked time: “This was not caused by an aversion to Church singing; just the contrary — all our members were sorry for not being able to meet. We can frankly state that our congregation made this sacrifice on behalf of the socialist development of Ostrava Region and we are glad to have made this sacrifice. According to us, the development of Ostrava region is the priority to which everything else must be subordinate.”

<sup>19</sup> Cf. W. Parę Santarius, skromnych uwag do problematyki Kościoła Chrystusowego w Nowym Testamencie. Samizdat; no further data.

<sup>20</sup> Pane, Tys povolal, 53–54.

renewal of individuals and the whole nation should be considered as the family treasure of Slezská Diakonie. Indeed, sacrificing the faith in the name of social services would mean to give up the truly holistic service provided to man as a whole. In real life, this could mean a struggle for a meaningful legislation and the courage to face post-Christian social and ethical experiments.<sup>21</sup> It's quite possible that one day diakonie will have to stop the provision of some services because national or European regulations would force it to act in contradiction with Christian faith and Bible-based ethics. However, this must never mean to lose the identity of our own faith or to deny the wish to express love by means of true acts.

## Ethnicity

Just as in each border region with a complex history, ethnicity was playing — and has been playing — an important role in Těšín region. Pastor Santarius grew up in a period of fervent ethnic conflicts that caused much disunity among evangelical believers living in the region. The establishment of as many as three various national congregations — German, Czech and Polish — is indeed a very eloquent proof. Escalated ethnic conflicts caused the separation of whole parts of particular congregations and their unification with other parts of church structure.

Let's mention examples from Komorní Lhotka, the first congregation where Pastor Santarius worked. The congregation in Staré Hamry was united with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and a new Adventist congregation was established in Dobruška. This event is often associated not only with a different theology but also — at least partially — with linguistic differences; Czech-speaking members of the congregation thought that their rights were not respected. Some people still remember a fist fight between the Czech parson Janeček and the Polish parson Krzywoń that took place in Komorní Lhotka during the first disturbed years after World War II, when there were efforts to unify the congregation with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. Similar incidents were a great scandal for the members of the Church.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> As negative examples of legislation that may be smartly abused, we might light absurd hygienic regulations, for example, published by Communist authorities concerning the Betezda and Sarepta centers or the ban on pastoral visits beyond the territory of the congregation. The only objective was to stop the Bible classes from being organized.

<sup>22</sup> For more detailed information about the ethnic composition of evangelical believers in Těšín Region, see works by J. Szymeczek, e.g. Józef Szymeczek. Rola Kościołów w życiu narodowym Polaków na Zaolziu. In Józef Szymeczek, ed. Polacy na Zaolziu — Poláci na Těšínsku. 1920–2000. Proceedings from academic conference held on

However, let's get back to the life story of Pastor Santarius. It has already been mentioned that due to the pressure generated by given circumstances, the second cycle of his primary education and his secondary education took place at Czech schools. However, once he started to study in Slovakia (1937), his national feelings woke up. It is quite interesting that in his biography, he mentions Bratislava as “the place of full national awareness.” While making this note, he also added and underscored the following remark (addressed to Czech politicians in the region of Těšín): “Depriving someone of his nationality is a sin.”<sup>23</sup>

His experience convinced him deeply that the majority society should take minorities in consideration. When World War II started, his family refused the so-called “Volkliste.” In real life, this meant relegation among the most disadvantaged and most persecuted ethnic groups. Pastor Santarius had a very personal experience with this fact, as he was practically immediately sent to forced labor. He was proud of his origin as well as of the region he came from. In his works, he mentions local people with a great respect: “our nation,” “our man.”<sup>24</sup> On the wall of his study, he used to have a large map of the Těšín region with statistics about ethnic composition in particular villages in 19th century. They proved that the original local population used to be mostly Polish. He considered himself Polish during his whole life and was also perceived as Polish both in Czechoslovakia and abroad. He also died as a “genuine Polish,” in the words of Pala, a lawyer, expressed at the funeral of Pastor Santarius.

Nonetheless, it seems that contrary to some other priests, he was able to keep his heart open not only to Polish people but to Czech and Slovak people as well. Nationality didn't become his hidden religion or, rather, he was able to distinguish his nationality from his faith. No matter how much he treasured his Polish origin, he never actively participated in enforcing Polish national interests on the educational or even political level.

As a sharp observer, he was certainly able to see that too intense national feelings excluded some of his colleagues and predecessors from a free service in the Church. In this context, let's mention Dr. J. Berger and his involvement in ethnic-based organizations, including his

Oct. 13–14, 2000, in Český Těšín. Český Těšín: Kongres Polaków, 2000, s. 141–150. ISBN 80-238-8050-0.

<sup>23</sup> Biographical album, 16, family archive.

<sup>24</sup> Charakteristika křesťanství v příštích letech, art. 10 and 11. In Pane, Ty jsi povolal, 37.

work as deputy in the Silesian Sejm (parliament) during the Polish occupation of Těšín region; he paid a price for this by being sent into a forced exile in Slovakia. We can also mention J. Kulisz, the principal spiritual model for Vladislav Santarius, and his controversial solemn sermon “When the Corn Ears Get Ripe” on the occasion of Polish occupational forces entering the Czech part of Těšín Silesia.

As far as Czech parsons are concerned, we can mention the controversial work of Jan Geryk or Pavel Janeček. It would be even more flagrant to compare them with Paul Zahradnik, the parson of the German Church congregation Na Rozvoji, who enthusiastically welcomed German troops, or with Jan Geryk and Pavel Janeček and their efforts of enforcing Czech language and culture. Pastor Santarius had esteem for K. Kulisz and J. Berger for their faith, personal courage and the suffering they had to endure because of their ethnic origin during the war. He also certainly understood the reasons for their actions, considering the regional history and the complex situation into which the majority of the Polish population got after the region was unified with Czechoslovakia.

However, he understood that national feelings and faith had to be grasped differently. Ethnicity was very important to him, but he also wanted to make sure that it would not hamper spreading the Gospel. He intentionally sought to prevent the missionary movement from being limited to a single nation and thus to just a specific part of society. Already at young age, he promoted what is today considered as a reasonable model of co-existence of various nations: integration of Western type instead of a wild Balkan way.<sup>25</sup> Where was this attitude anchored? In his strictly Christocentric concept of Christianity.

He clearly formulated his points of view at the beginning of World War II in the already mentioned project Free Church of Unification. Starting with Article 2.b — “Jesus Christ is the central point of life” [sic, i.e. not the central point of faith] — he arrives at the following thesis in Article 2.f: “The unification of everything in Christ is the goal and the consequence of Christianity. Everything must concentrate on it and all differences have to withdraw,” including nationalistic issues.

All this is emphasised in Article 3.ch where the full freedom of the planned movement is accentuated: “Free, independent, united Christianity working like an

organization aimed at the welfare of the nation, state and humanity; never serving material, earthly, perishing, unilateral or individual interests of individuals, groups or whole nations or states ... if they are contradictory to the nature of Christianity.”

According to him, the real renewal of a nation could not be ensured just by preserving the language and the culture. He was convinced that a nation needs more profound values. From this point of view, it's interesting to read Article 11 from his study “Characteristics of Christianity in Years to Come,” written when he was just 24 years old. “*Our man or nation doesn't need to go through Rome, Wittenberg or Geneva to reach God ... Our man, our nation is able and has the right to reach God through Christ.* That's why Christianity has to promote individual thinking and individual rebirth of a nation; it must supply the nation with the greatest values, absorbing the positive features of the nation and destroying the negative ones”<sup>26</sup> (emphasis mine). This was written in October 1939 during the first months of German occupation.

When you see these spiritual points of view, there is no wonder that he was able to quickly temper ethnic tensions wherever he worked and served.<sup>27</sup> The usual proceedings (at some places up to 1990s) consisted in dividing the congregation into a Czech and a Polish part, which was sometimes partially motivated also by the mutual animosity between the Czech and the Polish parson. Quite often, when somebody arrived by mistake to a church service in the other language, he or she simply turned around and went back home. However, Pastor Santarius was not willing to tolerate such things. If the question of God's Kingdom is supposed to be the priority, the issue of nationality and language must be handled in such a way to make sure that Gospel is spread and Christians remain united. That's why he united the existing choirs — Czech and Polish — very shortly after he had started to work in Třanovice; the united choir afterward sang in both languages. Pastor Santarius argued in the following manner: “They will all speak the same language in heaven; so why should two languages from the same kinship be divided, when everybody understands both of them?”<sup>28</sup> He was very serious about the affirmation in the Bible that we are just guests on this earth. Believers are above all citizens of

<sup>25</sup> Szymeczek, op. cit, 150. Szymeczek makes reference above all to E. Gellnera: Ernst Gellner, *Národy a nacionalismus*, Prague: Hřibál, 1993. ISBN 80-901381-1-X, 158.

<sup>26</sup> Charakteristika křesťanství v příštích letech, in Pane, *Ty jsi povolal*, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Pane, *Ty jsi povolal*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

heaven (Phil. 3:20) and they should settle their citizenship on earth accordingly.

Pastor's vigor, enthusiasm and organizational talent played their role too. He was able to make people focus on spiritual work and to keep them busy in such a way that according to many people, "There was no time for silly things,"<sup>29</sup> among them no time for eternal conflicts about language or nationality. For him, these issues had actually no place in the congregation because there were more important issues and tasks. He put everybody on the same level and made sure that everybody's (national) rights were respected. He found it absolutely natural to serve people in the language that was close to them. While having sermons or speeches, he was able to switch flexibly between Polish and Czech or even Slovak if some Slovak people were present. He also led his co-workers to do the same.<sup>30</sup>

Regardless of their nationality, he actually expected pastors to be able to serve both in Czech and in Polish. And he also expected the listeners to be so fond of the Word of God that they would appreciate hearing it in a different language. The emphasis put on bilingualism was reflected also by the number of new three-language hymnals comprising songs in Polish, Czech and Slovak. Following the apostle Paul's example, he tried to be "Polish for the Polish and Czech for the Czech." People with more pronounced national feelings could not have been satisfied with this approach (some thought he was trying to enforce Czech language, while others blamed him for enforcing Polish language), but it was a precious example of Christ's love implemented in practice.

The paradox of the ethnically neutral (or rather integrationist) approach of Vladislav Santarius is the fact that it would be hard to find other personalities in social life who would be naturally able to make so many local and foreign (Czech and Slovak) co-workers learn Polish (and gain at least a passive knowledge). Even today, many people who have been working in the Church and who came from other regions of the Czech Republic are quite capable of preaching in Polish. This was far from being the main objective of his efforts, but it somehow came by as a professional necessity. In a natural and quite an

essential way, he thus managed to preserve the Polish element in the Church.

Let's not just praise though. In spite of his efforts to find balance in ethnic issues, you can also see a certain fluctuation and progress in the life of Pastor Santarius. For instance, he was quite reticent toward many German people (certainly not toward all of them). In specific contexts, he didn't hesitate to recall the negative role of Germany in the history of 20th century. No wonder; he was indeed a victim of German fascism himself.

But there were also other moments when his local patriotism manifested itself in an instinctive and not quite sensitive way. His work in Ostrava was perhaps the most obvious example. For illustration, let's remember that when the evangelical church in Ostrava was founded at early 20th century, the main part of local evangelical believers were either German or Polish; Czech people constituted just a minority. Taking into consideration the Polish history of the congregation, as well as the fact that many people of Polish origin kept leaving the Těšín region in order to find jobs in Ostrava (or they at least commuted to attend the church services of Pastor Santarius), he did not hesitate to hold regular church services in Polish, despite the fact that Ostrava gradually became almost entirely a Czech town. Not everybody appreciated this. Sometimes he also astounded visitors from Bohemia, Moravia or even from abroad, advising them — with a certain exaggeration and seemingly not quite seriously though with quite an emphasis (as was usually the case with him) — that brothers should learn Polish because they would need this language to serve local people better.

### **In what way is this approach inspirational, if we consider the present and the future of the Church in this region?**

The issue of nationality, or at least the issue of language used during church services, remains a hot topic in some congregations, although the voices are much calmer than they used to be just after World War II. Now and then, it's precisely the language that plays a role in joining or leaving a church. The need for tolerance and respect has not vanished at all. Just the contrary. Nowadays, the situation is considerably different because after World War II, local people generally kept speaking the regional dialect, no matter if they declared Czech or Polish nationality. This is not the case anymore. Nowadays, the question is not who you feel to be but what you understand or not.

Many Czech-speaking people simply don't understand

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Pane, *Ty jsi povolal ...*, 84–J. Kunz declares that young people had no time for "bad" activities (dancing parties, bad company, alcohol, etc.). However, other people indeed also mentioned "nationalist passions" in this context.

<sup>30</sup> I remember that in our teens, we used to make fun of orators who fluently switched between languages, calling them "switch-men."

Polish anymore. It's perhaps a pity, but it's like that. When you look back in the past, you may sometimes — very carefully and just under certain circumstances — reproach the Polish majority for a lack of sensibility toward the Czech minority.<sup>31</sup> Today, it's vice versa. It's necessary to make sure that the Czech majority in the church has a sensitive approach towards the Polish minority. It's not easy, but it's necessary. When you see the growing globalization and the new migration period that has been taking place recently, you may perhaps perceive the situation in our region as a kind of training of tolerance and co-existence of various ethnic groups. It seems that focusing clearly on Jesus Christ, promoting a helpful approach and working together on “superior objectives” is the only passable path to take.

Another lesson we can take from Vladislav Santarius may be considered as his major contribution in this field: namely the way he managed to perceive the ethnic diversity of Czech-Polish-Slovak borderland as something positive, as a strategic advantage and a great occasion to preach the Gospel regardless of borders between states or nations. He had a vision: a Church that would be active not only in the Těšín region but among neighboring nations as well. He urged his co-workers to accept responsibility not only for the spiritual life of their own congregations and their own church but for those of other evangelical churches as well. He initiated several meetings and trainings for employees from Poland and Slovakia.<sup>32</sup> He thus implemented his far-reaching vision from the already mentioned project “Free Church of Unification,” where he defined in details the “sequence of regions to be gained:” (1) Těšín region, (2) the whole Polish nation (in accordance with the slogan “Silesia to the Polish nation”), (3) West Slavic nations (Czech, Slovak and the rest of the others), (4) East Slavic nations, (5) South Slavic nations, (6) neighbors of Slavic nations and (7) through Slavic nations, the whole humanity.

You may hear a pathetic echo of the Polish messianic

complex.<sup>33</sup> You may feel uneasy in front of the megalomania of these youthful plans and the later activism. You may question some proceedings. You may point out certain blunders. But you can't deny that his vision was far ahead of his time. The conditions in the Communist Czechoslovakia allowed his work to reach only to the neighbouring Poland. The furthest he got — just on paper, though — was Romania. Indeed, the Dutch-American missionary Hank Paulson secretly visited Pastor Santarius several times with a supply of Western literature, and he described him in his book about Christians in Eastern Europe as a Romanian pastor called Alex<sup>34</sup>

Thanks to his (often secret) international contacts, he raised awareness about Silesian evangelicals and their missionary work far beyond the national borders. But even more important was the fact that he filled his co-workers with enthusiasm for missionary service worldwide. It was no coincidence that the first large-scale conference on evangelization organized in Eastern Europe after the collapse of Communism took place right here. It was no coincidence that Pastor's co-workers or their descendants stood and have been standing behind the development of missionary and diaconal activities all over the world.

## Summary

Vladislav Santarius was able to take an explosive bundle of relations, interests and needs and to use it in a constructive way and to a general benefit. Inspired by the teaching of Jesus, he tried to re-conciliate oppositions and to find a balanced approach to everybody. His comprehensive concept of the Church and Christianity created conditions where the minimum resources provided by the Communist regime brought a maximum profit. He had great vision, but he also worked hard, starting out with small resources. His thoughts were focused on whole nations, but he never hesitated to devote his time and energy to a weak individual. Not discouraged when he was not enabled to do something, he never lost his faith and used every chance. He thought on a global level and acted on a local level.

He was far from being flawless in his acting and

<sup>31</sup> Cf. e.g. Józef Szymeczek. Rola Kościołów w życiu narodowym Polaków na Zaolziu. In Józef Szymeczek, ed. *Polacy na Zaolziu — Poláci na Těšínsku. 1920–2000. Polacy na Zaolziu – Poláci na Těšínsku. 1920–2000*. Proceedings from academic conference held on Oct. 13–14, 2000, in Český Těšín. Český Těšín: Kongres Polaków, 2000, s. 141–150. ISBN 80-238-8050-0. 146. “Believers with Czech nationality were considered to be Poles who had been forcibly assimilated into Czech culture and were able to understand Polish language. For this reason, the Church of Augsburg confession did not pay much attention to ensuring some specific care for Czech people.”

<sup>32</sup> Pane, Ty jsi povolal..., 56.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Polish poet A. Mickiewicz (especially his *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego*) and other Polish revivalists and their idea of Poland being the “Messiah of nations.”

<sup>34</sup> Hank Paulson. *Beyond the Wall: The People Communism Can't Conquer* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1982). Pastor's story is treated on pages 150–153. For more information about international contacts during Communist rule, cf. article by S. Piętań. *Mezinárodní rozměr jeho práce* In Pane, Ty jsi povolal..., 127–135.

judging, but he remains a precious model of enthusiasm about and for Jesus Christ. When remembering Vladislav Santarius, J. B. Hrboň appreciated the missionary activities with the following words, “Real faith has both enough imagination and enough love” to prove that “where they want to work, they are able to work despite unfavourable political system, despite any danger.”<sup>35</sup> We can’t but wish today’s Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession and Slezská Diakonie enough “real faith” and enough “imagination and love” for their future activities.

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Pane, Ty jsi povolal, 144.

# BOOK REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

***Mission Shaped by Promise: Lutheran Missiology Confronts the Challenge of Religious Pluralism* by Jukka A. Kääriäinen (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012)**

by John T. Pless

**K**ÄÄRIÄINEN IS A PASTOR of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod currently serving as associate professor of Systematic Theology at China Lutheran Seminary in Hsinchu, Taiwan. This book, published under the auspices of the American Society of Missiology Monograph Series, appears to be a revision of his doctoral dissertation at Fordham University. The topic is timely as is the author's efforts thoroughly to engage and promote classical Lutheran theological themes in articulating a contemporary approach to missiology. The first two chapters of the book are largely a Lutheran systematic theology of mission. Here Kääriäinen echoes Robert Bertram's that "*Promissio* is the secret of *missio*," a refrain that runs throughout his work. From this perspective Kääriäinen will provide a Lutheran hermeneutic for understanding the conceptuality of *missio Dei*: "*missio Dei* is shaped by *promissio*

*Dei*, or the promise of God is the secret of mission" (4). Along the way Kääriäinen enlists the resources of other Lutheran theologians, notably Edward Schroeder, Werner Elert, Gerhard Forde, Oswald Bayer, Carl Braaten and Robert Kolb to make his case. Contra Gustav Warneck and David Bosch, Kääriäinen sees Luther's theological legacy as rich with potential for missiology.

After laying out the contours of the Lutheran approach to mission as grounded in the divine promise and governed by the necessary distinction of the Law from the Gospel, Kääriäinen examines and critiques paradigms

represented by contemporary Roman Catholic theologians: Karl Rahner and Jacques Dupuis. Both operate with the traditional Roman "nature/grace" continuum. Rahner sees grace as a fulfillment of nature. Dupuis works out the implications of Rahner for missiology but especially for a theological affirmation of religious pluralism. Hence Dupuis asserts that "God may have — and indeed seems — to have more to say to humanity than what God has said in Jesus" (159). Rejecting a distinction

between "general" and "special" salvation history, Dupuis seeks to maintain that biblical and extra — biblical covenants are "complementary expressions of God's progressively unfolding history of salvation" (163). For Dupuis, the church is a sign of grace in the world but as the reign of God extends beyond the Church, salvation is present in other religions insofar as grace may be found there as well. Kääriäinen provides

There is much valuable material in Kääriäinen's book in light of the fact that much of contemporary Lutheran missiology seems to be adopted from Roman Catholic, Reformed or Evangelical sources.

a thorough critique of Dupuis' proposal making four major points: (1) Dupuis does not adequately distinguish between "revelation" and "salvation;" (2) Dupuis' indebtedness to the nature/grace model prevents him from sufficiently attending to the accusatory function of the Law and the promissory nature of the Gospel; (3) His "Spirit Christology" finally subordinates Christ to the Spirit so that the work of the Spirit moves beyond Jesus' death and resurrection; (4) Dupuis' understanding of the relationship of the church to the reign of God undermines the Church's role in mission.

This book's topic is timely as is the author's efforts to engage and promote classical Lutheran theological themes in articulating a contemporary approach to missiology.

The final two chapters of the book attempt to work out a constructive Lutheran proposal in light of the author's critique of Dupius. Here Kääriäinen invokes and elucidates key Lutheran themes. He suggests, for example, that the *missio Dei* conceptuality does not do justice to the twofold "mission" of God in the two governments. Working with Luther's distinction between God hidden and God revealed, Kääriäinen suggests a more "dialectical relationship" to proclamation and interreligious dialogue.

There is much valuable material in Kääriäinen's book in light of the fact that much of contemporary Lutheran missiology seems to be adopted from Roman Catholic, Reformed or Evangelical sources. However, the book also raises questions that beg for more careful analysis and a clarified response on the basis of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Kääriäinen's assertion that "all religious people of goodwill potentially believe in and worship the one true God" (238) runs counter to the condemnation of idolatry in Luther's exposition of the First Commandment in the *Large Catechism*. Here a helpful corrective is Edward Engelbrecht's *One True God: Understanding Large Catechism II:66* (Concordia Publishing House, 2007). Also problematic is the author's statement: "While my model emphasizes where Christ is present in his saving power — in the Gospel in its oral, written, and sacramental forms — one can never be certain He is not present" (251). Such a statement leaves the door open to a speculative theology that finally is detrimental to the necessity of proclamation.

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# BOOK REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

## ***Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology***

by Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015)

by John T. Pless

**D**ARRELL GUDER, the Henry Winters Luce Professor Emeritus of Missional and Ecumenical Theology at Princeton Theology Seminary, has enjoyed a distinguished career that grew out of his studies with Helmut Thielicke (1908–1986) at Hamburg, included significant work as a translator of theological works into English and most especially contributions in the study of missions. With the publication of the volume he edited in 1998, *The Missional Church: A Theological Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, he became the father of the term “missional.” If for no other reason, the emergence of this term and the freight that it carries makes *Called to Witness* an informative and provocative read.

Noting his teacher Helmut Thielicke’s dislike for adjectival theology, Guder concedes that the term has become something of a cliché with a multiplicity of meanings. He recalls the late bishop of the Church of South India Lesslie Newbigin’s (1909–1998) remark that when everything becomes mission, nothing is mission. Yet Guder defends the use of the term as a way of indicating a necessary theological shift with the alleged collapse of Christendom. Now, he argues, the Christian community must reconfigure every aspect of doctrine and life from the perspective of mission. Maintaining that the missional dimension was absent in Western Christendom and the theological systems that it produced. The new approach, he argues, will recover the missionary impulse of the

Early Church reading all of the so-called Nicene marks of the Church, “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” backwards beginning with apostolic. For Guder, the apostolic nature of the Church does not have to do so much with the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42) but with the fact that this community is sent into the world. Noting the historical development of the modern ecumenical movement out of the earlier missionary movement, Guder calls for a “missional ecumenism.” Here he shows his indebtedness to Lesslie Newbigin.

Chapter 2, “The *missio Dei*: A Mission Theology for after Christendom,” traces the development of the phrase, *missio Dei*, coined by Karl Hartenstein (1894–1952) in 1934 and popularized by the Willigen Conference in 1952. Guder shows the linkage of the term

to theology of Karl Barth (1886–1968) and its further development by David Bosch (1929–1992) and more recently John Flett (see his 2010 book *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*). Guder presses the point that missions are not simply a function or task of the Church but the Church by its being and nature missionary. Wilhelm Loehe (1808–1872) made essentially the same point in saying that mission is nothing other than the one Church of God in action. But unlike Loehe, Guder does not ground the missionary character of the Church in the pure preaching of the Gospel and the evangelical administration of the Sacraments.

*Called to Witness*, authored by the man who coined the phrase “missional,” makes an informative and provocative read.

*Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* provides a good window into the current state of the theology of mission by one of its most astute and articulate spokesmen.

Guder's intentions are clearly ecumenical. He praises the work of the Second Vatican Council with its accent on the "People of God" ecclesiology. He finds Avery Dulles (1908–2008) as a most useful resource for developing a missional ecclesiology. While ecumenically generous, Guder remains squarely within the tradition of modern Reformed theology shaped unmistakably by Karl Barth.

Most of the essays in this book were published in various journals or given as lectures over the last fifteen years. Given this fact, there is significant overlap and repetition between the chapters. For instance, we are told multiple times that Martin Kähler (1835–1912) asserted that mission was the mother of theology. *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* provides a good window into the current state of the theology of mission by one of its most astute and articulate spokesmen. It also provides sufficient evidence that this is not the path that confessional Lutheran missions can embrace or emulate. Perhaps it can challenge us to a more faithful practice in extending the word of the cross into the whole world.

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# BOOK REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

***Gnostic America: A Reading of Contemporary American Culture & Religion according to Christianity's Oldest Heresy***  
by Peter M. Burfeind (Pax Domini Press, 2014)

by Carl Rockrohr

**T**OO MUCH CONSPIRACY FLUFF, not enough clear confession of Jesus Christ. I hoped to read a thorough analysis of U.S. culture in terms of Gnosticism to perhaps better understand the people living in my own country. Instead, the major portion of the book puts forward a grand conspiracy theory of Gnosticism that has encompassed much of Western history.

This book is not an academic treatise. Its intent is not to get caught in the weeds of different Gnostic groups or teachings. For reasons this book will hopefully make clear, dealing with Gnosticism academically kind of misses the whole point of Gnosticism, which boasts a knowledge beyond book-learning. Thus it's far more productive to deal with Gnosticism in an archetypical or heuristic manner. This approach will make sense by the book's end (12).

In trying to leave out a thorough analysis of Gnosticism, a short "Gnosticism 101" summary is given on pages 6-7, but then the argument is sustained in chapter 2 to propose 13 traits of Gnosticism throughout history. The traits are then identified in another four chapters tracing the grand Gnostic conspiracy theory from ancient Greek myths, to the Gnostics at the time of the Early Church, to early Church fathers themselves, to monasticism, to Sufism, to love songs of troubadours in the Middle Ages, to Catharism, to Shakespeare, to European philosophers, to Communism, to the Nazis, to Jung, to the history of the Republican party, to 20th

century liberalism, to many contemporary popular musicians, comedians ... and the list goes on.

The number of persons and movements in history claimed to be part of the grand Gnostic conspiracy begs believability of the author's academic expertise. Has he studied every single historical person and movement that he states is involved to such an extent to prove something besides general parallels to this grand conspiracy? Are enough expert sources used? No. Such would require more academic rigor, but of course an academic treatise was not the aim.

At times liberty is taken with sources, especially in chapter 3, titled "The Underground Stream." I was irritated with the unexplained editorial insertion of Gnostic beings into a paragraph taken from Athanasius' *Life of Anthony*. There was no clear explanation for this charge against Athanasius except we are offered "a taste of Gnostic as well as Neoplatonic cosmological vision" (77). I spent time trying to follow up the citations, but to no avail; the charge stands unproved. Athanasius supposedly promoted Gnosticism just because the author suggests he does — guilt by suggestion. This ineffective attack against Athanasius made me suspicious of the use of other citations, and so the read became arduous.

It was strange that at one point the author expresses his own incredulity at the grand Gnostic conspiracy, notably the Sufi claim: "When I first read these words, I was incredulous. Albert the Great, Shakespeare, and Dante were Sufis? Coffee was a Sufi drink? How could any credentialed scholar make such a claim?" (80). The answer is

Is *Gnostic America* a book of Christian theology useful for understanding Christian mission?

The biblical account of man's first and continued rebellion to deny God's truth and to be like God is the biblical foundation to understand human history and our contemporary life.

that Gnosticism's claims are not bound by proofs because it transcends the mind. But then the question arises: Why does the author trust the opinions of such self-aggrandizing sources? It is unclear what the author thinks of false teachers; are their statements and theories reliable or not? Is their claimed Gnostic wisdom true or not?

The later chapters of the book, which give brief analysis of Neo-evangelicalism using the topics of worship, music, self, consumer choice, emergent church and neo-evangelical gnosis, are more useful, but the analysis is too short and often too generalized to be definitive. One wishes the writer would have concentrated on such contemporary topics rather than try to identify a grand universal Gnostic conspiracy in which he fails to suspend disbelief.

At its worst, *Gnostic America* reads like a conservative *DaVinci Code*. At its best, there are glimpses of truth that are Christian teaching, such as the Christian understanding of *agape* as self-sacrificial love for the other (61) or another all too brief paragraph that true Christian faith relies on an external hope (351).

But such insights occur too infrequently and are buried within the suggested details of the grand Gnostic theory. This leads to the question of the book's purpose and intended audience. Frequent theological code words and concepts without definitions eliminate many non-theological readers. The occasional rants against the Obama administration inject politics. The later chapters primarily focus on common confessional, theological Lutheran concerns. It appears the book is aimed at a few insiders of the same philosophical, theological, political and even economic persuasion. It might be best to call the book an attempt at a philosophy of history since Eric Voegelin is often cited as an authoritative source, as well as numerous attempts to incorporate various philosophers of the last two centuries.

Unfortunately, the book does not clearly aid true understanding of Christianity because there is not a sustained confession of Christ. There is no sustained exposition of biblical teaching for legitimate concerns expressed by the author, such as God's work through Word and Sacrament and not through feelings or special gnosis, the reality of the person of Jesus Christ, the weaknesses of popular contemporary worship styles. If these concerns are more valuable and true than Gnostic

lies, why not give a clear teaching? While the book touts a grand Gnostic conspiracy as what has happened leading up to the U.S., as well as happening in the U.S., the true revelation of Jesus Christ for the world as recorded in the Scriptures is not clearly presented to rebuff the conspiracy lies. Glimpses of the Gospel and Lutheran theology are here and there, but these occurrences are overshadowed under the perceived success of Gnosticism's rule of Western culture.

It is a mystery to me why the first temptations as recorded in Genesis 3 are never noted in the book as the most foundational explanations of our human condition. "Did God say? ... You can be like God knowing good and evil." The biblical account of man's first and continued rebellion to deny God's truth and to be like God is the biblical foundation to understand human history and our contemporary life. For the Christian, before there was a "system" of Gnosticism, there was the sinful rebellion against God's gifts and order, no Greek myths needed. Some parallels to, even repetition of, Gnostic thought throughout Western history are certainly present, but the biblical account of God's solution to mankind's rebellion in the gift of the Son is the reality that is needed by all mankind whether there is one grand conspiracy or another. Most certainly it is not a Gnostic conspiracy that gives the final explanation of many Americans' sense of despair (357).

At the root of humanity's despair is the natural state of all mankind caught in the clutches of sin, death and the devil.

Rather, at the root of humanity's despair is the natural state of all mankind caught in the clutches of sin, death and the devil. No matter what theory, special gnosis and current

religious and philosophical fads mankind dreams up, we cannot free ourselves. The author certainly would seem to support this point, but a book of Christian theology cannot allow the lies of the devil and our own sinful selves to be the final and loudest message, which is why I would not characterize this book as a book of Christian theology useful for understanding Christian mission. The person and work of Jesus Christ related, given and empowered in us through God's Word and Sacraments, is our sustained and clear message.

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# BOOK REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

One of the most valuable aspects of this 16th-century book shows the organic connection between doctrine and practice.

***Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel: How Doctrine, Ceremonies, and Other Church-Related Matters Shall (By God's Grace) Be Conducted Henceforth*** by Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae. Edited by Jacob Corzine and Matthew Carver. Translated by Jacob Corzine, Matthew C. Harrison and Andrew Smith. Vol. 9. Chemnitz's Works (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015)

by Albert B. Collver III

AT FIRST GLANCE, one might wonder why a translated church order from the 16th century would offer much appeal to someone other than the liturgical specialist, but upon deeper examination, Chemnitz's and Andreae's *Church Order* is much more than a historical curiosity. The *Church Order* is an English translation of the 1569 church order (*Kirchenordnung*) of Duke Julius of Braunschweig and Lüneburg. In the 16th century, a church order contained all the church regulations, rules, bylaws and services for a given territory. The *Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* is significant because its authors were Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae, who also helped prepare the Formula of Concord. The *Church Order*, in effect, is the Lutheran confession and doctrine put into practice. Seeing how the authors of the Formula of Concord put it into practice is instructive for us today.

The *Church Order of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* is much more than a hymnal for use Sunday morning. The *Church Order* contains the following parts: the Preface of Duke Julius; What the "Body of Doctrine," That Is, the Form and Patter of Pure Teaching, Shall be in the Churches of This Principality; A Brief, Simple, and Necessary Instruction regarding How Certain Chief Articles of Doctrine May, with Due Discretion, Be Presented for Edification and Guarded against All Distortion; and the Agenda, or Church Order — How Ceremonies Shall Be Established and Observed in the Churches of Our Principality. The English translation also

includes several introductory notes by the translators and editors of this edition. Of particular note is Matthew C. Harrison's essay, "Luther, the Confessions, and Confessors on Liturgical Freedom and Uniformity."

Harrison's essay examines two texts from the Lutheran Confessions, Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII and Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X. Harrison writes, "Luther, the Confessions, and the confessors clearly recognize and define freedoms in matters of worship ... They also, out of love and for the sake of unity,

argued for and put into practice limitations on freedom" (Kindle Location: 230). In the context of the 16th century, liturgical uniformity occurred territory by territory. So although there might be variations in the liturgical services between two territories, within a given territory all the congregations used the same form. Harrison argues that the phrase *Gemeine Gottes* from FC SD X, 9 should not be understood as the local con-

The *Church Order* is not meant to be a repristination of a 16th-century church order; rather it is a good historical-dogmatic work showing how two authors of the Formula of Concord put the faith into action.

gregation but rather the local community, referring to a particular region or territory. Harrison elaborates, "In our day it is common to read FC X as though it were defending an individual congregation's right to be liturgical or to dispense with all liturgy. This ignores the fundamental assertion of the *Augustana* regarding the conservative intent of the Lutheran Confessions to retain the Western rites and liturgical usages (purified), and that the Apology does not present a Lutheran church the option of being 'nonliturgical,' as is commonly understood in our circles" (Kindle Location: 572). Harrison's essay is helpful both

in explaining FC X but also the historical understanding of Chemnitz and Andreae when they wrote the *Church Order* under the authority of Duke Julius.

In Duke Julius' Preface, he establishes the reason or the right by which he established a church order, as well as described the need for one. Duke Julius writes, "We have been placed here by His divine omnipotence for our loyal and dear subjects not only for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity, but also so that, by the power of the office we bear and which God has committed to us, we may, above all, nurture in our subjects whatever pertains to right knowledge, prayer, and worship of God" (Kindle Location: 1229). Such a view that government has not only the right but the duty to promote right worship is very foreign to people living in the United States with the separation of the Church and the state. Yet into the 20th century, many European countries practiced the principle *cuius regio, eius religio* (literally: "whose realm, his religion"), whereby the religion of the ruler was the religion of the state in that region.

Duke Julius conducted a visitation of his territory and found its religious life to be lacking. He writes:

Regarding the state of the pastors and ministers of the church in our entire principality, in the course of an orderly and Christian examination, they found that a large portion of these men were not real pastors, but rather unlearned and unfit mercenaries, acting as hired hands; many parishes had been so disordered that children were going unbaptized and the elderly were dying without the Sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Christ, and thus left without comfort in their greatest trials. It is not unfitting to protest this on behalf of our dear and loyal subjects (Kindle Location: 1266).

Because of this deplorable situation, Duke Julius "sought how, according to God's will, the proper, ancient uses of the most primitive and purest churches may be retained. For in no way do we intend to introduce anything new into the churches of our principality which would not have been in use at the time of the dear apostles and their immediate successors" (Kindle Location: 1278).

Hence, Duke Julius commissioned Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae to produce the church order for his territory.

The next section of the church order is titled, "What the 'Body of Doctrine,' That Is, the Form and Pattern of Pure Teaching, Shall be in the Churches of This Principality Henceforth." Chemnitz and Andreae write, "Where a right and solid church order is to be established and put in place, the first thing — indeed, the foundation and basis — must be that the doctrine is pure and unified" (Kindle Location: 1380). In other words, doctrine and worship are connected. How the church worships is based upon its doctrinal foundation. Before the *Church Order* can present various liturgical forms, rites and orders, it reviews the "body of doctrine" taught by the Holy Scriptures.

The next section is titled, "Brief, Simple, and Necessary Instruction regarding How Certain Chief Articles of Doctrine May, with Due Discretion, Be Presented for

Edification and Guarded against All Distortion." This section reviews certain chief articles of the Christian faith. Chemnitz and Andreae note that not all pastors are equally trained and are not able to answer questions or refute error as they should. They also note, "And experience shows that many pastors who lack understanding merely tear down and fail to build. Further, lacking discretion, they trouble and confuse poor, erring consciences more than they instruct and correct

them with a proper foundation" (Kindle Location: 1471). The chief articles covered in this section are God, Repentance, The Distinction Between Law and Gospel, Sin, The Article of the Justification of the Poor Sinner Before God unto Eternal Life, Good Works, Free Will, The Sacraments in General, Confession and Absolution, Holy Baptism, The Mass, The Lord's Supper, Fasting and Prayer, and The Blessing of Salt, Water, Fire, Herbs, and Other Created Things. These chief articles all will be reflected in the liturgical rites and orders that follow in the book.

The final section of the church order is titled, "Agenda, or Church Order: How Ceremonies Shall Be Established and Observed in the Churches of Our Principality." Chemnitz and Andreae, referencing Paul in 1 Cor. 14:40,

The *Church Order* makes a great book for use at the seminary and by seminary students, as well as pastors who want to understand how the fathers of the Formula of Concord practiced the faith.

write that “it is God’s will that, when the congregation gathers together for the administration of the Word, Sacraments, and prayers, all things are to be done and observed with good decency, in order, and for building up.” (Kindle Location: 2792). They continue:

And though Christians are not everywhere bound to the same specific ceremonies — for Christian freedom has its place in this article ... — nevertheless ... uniformity in ceremonies with the neighboring Reformation churches should be achieved and maintained. And for this reason, in the matter of ceremonies, all pastors in the churches of our principality shall henceforth strictly abide by and conform to the order described below, and it shall not be neglected without exceptional and considerable cause (Kindle Location: 2810).

In other words, the pastors in the territory of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel will use the same orders and ceremonies. They also encourage that efforts are made to have similarity or conformity between territories. Such was the teaching of Chemnitz and Andreae on liturgical conformity.

What follows in the Agenda section are ceremonies for use in the various institutions and parishes of the territory. Orders for Matins, Holy Communion, Public Confession and so forth are provided. A nice feature of the English translation of the *Church Order* is the inclusion of the music for the various liturgical canticles in modern musical notation. Not surprisingly, some of the canticles are very similar to what is used today in Lutheran churches. After the Agenda section, there is a section on how the superintendent should conduct visitations of the parishes. The superintendent, equivalent or similar to a district president in the Missouri Synod, was instructed to visit each parish twice a year. He is supposed to examine the doctrine of each pastor and to inspect the church customs, “whether he also administers the holy Sacraments and other ceremonies according to our published ‘Church Order’” (Kindle Location: 4562). When the church order was published, the territory of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel had just under 400 pastors (tables in the church order list the various positions). The section on visitation also includes instruction for church

discipline and how to hold a general convention of the synod. In section of the *Church Order* resembles the constitution and bylaws of a church body.

The final sections of the *Church Order* deal with Marital Matters, An Order of Schools and a Chest Order. The marital matter section deals with engagements, consanguinity, divorce, reconciliation, abandonment and court fees. The order of schools states the reason for schools, chiefly “the holy ministry of preaching, secular authority, temporal offices, government, and management call for just, wise, learned, skilled, and God-fearing men; and schools are the proper means, ordained and com-

manded by God, in which such people may be raised up” (Kindle Location: 5474). It describes the organization of the classes, how many hours a day the boys should attend school (about six hours) and how they are to be trained in Latin and Greek. Several books by Philip Melanchthon serve as the primary textbooks. It also describes how the boys are to have godly fear, discipline and conduct themselves. Another section

describes the examination of the school master. Worship for the schools is outlined. Worship was considered an important part of the schools. Dress code, table conduct and so forth are all outlined. Additionally, there are provisions for girls’ schools. The superintendent is responsible for the spiritual life of the schools.

Finally, the church order outlines a common chest for the care of the poor. The chest order points out that the Scriptures command that the poor should be taken care of as needed. It describes what sorts of offerings can go into the common chest and when to collect those offerings. Another section describes who can receive distributions from the common chest: “First, to those who are afflicted by severe poverty, age, or illness. Those who are poor but do not beg. Those who need business assistance. Those affected by inflation. Poor students. Poor fatherless orphans. Those who are sick and dying” (Kindle Location: 6655-6705). A section of the chest order has an installation rite for those who are to administer the chest. It also describes the establishment of almshouses and how people are to conduct themselves in the almshouses.

The *Church Order* is too detailed to provide much more than the briefest of overviews to its content in a

The book is well worth studying and could be useful at circuit Winkels and for use on the mission field, as well as by emerging churches seeking to strengthen their Lutheran identity.

book review. The *Church Order* was an all in one resource for the superintendent and pastors in the 16th century, that was part doctrine book, part church constitution, part bylaws, part dispute resolution process, an agenda for worship, a guide book for establishing schools and for taking care of the poor. It provides a good overview of the sorts of things needed to be taken care of in a synod and could serve as a resource or guide for a church body, or for missionaries on the field, to develop all the necessary items needed for a church. Of course, most of the items described in the *Church Order* are available in contemporary resources; however, no contemporary resource combines it into an all in one book. The approach taken by the *Church Order* helps to demonstrate the continuity between doctrine, worship, and church governance; whereas, the contemporary approach often appears fragmented and disconnected from a doctrinal foundation, even if that is in fact not true. When everything is all together it helps people see the continuity and connection between the various parts.

One of the most valuable aspects of the book is how it shows the organic connection between doctrine and practice, particularly in the area of uniform worship and how the Church's doctrine plays out in church governance, in the establishment of schools and in works of mercy. The English translation of *Church Order of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* was 20 years in the making. The *Church Order* is not meant to be a repristination of a 16th-century church order; rather it is a good historical-dogmatic work showing how two authors of the Formula of Concord put the faith into action. Much can still be learned today by studying their example. The *Church Order* makes a great book for use at the seminary and by seminary students, as well as pastors who want to understand how the fathers of the Formula of Concord practiced the faith. The book also gives insight into how to understand Christian freedom in light of FC X. The book is well worth studying and could be useful at circuit Winkels and for use on the mission field, as well as by emerging churches seeking to strengthen their Lutheran identity.

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