

# LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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# LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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## STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS

- AE *Luther's Works*. American edition. 55 vols. St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958- .
- Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- BAG 1<sup>st</sup> ed., edited by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 1957.
- BAGD 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, 1979.
- BDAG 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., edited by Frederick W. Danker, 2000.
- BELK *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*. 12 editions. [Cite edition used.] Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930- .
- BHS *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984.
- LW *Lutheran Worship*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1982.
- NA<sup>27</sup> *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Ed. Kurt and Barbara Aland, et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.
- TDNT Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964- .
- TLH *The Lutheran Hymnal*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1941.
- W<sup>2</sup> Walch, Johann Georg, ed. *D. Martin Luthers sämtlichen Schriften*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ["St. Louis"] ed. 23 vols. St. Louis: Concordia, 1880-1910.
- WA *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Weimarer Ausgabe. ["Weimar ed."] Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883- .
- WA DB Weimarer Ausgabe Deutsche Bibel [German Bible]
- WA Br Weimarer Ausgabe Briefe [Letters]
- WA Tr Weimarer Ausgabe Tischreden [Table talk]

Abbreviations for the Lutheran confessional writings:

- AC Augsburg Confession
- Ap Apology of the Augsburg Confession
- SA Smalcald Articles
- Tr Tractate/Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
- SC Small Catechism
- LC Large Catechism
- FC Ep Formula of Concord, Epitome
- FC SD Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

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## EDITORIAL FOREWORD

**A**s I prepare this foreword to *Lutheran Theological Review* XIV we are drawing to an end of our commemoration of Holy Week, and I am struck by the preponderance of pieces in this issue that deal with the events and theological issues surrounding the week that is the centrepiece of our faith. Two of the central articles plus the sermon deal with the issues of the death of Christ, the nature of the Supper He instituted on the night He was delivered up, and the very Blood which was shed for us and is given to us in the Supper.

In asking the question, “Why Did Jesus Die?”, James Earl Keller summarizes and analyses three perspectives: those of Marcus Borg, Paul Maier, and N. T. Wright. He notes the strengths and weaknesses of all three positions, while keeping Jesus the God/Man firmly grounded in history. The article by Korey Maas looks at Luther’s Occamist education as it relates to Luther’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper, and particularly of the Real Presence. While the article is overtly philosophical in nature, Maas concludes with observations concerning Luther’s practical application of these insights in his discussion of the significance of Christ’s gift of this meal to His people. Finally, in his sermon based on the Words of Institution as recorded in the Gospel according to St Matthew, John Kleinig discusses the nature of blood and its work, examining the sacrifices of the Old Testament and their fulfilment with the shedding of the Blood of our Saviour. He notes that only the Blood of Jesus can cleanse, give life, and make us holy.

Other pieces in this issue do not deal directly with Holy Week questions, but nevertheless have important theological significance. We begin with a short study by John Stephenson on that most basic of theological questions, “Is There a God and Can We Know Him?” The first major article in the issue, by Jayson Galler, deals with the questions surrounding Jesus’ enigmatic words regarding being “with Him” or “for Him”, and “against Him”. Edward Kettner discusses the question of the Lutheran Confessions as being eschatological documents, not just in their content, but in their very nature. The issue then concludes with a review by Thomas Winger of the creeds as presented in the Kolb-Wengert edition of *The Book of Concord*.

We trust that this issue will be stimulating and helpful to our readers in their teaching and parish life.

EGK

Holy Saturday 2004

**SHORT STUDY:  
IS THERE A GOD AND CAN WE KNOW HIM?<sup>1</sup>**

*John R. Stephenson*

South of the border, the first half of this question seems to be redundant. Last week, during his state visit to China, President George W. Bush gave a televised address in which he claimed that a huge majority of the American people believes in “God”. If the president’s words may be taken at face value, we would be well advised to ignore the first half of our question and press on to the second. Whether we agree or disagree with Mr Bush’s domestic and foreign policies, we should subject his claim made on Chinese TV to critical scrutiny. One of the many reasons why you should place no faith in opinion polls is that the answers they give are manipulated in advance by the questions they pose. So you can ask the average American “Do you believe in God?” in such a way that very few will reply in the negative. The upshot of this procedure is that we have a continent full of people who believe in “God”, but when we enquire more closely into the “God” they believe in, we find ourselves in the realm of ghosts and shadows.

Permit me at this point to bring in the thoughts of two theologians with whom I should not normally care to be associated. Paul Tillich (1886-1965) emigrated from Hitler’s Germany to teach at Chicago and New York, and at the time of his death in 1965 was regarded as one of the leading Protestant theologians in the USA. Tillich never tried to develop a rigorous argument for the existence of God; rather, he aimed to persuade people that they had always believed in some kind of “God”, whether they were aware of the fact or not. Tillich defined “God” as a person’s “Ultimate Concern”. Everyone allegedly has an “ultimate concern”, which Tillich fitted into what he called the “Ground of Being”, which he equated with Christianity’s notion of God. Tillich aroused lots of interest, and he became a defining figure of the sixties, the decade in which he died. The problem with his equation of God with “Ultimate Concern” is that he hasn’t got any further than did Paul with his observation that this world is full of “gods many and lords many” (I Cor 8:5). Tillich proved a plurality of “gods”, but did nothing to demonstrate the existence of one true God.

The second theologian I’d like to refer to was a more serious player on the academic stage. The Swiss scholar Karl Barth (1886-1968) is up there with Origen, Augustine, Thomas, Luther, and Calvin in terms of his immense literary output and the influence he exercised. From the millions of

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<sup>1</sup>This manuscript formed the basis of an informal lunchtime lecture given on the campus of Brock University under the auspices of the Brock Lutheran Fellowship in early 2002.

words that streamed from Barth's pen, let me focus on one sentence, in which he pointed out that the word "God" is "in itself ... indefinite, empty, and ambivalent."<sup>2</sup> The pantheist Baruch de Spinoza (1632-77) gladly spoke of "God", by which he meant not a being distinct from the created universe, but reality as a whole (*Deus sive Natura*). Hindus can speak of "God" in one breath, and of millions of gods in the next, as do the Mormons who knock on our doors a couple of times a year. Jews, Muslims, and Christians all speak of God in a more precise sense, but we do not speak of the same God.

Barth's observation about how the word God is "in itself ... indefinite, empty, and ambivalent" explains why politicians in the US all call on "God's" support as they seek election to office. Lest I misrepresent Barth, I must point out that his theology did not end with this short statement. But in one feature of his work this great figure differed from all Christian theology before him, and not least from the Apostle Paul, namely in his ferocious denunciation of the whole enterprise of "natural theology". Now there's nothing unusual about a Christian minister appealing to an audience on a university campus, because this is what St. Paul did in the course of a missionary trip to Athens. In that city, as recorded in Acts 17, Paul tried to find common ground, to discern a point of connection, between himself and the learned scholars on the Areopagus. Paul argued that these Greek philosophers did acknowledge God, albeit an unknown God, a God whom Paul could make known to them by preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Christian tradition has developed arguments to demonstrate the existence of God. This procedure is not the same thing as proclaiming the Gospel, but it sets the stage for announcing the message which Christ mandated His apostles to preach. St Anselm of Canterbury (ca. 1033-1109) developed the so-called ontological argument for the existence of God. It never occurred to Anselm that his conclusion is contained in the premises of his argument. He defined God in a way that no medieval monk could disagree with, and therefore presupposed His existence. Thomas Aquinas (1224-74) argued deductively when he set out his "five ways" which lead to the knowledge of God. For him, God is the First Uncaused Cause and the First Unmoved Mover. I'm no philosopher, but my guts tell me Thomas was right. Whatever David Hume (1711-76) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) may say to the contrary, the argument from design is strong. But Barth argued that the whole enterprise of natural theology is wrong-headed and should be abandoned, which means that St Paul should have omitted most of the address he gave on the Areopagus.

Natural theology, as practised by St Thomas in the thirteenth century and by C. S. Lewis two generations ago, can and should lead people to give a

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<sup>2</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/4:53; qtd Vernard Eller, *The Language of Canaan and the Grammar of Feminism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 52.

positive answer to the first half of our question. But such use of the human mind answers a question by setting people before an enigma and a mystery. Human reason can lead us to conclude that there is a God, that He is distinct from the created universe, and that He is worthy of all kinds of exalted epithets. But our final extrapolation from sense perception might well be the conclusion that the God who really exists is basically unknowable.

So, if a minister of the Church finds common ground and discerns a point of connection between the community he represents and the learned scholars of the Areopagus as they continue in the faculty and students of Brock University, he can only answer the second part of our question by leaping across the threshold that divides philosophy from theology. If one God has indeed made this world and placed the human person at its summit, the question arises whether He has made audible, visible, and tangible contact with the material and spiritual creature known as humankind since the time that He made us. We can answer Yes to the query "Can we know God?" only if He has acted in earthly time and space to make Himself known. Other forms of monotheism tell of a transcendent God who always keeps an infinite distance between Himself and the world, but the Christian Church proclaims a God who remains fully God while at the same time becoming a permanent flesh and blood member of the human race. Christianity stands and falls with the Eternal Son of God becoming and remaining the Son of Mary, with the Word's becoming flesh, an article of faith we refer to through the Latin loan word "Incarnation".

Some people are impressed by Thomas' "five ways", and they agree with Paul that the universe proclaims God's eternal power and divinity (Rom. 1:20). But they are not sure we can know God, and, worse still, they fear that the God who is out there and up there is not worth knowing. They don't get how the apostles could go forth into the world and proclaim that "God is love" while there is so much anguish and misery and suffering on the globe. Philosophers refer to this question as "theodicy", and a multitude of books have been written with titles like *Evil and the God of Love* (John Hick), *The Problem of Pain* (C. S. Lewis), *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited* (Austin Farrer), and so forth. An Englishman who died in 1968 wrote such a book, in which he developed a series of arguments, some of them compelling. But Austin Farrer dealt best with this question in a simple sermon he gave one Christmastime, in which he pointed out that God has not given us an answer; He has given us a Son. Two thousand years ago He spoke a Word which cannot be added to or improved upon. At the completion of Israel's history He revealed Himself in a definite way which will stand to the end of the world. In Jesus of Nazareth God unreservedly entered into a human body and soul and completely shared not only in the joys but especially in the miseries of human existence.

Some weeks ago (on 24 January 2002) the Pope held an interfaith event in the Italian city of Assisi, where he presided over a Christian prayer meeting and provided space in a Franciscan friary for adherents of other religions to conduct their own rituals. So as not to offend Jews and Muslims and animists, the Pope ordered the Assisi friars to remove all crucifixes and other objects of Christian art from the rooms given over to these practitioners of other religions. I offer to you that the Pope made a big mistake, that He insulted our Lord Jesus Christ, and did a great disservice to the followers of non-Christian religions. St Paul determined that among the Corinthians he would “know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (I Cor 2:2), and he saw to it that before the eyes of the Galatians “Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” (Gal 3:1). Even in a secular and pagan age, most people are going to agree that there is a “God”, of one sort or another. But till the last day there will be bitter controversy over the questions of if and how we may know Him. The only way I can know Him and invite you to know Him is by pointing to a boy child conceived of a virgin and nursing at her breast, a baby who knew what it was to be a refugee, who walked up to Jerusalem as a lad of twelve, who began His ministry when baptised around the age of thirty, who preached and performed miracles and entered the holy city to suffer abandonment and abuse, to die and rise again and gather people of every race and condition into His holy Church. The only way I can know this enfleshed God is by letting a pastor preach His Word to me, by being baptized, by receiving Absolution or forgiveness, and by being fed at the Sacrament where He keeps on performing miracles. There is indeed a God, and we can know Him when we behold His loving face in the crucifix which should remain on the walls of the Assisi friary, of our seminary, and of all places.

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**MATTHEW 12:30; MARK 9:40; LUKE 9:50; 11:23 –  
“WITH AND FOR” OR “AGAINST”?<sup>1</sup>**

*Jayson S. Galler*

“Faithful shepherds,” Dr Martin Luther states, “must both pasture or feed the lambs and guard against wolves so that they will flee from strange voices and separate the precious from the vile”. Thus, the Formula of Concord says, “it is essential not only to present the true and wholesome doctrine correctly, but also to accuse the adversaries who teach otherwise.”<sup>2</sup> Faithful shepherds who condemn the false teaching of other Christians encounter scholars and laity who question the condemnations by referring to Mark 9:40 and Luke 9:50,<sup>3</sup> where Jesus says: “For the one who is not against us (or “you”, plural) is for us (or “you”,

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<sup>1</sup>The author acknowledges the constructive reviews of an early draft of this paper by then Pastor-elect Jody A. Rinas and Rev. Mark A. Sander.

<sup>2</sup>SD R&N:14, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 506. Tappert’s edition does not give a citation for the Solid Declaration’s quotation of Luther. Nor does the newer Kolb edition (eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000]), where the translation is slightly different: “it is necessary not only to present the pure, beneficial teaching correctly, but also to censure those who contradict it and teach other doctrines (1 Tim. 3[:9]; Titus 1[:9]). For, as Luther states, true shepherds are to do both: pasture or feed the sheep and ward off the wolves, so that they may flee from other voices (John 10[:4b-5, 16b] and ‘separate the precious from the vile’ (Jer. 15[:19, Vulgate]))” (529-30).

This author searched unsuccessfully for the source of this Luther quotation until Divine Providence led him to it in Ewald M. Plass’s *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959). There, the quote appears as part of #3351 under the heading of “Polemics”, and compiler Plass gives the source as Luther’s 1523 exposition of I Peter 5:2 (WA 12:389; EA 51:483; W<sup>2</sup> 9:1100 f.). Plass quotes Luther in a slightly different translation and at greater length than the Formula:

A preacher must not only feed the sheep so as to instruct them how they are to be good Christians, but must also keep the wolves from attacking the sheep and leading them astray with false doctrine and error; for the devil is never idle. Nowadays there are many people who are quite ready to tolerate our preaching of the Gospel as long as we do not cry out against the wolves and preach against the prelates.

But though I preach the truth, feed the sheep well, and give them good instruction, this is still not enough unless the sheep are also guarded and protected so that the wolves do not come and carry them off. For what sort of building is it if I throw away stones and then watch another throw them back in? The wolf can readily tolerate a good pasture for the sheep; he likes them the better for their fatness. But what he cannot endure is the hostile bark of the dogs. Therefore it is of vital importance to set our hearts on truly feeding the flock as God has commanded it. (1053)

<sup>3</sup>See citations below for such comments by scholars. This author personally experienced laity using these references to question such teaching and preaching.

plural).”<sup>4</sup> The faithful shepherd can counter, however, with Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23, where Jesus says: “The one not being with Me is against Me, and the one not gathering with Me is scattering.”<sup>5</sup>

Some think these two passages contradict each other,<sup>6</sup> but, as will be seen in this paper, they do not. Each complements the other and together they teach how to regard those outside the true confession of the faith. This essay explores this thesis by examining the two sayings in context and noting their particularities, comparing and contrasting the two sayings, briefly surveying St Augustine’s uses of them in *Against the Donatists*, reviewing Luther’s uses of the passages, and considering implications for today’s faithful shepherds. Though little treated in the last half-century of periodical literature,<sup>7</sup> the combined teaching of these passages is especially relevant in our time of relative truth and least-common-denominator ecumenism.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>This and other Biblical citations are this author’s translation unless otherwise noted. The NA<sup>27</sup> text of Mk 9:40 has ἡμῶν, while at Lk. 9:50 the word is ὑμῶν. In each place the other or combinations of the two are variant readings. Lenski writes: “As far as the pronoun ‘you’ is concerned . . . this refers to them as disciples of Jesus and thus involves Jesus as much as ‘we’ does” (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946], *ad loc.* Lk. 9:50, 550).

Because multiple commentaries by the same author will be cited in this essay, as well as single sources dealing with more than book, the notes will indicate the specific place from where the comment comes when it is not self-evident on which specific verse the comment was made.

<sup>5</sup>The NA<sup>27</sup> text of Mt. 12:30 and Lk. 11:23 are identical.

<sup>6</sup>Plummer writes: “Renan hastily pronounces the two sayings to be *tout à fait opposées* (*V. de J.* p. 229)” (Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, The International Critical Commentary [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914], *ad loc.* Lk. 9:50, 260). The French expression, according to Rev. David Milette of Moncton, New Brunswick, means “completely opposed to” or “precisely the opposite”. Of St Luke’s account in 9:50, Marshall writes: “The saying stands in a certain tension with 11:23” (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978], 399), and he writes that 11:23 “stands in paradoxical relation to 9:50” (478).

<sup>7</sup>This author’s search of 50 years of the *Index to Religious Periodical Literature* and its successor *Religion Index One: Periodicals* found no articles directly comparing the diverse statements. There were only a handful of entries on one or more of the texts in question, and still fewer in English. In addition, the verses are given scant attention in commentaries. This essay draws on the little that is found in both older and more recent works of this type.

<sup>8</sup>Despite this relevance, preachers have little opportunity to expound these texts. The Lutheran Hymnal’s lectionary includes only Lk 11:23 as part of the Gospel reading for the 3rd Sunday in Lent (Lk 11:14-28). None of the four verses are included in the one-year lectionary of *Lutheran Worship*, and its 3-year lectionary includes only Mk 9:40 as part of the Gospel reading for Pentecost 19 in the B cycle (Mk 9:38-50).

## 1. SAYING PARTICULARITIES<sup>9</sup>

### a. *Mark 9:40 and Luke 9:50*

In the Holy Gospel accounts of both St Mark and St Luke, Jesus says: “the one who is not against us is for us.” In both accounts this saying comes after the disciples see an unknown man driving out demons in Jesus’ name (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἐκβάλλοντα δαιμόνια). The disciples repeatedly tried to hinder the unknown exorcist because the man was not following with the disciples. Like Moses who answered jealous Joshua’s complaint,<sup>10</sup> Jesus told them to **stop** hindering him, because “No one is able to do powerful deeds in My name and immediately speak evil of Me.”<sup>11</sup> In the immediate context of both Mark 9:40 and Luke 9:50 is also the issue of who is the greatest, which Jesus addressed by using a little child to teach them humility.<sup>12</sup>

The unknown exorcist successfully used the name of Jesus and thus demonstrated his own faith fellowship with Jesus.<sup>13</sup> Instead of the work of a disciple being a mark of superiority, Jesus says it demonstrates inward agreement with Him. Not just a miracle demonstrates this, but even a simple cup of water given in Jesus’ name.<sup>14</sup> With such affinity demonstrated, Jesus urges the disciples to patiently let the man’s faith develop, but He does not

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<sup>9</sup>For ease of comparison and following the ensuing discussion, the readers may wish to open the *Synopsis Quatuor Evangelium*, edited by Kurt Aland. In the 14<sup>th</sup> revised edition published in 1995, the relevant sections and pages are: §117, p. 167; §167, p. 248, and §188, p. 270.

<sup>10</sup>Num. 11:24-30 (see Marshall, *ad loc.* Lk. 9:49-50, 398, *et al.*).

<sup>11</sup>Mk 9:39. Lk. 9:50 does not include the longer explanation as to why. Note that John first uses the word “hinder” (κωλύω) which Jesus then repeats. It is used in relation to persons with the sense “hinder, prevent, forbid ... stand in the way” and significantly mostly of positive spiritual occurrences, such as: preaching the Gospel (Acts 16:6; 1 Thess. 2:1), Jesus blessing little children (Mt. 19:14; Mk 10:14; Lk. 18:16), Baptism (Acts 8:36), the work of the Office (Heb. 7:23), people entering heaven (Lk. 11:42), of God in general (Acts 11:17), and perhaps most significantly of getting in the way of someone being welcomed into fellowship (III Jn 10) (BAGD 461). Though no antonym is specifically mentioned or implied in Mk 9:40 or Lk. 9:50, it may be that while Jesus does not want the apostles to hinder the man He would want them to bring him into their fellowship (see the following discussion in this section and in part 3).

<sup>12</sup>Just notes that “Despite appearances, 9:49-50 belongs with the report of this [greatness] argument”, and he finds the strong link in the Ἀποκριθεὶς of 9:49 (Arthur A. Just, Jr, *Luke*, 2 vols., Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996-97], 1:414). The humility Jesus teaches here is not, as Plummer suggests, “the Humility of Toleration” (Plummer 258). Whatever the lesson, it may be one that the Sons of Thunder were slow to learn, as the next pericope in St Luke’s account suggests (9:51-56).

<sup>13</sup>Just, *ad loc.* Lk. 9:46-50, 415, especially n. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Ezra P. Gould, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel according to St Mark*, ed. Alfred Plummer (Edinburgh: Clark Constable Ltd. , 1983), *ad loc.* Mk 9:38-50, 175.

urge them to tolerate the man apart from their group.<sup>15</sup> The passage must not be misapplied, as R. C. H. Lenski explains:

It could not apply to men who are merely indifferent to Jesus and thus not actively against him. Such indifference and coldness as a response to Jesus and his revelation would be “against” Jesus in a most decided way. To be lukewarm and neither hot nor cold is fatal. Thus, not to be against Jesus means, indeed, to be for him at least to some degree.<sup>16</sup>

It would appear that though the man believed in and used Jesus’ name, he did not yet publicly confess it: “The chances were that this man believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but he had not yet gained the understanding that he ought to join the disciples of Jesus and follow after Him, thus confessing his faith before men.”<sup>17</sup> The unknown exorcist did not associate with the revealed Church.<sup>18</sup>

While prepositions are often slippery in meaning, they are significant, especially here. The prepositions used in this saying are “against” (κατά) and “for” (ὑπέρ). The word κατά in Mark 9:40 designates “such a position or state of mind in a different way [as to] be against someone”. With this sense in Mark 9:40 and Luke 9:50 κατά is used opposite ὑπέρ,<sup>19</sup> which is used in a general way meaning “be for someone, be on someone’s side”.<sup>20</sup> In Matthew

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<sup>15</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964 printing), *ad loc.* Mk 9:39, 398. See also below, where St Augustine understands there to be something about the unknown exorcists that needs correction.

<sup>16</sup>Lenski, *ad loc.* Mk 9:40, 398. Cf. Lenski, *ad loc.* Lk. 9:50, 550. Lenski alludes to Rev. 3:15. As examples of what Jesus teaches here, Kretzmann gives the different motives for preaching to which St Paul refers in Phil. 1:14-19 and in different ways of serving (Paul E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible: The New Testament*, vol. 1 [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921], *ad loc.* Mk 9:40, 217).

<sup>17</sup>Kretzmann, *ad loc.* Lk. 9:49-50, 319.

<sup>18</sup>The formulation of “following us” in Lk. 9:49-50 is generally taken to refer to membership of the church (Marshall, *ad loc.* Lk. 9:49-50, 398, citing R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* [Göttingen: n. p., 1958<sup>4</sup>], 23f; E. Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* [Göttingen, 1968], 110f. ; and J. M. Creed, *St Luke* [London: Macmillan, 1930], 138f.). What the Apostle John says in v. 49 (οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ μεθ’ ἡμῶν.) is noticeably different from Jesus’ expressions.

<sup>19</sup>BAGD 406. The entry does not include all NT passages; Lk. 9:50 is an omitted example of κατά used in the same sense opposite ὑπέρ.

<sup>20</sup>BAGD 838. The only other listed use of ὑπέρ with κατά is Rom. 8:31, where God “for” us summarizes the Gospel and emphasizes the resulting confidence in the face of enemies (see C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975], *ad loc.* Rom. 8:31, 435). A Logos Strong’s number search revealed a total of 17 verses using both ὑπέρ and κατά. The only other relevant verses (where they carry the same sense) are I Cor. 4:6 (of pride in one leader against another) and II Cor. 13:8 (of what one does for or against the Truth).

12:30 and Luke 11:23 κατά is used with the same sense but is used opposite μετά.<sup>21</sup>

***b. Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23***

In their accounts of the Holy Gospel, St Matthew and St Luke both record Jesus' saying: "The one not being with Me is against Me, and the one not gathering with Me is scattering." This saying also comes in the context of casting out a demon. This time, however, Jesus healed a man (ἐθεράπευσεν, Mt. 12:22) by casting out a demon (ἦν ἐκβάλλων δαιμόνιον, Lk. 11:14). As a result the people began to think that perhaps Jesus was the messianic Son of David, but the Pharisees suggested that Jesus had His authority from Beelzebub, the prince of demons.<sup>22</sup> In reply Jesus said that a kingdom divided against itself would be ruined and a house divided against itself would not endure. Thus, Jesus inferred that He, a stronger man, has entered the strong man's house (that of Satan) and tied him up in order to carry off his possessions.<sup>23</sup>

The Pharisees, by not following and acknowledging Jesus, disrupted and hindered the work of Jesus who gathers the scattered children of God (Jn 11:52).<sup>24</sup> Though no object for the gathering or scattering is given in the text,<sup>25</sup> sheep seem to be in view.<sup>26</sup> Martin Franzmann well summarizes the verse in its context:

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<sup>21</sup>BAGD 406.

<sup>22</sup>McNeile suggests Matthew saw Jesus as gathering and the Pharisees as scattering (Alan Hugh McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955], *ad loc.* Mt. 12:30, 177).

<sup>23</sup>St Mark's account includes the discussion of the strong man (3:23-27), but does not include the saying in question.

<sup>24</sup>Otto Michel, s. v. σκορπίζω, in *TDNT* 7:420.

<sup>25</sup>Both Mt. 12:30 and Lk. 11:23 have as a variant reading the insertion of με after σκορπίζει. Metzger suggests copyists inserted this complement to produce a balanced expression, but he calls it an "almost meaningless ... scribal blunder" with "disastrous consequences for the sense!" (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, corr. ed. [New York: United Bible Societies, 1975], 32 and 158; cf. Marshall, *ad loc.* Lk. 11:23, 478.) If, however, Christ is talking about His Body, the Church, which is made up of those who believe in Him, such a reference to Himself would not be meaningless but quite significant. Acts 9:1-5 serves as a case in point: Jesus refers to Saul persecuting Him (vv. 4, 5), though in fact Saul was persecuting those who belonged to the Way (v. 2). The point is: What one does to believers, one does to Him in whom they believe. The early transcribers of Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23 may have wanted to make more explicit that it was indeed Jesus' Body, the Church, being scattered.

<sup>26</sup>So R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1951), *ad loc.* Mt. 12:30, 482. Though Lenski there also considers grain or fish, he refers to Mt. 9:36; 10:6; and Jn 10:12, the last of which also uses σκορπίζει in relation to sheep. Cf. Lenski *ad loc.* Lk. 11:23, 640; Marshall, *ad loc.* Lk. 11:23, 478, where he cites B. S. Easton, *The Gospel according to St Luke* (Edinburgh: [n. p. ], 1926), 181; and W. D.

Jesus is the Messianic Shepherd who gathers anew the people of God, and there is now no room for neutrality. Each man is called on to decide whether he will gather the flock with Him or scatter it (12:30). Men cannot stand by and just say things. Here is the presence of the Spirit of God, the manifested creative working of God Himself which man cannot gainsay and dare not contradict; for that is the ultimate blasphemy, the eternally unforgivable sin (12:31,32), unforgivable because it cuts off repentance at its root.<sup>27</sup>

Not just contradiction, but even criticism and indifference are tantamount to opposition.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, attitudes “for” or “against” Jesus “have their immediate effect on others: the one gathers, the other scatters.”<sup>29</sup>

The prepositions used here in relationship **to Jesus** are “with” (μετ’ ἐμοῦ) and “against” (κατ’ ἐμοῦ). In Classical Greek and secular and New Testament koine Greek, the word μετά with the pronoun in the genitive case suggests “in the midst”, “between”, “among” people, or “to be or act in fellowship with”.<sup>30</sup> However, when it comes **to God and man**, as in Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23, it emphasizes a unique being “with” the other. Another example is found in St Luke’s account: the angel telling Mary that the Lord is with her (ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ, 1:28). More significantly, St Matthew’s account refers to Jesus as the fulfilment of the long-promised Immanuel, God with us (Μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός, 1:23). Hence, Jesus “is the expression, sign and actualisation of the covenant of God with men, taking away their sins, Mt. 1:21; 26:28.” When Jesus promises to be present where two or three gather in His Name, this is the same as being “with” them (18:20). This abiding of the Son of God Himself with His Church through Word and Sacrament continues to the end of the age (ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, 28:20). Therefore, “What is said fundamentally at the beginning of the Gospel is thus extended both to the community and also to the messengers. He who is ‘God with us’ shows

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Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 2, gen. ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, & G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), *ad loc.* Mt. 12:30, 343, and n. 53 where they also refer to Is. 13:14; 40:11; Jer. 23:2; Ezek. 34:13; Zech. 13:7-9; and Mt. 26:31 par. Plummer rules out the gathering of seed or fruit and suggests the object is either sheep or a band of followers (Plummer, *ad loc.* Lk. 11:23, 303).

<sup>27</sup>Martin H. Franzmann, *Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew*, Concordia Heritage Series (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 101. Later Franzmann connects this saying with the judgment of the last day, referring to Mt. 25:32, 33 (183).

<sup>28</sup>On criticism, see Marshall, *ad loc.* Lk. 11:23, 478, and on indifference see, for example, McNeile, *ad loc.* Mt. 12:30, 177. Compare, however, Gould, who argues against equating “seeming indifference” with “real hostility”, writing that the point of the passages is “that friendliness and hostility are incongruous, and cannot therefore exist together” (Gould, *ad loc.* Mk 9:40, 177).

<sup>29</sup>Lenski, *ad loc.* Mt. 12:30, 482.

<sup>30</sup>Walter Grundmann, s. v. σύν-μετά, *TDNT* 7:767, 769, and 771-72.

in His promises that He is this right on to the consummation of the age.”<sup>31</sup> Though Holy Scripture rarely speaks of one “with” God,<sup>32</sup> the “withness” of the follower with Christ relates to the Church as He gathers the believer into the community by Baptism and gathers it around the Gospel and Sacraments.<sup>33</sup> That Jesus continues this saying in terms of gathering and scattering also demonstrates that the revealed Church is in view.<sup>34</sup>

## 2. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE TWO SAYINGS

As has been seen, the Church is in view in both sayings of Jesus. Nearly all commentators agree that both sayings emphasize the impossibility of neutrality when confronted by Jesus. Though both sayings come in relation to exorcisms, the contexts are different. In the case of Mark 9:40 and Luke 9:50, the exorcist in question is a believer, though, oddly enough, one

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<sup>31</sup>Grundmann 776.

<sup>32</sup>Grundmann 779-80.

<sup>33</sup>Grundmann details other reflections of this unique “withness”, such as the liturgical salutation and apostolic blessing: “the Lord is present with His gifts in the congregation assembled for worship and also ... equips leading men in the congregation to declare His word and will to it with due authority” (778). Grundmann documents and emphasizes the Baptismal connection, though St Paul uses *σύν* of this “withness” (789-92, but compare, for example, 795 on *μετά* in Jn 13:8). Furthermore, there is the “withness” of table fellowship, especially that with sinners, Matthew 9:11 and Luke 15:2 (796). In short, Grundmann concludes: “salvation is effected in the participation in Christ’s destiny by which we are made in His image and in the being with Him in which God binds himself to man” (797).

<sup>34</sup>Some in the so-called Church Growth Movement speak of the Church in two modes: gathered and scattered. Typical is: “The church is gathered on the Lord’s day around the Word and Sacraments only to be scattered again throughout the community” (Kent R. Hunter, *Foundations for Church Growth* [New Haven, Missouri: Leader Publishing Company, 1983], 28). Nothing could be further from Biblically and Confessionally shaped speech. Michel observes “the OT and Jewish expectation that in the future the dispersed people of God will be gathered again, Is. 43:5 ff; Ezek. 34:12 f. ; Ps. Sol. 8:28” (Michel 421). This expectation is fulfilled in Christ (see not only Mt. 12:30 and Lk. 11:23, but also Jn 11:52). As to the Confessions’ use of terms, SC 2:6 refers to the Holy Spirit “gathering” the whole Church on earth (LC 2:45, 53 and SD 2:49 are similar). LC 2:62 says the work of gathering is not done. SD 2:50 speaks of gathering the Church out of the human race. The use of Mt. 23:37 in SD 2:58 and SD 11:41 suggests those not gathered (that is, the scattered) are in the darkness of unbelief and therefore lost. Though the Confessions can speak of believers scattered throughout the world, those believers are gathered to churches: the Preface to the Apology par. 19 mentions “scattered churches”; Ap 7/8:10 refers to men scattered but says they have the same sacraments, which of course means they are “gathered” into congregations wherever they are “scattered”; likewise par. 20 where they are recognized by the marks of the Church; and finally Treatise 16 in mentioning “the kingdom of Christ scattered over all the earth” in the same sentence goes on to illustrate that statement with the “many churches in the East”. See also Klemet Preus’s evaluation of Kent Hunter’s *Confessions*, “The Theology of the Church Growth Movement”, in *Logia* 10.1 (Epiphany 2001): 45-51.

outside the revealed Church. In the case of Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23, Jesus' exorcising a demon reveals the Pharisees' opposition to the Church.<sup>35</sup> In each case the response to the message is different, and consequently so is the saying of Jesus. Lenski puts it this way:

One states who are for Jesus, the other who are against him. ... Whoever comes in contact with Jesus and develops no hostility toward him and his is already to a degree won for him and will soon confess it; but whoever comes in contact with Jesus and forms no attachment for him is already to a degree against him and will soon reveal it. The two dicta thus belong together, each makes the other clearer.<sup>36</sup>

Based on the contextual changes and changes in the personal pronouns in St Luke's account, Arthur Just distinguishes the passages along the lines of "intra" Christian relationships (that is, between so-called Christians) and "inter" Christian relationships (that is, between so-called Christians and others).

[Lk. 11:23] has to do with acceptance or rejection of Jesus ("me"). The saying in [Lk.] 9:50 is guidance for Jesus' followers in assessing the relationship between themselves ("you") and others who also serve in the name of Jesus, and who therefore are also "for" Jesus and "for" his disciples. In 9:50 the third party ("whoever") was casting out demons in Jesus' name, doing the work of God's kingdom, so he was "for" Jesus and "for" his disciples. But [in Lk. 11:23] the third party ("the one who") refers to those in the crowds who accuse Jesus of being in league with Satan and those skeptics who demand a miracle (11:15-16) ....<sup>37</sup>

A similar conclusion is reached by those who suggest the key to the apparently contradictory sayings is considering both to whom Jesus is speaking and about whom He speaks. Alfred Plummer explains this view this way:

[In Lk. 11:23] Christ gives a test by which His disciple is to try *himself*: if he cannot see that he is on Christ's side, he is against Him. [In 9:50] He gives a test by which His disciple is to try *others*: if he cannot see that they are against Christ's cause, he is to consider them as for it.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Cf. *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, gen. ed. Robert G. Hoerber (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), *ad loc.* Lk. 9:50, 1567.

<sup>36</sup>Lenski, *ad loc.* Mk 9:40, 399. Cf. Lenski, *ad loc.* Lk. 9:50, 550-51.

<sup>37</sup>Just, *ad loc.* Lk. 11:23, 474. Just continues: "'the one who' could even refer to Satan, referred to in the preceding verse (11:22), since *Satan is the one who divides and scatters the church, while Jesus works to gather and unite the church*" (emphasis original).

<sup>38</sup>Plummer, *ad loc.* Lk. 9:50, 259-60 (emphasis original). Though he does not cite Plummer, McNeile is similar, writing that Mt. 12:30 and Lk. 11:23 are "spoken to the indifferent about themselves", while Mk 9:40 and Lk. 9:50 are spoken "to the disciples about some one else" (McNeile, *ad loc.* Mt. 12:30, 177). He further suggests that the sayings correspond to the

Such testing can hardly be subjective, however. There is an objective standard: the Truth of God's Word and whether the person in question confesses it and is in fellowship with His Church. In Mark 9:40 and Luke 9:50 Jesus tells His followers to not hinder the work that the unknown exorcist was doing; He does **not** tell His followers to tolerate the man apart from their communion, as St Augustine makes perfectly clear.

### 3. ST AUGUSTINE'S USES OF THE TWO SAYINGS IN *AGAINST THE DONATISTS*

John A. Haas suggests that Mark 9:40 "absolutely repudiates the position that beyond a certain communion there is no salvation." To support his claim, Haas favourably cites St Augustine's treatise, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, where Augustine writes: "But there may be something Catholic outside the Catholic Church, just as the name of Christ could exist outside the congregation of Christ, in which name he who did not follow with the disciples was casting out devils."<sup>39</sup> Haas' statement and use of St Augustine from *Against the Donatists* in support of it led this author to further examine St Augustine's use of these two sayings of Jesus in that treatise, which revealed quite an opposite conclusion from what Haas drew.

St Augustine judges that even those who are "for Christ" apart from the one, holy, Christian and apostolic Church scatter. This is clear already in Book I, where he writes: "For all of them who are not against us are for us; but when they gather not with us, they scatter abroad."<sup>40</sup> Shortly thereafter, St Augustine writes in favour of careful treatment of schismatics and heretics: "the wound which caused his separation should be cured by the medicine of the Church; but ... what remained sound in him should rather be

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warnings "Test yourselves" in II Cor. 13:5 and "Judge not" in Mt. 7:1. Cf. also Davies and Allison, *ad loc.* Mt. 12:30, 344 (they cite McNeile).

The saying of Jesus in Mt. 7:1, however, does not rule out judging and discrimination in, for example, admitting one to or excluding one from the Sacrament of the Altar in Closed Communion. See that verse's following context (Mt. 7:6: "Do not give dogs what is sacred [τὸ ἅγιον "the holy things"]; do not throw your pearls to pigs") and the multiple passages that speak of Jesus and His followers judging (for example, Jn 9:39; Rom. 16:17).

<sup>39</sup> St Augustine cited by John A. Haas, *The Lutheran Commentary: Annotations on the Gospel according to St. Mark* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons for The Christian Literature Company, 1895), 166. He cites Augustine, *On Baptism, ag. the Donatists*, Bk VII. , C. 39, 77, which is on page 508 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 4: *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprint 1983. (This particular treatise is translated by J. R. King, revised by Dr Hartranft.) All of the following citations will be to this edition.

<sup>40</sup>Bk I, c. 6, 8, p. 415.

recognized with approbation, than wounded by condemnation."<sup>41</sup> He cites the saying of Matthew 12:30, but contrasts it with that of Mark 9:38, 39 and Luke 9:50. In commenting on the latter passages, St Augustine is quick to point out that in the case of the unknown exorcist something still needed to be corrected.<sup>42</sup> Otherwise, he writes,

any one would be safe who, setting himself outside the communion of the Church, severing himself from all Christian brotherhood, should gather in Christ's name; and so there would be no truth in this, 'He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.'<sup>43</sup>

St. Augustine holds the two sayings in tension by writing:

the man was to be confirmed in his veneration for that mighty Name, in respect of which he was not against the Church, but for it; and yet he was to be blamed for separating himself from the Church, whereby his gathering became a scattering ....<sup>44</sup>

Later He similarly writes that Christians will be "on the rock on which the Church is built", otherwise the Lord's saying of Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23 will not be true.<sup>45</sup>

To be sure, as Haas' quotation of St Augustine noted at the beginning of this section suggests, St Augustine recognizes that there can be bad in the revealed Church just as there can be good outside of it.<sup>46</sup> Yet, there is a distinction. Baptism and the gospel, which might be common to both, will not be of benefit outside the one Church.<sup>47</sup> St Augustine favourably cites Cyprian's maxim that "Salvation is not without the Church", immediately adding, "Who says that it is?"<sup>48</sup> Those outside the Church scatter abroad.<sup>49</sup> St Augustine favourably cites Secundinus of Cadius, who associates the saying of Jesus in Matthew 12:30 (about those "not with" being against) with I John

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<sup>41</sup>Bk I, c. 7, 9, p. 416.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. n. 11 and the discussion in the text at n. 15 above.

<sup>43</sup>Bk I, c. 7, 9, p. 416.

<sup>44</sup>Bk I, c. 7, 9, p. 416. Augustine raises the idea of the correction which the unknown exorcist needed several times later as well (for example, Bk IV, c. 10, 17, p. 454).

<sup>45</sup>Bk VI, c. 31, 59, p. 493. This statement comes after favourably citing Secundinus of Carpis, but St Augustine extends the argument: "For they scatter His sheep who lead them to the ruin of their lives by a false imitation of the Lord."

<sup>46</sup>St Augustine writes: "both many who are within act against the Church by evil living, and by enticing weak souls to copy their lives; and some who are without speak in Christ's name, and are not forbidden to work the works of Christ but only to be without, since for the healing of their souls we grasp at them, or reason with them, or exhort them. ... [B]oth some things are done outside in the name of Christ not against the Church, and some things are done inside on the devil's part which are against the Church." (Bk IV, c. 10, 17, p. 454.).

<sup>47</sup>Bk VI, c. 31, 59, p. 493; Bk VII, c. 39, 77, p. 508.

<sup>48</sup>Bk IV, c. 17, 25, p. 458.

<sup>49</sup>Bk IV, c. 17, 25, p. 458.

2:18-19 (that those who go out from the Church are antichrists<sup>50</sup>). St Augustine further alludes to Matthew 7:22-23, where the Lord does not know some who have done wonderful deeds in His Name. He presumably does not know them because they are outside of the Church.<sup>51</sup> Haas clearly took his quotation of St Augustine out of context, but the journey further into *Against the Donatists* to establish that fact also proved helpful in establishing a greater understanding of the two sayings of Jesus, especially as it pertains to Holy Baptism. A different controversy over Baptism prompted Luther to make similar condemnations based in part on the passages in question.

#### 4. LUTHER'S USES OF THE PASSAGES

In his biography of Luther, Heiko Oberman comments thusly on the collective judgements Luther made on those not oriented to Wittenberg:

When papists, Jews, and so-called fanatics are condemned as groups, individual differentiation becomes impossible. The individual human being disappears behind a uniform foisted upon him. In the tumult of the Last Days individual qualities are lost in collective judgments and “all who are not with us are against us.” Yet herein lies the paradox, for there is a genuine grain of truth in these collective condemnations, which is easy to overlook in our time. It is for the sake of this timeless truth that Luther’s voice must be heard—however reluctantly.<sup>52</sup>

Oberman goes on to specifically examine the controversy over Infant Baptism. Though Oberman does not give a specific Luther reference for his statement, a perusal of Luther’s use of these two sayings of Jesus supports Oberman’s conclusion and use of the phrase.<sup>53</sup>

Luther, as Oberman suggests, used these two sayings against the Reformed. In a 1528 letter to two apparently Roman Catholic priests seeking help in dealing with the Anabaptists, Luther writes:

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<sup>50</sup>Cf. Luther’s similar use of I Jn 2:19, *ad loc.* Jn 15:2 (1537-38), AE 24:205-6.

<sup>51</sup>Bk VI, c. 18, 30, p. 488.

<sup>52</sup>Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, tr. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New York: Image Books by Doubleday, 1992), 229. This author is indebted to Dr David P. Scaer, whose reference to this Oberman quotation sparked this author’s investigation into these sayings of Jesus. See Scaer’s unpublished 2000 Ft. Wayne Symposia paper “Death and Resurrection as Apocalyptic Event”, p. 3 and n. 13 on p. 11.

One might take exception to Oberman’s claim that a uniform is “foisted” upon the individual. Individuals voluntarily join congregations that confess a specific faith. A judgement of that confession is not forced upon the individual, but the individual has let it come upon him or her by his or her own doing.

<sup>53</sup>In the index to the American Edition of *Luther’s Works*, there are a total of 13 references to Mt. 12:30; Mk 9:40; Lk. 9:50; and 11:23. All are at least noted below (with the date of the particular work in the text or in the note).

Since our baptizing has been thus from the beginning of Christianity and the custom has been to baptize children, and since no one can prove with good reasons that they do not have faith, we should not make changes and build on such weak arguments. For if we are going to change or do away with customs that are traditional, it is necessary to prove convincingly that these are contrary to the Word of God. Otherwise (as Christ says), "For he that is not against us is for us."<sup>54</sup>

The Anabaptists, Luther suggests, **claim** to be with the Reformers, but in fact are against them and are scattering, hindering the Gospel. On 13 May 1531, while preaching on John 6:66-67, the disciples who turned away from Jesus after the Bread of Life discourse, Luther commented that false teaching is to be expected and that "schismatic spirits must be identified by their apostasy".<sup>55</sup>

Luther could also use these sayings of Jesus against the Papists; he writes:

We scorn papal bulls and human dreams, but the Holy Scriptures we venerate. If they despise the Holy Scriptures, let them go and worship their water bulls. Christ says: "He who is not with me is against me." We say: All that is not with the Scriptures is against the Scriptures. Their priesthood and its sacrifice and office, their episcopate, are not with the Scriptures ... therefore they are necessarily against the Scriptures and thus against God. But what is against God is the work of the devil.<sup>56</sup>

Between 1527 and 1529, Luke 11:23 came to serve Luther as sort of a rule of thumb for ceremonies and rites, almost like the justification principle in liturgical renewal.<sup>57</sup> Later, Luther applied the Luke 11:23 rule of thumb in a 1539 disputation on the relationship of philosophy to theology thusly:

Whatever harmonizes with the truth of the faith proves the truth of the faith. The truth of philosophy and of reason is of this kind. Therefore, philosophy proves the truth. Or to put it otherwise: Whatever is on our side is not against us, as Christ says: "He who is not with me is against me." However,

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<sup>54</sup>*Concerning Rebaptism*, AE 40:241.

<sup>55</sup>*Ad loc.* Jn 6:66-67, AE 23:187-89. Here, Luther refers to Luke 11:23.

<sup>56</sup>*The Misuse of the Mass* (1521), AE 36:160. Cf. the 1539 treatise *On the Councils and the Church* in AE 41:122: "But if they establish anything new with regard to faith or good works, you may rest assured that the Holy Spirit had no hand in it, but only the unholy spirit with his angels. For in that instance they must act without and outside of Holy Scripture, indeed, in opposition to it, as Christ says, 'He who is not with me is against me.'"

<sup>57</sup>Cf. *ad loc.* Is. 11:10, AE 16:124. This author acknowledges the help of Ms Carol Liboiron, the librarian at the Martin Chemnitz Library of Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, who provided faxed copies of this and other Luther references not in this author's own collection.

philosophy is not against us but for us. Therefore, philosophy is on the side of theology and not against it.<sup>58</sup>

In that same disputation Luther is clear that whether one is “for” or “against” is based on the faith. He says: “Whoever is for us, that is, has the same faith. All things are for Christ and work together for good in the elect; yet all things do not constitute the gospel.”<sup>59</sup>

On another occasion seven years earlier, Luther seemingly echoed Augustine’s view that there is good outside the revealed Church and evil apparently within it. Luther uses Luke 9:49-50 as he writes of signs and wonders taking place both through pious individuals and evil persons who occupy an office but teach correctly. Here again, the determining factor is whether “the signs aim at praising Christ and advancing your faith.”<sup>60</sup> To the individual, Luther applies Luke 11:23 quite simply: “to be against Christ is a mortal sin. And not to be with him is to be beyond grace.”<sup>61</sup> There is no neutral position, due to the resulting ontological relationship between Christ and the believer. Luther writes:

The truth of the matter is rather as Christ says: “He who is not with me is against me.” He does not say “He who is not with is not against me either, but neutral.” For if God is in us, Satan is absent, and only a good will is present; if God is absent, Satan is present, and only an evil will is in us. Neither God nor Satan permits sheer unqualified willing in us, but ... having lost our liberty, we are forced to serve sin, that is, we will sin and evil, speak sin and evil, do sin and evil.<sup>62</sup>

## 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY’S FAITHFUL SHEPHERDS

Eduard Schweizer writes that in Mark 9:40 Jesus discusses one’s joining the band of disciples and that in Matthew 12:30 Jesus emphasizes one’s confessing His name. Schweizer concludes that “Ecumenical openness

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<sup>58</sup>*Disputation on “The Word was made flesh”*, AE 38:249-50.

<sup>59</sup>*Disputation on “The Word was made flesh”*, AE 38:264. Similar is his later statement: “Whatever is in harmony with the truth of the faith supports the truth of the faith, because Christ said: ‘For he that is not against us is for us’” (273).

<sup>60</sup>*The Sermon on the Mount* (1532), AE 21:278-79.

<sup>61</sup>*Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), AE 31:65. Luther brings up Lk. 11:23 again in discussing Jesus Christ as the centre of the faith (*Three Symbols* [1538], AE 34:207).

<sup>62</sup>*The Bondage of the Will* (1525), AE 33:115. Cf. earlier in the same treatise: “the Word of God and the traditions of men are irreconcilably opposed to one another, precisely as God himself and Satan are mutually opposed, each destroying the works and subverting the dogmas of the other like two kings laying waste each other’s kingdoms. ‘He who is not with me,’ says Christ, ‘is against me’” (54). Recognizing the rhetoric, it is still hard to imagine God subverting Satan’s dogma!

(Mark 9:40) and the unambiguous demand for a clear confession of Jesus (Matt. 12:30) are certainly compatible."<sup>63</sup> To be sure, faithful, confessional undershepherds of the Good Shepherd are ecumenical, in the best sense of the word.<sup>64</sup> Yet, they will also demand a clear confession by, to paraphrase the Formula of Concord, both presenting the true doctrine and accusing those who teach otherwise. Both sayings of Jesus under consideration support this practice. This has been seen by examining the two sayings in context and noting their particularities, comparing and contrasting the two sayings, briefly surveying St Augustine's uses of them in *Against the Donatists*, and reviewing Luther's uses of them.

The Luther citation made by the Formula of Concord that began this article is made there to emphasize how antitheses are necessary for the unity of the Church. Presenting true doctrine correctly and accusing those who teach otherwise is done "to preserve the pure doctrine and to maintain a thorough, lasting, and God-pleasing concord within the church".<sup>65</sup> Drawing attention to differences between so-called Christian denominations may appear to be divisive, but errors regarding the chief parts of doctrine "must be refuted to preserve the truth".<sup>66</sup>

When the two passages are taken together, the combination leaves us considering those who are "with and for" Jesus or "against" Him.<sup>67</sup> Note that even when the person not with the disciples is under consideration, Jesus expresses the opposition most personally.<sup>68</sup> There is an inherent tension in confessing the truth about Jesus to a fallen world filled with other so-called Christian denominations. Herman Sasse explains the two forces this way: "the Lutheran Church which is faithful to its Confession is the true church of Jesus Christ and the church of Christ is not limited to the church of the Lutheran Confession."<sup>69</sup> The sayings of Jesus in Matthew 12:30/Luke 11:23

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<sup>63</sup>Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, tr. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), *ad loc.* 11:30, 287. Cf. Davies and Allison, *ad loc.* Mt. 12:30, 344.

<sup>64</sup>There are no uses of the four passages in question in the Tappert edition of *The Book of Concord*, according to its index and a database search of the same edition. Nor are any references found in the index of the Kolb edition.

<sup>65</sup>SD R&N:14, Tappert, 506. Kolb's translation reads: "In order to preserve pure teaching and fundamental, lasting, God-pleasing unity in the church" (529).

<sup>66</sup>SD R&N:15, Tappert, 507. Cf. Kolb, 530.

<sup>67</sup>One must never confuse God being on "our" side with our being on "His". Cf. Josh. 5:13-14. God is not "a subservient ally who can be mobilized by us for the accomplishment of our purposes" (Cranfield, *ad loc.* Rom. 8:31, 435).

<sup>68</sup>Note the first person singular pronoun (ἐμοῦ) in Mt. 12:30 and Lk. 11:23, in contrast to the either first person or second person plural pronouns in Mk 9:40 and Lk. 9:50. See also above, n. 25.

<sup>69</sup>Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith*, tr. Theodore Tappert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1938), 176-77. He cites the Preface of the Formula of Concord (cf. Tappert, 11). He further notes that the condemnations

and Mark 9:40/Luke 9:50 support this, respectively urging both exaltation of the true confession and humility towards those who are true believers but may be in other communions due to weakness or some sort of “felicitous inconsistency”.<sup>70</sup>

Practically ascertaining who is “for and with” and who is “against” Jesus is difficult. It is not impossible, however, as the process is linked to the Means of Grace, the marks of the Church. The Church is the assembly in which the Gospel is preached in its purity and the Sacraments rightly administered.<sup>71</sup> The different natures of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar may even correspond to identifying who is “for” and who is “with”. One baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit may indeed be “for” Jesus, though not fully “with” Him in proclaiming His death until He comes—just as the unknown exorcist was “for” Jesus but not with the disciples. To be sure, different denominations will draw these lines differently than others.<sup>72</sup>

Where today one might want only to condemn false churches or their teachers and not the individuals in them, the passages in question deal with single individuals. Faith is always a subjective appropriation of the objective

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of the Confessions are not to condemn those who err out of simplicity or everyone in an entire church but to condemn the wrong teachings and teachers that conflict with the Word of God.

<sup>70</sup>This is a term Francis Pieper uses for instances where a theologian’s personal faith is at variance with his published views (see, for examples, *Christian Dogmatics* [in three volumes, tr. Theodore Engelder, et. al. , St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950-1953], 1:x, 72, and 114 n. 167). Though it may be that Pieper coined the term, he claims it is a principle of which Luther was cognizant (1:6). More recently, Dr David Scaer has written of this principle’s universal nature (“Dominus Iesus and Why I Like It”, in *Logia* 10.2 [Easteride 2001]: 57-58). Though Pieper uses it primarily of theologians and their published writings, it can similarly apply to the faith of the individuals’ hearts and the confessions of the altars at which they commune, that is, the confessions of the congregations where they hold membership or regularly attend. Pieper indeed mentions this happy inconsistency while noting that there are true believers in other communions and cites at least one case where Luther did likewise (see, for examples, 1:24, 83-84, 87-88).

<sup>71</sup>AC VII:1, Tappert 32. Cf. Kolb, 42-43.

<sup>72</sup>Scaer points out that Rome treats Lutherans as Lutherans (at least *gnesio*-Lutherans) treat the Reformed: recognizing a valid baptism but not a valid eucharist (“Dominus Iesus”, 57). In the case of the Lutherans and the Reformed, the validity of a Reformed Baptism rests on the use of water and the Divine Name (Pieper, 3:262 n. 17), though Scaer seems to question whether Reformed Baptisms are valid (see “Dominus Iesus” 57, and *Baptism*, vol. 11 in *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*, ed. John Stephenson [St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 1999] 66). For Rome and the Lutherans, on the other hand, the invalidity of the Lutheran eucharist surely rests on Rome’s failure to recognize the ordination of Lutheran pastors: “Only validly ordained priests can preside at the Eucharist and consecrate the bread and the wine so that they become the Body and Blood of the Lord” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [New York: An Image Book published by Doubleday, 1994], paragraph 1411, page 394). Validity (essence, or promises) and efficacy (benefits) are, of course, two different, though related, things in Lutheran theology.

truth. Though individuals hardly gather or scatter, the attitudes of individuals, it has been noted, can impact the success or failure of the Church. Moreover one’s belief or lack thereof determines his or her eternal state. The two sayings introduce tension even in dealing with individuals. According to Mark 9:40 and Luke 11:50, patience is in order, as Kretzmann explains:

This judgment of Christ contains an instruction for all of us to have patience with our weak brethren and sisters. They have faith in their hearts and confess the name of Jesus, but are not so far advanced as to be on a level with established Christians. But the Lord will give them further enlightenment, and it is not for us to set limits too arbitrarily.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, in keeping with Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23, such patience cannot ignore the ongoing state of confession in which the true Church exists, as Kretzmann again explains:

those that are not part with Christ, on His side, taking His part at all times, are against Him and must be reckoned with His enemies; and he that is not working with Him in every respect must be considered as belonging to those that disperse and scatter the fruits of His ministry and labor.<sup>74</sup>

## 6. CONCLUSION

This essay began by noting how Mark 9:40 and Luke 9:50—which seem to argue for tolerance of, or at least patience with, an individual confessing Christ apart from the Church—can be used to oppose Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23—which seem to argue for condemning an individual for not being and gathering with Christ, and thus scattering Him and His Church. The two sayings are not in opposition, however, but complementary. The former may be more relevant to issues of unionism, while the latter to those of syncretism. In any case, however, one cannot hesitate to call a spade a spade—the truth of the Gospel and the salvation of individuals are at stake. It may well be that individuals come under collective condemnations due to their own weakness, but the exigency of the times demands it.

In the final analysis it is worth remembering Oberman’s observation of the heightened urgency of the eschaton already in Luther’s day. The heightened urgency goes back further than that: in St Luke’s account, the only one to contain both sayings, the more condemnatory saying comes as Jesus has drawn closer to Jerusalem. In these latter days, faithful shepherds do well, for the sake of the Gospel and the elect, to condemn without

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<sup>73</sup>Kretzmann, *ad loc.* Lk. 9:49-50, 319.

<sup>74</sup>Kretzmann, *ad loc.* Lk. 11:17-23, 329.

hesitation those whose belief, teaching, and confession are impure, and thus those who do not gather with them. For, to paraphrase Luther, those whose belief, teaching, and confession are impure are both in mortal sin and beyond grace. Such is somewhat harsh law for those who fail in these regards. The comment paraphrased from Luther, however, comes in the Heidelberg Disputation as proof that Christ alone is our righteousness—righteousness freely given to all who repent and trust in Christ for forgiveness.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>See the *Heidelberg Disputation* quotation above at n. 61.

## WHY DID JESUS DIE? THREE VISIONS

*James Earl Keller*

Jesus' death is central to the entire New Testament and to most forms of Christianity. Most mainline scholars agree that Jesus of Nazareth suffered the death penalty on a Roman cross at some point during the rule of Tiberius Caesar. Many of those would also concur that the evidence against this Jesus was poor, and may even have been insufficient to warrant capital punishment. Nevertheless, the sentence was carried out at the behest of then Judean governor Pontius Pilate. Several ancient sources report the incident, each with their own unique spin.

The ancient sources, however, leave some questions unanswered. Among the most significant of these are: Why did Jesus die? What were the deciding factors that led the authorities to crucify Him? Who was ultimately responsible? Why ask why?

In an attempt to answer these questions this paper will survey the work of three contemporary scholars who correspond to three unique perspectives on the whole question of Jesus—Marcus Borg will represent the views of liberal scepticism, Paul Maier of faith-based conservatism, and Tom Wright of the critical realists.

### MARCUS BORG – INTELLECTUAL SCEPTICISM

Marcus J. Borg is Hundere Distinguished Professor of Religion at Oregon State University, and a Fellow of the Jesus Seminar founded by Robert Funk. His scholarship since receiving his doctorate at Oxford University in England has been in biblical studies, most particularly in contemporary Jesus research. Borg's many books on the subject have propelled him to the leading edge of Jesus scholarship, and his work with the Jesus Seminar is ongoing.

In order to grasp Borg's view of history as it impacts the crucifixion accounts, one must first understand his christological presuppositions. The roots of these presuppositions lie in Borg's formative years growing up in a "traditional and conventional Midwest Lutheran church". Borg suggests that from his earliest recollections as a young Lutheran he was a biblical literalist who did not question the events as they were portrayed unless there were obvious reasons to do so. Borg also recalls having no need to rationalize how a mere human being could possess all the qualities of God. Jesus Christ could most certainly be both God and man, and at the same time think that way about Himself.

By the end of childhood, the ingredients of the popular image of Jesus were in place: Jesus was the divinely begotten Son of God who died for the sins of the world and whose message was about himself and his saving purpose and the importance of believing in him. Indeed, John 3: 16, that verse I memorized as a preschooler, expressed this childhood image perfectly: Jesus is the divine saviour in whom one is to believe for the sake of receiving eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

As Borg passed from childhood into adulthood this literalistic perception began to change. In several of his works Borg relates a seminal story of his childhood in which the image of God first appeared in his mind.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, that image of God from preschool resembled in many ways the pastor of the Lutheran church in which Borg grew up. This pastor was a middle-aged and greying man who wore a simple black robe when conducting services. Borg remembers saying his night-time prayers with the face of this pastor swirling in his mind. To Borg, this continued to be the face of God for many years.

Yet the image did not stop with a face. As far as Borg can remember this pastor had one less than endearing quality—he was a “finger-shaker”. He would shake his finger at the congregation repeatedly when he preached, and sometimes during the Absolution portion of the liturgy. When as an adult Borg recalled that his childhood included the notion that God was a finger-shaker, he began to wonder if this image was shared by others, and perhaps was simply an erroneous conception propagated by the Church in order to maintain discipline and authority.

The finger-shaker God leads one inevitably to conclude Christianity is nothing more than a religion of requirements, the basic requirement being unquestioning obedience to God and His standards to which no one can aspire. The God of requirements is the God of conventional Christian wisdom, but is in no wise the true essence of God. Years at college and seminary convinced Borg that another view of Jesus was needed. At this point Borg began to reject the “popular” notion of Jesus. He says, “I learned that the image of Jesus from my childhood—the popular image of Jesus as the divine saviour who knew himself to be the Son of God and who offered up his life for the sins of the world—was not historically true. That, I learned, was not what the historical Jesus was like.”<sup>3</sup> Borg’s Jesus undermines the God of requirements with His subversive social vision. Jesus’ attack on the authority that perpetuated sharp social boundaries ran Him afoul of the vested interests of His day, and they finally were forced to

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<sup>1</sup>Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishing, 1994), 6.

<sup>2</sup>Personal conversation, 20 September 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Borg, 8.

take some notice of Him. For Borg, Golgotha was less about the will of God and more a simple matter of time.

Jesus was an historical person who died on a Roman cross. Borg has no doubt of this. However, the real issue is how much of the Gospel accounts can be trusted to help construct an accurate historical picture of the events? Borg is willing to concede that much of the chronology given by Mark's Gospel is probably historical. Jesus most certainly made some kind of entrance into Jerusalem that could be witnessed by many. He probably taught often in the temple courts and engaged the more articulate Jews in debate. He avoided their verbal traps with aplomb. After Palm Sunday He made an unannounced visit to the temple and at the same time created a spectacle at the expense of those conducting business inside. This was Jesus' "most dramatic public act".<sup>4</sup> He directed poignant parables against the temple authorities, indicted scribes for extortion, and even intimated He would raze the temple and rebuild it in three short days. Jesus' relativization of the temple, and along with it those who depended on the temple for legitimation, was the final straw. "The centrality of Jesus' conflict with the temple is pointed to by Mark's statement that it was the cause of Jesus' arrest."<sup>5</sup>

Borg is more sceptical with regard to the passion narratives found in the Canon, those accounts which speak of Jesus' final 24 hours of life. He suggests, as others have done, that the passion narratives are not straightforward historical documents, but are developing traditions characterized by four components: history remembered, prophecy historicized, imaginative elaboration, and purposive interpretation.<sup>6</sup> Some of the events actually happened. Some are post-Easter interpolations that attempt to place Jesus' life and death in the realm of prophecy fulfilled. Others, like Mark's knowledge of the content of Jesus' Gethsemane prayer that was heard by no one, fall into the category of fanciful expansions. Still others are theological projections of "divine providential purpose", but are not of historical value. The Gospel of Mark, which Borg assumes is the earliest, may for that reason contain the most "pure" history. Matthew and Luke, copying Mark and other sources, are rife with imaginative elaboration. There is no evidence to suggest John knew anything of Mark's Gospel, and therefore his passion account is most surely independent. Nevertheless, all four Gospels are historically suspect.

Borg doubts the events between Jesus arrest and execution are genuine for the simple reason the disciples who recalled and recorded them had

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<sup>4</sup>Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1999), 83-84.

<sup>5</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 84.

<sup>6</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 84.

already fled and were not present as witnesses. A pre-trial before the Sanhedrin could not have occurred at night, much less with the lack of evidence against the accused as the Gospels state. That Jesus should be given a trial before Roman governor Pilate is unlikely as well, since a death sentence on a peasant could be legally carried out without that peasant ever appearing before higher authorities. The “corporal” punishments on Jesus—scourging, beating, mocking, stripping of clothes, and the like—could have been pieced together from the details of routine treatments prior to a crucifixion. They need not have occurred necessarily as the Gospels claim.

The form of Jesus’ death was, of course, crucifixion. Borg suggests there are two significant points to make from this. First, crucifixion was a Roman death penalty not routinely practised by other societies. Roman authority was required to order crucifixion. Borg points out that the Romans reserved crucifixion as a punishment for two types of persons—political rebels and other insurrectionists whose treasonous activities had become public, and chronically defiant slaves.<sup>7</sup> The common link might be summarized as those persons who for various reasons reject established authority.

Second, Borg refers to the work of others, most notably his Jesus Seminar colleague John Dominic Crossan, with regard to Roman practice concerning corpses following crucifixion. In most instances crucifixions were performed with the legs only a few inches off the ground. The typical picture of persons being hauled several metres into the air was simply unnecessary and took too much effort. Following death, the corpse of a crucified person was not taken down immediately but rather was left on the cross for scavengers such as dogs or birds to devour. When a corpse was deemed ready for disposal the Romans did not routinely release remains into the hands of others for burial, but instead cast all remains of crucified persons into a common, unmarked grave. This final act of ignominy was considered part and parcel of the utter shaming and humiliation of an individual and his or her corpse. Exceptions to this kind of treatment were sometimes made, but on very rare occasions.

One may wonder at the singular brutality of crucifixion, especially given the fact the Romans utilized more “humane” forms of execution such as beheading. The reason may be more political than spiritual. Crucifixion was a bald form of political deterrence. Those who witnessed the agonizing death and subsequent humiliation of the remains of a rebel against Rome might think twice before incurring such wrath on themselves.

Another question Borg probes is that of responsibility for Jesus’ death. Among the major players in the drama—the Jewish leaders, the Jewish nation, the Romans and others—which were to blame for sending this rather innocuous Jewish peasant to the cross? To answer this Borg turns to the

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<sup>7</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 88.

Gospel accounts. In concert with other redaction critics, Borg believes the Gospels represent a continuum of early Christian thought, and are not absolutely literal historical documents. The Gospels, as a building tradition, contain in archaeological terms “early layers and later layers”.<sup>8</sup> Borg’s Gospels include minimally two voices—the voice of Jesus, and the voice of the Christian community after His death. Borg assumes only a fraction of the words and deeds attributed to Jesus actually go back to Him.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the remainder of Gospel material must be the product of individuals trying *ex post facto* to make sense of Jesus and His death.

Since the Gospels are in no way innocent of religious editorial, as pious as such editorial may be, they cannot be seen as offering unbiased reports of the events leading up to Jesus’ death. However, Borg is willing to grant the Gospels are valuable insofar as they offer at least snippets of historical fact. For example, someone was responsible for sending Jesus to the cross, but the identity of that person or persons moves significantly from the earliest Gospel to the latest. The building Gospel tradition progressively shifts the blame from Roman authority to Jewish authority and then finally to the Jewish people as a whole. This progressive shifting is visible if one assumes the Gospel chronology as Borg views it. The earliest Gospel, the Gospel of Mark, already portrays the Roman governor Pilate as reluctant to execute Jesus. He cannot find a good reason to send Jesus to the cross but eventually gives in to pressure applied to him by the Sanhedrin and other Jewish leadership.<sup>10</sup> Matthew, according to Borg, is copying Mark as he writes and adds the scene of Pilate washing his hands of the blood of Jesus before the people because he has found no basis for the charges against him (27:24). Matthew also adds the “scene” in which the Jewish crowd calls out, “Let His blood be upon us and our children” (27:25). The Gospel of John takes this one step further by identifying of the enemies of Jesus as “the Jews”.

For Borg the progressive Gospel shifting of blame indicates the effort put forth by early Christianity to exonerate itself politically. Jesus, the leader of the Christian “movement”, had been executed for treason against Rome. The fact the charge was never justified was not important. The charge stood. As a result, the followers of Jesus would themselves appear subversive and dangerous whether they were so or not. Borg intimates that the shifting of blame from Rome to Jerusalem was brilliant political sleight of hand. Anyone questioning the patriotism of the early Christian movement could simply be directed to the Gospels which state Jesus was executed under suspicious **Jewish** circumstances. The Roman governor actually found Jesus

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<sup>8</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 4-8.

<sup>9</sup>The Jesus Seminar estimates that roughly 18 per cent of Jesus’ words and deeds are genuine.

<sup>10</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 89-91.

innocent but the leaders of the Jewish people insisted that He be put to death. Any further difficulties would thus be written off as misunderstanding.

Borg argues that responsibility for the death of Jesus historically must fall at the feet of first-century Jerusalem elites, namely the Roman governor Pilate and a narrow high priestly circle indebted to temple maintenance. This native aristocracy were not benevolent figures but rather the oppressors of the Palestinian Jewish nation during Jesus' lifetime.

What can we say about what lies behind the gospel picture of responsibility? Though the details remain vague, nearly all mainline scholars see Jesus' arrest and execution as resulting from collaboration between the ruling elites of the day .... This collaboration need not have involved a trial before either; a brief consultation before or after the arrest would have been adequate. The conclusion that Jewish elites were involved is not a way of reintroducing the notion of Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus. Rather than representing Judaism or the Jewish people, the Jewish temple elites were the oppressors of the vast majority of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

Why was Jesus killed? In Christian retrospect, Jesus' death has often been seen as the very purpose of His life; Jesus was born to die for the sins of the world. However, Borg comments, if one considers the question historically one cannot arrive at that conclusion. The historical question is not "why did Jesus die" but rather "why was he killed?"<sup>12</sup> If the question is posed in that manner, Borg suggests, the answer cannot be "for the sins of the world" for that would make no sense. The interpretation of Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sin was a product of the early Christian community after the fact, and most certainly was not Jesus' own intention. Historically considered, Jesus was killed because He was a social prophet who challenged the domination system, and moreover had attracted a loyal following. Jesus was killed because He stood for His own alternative social vision of the Kingdom of God, and stood against the Jewish leadership who had in the name of God created an oppressive and exploitative socio-political system.<sup>13</sup> The spectre of insurrection left the elites on both sides with no choice but to do away with Jesus. If Jesus had simply been a wisdom teacher, a healer, or a spirit person, it is historically doubtful He would have been executed.

Interestingly, Borg is not willing to entirely dismiss the possibility that Jesus perceived His death as possessing salvific quality. Significant persons all through history have suffered from delusions of grandeur. However, the idea of Jesus having such a self-understanding removes lustre from Him as a symbol or object of devotion.

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<sup>11</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 90.

<sup>12</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 90.

<sup>13</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 91.

Honesty compels candour: I find this [Jesus' belief his death was necessary for the removal of sin] not only a strange notion, but an unattractive notion to attribute to Jesus .... I want Jesus to be an attractive figure. Obviously, wanting Jesus to be attractive cannot be a criterion for making historical judgments, and I must factor this desire into my historical judgment not only about this matter, but about every other historical decision I make about Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

### PAUL MAIER – FIDEISTIC CONSERVATISM

Paul L. Maier is professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University, and son of the first Lutheran Hour Speaker, Walter A. Maier. Maier credits his interest in the history of the ancient Near East to his conservative Lutheran upbringing and extensive travel in the Middle East and Asia Minor. Central to Maier's claims regarding the person of Jesus is his contention that Christianity along with its parent Judaism are the only major world religions which can claim an unassailable historical base. The events catalogued in the Canon of Scripture well and truly occurred. Biblical history is neatly in concert with other ancient historical sources. Not only that, recent studies in the fields of geography, archaeology, climatology, and meteorology, as well as those in more cerebral disciplines like linguistics, politics, and economics, corroborate biblical claims. "The wealth of information available from ancient history should, then, enrich our quest and help bridge the gap between what is secular and what is religious in biblical antiquity."<sup>15</sup>

Unlike Borg, Maier chooses not to enumerate his presuppositions, nor to become embroiled in protracted debates over sources, redactions, oral traditions, or even divine inspiration. Maier simply assumes that the Bible must be taken at its word unless history or archaeology can prove otherwise. Maier has been accused by some of harbouring an inordinately high opinion of Scripture, a claim he deflects by suggesting Scripture requires at least as much respect as other ancient sources that his critics cite with impunity. Maier simply examines Biblical sources with the same care and scepticism as all other ancient sources, and even assumes their theological and christological biases. The Gospels most certainly were crafted by men on the tablets of history through the lenses of faith. Nevertheless, this uncritical assumption in no way prevents Maier from stating that, in his view, the Bible should be taken at its word as a straightforward and unambiguous historical document.

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<sup>14</sup>Borg, *Meaning of Jesus*, 82.

<sup>15</sup>Paul L. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1991), xviii.

Along with his high view of Scripture, Maier has no difficulty envisioning Jesus as a divine figure during His earthly life, one that even thought of Himself as possessing all the qualities of God. To that end Maier places himself squarely in the pale of Lutheran orthodoxy, which claims an unbroken connection to the confession of the early church. Maier does not stray from the “traditional” interpretations of Jesus that more critical scholars like Borg reject. He is less concerned with speculative theology, but betrays a willingness to engage in Christian apologetics when confronted.

Maier’s Jesus is none other than “the central figure in human history”.<sup>16</sup> In Maier’s historical judgement, reaction to this first century Jewish peasant was rarely neutral—one either liked Jesus or one did not.<sup>17</sup> Those who disliked Jesus and His program tended to be the ones who stood to lose if His vision of the Kingdom of God were to be true. Many persons in and around Jerusalem at the time of Jesus depended upon the maintenance of the religious *status quo*. The temple, with its claim to monopoly on access to God which for centuries had gone unchallenged, was big business for thousands. On the other hand, a significant portion of the population found Jesus to be an impressive and desirable figure. They pondered His words and marvelled at His miracles. They wanted more from this new prophet, especially if it also meant relief from oppression.

The historical Jesus did not explode onto the scene, but rather slipped in through the backdoor. Maier suggests Jesus “came out” as a candidate for messiahship not by a flash of divine light at His baptism, but rather in the simple confines of His own synagogue in Nazareth. The thirty-year-old son of a dead carpenter rose one Sabbath and read from the book of the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are down-trodden, to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord. (Lk. 4:18-19a, NASB)

The crux of matter, the essence of Jewish outrage, was Jesus’ later claim to have fulfilled the prophet’s words in that time. The problem Jesus created for Himself was obvious—He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

Maier agrees with Borg on one key point: Jesus was radically **theocentric** rather than **christocentric**, pointing most often to the Father and not to

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<sup>16</sup>Maier, 87.

<sup>17</sup>This is in stark contrast to Borg who suggests that Jesus was an ambiguous figure. According to Borg, one could look at Jesus’ words and deeds and claim that he was insane, as his family did. One could conclude he was merely eccentric, a Jewish mystic with a passion for mankind. Or one could assume that Jesus had been infused with the Spirit of God and was therefore, in some sense, divine.

Himself.<sup>18</sup> Jesus advanced the strict rules of conduct outlined in the Old Testament Torah, especially in long addresses such as the Sermon on the Mount. The new and key element Jesus introduced was forgiveness. For Maier, the discourses of Jesus were less about political realities or even holiness, and more about liberation from the straightjacket of rabbinic tradition. Mark 2:27 may be observed as programmatic in this instance: “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Therefore the Kingdom of God, a theme to which Jesus would regularly refer, was not so much a political category as “the crucial future dimension of existence” when God’s reign would be consummated in the resurrection of the dead, something Jewish tradition held as a fact.

In an era of sharp Biblical scepticism, Maier contends for a more literalistic understanding of the Canon. Some scholars such as Crossan and Borg tend to downplay the existence of miracles in much of their various treatments of Jesus. While Borg will submit that in his view Jesus was a “remarkable healer”, this in no way requires that Jesus also be the Messiah. Maier, on the other hand, expounds on the nature and details of the miracle accounts, concluding that they were not intended to amaze but rather to help compel to faith and to show the compassion of God. Borg contends, as do most of his Jesus Seminar peers, that while the persons depicted in Scripture probably are real, many of the physical landmarks such as Peter’s house or a village named Emmaus are most certainly apocryphal. In contrast, Maier takes great pains to place Jesus, the others, and the geographical details squarely into first century Palestine just as the Scriptures indicate.<sup>19</sup> The point, for Maier, is clear: this man Jesus, who was the Messiah and thought that way about Himself,<sup>20</sup> walked and preached and healed in real locales known as Judea and Galilee.

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<sup>18</sup>This was nevertheless a problematic position for Jesus to assume. If God can be understood as Father, then there must be a relationship present between God the Creator and His creation. Furthermore, a divine Father must by definition have divine offspring. Any Son of the Father would himself be divine.

<sup>19</sup>Maier relates the following concerning the “House of Peter”: “South of the synagogue and nearer the lakeshore stand the newly excavated ruins of the ‘House of St. Peter’ .... While final proof is necessarily lacking, we may consider the evidence. The basal remains of a fifth-century octagonal church were exposed at this location, an important clue that this was a long-venerated sacred site .... Under the center of this structure a first-century *house* was discovered, doubtless the very place the pilgrim nun Egeria identified as Peter’s house (c. 382 A.D.)” (103).

<sup>20</sup>“Early Sunday morning, Jesus made his baldly public entry into Jerusalem. It was the end of all privacy and safety, and the beginning of what would be an inevitable collision course with the priestly and political authorities of the land. His irrevocable step was taken deliberately, with every consideration for the consequences, for otherwise he might simply have slipped unceremoniously into the city with the thousands of Passover pilgrims.” Maier, 110-11.

Having established the veracity of the Scriptures as reliable historical documents, Maier turns his attention to the events of Holy Week. If Jesus is the central figure of human history, the week leading up to His death was the “week that changed the world”.<sup>21</sup> Jesus’ march towards Golgotha, and His fulfilment of so many ancient Messianic prophecies preclude the notion He was merely in the wrong place at the wrong time. Maier’s Jesus was a “man born to die”.

Jesus and the disciples made a resolute journey “up to” Jerusalem in time for the Passover celebration. Their expedition took them from the foothills of Galilee and through Jericho on their way to the Holy City. They were making their way to Bethany, one of the eastern suburbs of Jerusalem still visible today. Maier finds no difficulty in assuming Jesus and the others would without a doubt have stayed outside the environs of Jerusalem proper. Accommodations in Jerusalem would have been difficult, if not impossible to find at Passover. It was common for visitors to Jerusalem during the Passover to stay with friends, in this case Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.<sup>22</sup> Yet the most compelling reason for the Bethany base was probably Jesus’ overwhelming popularity. Thus, He and His party would have been much easier to find had they found lodging within the city walls.<sup>23</sup>

Why should the chief priests and teachers of the Law be alarmed at this peasant? Maier concludes they were worried about the political overtones His presence might represent. The palm branch, like those waved as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, was more than a plant. It was a symbol of an independent Palestine.<sup>24</sup> What if the aim of this Jesus of Nazareth was to wrest authority from them and set up a Judean monarchy in their place? The attempt would not have been unprecedented. The “wild card” factor was of course the presence of the ruling Romans. Joseph Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest during that time, knew that Roman governor Pontius Pilate had just arrived in Galilee to deal with any uprising that might transpire during Passover week. Caiaphas was also responsible for the several arrest notices

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<sup>21</sup>Maier, 106.

<sup>22</sup>Maier assumes the raising of Lazarus to be the compelling act in Jesus’ dossier. Those persons who had witnessed or heard of it were present to “welcome the prophet home” to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Not only that, the persons who thought of Jesus as an impostor or sorcerer were probably in attendance as well, if only to try to sabotage the triumphal entry.

<sup>23</sup>Maier proposes this as the reason and need for Judas’ betrayal. Scholars have wondered at this, reasoning that if Jesus took no steps to hide Himself from the authorities, why should Judas be required to lead the soldiers to Him? Maier believes the presence of the tent city around Jerusalem made locating a collection of bearded and robed Galileans under the cover of night a functional impossibility without a guide. Judas’ assistance was mandatory for the deed to be completed before the Sabbath.

<sup>24</sup>Maier, 111.

placed around Palestine that threatened Jesus with death by stoning.<sup>25</sup> Though he would have preferred independence, Caiaphas was no dreamer. By all historical accounts he was a circumspect and wise Sadducee who did not wish to compromise the peace. The very fact the Sanhedrin, at the behest of Caiaphas, wished to stone Jesus to death speaks to the historicity of the Gospel accounts. Like Stephen in Acts 7, Jewish law prescribed stoning for offences related to blasphemy, except in the presence of the ruling Romans, whose punishment of choice for rebels was crucifixion.

While all this intrigue is most interesting, it did not exist in a vacuum. Maier points to the necessity of interpreting these events, as well as any events of history, in context. In the years following Pompey's conquest of Palestine in 63 B.C., twelve different uprisings of varying success had occurred there.<sup>26</sup> The Romans were growing tired of these constant interruptions to the stability of the region, and were perhaps over-prepared. The numbers of legionnaires in Jerusalem at this time was enormous. Palestine was already on "probation" for various offences, and the Romans most assuredly did not need an armed insurrection to occur to be prompted to remove some heads. Direct and oppressive occupation was already dangerously close.

In Maier's view, there were also human reasons for attacking Jesus and wishing Him dead. The Jewish leadership must have experienced an enormous amount of jealousy with respect to Jesus. There were those among the populace who were hailing Jesus as "something more than a man", a moniker He was doing little to discourage other than to warn His disciples to keep the "Messianic secret". Jesus had delivered some stinging blows to the Pharisees and Sadducees in public debate, and His charge that they were "vipers" and "white-washed walls" did not serve to endear Him to them either. Also, the cleansing of the temple placed Jesus in conflict with those who profited mightily from its sacrificial activities.

News of the scene cut the priestly establishment to the quick. What might well be called "Annas, Caiaphas, and Co." controlled all concessions on the Temple premises, and, while one day's loss was not that significant, Jesus

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<sup>25</sup>"The Fourth Gospel concludes this crucial scene [the formal decision to arrest Jesus made months before Holy Week] with a revealing statement: 'Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should let them know, so that they might arrest him.' (11:57) We may, in fact, have some idea of how the arrest notice read. A rabbinical tradition recorded in the Talmud spells out the indictment against Yeshu Hanozri (Hebrew for 'Jesus the Nazarene'). Combined with the New Testament evidence, the notice can be reconstructed as follows: Wanted: Yeshu Hanozri. He shall be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf. Anyone who knows where he is, let him declare it the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem." Maier, 114.

<sup>26</sup>Maier, 115.

was setting a precedent that might well rouse the rabble to future assaults on the Temple and disrupt worship and sacrifice. He would have to be dealt with—immediately.<sup>27</sup>

Many historians have long doubted Jesus' nocturnal appearance before Caiaphas. A man of Caiaphas' stature would most assuredly not have risen from his bed to sentence a peasant, even one as impressive as Jesus of Nazareth. Yet the reasons for the clandestine trial seem clear if examined, once again, in context. Caiaphas did not wish to incite the crowds or the Romans. A trial at night would dispense with the difficulties inherent in a daytime hearing such as the loud voices of hundreds of witnesses who might be present, and the public outcry that surely would have resulted. "The prisoner would then be in Pilate's hands before the case could become a *cause celebre*."<sup>28</sup>

Did Jesus' self-understanding include the view that He was the long-awaited Messiah? Maier contends it did. Though Jesus never stated this in so many words, Maier believes He admitted He was the Messiah when Caiaphas demanded, "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if You are the Messiah, the Son of God." Jesus' response was justifiably cryptic: "You have said so." Not only that, Jesus displayed no fear when He questioned the Jews according to their own Law. The charge of blasphemy which Caiaphas issued was spurious at best.

Jesus' claim to be the Messiah was either true or false, and should have been examined in detail by Caiaphas. Yet even if it were proven false, the claim itself was not necessarily blasphemous. According to the Talmud, blasphemy technically occurred only when the sacred name of God as it was revealed to Moses—Yahweh—was uttered. Whether or not Jesus said it is not known, since the Gospels were written in Greek, but it seems he did not. The entire hearing, however, had violated so many other provisions in Jewish law that no technicality at this point could stand in the way of the high priest's virtually directed verdict of Guilty in a supercharged emotional atmosphere.<sup>29</sup>

The figure of Pontius Pilate is central to Maier's defence of the Gospel records. Both the "canonical" and historical Pilate can be seen as leader that left much to be desired. Many historians, particularly those of the Jesus Seminar, maintain that Pilate could not have acted as the synoptists and John paint him, if he even existed at all. A Roman governor drunk with power could not possibly have cared one whit for a poor Jewish carpenter. However, Maier contends Pilate's actions were reasonable if taken as a continuum. No less than five significant instances<sup>30</sup> recorded by Josephus

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<sup>27</sup>Maier, 120.

<sup>28</sup>Maier, 137.

<sup>29</sup>Maier, 139.

<sup>30</sup>Maier, 148.

and Philo in the years leading up to that fateful Passover indicate Pilate could indeed have reacted the way the evangelists indicate. The two most infamous of these were the “affair of the Roman standards”, and the aqueduct riot.

In what came to be called “the affair of the Roman standards,” Pilate’s troops once marched into Jerusalem carrying medallions with the emperor’s image or bust among the regimental standards. This action provoked a five-day mass demonstration by Jews at the provincial capital, Caesarea, which protested the effigies as a violation of Jewish law concerning engraved images (Exod. 20:4-5). Pilate finally relented and ordered the offensive standards removed. Later in his administration, he built an aqueduct from cisterns near Bethlehem to improve Jerusalem’s water supply, paid for it with funds from the Temple treasury. This sparked another riot, which was put down only after bloodshed, even though Pilate had cautioned his troops not to use swords.<sup>31</sup>

Needless to say, Emperor Tiberius was far from enamoured with Pilate’s performance, and in a rather nasty letter indicated Pilate should desist from antagonizing his subjects in any way concerning their religion. Pilate was on “probation” with Rome at the time Jesus appeared before him, and was obviously walking on political eggshells.

No matter what charges Caiaphas and the others could bring forward against Jesus, Pilate was in no position to sentence Him to death for blasphemy. That must remain between Jesus and His Jewish protagonists. The Jewish leadership needed to establish a socio-political motive for Jesus’ behaviour in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine. Thus, when Pilate asked for a summary of charges against Jesus, the Jewish leaders’ response was predictable: “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King” (Lk. 23:2). Pilate’s interrogation of Jesus was conducted in private, but when it proceeded nowhere, he dispatched Jesus to Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Palestine. The reason for this was obvious. Herod knew Jewish religious law better than Pilate, and had already been responsible for executing another Jewish prophet, John the Baptizer.

Antipas, it must be remembered, had already embarrassed Pilate once at the time of the Roman shields episode. Antipas issued a letter to Tiberius suggesting Pilate was a weak leader who had no idea how to govern Jews. Pilate knew any further conflict with Antipas would result in another letter to Rome, and so sending Jesus to stand trial there was the beginning of a new and more congenial relationship with him. After all, Antipas had desired to meet Jesus for some time in order to witness some miracle. Jesus refused to

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<sup>31</sup>Maier, 148.

comply with Antipas' goading, and was quickly dispatched by him back to Pilate, but not before Antipas humiliated Jesus with robes.

Jesus returned to Pilate a broken and bleeding man. Pilate, upon seeing Jesus in this reduced state, concluded that the charges brought concerning him were baseless (Lk. 23:14-16). Nevertheless, the crowds continued to shout for Jesus' blood. When given the choice, they even chose to release a convicted murderer over the gentle Nazarene. Pilate's wife had already warned him not to get involved with Jesus, saying, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about Him" (Mt. 27:19).<sup>32</sup> After more beatings, presumably to elicit sympathy, Jesus was brought once again before the crowds. But their shouts for Jesus' blood grew all the louder. Another private meeting in Pilate's palace proved fruitless. Jesus was not of the mood to talk.

Pilate, the most powerful man in Palestine, returned to the tribunal with the disturbing news. He found no reason to crucify Jesus.

He was on the point of releasing him when, in understandable desperation, the prosecution played its trump card. Perhaps it was Caiaphas himself who said, "If you release this man, you are *not* a Friend of Caesar. For anyone who would make himself a king *treasonably* defies Caesar!" It was a brilliant thrust that hit the mark cleanly, directly .... High officials in the Empire and some members of the Senate were privileged to join the elite fraternity of *Amici Caesaris*, the Friends of Caesar, and no one left it except under mortal disgrace. Pilate's resistance crumbled: It was Jesus or himself, and he opted for self. His final feeble attempts to defend Jesus and the bowl in which he tried to wash his hands of responsibility in the matter were all retreating actions in the face of the mounting riot conditions that rattled cries of "Away with him! Crucify him!" across the plaza. The trial was over—also for the judge. Drying his hands, Pilate gestured toward Jesus and said, "*Stauroutheto*" to a centurion of the Jerusalem cohort: "Let him be crucified."<sup>33</sup>

On the question of responsibility for Jesus' crucifixion, Maier attacks scholarship that assumes Jesus was either a dangerous revolutionary, perhaps a Zealot, or that the New Testament has falsely shifted the blame from Roman authority to Jewish authority. How could Christians "sell" Jesus to Roman citizens if Pilate, their governor, killed the leader of their movement? On the first point, no credible linkage has been made between Jesus and the Zealots, save the presence of Simon Zealotes among the disciples. Association with Simon makes Jesus a Zealot as much as association with Matthew makes him a tax collector. Jesus did instruct His disciples to procure swords (Lk. 22:36-38), but in such small numbers that they could hardly be considered a threat. On the second point, Sanhedrin 43a of the

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<sup>32</sup>Maier is not above gospel harmonizing to make his case.

<sup>33</sup>Maier, 160-61.

Babylonian Talmud mentioned above proves the Jewish leaders had already passed a death sentence on Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>34</sup> Also, *Toledoth Jeshu*, a fifth century compilation of early Jewish traditions, placed the responsibility for Jesus' conviction on the priests, and does not dwell on the role of Pilate.<sup>35</sup> Not only that, Paul was reporting on these events before the Gospels were composed. It is unlikely that he, too, would conspire to whitewash Pilate's role.

Who then was responsible? Maier draws his conclusions from the facts as presented. Pilate must retain a certain degree of responsibility for passing sentence on Jesus despite overwhelming evidence that He was innocent. The Jewish leadership was also culpable, but may be partially excused for fearing Jesus was a clear and present danger as a religious terrorist and possible seditious usurper. Luke records that "a great number wept" as Jesus was led to be crucified (Lk. 23:27). Since early Christianity was Jewish at its core, in no way would it make sense to pin the tail of responsibility on "the Jews". Maier concludes: "Responsible Christian theology emphasizes that it was God—not any Jewish prosecution—who was ultimately responsible for the Crucifixion, since all mankind was involved in, and affected by, the events swirling around the cross, not just one or another ethnic group."<sup>36</sup>

In summary, Maier contends for the historicity of the Gospels that place Jesus squarely in opposition to those whose vision of the Kingdom of God was one of requirements rather than faith. Jesus ran afoul of a stiff-necked aristocracy who deemed it necessary to do away with Him rather than debate Him. The Roman governor Pilate was also complicit, owing to some rather unfortunate circumstances and a lack of personal will. These are the historical reasons for the death of Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter turned Messiah.

## N. THOMAS WRIGHT – CRITICAL REALISM

Nicholas Thomas Wright is Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey and was formerly Dean of Lichfield Cathedral. His academic scholarship began in the field of Old Testament history, and has evolved into the study of Christian origins and the question of God. He has been involved in the scholarly quest for the historical Jesus for nearly twenty years, most recently

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<sup>34</sup>And in 62 A.D., only twenty-nine years after Good Friday, a stunning near-parallel occurred: the high priest and the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem stoned to death James, the half-brother (or relative) of Jesus and first Christian bishop of Jerusalem in the *absence* of the Roman governor Albinus, who was later so angry at this that the high priest was deposed." Maier, 162.

<sup>35</sup>Maier, 162.

<sup>36</sup>*In the Fullness of Time*, 163.

with his book *The Challenge of Jesus*. His many volumes on the subject exhort both scholars and others to take the study of Jesus seriously, especially in the arena of Christian apologetics. Wright has been an outspoken critic of more “liberal” views of Christianity, particularly those purported by the Jesus Seminar. He attempts to traverse a *via media* between the radical biblical critics on one hand, and crass fundamentalism on the other. Wright prefers to let the Scriptures and history speak without a preconceived and overt agenda.

Before delving into the Scriptural and secular sources, Wright lays down his epistemological presuppositions. To do so he summarizes and critiques the “classical” positions of positivism at one end of the philosophical spectrum and phenomenism at the other. Positivism suggests that there are things in the natural order of which we may have “unquestionable knowledge” through empirical testing. Enlightenment positivism hypothesized that one can know things as they are on a common-sense level. However, some disciplines such as metaphysics and theology clearly exist beyond the pale of empiricism. Thus, those things that we can observe are by necessity given a higher position than those which exist *a priori*. Things that cannot be tested cannot be spoken of without “some sort of nonsense”. For Wright this leads inevitably to problems of authority.

One meets [positivism] among naïve theologians, who complain that while other people have “presuppositions”, they simply read the text straight, or who claim that, because one cannot have “direct access” to the “facts” about Jesus, all that we are left with is a morass of first-century fantasy.<sup>37</sup>

The other pole that Wright dismisses is phenomenism. Phenomenism maintains the same radical empiricism as positivism, but in a more guarded fashion. One may be certain of the reality of a thing only when confronted through the sense data which confrontation with that thing produces. However, while positivism would have no difficulty arguing the existence of a thing from sense data, phenomenism remains more “cautious”, preferring ambiguity to certainty. “Instead of the brash ‘this is correct’, we [the phenomenists] say ‘I would want to argue that this is correct’, collapsing a dangerously arrogant statement about the world into a safely humble statement about myself.”<sup>38</sup>

The difficulties with these positions become apparent most particularly when confronting history. Most all historians agree there is no such thing as unvarnished history. History is, rather, a combination of what happened in the past and what was written concerning what happened in the past.

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<sup>37</sup>N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), 33-34. Hereafter *NTPG*.

<sup>38</sup>Wright, *NTPG*, 34.

Therefore, the hope of finding true history is hopelessly slim. History is necessarily selective; even primary sources and eyewitness testimony are rife with interpretation. If this is so, positivism and phenomenism must eventually reach the frustrating cul-de-sac of solipsism, the belief that I am the only thing that exists since I am the only reality for which I have evidence.<sup>39</sup> In terms of biblical scholarship, or any historical inquiry for that matter, this kind of ontological arrogance simply will not do.

Over against these two positions, Wright suggests a third option, something he titles **critical realism**. The thing that is known has a reality all its own. This is the basis for **realism**. The only possibility for reality, then, must come through dialogue between both the knower and the known. This is the basis for **criticism**. Critical realism takes initial observations or empirical facts and reflects upon them, but can survive the challenges presented by that reflection and still speak with confidence about reality.<sup>40</sup> It is this reflection on reality on which Wright bases his scholarship in all instances, and most especially as it impacts the quest for the historical Jesus.

In his volume *The New Testament and the People of God*, Wright proposes that in order to understand Jesus and the Christian movement rightly, one must grasp Jewish praxis, story, and symbol with clarity. First-century Jewish culture is remarkably removed from our own, and thus what seems odd to our post-Enlightenment and post-modern ears could be perfectly valid for a Palestinian living in the time of Jesus. Wright warns that Jesus research which ignores praxis, story, and symbol in favour of its own uncritical presuppositions will form erroneous results.

The idealist tradition [like the Jesus Seminar], by starting with sayings, tends to lose sight of events and actions within the fog of hypothetical tradition-history. But it is events and actions, and the implicit narratives they disclose, that count within a world that knows the value of symbols. Modern westerners, who live in a world that has rid itself of its ancient symbols, and mocks or marginalizes those that are left, have to make a huge effort of historical imagination to enter into a world where a single action can actually *say* something .... Unless we make the effort, however, we become prisoners of our own culture, and should give up even trying to be historians. Words focus, limit and sharpen symbolic actions, but do not replace them.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Wright, *NTPG*, 35.

<sup>40</sup>Wright suggests three presuppositions of critical realism. First, reality can be viewed only through the lenses of man; there is no such thing as a god's-eye view. Second, interpretations of reality are a fact, and are coloured by perspective and worldview. Third, perspective will differ between cultures. There is no such thing as a disinterested observer. *NTPG* 36.

<sup>41</sup>Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 554. Hereafter *JVG*.

Such a view suggests it was possible for Jesus of Nazareth to believe He was the promised Messiah. All the pieces fit. Not only that, He most certainly could have understood His death as possessing salvific quality.

Wright suggests the question “Why did Jesus die” is among the most frequent of those posited by biblical scholars. The question why is most concerned with human intentionality, and therefore has tied up within it the several other queries this paper has already addressed, namely the position of the Roman state, the motivation of the Jewish officials, and Jesus’ own self-realization. Wright’s position on the sources indicates he has the utmost respect for the Gospels as historically accurate for the most part. Critical realism helps him to see those sources as valuable despite the theological and exegetical reflections they contain. Passion speaks to veracity, not fiction.

After all, if a first-century Jew believed that the events he or she had just witnessed and indeed taken part in really were the turning point of history, they would be unlikely to describe them in the deliberately neutral language of someone writing up an experiment in inorganic chemistry. Changing the science, to distrust the sources because they show evidence of theology and exegesis is like distrusting an astronomer’s report because the observations were not conducted during the hours of daylight.<sup>42</sup>

There was to Jesus a political edge. Wright indicates this fact is most compelling in reflecting on His death on a Roman cross. “Jesus was executed as a rebel against Rome.”<sup>43</sup> Historically considered, those who wished Jesus dead had to find a charge severe enough that Pilate would get personally involved, but soft enough that the Romans would not strike at the populace militarily. That Jesus, a peasant from Nazareth, should claim to be the Messiah and therefore committed blasphemy was the only possible charge that fit both criteria. Pilate would be forced to respond to a man who claimed to be a King, even one whose kingdom was not of this world. At the same time, the Romans would have no reason to mobilize the legions in and around Jerusalem since blasphemy was strictly a religious matter.

However, though Pilate may not have been concerned if Jesus were claiming to be the Messiah, he would have chafed at the prospect of Jesus as King of the Jews. If YHWH were establishing His kingdom on earth, with Jesus as monarch, all rulers (and Caesars) would be reduced to transient officials. Wright agrees with Maier that Pilate was not an especially competent leader. Pilate was, rather, a vacillating and petty despot, with a vindictive streak.

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<sup>42</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 541.

<sup>43</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 544.

What emerges from the records is not that Pilate wanted to rescue Jesus because he thought he was good, noble, holy or just, but that Pilate wanted to do the opposite of what the chief priests wanted him to do because he always wanted to do the opposite of what the chief priests wanted him to do. This was his regular and settled *modus operandi*.<sup>44</sup>

Why should the chief priests have presented Jesus to Pilate as a criminal in the first place? The answer, Wright contends, is difficult, if not impossible, to determine with absolute certainty. It also poses a problem for less orthodox interpretations of Jesus and His self-understanding. The Jewish leaders most definitely wished Pilate to find Jesus guilty. However, they could not risk framing Him and His movement as traitorous and threatening in the mode of Judas Maccabeus who had been executed two centuries earlier. If the Romans had been convinced Jesus was dangerous, they most assuredly would have arrested not only Him, but also all who followed Him as well, and perhaps a few Jewish officials for good measure. Hence, Jesus was not charged with sedition, but with “leading the people astray”.

They invoked Deuteronomy 13 and similar passages because Jesus was following, and advocating, an agenda which involved setting aside some of the most central and cherished symbols of the Judaism of his day, and replacing them with loyalty to himself. More specifically, his attitude to Torah (during his Galilean work) pointed towards his action in the temple: one can imagine onlookers, aware of what Jesus had done and said in Galilee, saying “There! I knew he was up to no good!”<sup>45</sup>

In the final analysis the Jewish leaders could not execute Jesus on their own. For this they required the Romans.

In contrast to Borg and Maier, Wright devotes a great deal of attention to examining the historical framework and events of the Last Supper. At the Last Supper, the most solemn juncture of His earthly life, Jesus celebrated the feast of Passover with His disciples for the final time.<sup>46</sup> The disciples may or may not have understood the enduring significance of the meal at the time. Yet the symbolic value of the Last Supper cannot be overlooked. First, it was an unmistakable symbol of the new exodus, a journey into the future where YHWH is king and overcomes all literal and pseudo-Pharaohs. Second, it was an unmistakable symbol of the new exodus in the person of Jesus Himself. This was the controversial point.

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<sup>44</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 546.

<sup>45</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 548.

<sup>46</sup>Wright is not terribly concerned that the sources are not consistent as to when the Supper occurred. That the synoptics should disagree with John by one day need not call into question the historicity of the Last Supper. The fact remains that, in Wright’s opinion, Jesus of Nazareth had some kind of evening meal with His disciples prior to His death.

Jesus' central actions during the meal seem to have been designed to reinforce the point of the whole meal: the kingdom-agenda to which he had been obedient throughout his ministry was now at last reaching its ultimate destination. Passover looked back to the exodus, and on to the coming of the kingdom. Jesus intended the meal to symbolize the new exodus, **the arrival of the kingdom through his own fate**. The meal, focused on Jesus' actions with the bread and cup, told the Passover story, and Jesus' own story, and wove these two into one.<sup>47</sup>

In Wright's opinion, the celebration of the Last Supper proves Jesus believed His death would produce salvation for the people of God. The unleavened bread symbolized two things: the urgency of the Israelites to leave Egypt following the Passover and the urgency to complete the mission the Father had entrusted to Jesus. The wine also symbolized two things: it recalled the covenant cut between YHWH and the Israelites (Ex. 24:8) and pointed to the coming messianic victory that would free Israel from her long exile.<sup>48</sup> A vital part of the celebration was the admonition to the disciples to "do this in remembrance of Me." If Jesus did not think of Himself messianically, it is inconceivable that He would give His disciples this kind of directive and expect them to carry it out, especially after they had become aware of His death. Jesus was showing unswerving intentionality of a renewed and redeemed Israel through His own salvific act.

Wright does not confine his treatment to the sources and their obvious bias. He also analyses first-century Jewish apocalypticism to make his point regarding Jesus less esoteric. Historically considered, a great number of "second temple" Jews believed that restoration of the Jewish nation and relief from their temporal strife would occur only following a period of intense suffering.<sup>49</sup> This view was based primarily on exegesis of Isaiah 40-55, which a majority of first century Jewish scholars interpreted messianically. Some believed the suffering described would occur on a collective, national level. Others, including Jesus Himself, understood the suffering as personal, and most probably in a single individual. Jesus' own experience and knowledge of Scripture would definitely produce such a view. His friend John the Baptizer had been beheaded at the command of Herod Antipas.<sup>50</sup> This heinous act recalled the prophet Habakkuk, who foretold of conflict between the Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest (Hab. 2). The Wisdom of Solomon opined that the wicked oppose the righteous to death for they "embarrass" them (Wisdom 2:12-20). The Maccabean martyrs regarded their sufferings as salvific for the nation's sins

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<sup>47</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 559. Emphasis added.

<sup>48</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 560-61.

<sup>49</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 577.

<sup>50</sup>Mt. 14:1-2; Mk 6:14-29; Lk. 9:7-9.

during their time, so that Israel may attain permanent righteousness at a later date.<sup>51</sup> The point is clear:

According to [Jewish] tradition, the suffering and perhaps the death of certain Jews could function within YHWH's plan to redeem his people from pagan oppression: to win for them, in other words, rescue from wrath, forgiveness of sins, and covenant renewal. This by itself, [Wright suggests], would be enough to give us some substantial clues as to the world of thought within which a prophet and would-be Messiah, in the first third of the first century, might find his own vocation being decisively shaped.<sup>52</sup>

What, then, was Jesus' own intention as He "set out resolutely for Jerusalem?" Following in Albert Schweitzer's steps of a century ago, Wright interprets the events of Holy Week through the lenses of "consistent eschatology."<sup>53</sup> Jesus proclaimed, and more importantly lived, an end to the "present evil age", and advocated the raising of a "new life" for the people of God independent of the temple and its paralysing system of sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus believed, from the earliest point of His earthly ministry, that He carried within Himself Israel's entire destiny. At no point did He see military force as an appropriate means of release from exile, but rather spoke of and lived the way of peace and love—in other words, the way of the cross.

"It should be beyond doubt that Jesus knew the scriptures intimately."<sup>54</sup> Wright even suggests that the book of Daniel, with its remarkable reference to the Son of Man, formed the hermeneutical key for His entire ministry.<sup>55</sup> In addition, Jesus probably derived His understanding of the royal shepherd from the prophet Zechariah (13:7), as well as the need for the king to arrive at Zion on the back of a pack animal (9:9) and the coming of YHWH to His people to fulfil His covenant with them (14:1ff.). Psalm 22, as well as other psalms that Jesus would have prayed and sung for years, could have been on His lips while He hung dying from a Roman cross. For this reason Wright dismisses the perception that direct biblical quotations from Jesus' lips required insertion at the hands of a later, exegetically-minded redactor. Jesus possessed a mind of His own, a mind filled with the Word of God.

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<sup>51</sup>"Our brothers after enduring a brief suffering have drunk of everflowing life, under God's covenant; but you [the Syrian king Antiochus] by the judgment of God, will receive just punishment for your arrogance. I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by trials and plagues to make you confess that He alone is God, and through me and my brothers to bring an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation" (II Macc. 7:36-38).

<sup>52</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 583-84.

<sup>53</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 593.

<sup>54</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 597.

<sup>55</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 598.

Wright is not so much interested in placing a theology, even an atonement theology, into Jesus' mind as he is in presenting a Jesus who acts out YHWH's covenant promise to lead His people to safety in and through the forgiveness of their sins. Hence, any and all Old Testament allusions to messiahship are not basic to a theory of how Jesus came to self-realization. Rather, they are prophetic utterances of a **vocation** that could not be articulated clearly apart from their flesh and blood referent.

The only way that such a vocation could be articulated without distortion was in story, symbol and praxis; all three came together in the Temple, in the upper room, and ultimately on the hill outside the city gate. Jesus' personal reading of Isaiah belongs not so much in the history of ideas, as in the history of vocation, agenda, action and ultimately passion. And he understood this vocation, agenda, action and passion as messianic.<sup>56</sup>

All of Jesus' words and activities are, for Wright, incontrovertible proof that Jesus accepted the messianic task. His relativization of the temple and placing of Himself in its place showed beyond doubt Jesus believed His death to have sacrificial properties. Jesus could not have advocated temple bypass without something with which to replace it. Also, Jewish tradition held the Messiah would destroy Israel's foes and restore the eternal rule of YHWH. The parallels to Jesus' life and ministry are obvious. When confronted by Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin Jesus stood as the Teacher of Righteousness over against the Wicked Priest. The messianic task peaked later in front of Roman governor Pontius Pilate. Satan, the Father of Lies, had taken up residence in both Rome and Jerusalem. Jesus would Himself battle the evil foe, not with weapons of war, but with love and sacrificial death. The earliest Christians, while revisiting the events of Holy Week in their worship, saw the cross as the decisive victory over death and the grave. They also saw it as a fitting end to a life characterized by healing and active love. When biblical historians allow the accounts of Jesus to speak for themselves, and engage them through the lenses of critical realism, an interesting theme emerges:

What, in the end, made Jesus operate this way; what energized his incorporating death into his mission, his facing it and going to meet it? The range of abstractly possible answers is enormous .... But ... it is above all in the tradition generated by Jesus that we discover what made him operate in the way he did, what made him epitomize his life in the single act of going to his death: He "loved me and handed himself over for me" ...; "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" .... If authenticity lies in the coherence between word (Mark 12:28-34) and deed (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2; John 13:1; Rev. 1:5), our question has found an answer.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Wright, *JVG*, 604.

<sup>57</sup>Ben Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 252f.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper has presented three scholarly responses to the question “Why did Jesus die?” Each theory is compelling in its own way. Nevertheless, one must be careful at all times not to attempt to answer questions which are not being asked. For example: Is it necessary to ascertain beyond a reasonable doubt the reasons for Jesus’ death? Does an unimpeachable rationale for His trip to Golgotha have any effect historically, much less soteriologically? What is the meaning of all of this?

If one were to approach the subject of Jesus’ death from the perspective of Marcus Borg, the details of Holy Week really matter very little. For Borg, Jesus was an entirely human Galilean peasant of the first century, and thus His death could not have held any intrinsic value. The significance of Jesus’ death is found only as it relates to religious experience and cultural interaction. “To follow Jesus means in some sense to be ‘like him,’ to take seriously what he took seriously, which can provide us with an ‘alternative vision of life.’”<sup>58</sup> The Jesus that emanates from the imagination of the Christian community is no more and no less than the image of the invisible God, a shadowy figure whose alternative social vision is well worth aspiring to in order to make the world a better place.

In many ways the image of Jesus that Borg portrays is an attractive one. Borg’s Jesus is the ideal icon of social activism, a man who sought to replace holiness and requirements with compassion. “The politics of holiness, [Borg] asserts, is about law and status and exclusion, whereas the politics of compassion is about freedom and equality and inclusion .... This prophetic counterculturalism got Jesus into trouble with the authorities, who did not want their status-conscious world threatened.”<sup>59</sup> While this view is laudable for those engaged in the business of cultural critique, it holds no muster for others who need Jesus to speak to the coming of the end times, and the demands of life in the kingdom of God.<sup>60</sup> Borg’s Jesus is perfect for our pluralistic age—unassuming, unthreatening, and unremarkable.

Borg claims the “popular” notion of Jesus has ceased to be persuasive in our time. No rational human being could possibly accept all the divine qualities that the creeds of the Church attach to Him. Yet in many ways Borg’s Jesus is more incredible than the one to whom the Church points.

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<sup>58</sup>Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishing, 1997), 41.

<sup>59</sup>Johnson, 43.

<sup>60</sup>Johnson’s comments here are compelling: “A fresh Ph.D. whose entire approach to the New Testament is in terms of ‘ideological criticism’ (i.e. discovering all the ways the texts are oppressive to underrepresented persons) quickly runs out of insight pertinent to those whose work with the text demands weekly preaching, the visitation of the sick, and the comfort of the grieving” (75).

Borg rejects the miracle stories as Feuerbachian wish fulfillments, projections designed to make Jesus appear more divine, and yet claims His disciples must have felt “something” divine in His presence. He denies that Jesus had any internal identification as Messiah, while still marching toward certain death in Jerusalem. He insists Jesus died horribly on a Roman cross as the Gospels state, but rejects their reports of a resurrection, stating that even though Jesus is still dead it remains possible for one to have mystical contact with Him. All things considered, Borg succeeds only in making Jesus of Nazareth more enigmatic, and less believable even as a figure of history.

Paul Maier’s Jesus is most certainly what Borg would identify as the “popular”, creedal Jesus. The Jesus Maier finds in Scripture and secular literature is both human and divine, a real man imbued with the Spirit of God. Not only did this Jesus think and act like the long-awaited Messiah, He left a legacy behind from which His followers for generations would draw strength. It would seem ridiculous for the followers of Jesus to remain committed to Him if He had died on a cross and stayed dead.<sup>61</sup> Maier insists that Jesus could and did believe His death had eternal repercussions. It was just a question of how many would take Him at His word.

Maier has no illusions. He realizes that Scripture contains christological bias, and to a certain extent welcomes that bias as yet another factor contributing to their legitimacy. He acknowledges that not all archaeological discoveries will corroborate canonical claims. After all, reports on the same event will differ enormously based on the reporter’s assumptions and worldview. However, the fact that one may never craft a perfect image for the historical Jesus in no wise removes Him from His rightful place as the sole object of salvation for millions of Christians. The reasons for His death are, for Maier, entirely consistent with the facts, both from the perspective of history and from the perspective of orthodox Christian theology.

However consistent Maier’s scholarship may be, it is by no means beyond scrutiny, especially at the hands of biblical relativists. To them Maier is just another fundamentalist. One oft-repeated objection holds that Maier and others like him present a Jesus that is unfortunately more divine than human. In other words, faith is expected to supply what credulity removes. Borg maintains the post-Enlightenment inability to take the Bible at its word has caused the membership of most mainline churches to decline in recent decades. In response Maier points out that the biblical record can be tested, and more often than not is found to be consistent with the historical facts. At the same time he never denies the necessity of faith.

Borg and Maier surely represent two radically different visions of the historical Jesus and the reasons for his death. Thomas Wright presents a third

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<sup>61</sup>History indicates John the Baptizer’s sect died out before the end of the first century.

vision, a means to see “both sides” of Jesus—the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith—simultaneously. Darrell Bock, in his review of Wright’s *Jesus and the Victory of God* averred that

Wright is unashamedly committed to the connection between history and Christianity in an era when some wish to sever the two. Wright is clear that Christianity is neither an ideology nor an ethic grounded in some idealized story of origins; it is a faith making claims about divine activity in the affairs of humanity. This means that those events, their significance and their connections matter very much.<sup>62</sup>

This is most certainly Wright’s most significant contribution to contemporary Jesus research.

By any current standard Jesus of Nazareth was an unusual man. The milieu in which He walked placed a premium on holiness and ritual, and downplayed self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. Jesus’ message of peace and love in the midst of violence and hate, as well as His willingness to suffer an unjust death at the hands of a recalcitrant populace, made Him oddity in His own time and in ours. Wright considers awareness of these facts vital for any treatment of Jesus to be considered worthy. Yet he does not wish to overlook the more controversial and disconcerting side of Jesus, the one which claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of the Most High God. Wright consistently supports the notion that God was indeed acting in history through Jesus, and would do so again at some future moment. God through Jesus announced victory over the principalities and powers, and was taking steps to redeem all of fallen creation. Wright’s Jesus is both unmistakably human and irrepressibly divine, a claim Christians have been making from the beginning.

One need not engage in fideistic gymnastics to agree with Wright’s portrait of Holy Week. Jesus’ actions in the Temple “raised serious questions of authority and inherently challenged the leadership.”<sup>63</sup> This led to the perception that if allowed to continue Jesus could damage the already tenuous stability in Jerusalem. Jesus’ preaching, His presence and His call to the Jewish nation to cleanse itself from the inside out was entirely distinct from current practice.<sup>64</sup> Yet it was Jesus’ promise that the defeat of evil was imminent when YHWH made His return to Zion that ultimately brought about His physical demise. No man who promotes a theocracy in an autocratic state survives very long, and Jesus was neatly disposed of as an enemy of the

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<sup>62</sup>Darrell L. Bock, “The Trial and Death of Jesus in N. T. Wright’s *Jesus and the Victory of God*”, in Carey C. Newman, ed., *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 109.

<sup>63</sup>Bock, 111.

<sup>64</sup>Bock, 112.

people. The Jewish leaders had their silence. The Romans had their peace. The case was closed. At least until Sunday.

*In toto* Wright's work deserves much respect and further study. His attempt to wind his way through the minefield that is contemporary Jesus research has resulted in a theology that is consistent, vital, and wholly orthodox. He may even have presented the scholarly community with a view of Jesus of Nazareth that both liberals and conservatives may embrace. Only time, and much discussion, will tell.

Jesus of Nazareth will no doubt continue to be the most celebrated and misunderstood figure in history. The reasons for His death may never be fully elucidated. Yet we must never cease in our collective quest to unearth the truth about the real Jesus. For as we pursue Him, in His story we find ourselves. We find the hopes and fears of all the years are met in the peasant who claimed to be God.

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## THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS AS ESCHATOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS: THEIR RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

*Edward G. Kettner*

As we in the last few years have experienced the dawn of a new millennium (or at least a dramatic change in the calendar), we have seen a world obsessed with its own end, both in a secular and in a religious sense. On the one hand, environmental and ecological concerns have pointed to the reality that humanity does have the capabilities to damage and even to destroy the life-sustaining properties of this world. Global warming, industrial pollution, and the continuing possibilities of nuclear and biochemical holocaust have focussed the attention of the world upon the fact that this world will not last for ever and that humanity can hasten the end. On the other hand, occult predictions focussing upon the work of seers like Nostradamus and others led some who dabble in the mystical arts to claim that this world would not even last into the new millennium. We can add to this the dispensationalists, who through television and many books, from Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* of a few decades ago to the *Left Behind* series which tops the best seller lists today, try to find fulfilment of the book of Revelation in the events of today, convinced that all of the prophecies concerning the end times are coming to completion now, and that the day of Christ's millennium, complete with seven-year tribulation, the rapture of the saints and a reign of Christ on earth, is on the verge of dawning. One might say that with the coming of the year 2000 the hopes and regrets that come at the end of a year and the beginning of a new year were increased a thousandfold, since the dramatic change in the calendar graphically indicates how fleeting time is. On the other hand, the voice of the utter secularist and rationalist seeks to point out that the calendar is arbitrary, a mere human invention, and that therefore one can expect absolutely nothing of significance in the future except what humanity brings upon itself by its own free will, and what an unfeeling, unheeding cosmos brings upon us. And given the fact that the dire predictions of the end of civilization as we know it did not come to pass (for example, Y2K was basically a no-show) the turn of the calendar may have brought some soul searching and some hope, but the world has continued on much the same as before.

Yet, even though things have remained pretty much the same, what Ulrich Körtner calls “world anxiety”<sup>1</sup> continues. Environmental concerns continue to dominate the newspapers, and in the discussion of the possibility of the end of civilization as we know it, Y2K has been replaced by 9/11. In the face of all of this, then, what witness is the Christian Church called to bring to humanity? How is an attitude of hope to be brought to a world which is coming apart at the seams? What is the content of the Christian hope which in turn gives us hope? What witness to the truth revealed by God in the Holy Scriptures do we have to offer to people who are clearly worried about the possible end of all things, or at least of the world as we know it, to bring them hope in the midst of their anxiety? Our Lord has a clear word of encouragement in the face of “world anxiety”: “Now, when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28).<sup>2</sup> Our calling: bring that word of hope. To set that word in relief against all human aspirations and theologies of glory, we are also to bring a word of rebuke to those who distort the words and witness of Christ concerning the end. The word of hope is also accompanied by a word of warning to those who would spurn the gracious offer of forgiveness, life, and salvation from Christ. In conjunction with our calling, we can turn to the Lutheran Confessions to see the content of our hope and the means by which we can give witness to this hope. Let us, then, take a walk through the Confessions to see the bold expression of our hope and its significance for the life of the Church.

At first glance, the witness of the Lutheran Confessions to the content of the Christian hope seems to be minimal. Yet it is quite clear that the Confessors considered eschatology to be important. Indeed, the hope which the Church has in Christ lies behind all of the concerns which are expressed in the Confessions. Edmund Schlink correctly notes, “[The Confessions] contain so few specific eschatological paragraphs because their whole doctrine in all articles is replete with eschatological expectation.”<sup>3</sup> The very nature of confession itself implies the importance of correct doctrine in the life of the church for leading people to eternal life. The Confessors were well aware of this. The Preface to the Book of Concord in just its second paragraph refers to that era as “the last times of this transitory world”,<sup>4</sup> and later declare, “By the help of God’s grace we, too, intend to persist in this

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<sup>1</sup>Ulrich H. J. Körtner, *The End of the World: A Theological Interpretation*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>All Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles [a division of Good News Publishers], 2001).

<sup>3</sup>Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 270.

<sup>4</sup>Preface to the Book of Concord, 3. All direct quotations from The Book of Concord are from the Tappert edition.

confession until our blessed end and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ with joyful and fearless hearts and consciences.”<sup>5</sup> Such a bold statement provides a model for us to follow as we proclaim the Gospel in our age, as well. Hence we must not merely look at the eschatological content of the Confessions, as important as that is. We need to see them as eschatological documents, confessions which by their very nature point to the end of this age and the life of the world to come.

The eschatological hope of the Confessions cannot be separated from the central issue which they address—justification by grace through faith. The questions involved in the issue of justification are serious precisely because the salvation of human beings is at stake, since at issue is the answer to that most basic of theological questions, “What must I do to be saved?”, or as Luther put it, “How do I find a gracious God?” Do I work to merit salvation, trusting in what I do to please God? Do I work as hard as I can and then appeal to God that He might perchance show me mercy because I at least have tried to please Him? Or do I put my trust in a God who grants me salvation freely because of the work which Jesus Christ has done for me? Is salvation by my own righteousness, or by grace? Must I earn God’s favour myself, or is it given to me freely because of the merits of Christ?

The Confessions clearly declare that the Gospel is most certainly “the decree of pardon in God’s judgment for all time and eternity.”<sup>6</sup> Salvation is a gift of God, given in time and lasting into eternity. To fail to confess the true Gospel misrepresents God, denies the value of the work of Christ, and so robs people of the peace and joy of the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins in this life and of salvation in eternity, all issues of eschatological significance. The two possible ways to salvation are mutually contradictory, so it is imperative that the church confess the truth, for the wrong view leads to uncertainty, and ultimately to condemnation.

Since the Church Militant is the community of Christ, an interim eschatological community living under the Gospel, a pilgrim people living in the gift of forgiveness, receiving Christ’s gifts for sustenance as it moves toward the fulfilment of its hope, it inevitably confesses that hope in its confessions. The eschatological hope is the ultimate statement in the ecumenical creeds, both in terms of placement and in terms of fulfilment. The ecumenical creeds all mention the Christian hope, as all deal with the most basic tenets of the Christian faith, which culminate with the hope of eternal life. All three creeds mention the hope for the return of Christ from heaven to judge both the living and the dead. All mention the hope of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal life, or as the Nicene Creed puts it, “the life of the age to come.” Because of the Person and His work

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<sup>5</sup>Preface, 9.

<sup>6</sup>Schlink, 271.

proclaimed in the second article, the third article gives us everything that God has to give us, including life in His presence for ever.

Since the creeds are confessions of faith and thus confessions of hope, there is no corresponding declaration of belief in eternal punishment alongside the declaration of belief in eternal life in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. Nevertheless, the possibility of eternal punishment is implied in the belief that Christ will judge all men, the living and the dead. "Living" and "dead" here refer to physical life and death, but the very idea of judgement contains with it the recognition of the possibility of condemnation. It is only in the Athanasian Creed that there occur statements concerning the fact of eternal punishment, stating that those who do not keep the whole faith will "without doubt perish for eternity" (par. 2), and "those who have done evil will go into everlasting fire" (par. 39). To spurn God's offer of salvation, to be so bold as to stand before God on one's own merits, leads to final, irrevocable judgement.

Because the hope of eternal life is central to the Christian faith, Luther confesses that hope in his catechisms, most appropriately touching upon the subject in his explanations to the second and third articles of the Apostles' Creed, and his explanation to the conclusion of the commandments. In the latter the Law is clearly proclaimed, as Luther notes God's wrath and punishment against those who violate His commandments, as well as His grace and blessing to those who keep them and trust in Him.<sup>7</sup> Both wrath and grace, punishment and blessing, are present in time and in eternity. Yet, though these words deal directly with the Law, and the importance of keeping the commandments is stressed, the motivation behind keeping them is the love of God, not the desire to earn salvation. Good works are stressed as the living out of the commandments takes place in one's vocation, but the love of God is presupposed, indeed is stated explicitly in conjunction with each of the commandments. Indeed, since the commandments continue to accuse even as they inform us of the shape of the Christian life, there is no hint of works-righteousness. Indeed, the ability to love God comes only because our sins have been forgiven and our lives thus transformed by the Gospel.

Luther's explanation to the second article of the Apostles' Creed points to the Christian goal of eternal life, as he notes that Christ suffered and died for my eternal life, which he describes as living in His kingdom and serving Him "in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness".<sup>8</sup> He elaborates on the significance of this in the Large Catechism, noting that Jesus has delivered us from hell through His death, swallowed up death by His resurrection, and will completely separate us from the wicked when He

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<sup>7</sup>SC I:22

<sup>8</sup>SC II:4.

comes on the Last Day.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Christian hope is again seen to find its foundation in the work of Christ and no place else.

The explanation to the third article continues the exposition on the necessity of grace for salvation. The resurrection of the dead and eternal life are declared there to be the gift of the Holy Spirit. Indeed faith itself, the one prerequisite for eternal life, is shown here to be itself a gift of God, thus making any claim for one's own merit impossible.<sup>10</sup> Luther notes that the entire work of salvation has been won by the work of Christ, but without the work of the Holy Spirit it would all have been done in vain. He goes on to say, "In order that this treasure might not be buried but put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this sacrament of salvation."<sup>11</sup> The Word is the means by which the Holy Spirit works, and through the Word the Holy Spirit brings to us the merits of Christ, and therefore also eternal life.

It should also be noted that the Greek of the Apostles' Creed speaks of the resurrection of the flesh (σάρξ) rather than of the resurrection of the body (σῶμα). Luther notes problems with the term, mainly because of the connotations of the term "flesh", especially in the German, where the term *Fleisch* means "meat". Yet he notes that the term is unimportant if the words are rightly understood.<sup>12</sup>

However, the use of σάρξ is significant in that the term stresses the fact that what is raised to new life is the very body which lived and died on this earth, though of course in the new life it will be elevated to a plane far above the one on which it has existed in this life, as Paul shows in I Corinthians 15. The term speaks against the philosophical dualism of Gnosticism, which considers the spirit to be by nature good and the flesh evil, and so points to the fact that it is the whole man who is corrupt, and conversely that it is the whole man who has been redeemed by Christ. There is no part of man more worthy of salvation than another, and indeed nothing in man that is worthy of salvation at all.

The term "body", which though in its basic meaning teaches precisely the same thing, has been used by some to teach the reception of a resurrection body immediately upon death, which is, and remains into eternity, distinct from the body of this life. Defenders of such a view are fond of quoting I Cor. 15:50, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God". But what Paul means here is explained in the second portion of the verse: "nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." Flesh and blood as they are

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<sup>9</sup>LC II:31.

<sup>10</sup>SC II:6.

<sup>11</sup>LC II:38.

<sup>12</sup>LC II:60.

presently constituted, being bound in sin and enslaved by corruption, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Since sin and corruption have been overcome by Christ, on the last day the perishable will put on the imperishable, the mortal will put on immortality (I Cor. 15:53).

That the use of the term “flesh” is legitimate when referring to the resurrection may be seen also in the Scriptures in the context of one of Jesus’ resurrection appearances. In order to demonstrate that He is not a ghost, Jesus invites His disciples to touch Him, saying, “a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39). “Flesh and bones”, a real material existence, remained and continue to remain a part of Jesus’ nature, though transformed and exalted through the resurrection.

The importance of stressing resurrection as the final destiny of humanity seems at times to have disappeared from the radar-screen of many Christians. The popular talk of “going to heaven when we die” demonstrates that we may not have been as bold in the proclamation of the final resurrection of the dead and life in the new heavens and new earth as we ought.<sup>13</sup>

The hope of eternal life which the Christian has in Christ is presented also in Luther’s discussion of the Lord’s Prayer. In both catechisms he notes the coming of God’s Kingdom both now by the Holy Spirit through the Word and also hereafter through the final revelation of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Thus both the “now” and the “not yet” aspects of God’s Kingdom are noted. Its presence now through faith is the means by which the Christian is prepared for its final revelation in the return of Christ. To pray for the coming of God’s Kingdom is to ask that the Gospel be preached throughout the world and be received by faith, that the devil’s kingdom might be overthrown in us even in this life, and is to look forward in hope to the ultimate destruction of the devil’s kingdom, with the final destruction of sin, death, and hell.<sup>15</sup>

The eschatological significance of the final petition is also well noted in the Small Catechism, as it is finally directed to the last hour of life on earth, and so becomes a prayer for a blessed end and deliverance from this sinful world.<sup>16</sup> This, too, is a confession of the hope that is the goal of the Christian faith. It also presupposes all that has gone before in the prayer, “For if we are to be protected and delivered from all evil, [God’s] name must first be hallowed in us, his kingdom come among us, and his will be done.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>This was noted by Dr Jeffrey Gibbs in a plenary presentation to the 1999 Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Theological Symposium, published as “Regaining Biblical Hope: Restoring the Promise of the Parousia”, *Concordia Journal* 27 (October 2001): 310-22.

<sup>14</sup>SC III:8; LC III:53.

<sup>15</sup>LC III:54.

<sup>16</sup>SC III:20.

<sup>17</sup>LC III:118.

Neither is it possible to speak about the sacraments without making reference to the Christian hope, for the very purpose of the sacraments is to ultimately bring us to eternal life. Baptism is Gospel, a means of God's grace, because it brings forgiveness of sins, delivers from death, and grants eternal salvation to believers.<sup>18</sup> The three aspects are inextricably intertwined: forgiveness brings deliverance and salvation. Exactly the same benefits are ascribed to the Lord's Supper, which gives forgiveness, life, and salvation. Here the close relationship between the benefits is expressed with those words, "where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation."<sup>19</sup> To have forgiveness is to have eternal life; to have eternal life means one has received forgiveness.

The creeds and the catechisms are content to set forth the Christian hope without reference to heretical or heterodox views. While the creeds certainly came into being to declare the content of the Christian faith in the face of error, the specific errors in question are neither examined nor specifically refuted. The catechisms, being at heart instruction manuals on the basics of the faith and (for the Small Catechism) a handbook for the devotional life of the Christian, are geared to proclaim the Gospel for the purpose of instruction in the faith. When they speak of error, it is the error of unbelief and the sin of pride which is addressed. It is only in the other Confessions that other viewpoints are presented and rejected. It is to these that we must now turn.

The proclamation of the Christian hope as set forth in the Augsburg Confession is present to affirm the solidarity of the confessors with the Christian Church throughout history. There the confessors testify of a belief in the return of Christ, judgement, eternal life, and eternal punishment.<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that at this point the Roman Church had no objections to the Lutheran understanding of the content of the Christian hope, so that there is no lengthy article on the subject in the Apology. Here, at least, it may be noted that the hope of the Church throughout the End Times, from Christ's ascension to the present, meets the threefold test established by St Vincent of Lerins: antiquity, ecumenicity, and consent, being taught always, everywhere, and by all.<sup>21</sup>

The teachings which are rejected are significant, however, in that, while they were certainly a problem at the time of the Reformation, they are still being presented today. These views are those of the denial of eternal

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<sup>18</sup>SC IV:6.

<sup>19</sup>SC VI:6.

<sup>20</sup>AC III:6; XVII:1-3.

<sup>21</sup>In fact, since the test of orthodoxy is based on God's revelation, not the Church's (sometimes inadequate) witness, the litmus test for orthodoxy is that which **is to be taught** always, everywhere, and by all.

punishment, either in some form of universalism, or in the sense that the punishment of the wicked will eventually come to an end,<sup>22</sup> and that of millennialism. Though “millennialism” (or, to use the Greek root, “chiliasm”) is not explicitly named here, the rejection of the “Jewish opinion”<sup>23</sup> that the Church will set up a kingdom on earth in this present age is a clear rejection of postmillennialism. But in rejecting the idea that the saints will possess an earthly kingdom before the resurrection of the dead (i.e. the Last Day), the confessors in fact reject millennialism in any form. The idea of an earthly millennial kingdom must be rejected because (1) the Scriptures do not teach any such kingdom, and (2) such a kingdom is superfluous to the fulfilment of God’s purpose for the world. The prevalence of millennial views in the Church by many who profess the inerrancy of Scripture shows that mere belief in inerrancy is not enough to ensure orthodoxy. A properly interpreted Scripture that keeps the Gospel at the forefront and which sees the end as the final nail in death’s coffin, as it were, rather than merely the fulfilment of many detailed prophecies regarding the history of this world, is necessary to keep the true hope before the eyes of God’s people.

Now, it is true that if Old Testament passages which speak of “Israel” only refer to the physical nation of Israel, then a millennial reign of Christ would be necessary for the fulfilment of prophecy, though there would seem to be no other reason for it. Since, however, Paul has clearly shown (Romans 10-11) that “Israel” refers to the Israel of faith, into which Gentile believers are grafted, and hence refers to that body of believers which in the New Testament is referred to as the Church, those prophecies need not be applied to a kingdom on earth, but will rather be fulfilled in the eternal kingdom.

The Confessions are completely clear on their understanding of the final hope for Christians and the world as a whole. They have little to say, however, on the state between death and resurrection. This is not to say, however, that they categorically deny the existence of such a state. Rather, they treat the state in passing rather than directly, and what they say affirms the existence of such a state. The Formula of Concord, in speaking of Jesus’ descent into hell, notes that one of the questions asked is whether this descent took place only according to the soul or according to body and soul,<sup>24</sup> indicating the existence of the belief in the church (a belief that the Confessions nowhere challenge) that the soul survives the body at death.

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<sup>22</sup>This view is now being argued by some in Neo-Evangelical circles. For a recent discussion of this topic, see Edward William Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical and Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

<sup>23</sup>AC XVII:5.

<sup>24</sup>FC Ep IX:1. That the descent of Christ into hell took place according to the whole person after His burial is noted in FC SD IX:2, but that does not change the fact of the reference to the soul living on separate from the body.

There are also references in the Confessions to the saints in heaven. These passages specifically deal with the question of prayer to the saints. Some theologians who attack the idea of the immortality of the soul and the intermediate state point to the unscriptural practice of praying to the saints as a clear argument against the survival of the soul after death.<sup>25</sup> Yet, while the Confessions clearly reject the practice of praying to the saints, they do not attack the intermediate state itself, but, on the contrary, assume its existence. In fact, the possibility is freely granted that the saints may pray for the Church in general, though it is acknowledged that there is no solid scriptural evidence for that practice. Yet it is also declared that this does not mean that we in turn should pray to them. On the contrary, it is declared that such a practice amounts to idolatry.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the Confessions do not see the practice of praying to the saints as inherent to the doctrine of the intermediate state, but rather an abuse which is an abuse (1) because it has no scriptural warrant, and (2) because it puts the saints in a mediatorial position which by right belongs only to Christ. Looked at positively, the reality of the state between death and resurrection is wholly consistent with the proper understanding of the Church as the saints of God of all times who have received life through faith in Jesus Christ. Surrounded by that great cloud of witnesses, we on earth join with the saints in heaven in the unending worship of the Saviour.

Also related to the idea of the intermediate state is the Roman Catholic teaching regarding purgatory. This too is seen by some as an inevitable outgrowth of the idea of the soul's immortality, but again it is not attacked by the Confessions on that ground. The principle objection to the doctrine of purgatory (besides, of course, the lack of scriptural evidence) is the fact that its very existence contradicts justification by grace. The Smalcald Articles state, "Purgatory and all the pomp, services, and business transactions associated with it are to be regarded as nothing else than illusions of the devil, for purgatory, too, is contrary to the fundamental article that Christ alone, and not the work of man, can help souls."<sup>27</sup> The Apology notes that purgatory is predicated upon a division of the forgiveness of sins between the power of the keys and satisfactions.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the doctrine of purgatory is essentially based on works-righteousness (or, I think better put, "the righteousness of self"), and is bound up in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass as sacrifice, particularly as a sacrifice which can help the dead.

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<sup>25</sup>See, for example, Carl Stange, *Die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (Gutersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1925), 10, where he also blames the idea of the immortality of the soul for the rise of the concepts of purgatory and indulgences.

<sup>26</sup>SA II.ii:26; Ap XXI:9.

<sup>27</sup>SA II.ii:12.

<sup>28</sup>Ap XII:13.

In dealing with the signs of the end, the Confessions point to only one: the Antichrist. This does not mean that the Confessors consider the other signs unimportant. Rather, as Schlink notes, “The silence about the other signs proclaimed in Scripture is not to be understood as a denial, but as an abbreviation”.<sup>29</sup> The Confessions deal with the concept of Antichrist because they point to the papacy, in its denial of the Gospel, as the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the Antichrist. The coming of the Antichrist and his unveiling are indications that the church is living in the last times.

The Smalcald Articles note that the papacy is a human invention, yet the pope’s pronouncements decree that no Christian can be saved unless he submits to the pope. The articles note that, rather than being of a help to the Church, the office is unnecessary and useless.<sup>30</sup> They point to Paul’s words in II Thess. 2:4, indicating that the pope by his demands exalts himself over God. Since he fulfils the qualifications for the office as set forth by Paul, the pope is declared to be the “real Antichrist”.<sup>31</sup> So also a significant section of the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope is spent noting how the office of the papacy fit the marks of the Antichrist.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, as strong as these statements are, elsewhere the declaration is made in more conditional form. The Apology stresses the chief function of the Kingdom of the Antichrist, which is that of functioning in the place of Christ. Thus, any system that places human authority over God and denies that God freely justifies us establishes the Kingdom of the Antichrist. All false teachers are therefore antichrists.<sup>33</sup> The Apology also notes that the kingdom of Mohammed fits this description as well. The Kingdom of the papacy is compared to this with the words, “So the papacy will also be a part of the kingdom of Antichrist if it maintains that human rites justify.”<sup>34</sup> The “if” indicates the possibility of change. It is only as time progresses and the Confessors come to see the impossibility of change within the Roman system that the conditional aspect disappears and the declaration of the papacy as the “real Antichrist” is strongly asserted.

In understanding the papacy as Antichrist, it is important to note that no specific pope is named—it is the office itself which bears the marks of Antichrist. Neither does this understanding mean that the church has no other enemies in the world, or that no other office or institution exists which

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<sup>29</sup>Schlink, 283.

<sup>30</sup>SA II.iv:4-5.

<sup>31</sup>SA II.iv:10.

<sup>32</sup>Tr 39-59. Arthur Carl Piepkorn, in “Do the Lutheran Symbolical Books Speak Where the Sacred Scriptures Are Silent?” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43 (July 1972): 34, calls this use of II Thess. 2:4 “exegetically frail”, but the application of the marks of the “man of lawlessness” to the papacy needs to be taken seriously.

<sup>33</sup>Ap VII and VIII:48.

<sup>34</sup>Ap XV:18.

sets itself up in place of God. Rather, it means that the church must always be on the alert for any attempt to supplant God's Word and authority, particularly through the substitution of human works and ordinances for the precious Gospel of Christ.<sup>35</sup>

Though the Confessions as a whole look to the end of the world and eternal life, there is little said as to the nature of the end. The return of Christ is clearly taught, and it is declared that the resurrection of the dead will take place at that time.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, this return will take place "openly", indicating that this is to be understood as an objective event in history, albeit the final event.<sup>37</sup> It is at this time that the change in human nature for all believers will take place, as the corruption which attaches itself to human nature in this life will be removed.<sup>38</sup> The Christian will no longer be saint and sinner at one and the same time, but purely saint.

To summarize, the Confessions have an eschatological outlook through and through. The Confessors see themselves as living in the last times, in a world that is fast coming to a close. They see the evidence of this in the rise of the kingdom of the Antichrist, which takes the form of human laws, rites, and authorities arising in an attempt to supplant the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of Christ. They see themselves called to confess the Gospel of Christ in the face of this opposition, knowing that they will be called to give account before the tribunal of God. They testify to the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world as evidenced by the work of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament, which are given in this world to bring forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, and life and salvation to humanity. Finally, they express the hope of the world to come as the goal to which God is bringing His people; a new age which will be ushered in by the return of

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<sup>35</sup>Perhaps it would do well to listen to Schlink as he notes that the Confessions' references to the papacy as Antichrist should be understood as "paradigm rather than dogma", and so serve as a model as to how to observe at every moment of every age the signs of the end. Schlink, 283. At the same time, we need to remember that we must be bold to point out that the papacy's continued insistence that it is the divinely appointed office of "Vicar of Christ" and its continued mingling of justification and sanctification continue to fit the marks of the man of lawlessness in II Thessalonians 2.

<sup>36</sup>AC XVII:1-3.

<sup>37</sup>AC III:6. Schlink's declaration that the remarks about the actions of Christ on the Last Day are not qualified by time must be rejected. They are to be understood as the means by which the present order is brought to a close, not as events which take place outside of time and sequence. See Schlink, 286. At the same time, any attempt to see the Christian who departs from this life as moving from time to a "timeless" eternity is to be rejected, since it violates the Scriptures' clear contention that we are a historical people from start to finish, and that those who die in Christ are "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8), awaiting the resurrection and their public vindication before the world (Rev. 6:9-11). For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see this author's article, "Time, Eternity, and the Intermediate State", *Concordia Journal* 12 (May 1986): 90-100.

<sup>38</sup>This separation takes place "wholly by way of death in the resurrection." FC Ep I:10.

Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the final destruction of sin, death, and Hades, and the eternal separation of the ungodly from the children of God. Such a confession, and only such a confession, takes the whole of Scripture seriously and does justice to the glorious Gospel of Christ.

What relevance, then, does the testimony of the Confessions have for the life of the Church today? To quote St Paul from a different context, “Much in every way.” For one thing, it shows us where our priorities are to be put. In the face of all demands that the pastors of the church preach “lifestyle” sermons, the Confessions point us up, and not down, calling upon us to heed St Paul’s injunction in Col. 3:1-4:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Sermons which relate to the Christian life, therefore, are sermons which relate to Christ, who **is** the Christian’s life. They will relate to Baptism, to forgiveness, to implications of true discipleship, bearing the cross because as Christians we are aliens in this world, pilgrims moving to our home. If people want advice on better relationships, on coping with life in this world, there are places for giving that even in the church, but we must recognize that similar advice, advice just as useful, can come from secular sources as well and be as equally valid. What we have to give, nothing and no one other than Christ Himself, the world cannot give, and to do what the world can do as well turns our attention from what we are called to do. The very Confessions to which we subscribe serve as a check on our desire to be relevant merely for the sake of relevance, rather than bringing a truly eschatological message, a message which points to God’s breaking into the world and to the final judgement, a message which in fact actually raises the dead to life.

We only prepare people for life by preparing them for death: “If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom. 14:8). May we, following the lead of our Confessions, continually see our calling for what it really is: a pointing to the One who has already won the victory, and who is leading us to the mansions He has prepared for us.

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## **LOGIC AND THE LORD'S SUPPER: A BRIEF LOOK AT LUTHER AND OCCAM**

*Korey D. Maas*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The twentieth century saw no shortage of research concerning the relationship between the Reformation and the later Middle Ages. Quite naturally, much of the scholarship focused specifically on Martin Luther's relation to his late medieval theological context. Furthermore, while certainly not ignoring the early influence of movements such as monasticism, mysticism, and humanism, Reformation scholars have directed much of their attention to the Reformer's theology as it relates to that of high and late medieval scholasticism.

To be of even minor benefit, however, any discussion of Luther's relation to medieval theological trends must be brought down from the abstract realm of "-isms". Scholasticism, nominalism, terminism, Occamism: each provides a convenient label (and each will be used below), but each often proves too vague and amorphous to be truly useful. The following, therefore, will not be concerned primarily with the methods and premises of scholasticism or nominalism as a whole, nor with the variety of its doctrinal conclusions. The focus will be significantly narrowed to two figures and one doctrine—William of Occam and Martin Luther on the Lord's Supper.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in placing these two men and their texts side by side, much of the attention will be given particularly to the use of logic found in each. What kind of logic is here found? How is it used? And most importantly with regard to the Sacrament of the Altar, for what reason does logic enter the picture at all?

A few more words are necessary by way of introduction. Occam and Luther have not been randomly called up for comparison, nor have their theologies of the Sacrament. The subject is by no means new, nor perhaps will the conclusions be. There has, however, been such a varied response to

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<sup>1</sup>Even more specifically, our focus will be limited to Occam's *De Sacramento Altaris*, ed. T. B. Birch (Burlington: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1930), and Martin Luther's *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* (1528), AE 37:151-372; WA 26:241-509. The continued debate over whether the text found in Birch's edition of *De Sacramento* is in fact one or two treatises, which was written first, and what name belongs to each need not be discussed here. When deemed necessary, however, I will refer to the "shorter" or the "longer" treatise in Birch in order to clarify references.

the question of Luther's possible debt to Occam's theology of the Eucharist that certain aspects of the debate are worth investigating once again.<sup>2</sup>

### THE SCHOLASTIC MILIEU: OCCAM, LUTHER, AND THEIR CONTEXTS

There is no abundance of biographical information on the life of William of Occam. There does not even exist an authoritative dating or chronology of his extant works. Likewise, it is only very recently that a critical edition of Occam's complete works has become available. What we do know of Occam, and in the end what is perhaps most important, is what he thought and what he taught. Even this, however, has been the subject of frequent debate.

Surveys of nominalism are quite often content to restrict Occam's importance to the realm of epistemology. The conclusion is then frequently drawn that Occam's approach to logic follows from his unique epistemological framework. The question of whether this is indeed the case or whether, as others hold, Occam's particular brand of logic gives rise to his theory of knowledge is far from being satisfactorily answered.<sup>3</sup> The importance of Occam's logic for comparison with Luther, however, makes a brief overview necessary.

Occam's *Summa totius logicae* is widely and justifiably considered his "master work".<sup>4</sup> The views found therein are largely influenced by the thirteenth-century logician Peter of Spain, who opens his own *Summulae*

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<sup>2</sup>To merely call attention to two notable opinions, we may compare that of Birch, who translated Occam's treatises, to that of G. Buescher, who wrote an exposition of Occam's sacramental works. Birch's introduction, xxiii and xxv, concludes that Occam's influence on Luther was "most profound" and that he had a "direct bearing" on Luther's doctrine. Buescher, *The Eucharistic Teaching of William of Ockham* (New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1950), 150, on the other hand, confesses that he "has failed to uncover, at least with regard to the Eucharist, the seeds of the reformer's heretical teachings in the writings of Ockham."

<sup>3</sup>E. A. Moody, *The Logic of William of Ockham* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), 52, and G. Leff, *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse* (Manchester: Manchester U. Press, 1975), 124, hold the opinion that epistemology is primary. F. C. Copleston, *Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 119, and D. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (Harlow: Longman, 1988), 293, hold the opposite position. Likewise, B. Häggglund, *History of Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 198, calls logic Occam's "base science". Arguing that the majority of Occam's arguments are logical and semantic rather than epistemological, G. White, *Luther as Nominalist* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1994), 29 and 45, criticizes those who characterize Occam primarily on the basis of his epistemology or who fail to make a formal distinction between logic and metaphysics when discussing his philosophy.

<sup>4</sup>Leff, 124; Knowles, 291.

*logicales* by defining logic as the art of reason.<sup>5</sup> As reason takes place by means of language, so logic is founded on the study of terms—hence, “terminism”—and their relations to one another.<sup>6</sup> While previous philosophers and theologians had considered terms and propositions as metaphysical categories, the nominalists (or terminists) restrict them to logical categories.<sup>7</sup> Such logic is not concerned with “what is”, but with “what is said”. Put another way, logical propositions state truths about terms, propositions, and arguments rather than things *per se*; they are concerned with signifiers rather than those things signified.<sup>8</sup> As such, the logic of Occam and his nominalist brethren is inseparably entwined with that first subject of the medieval trivium, grammar. Not only did the unhitching of logic from metaphysics set the terminists of the *via moderna* apart from the realists of the *via antiqua*; their subsequent emphasis on logic in the study of grammar also distinguished them from the humanists, who rarely disguised their disdain for what they considered an intrusion of hair-splitting dialectics into their own field of specialty.<sup>9</sup>

In the realm of logic, as in most every area of the medieval university, Aristotle loomed large. The heart of the debate between high and late scholasticism may be framed in part with the question, “Which Aristotle?” Thomas Aquinas had little doubt that Aristotle, or “The Philosopher” as he usually called him, could be pressed into the service of theology. In his magisterial thirteenth-century go at a synthesis between philosophy and theology Aquinas posited three uses for philosophy.<sup>10</sup> It may, first of all, demonstrate preambles to the faith. Further, it may clarify doctrine by analogy. Finally, philosophy may be used to refute objections to the faith. Of these three uses, Aquinas’ preference is largely for the second, clarifying by analogy. In this context his critics often accused him of bending and shaping

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<sup>5</sup>Copleston, 121-22.

<sup>6</sup>Hence, Occam’s *Summa* begins with the subject of terms. See Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. P. Boehner (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1990), 47ff.

<sup>7</sup>See Leff, 124.

<sup>8</sup>Moody, 33-34.

<sup>9</sup>For a brief discussion of the distinctions between the nominalist and humanist approaches to grammar see White, 39-49.

<sup>10</sup>The discussion of Aquinas and Occam in this paragraph relies heavily on the analysis of E. D. Sylla, “Autonomous and Handmaiden Science: St. Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham on the Physics of the Eucharist”, in *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*, ed. J. E. Murdoch and E. D. Sylla (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1975), 349-96. Any comparison of Aquinas’ method with Luther’s need not be considered in this context, for R. Seeberg, *Die religiösen Grundgedanken des jungen Luther und ihr Verhältnis zu dem Ockhamismus und der deutschen Mystik* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1931), 7, is quite right in stating that “Luthers Lehre in keinem positiven Verhältnis zu ihr steht.”

Aristotle to suit his own needs.<sup>11</sup> Occam, by contrast, was not so willing to do so. While appropriating Thomas' first and third uses of philosophy, he completely dismissed the second.<sup>12</sup> While philosophy may perhaps demonstrate certain "prefaces" to theology proper, even this first use is not, according to Occam, its primary benefit for theology. Philosophy serves best when it is restricted to refuting faulty arguments. In this capacity, refutation, formal logic finds its particular niche. In contrast to Aquinas, at least, it would seem then that Occam's use of philosophy in general and logic in particular is overwhelmingly negative or apologetic. Before moving on to see if this is indeed the case it may prove beneficial first to survey Luther's relation to Occam, his logic, and its use.

David Steinmetz has rightly and unapologetically asserted, "No historian would dispute that Luther's break with scholasticism is primarily a break from Occamism."<sup>13</sup> Questions remain, however. How complete was this break? And were there emphases in nominalist thought that Luther could retain when useful? An estimation of Luther's relation to Occamism depends in large part upon where one starts and how far one goes. To both begin and end the discussion with the Luther of Erfurt would leave us with a student (and monk) quite comfortable with William of Occam, Gabriel Biel, and the entire *via moderna*. To begin and end with his 1517 disputation on scholastic theology would, on the other hand, show us a very different Luther. The later Luther, the Luther of the "Great Confession", is not so easily pinned down. There is little doubt that Luther's introduction to the *via moderna* occurred while at university in Erfurt, which has been characterized as "an invincible stronghold of nominalism".<sup>14</sup> Here Luther was taught a "pronounced and definite nominalism" by men like Jodokus Trutfetter and Bartholomäus Arnoldi von Usingen.<sup>15</sup> It was here also that Luther would have first read such important nominalist works as Peter of Spain's logic text, Occam's commentaries on Aristotle, Biel's exposition of the Mass, and Pierre d'Ailly's commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard.<sup>16</sup>

Luther's nominalist education was by no means unique. Erfurt was only one of a number of European universities in which the *via moderna* found a

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<sup>11</sup>Aquinas himself seems to have realized, especially with regard to the modes of Christ's presence, that his theological speculation is not entirely compatible with any received philosophical thought. See Sylla, 363.

<sup>12</sup>For a slightly different outline of the theological use which Occam makes of logic see Leff, 331.

<sup>13</sup>D. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 56.

<sup>14</sup>Ehrle, *Franziskanische Studien* 9 (1925), quoted in L. Meier, "On the Ockhamism of Martin Luther at Erfurt", in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 43 (1950): 58.

<sup>15</sup>M. Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 29.

<sup>16</sup>See White, 25.

welcome reception in the late fifteenth century. What did perhaps set it apart and contribute to its early respectability, however, was a consistent philosophical and theological striving for what Martin Brecht labels “clean logic”.<sup>17</sup> The influence of this emphasis on Luther is noted by a variety of scholars.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Luther’s own estimation of what he learned of Occam and his logic at Erfurt is mentioned on numerous occasions in which he identifies himself with the “sect” or “faction” of Occam.<sup>19</sup> Especially highlighted for praise, even in Luther’s later years, is Occam’s logical acumen: “My master Occam was the greatest of the dialecticians.”<sup>20</sup> “Occam alone understood dialectic.”<sup>21</sup>

Before passing on to Luther the Reformer, it may be worth mentioning, if only in passing, that even after leaving the university for the cloister, Luther, it seems, had continued contact with Occam’s school of thought. As Grane asserts, “We have every reason to believe that the teaching in the Erfurt monastery was of the Occamist type.”<sup>22</sup> Whatever specific teaching Luther may have received at university and in the Erfurt cloister, one will also do well to acknowledge the word of warning offered by Grane: that only in the mind of scholars—very rarely in life itself—do students exist as mere models of their teachers.<sup>23</sup> When examining Luther, who certainly had no qualms about public dispute with and vocal condemnation of the theology and theologians of his day, one will especially want to heed this reminder.

Luther did indeed break with his former nominalist teachers, with scholasticism as a whole, and with the Aristotle that undergirded each. The content of his 1517 disputation, to give only one example, provides ample evidence of this; and more than one author has treated the subject at length.<sup>24</sup> It should be noted however, that even after the harsh condemnations of 1517 Luther was willing to allow Aristotle some small place in the education of theologians. The particular place made for The Philosopher is quite significant. In his 1520 treatise to the Christian nobility of Germany, Luther

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<sup>17</sup>Brecht, 34.

<sup>18</sup>G. Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), 88, says Luther owed much to the stern discipline of logic learned at Erfurt. Brecht, 38, calls the influence of the Erfurt dialectics on Luther “unmistakable” even in spite of later repudiations, and further states that throughout his life Luther worked with texts according to the rules learned in Erfurt. The central thesis of White’s work is that Luther was, at least with regard to grammar and logic, a nominalist.

<sup>19</sup>WA 6:195 and 600.

<sup>20</sup>WA Tr 2:516.

<sup>21</sup>WA Tr 1:85.

<sup>22</sup>L. Grane, *Luther and Scholasticism*, CASS. 85-16 in Concordia Seminary Library. Meier presents convincing evidence in support of Grane’s assertion.

<sup>23</sup>Grane, *Luther and Scholasticism*.

<sup>24</sup>For the disputation see AE 31:3-16. For the most extensive treatment of the issues see Grane, *Contra Gabrielem* (Gyldendal, 1962).

makes specific mention of Aristotle, stating that he would gladly see his logic retained so that people might learn to speak and preach well.<sup>25</sup> Given Luther's estimation of Occam's logic, it will not be too wild a conjecture to suggest that the Aristotle here recommended is Aristotle in Occamist dress.

### **THE LORD'S SUPPER: OCCAM, LUTHER, AND THEIR TEXTS**

Having briefly surveyed the philosophical and theological contexts of both Occam and Luther, a step from the abstract to the concrete may be taken. Both Occam and Luther note that it is in the doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper that one touches on the heart of things. Occam does so by stating early in *De Sacramento Altaris* that,

the Only-begotten Son of God, after He had assumed the substance of our frailty in order that he might redeem us from the servitude of the devil and restore us to our original liberty and also bring us at last to our heavenly inheritance, offered Himself on the altar of the cross as the price for the redemption of the human race.

Moreover, that a perpetual memorial of so great a gift might remain among us and also that Christ might daily be mystically offered as a sacrifice for us who err daily, He left behind His body in the food and His blood in the drink to be received by the faithful in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the unspeakable loftiness of which is deemed an improper subject for human investigation; by virtue of which there is need to speak of this sublime and most excellent sacrament with all fear and modesty; for with respect to no sacrament is error more perilous, nor inquiry more laborious, nor invention more fruitful.<sup>26</sup>

Luther, for his part, sums up the importance of a correct doctrine of the Lord's Supper and its central place in Christian life and theology when he writes:

See, then, what a beautiful, great, marvelous thing this is, how everything meshes together in one sacramental reality. The words are the first thing, for without the words the cup and the bread would be nothing. Further, without bread and cup, the body and blood of Christ would not be there. Without the body and blood of Christ, the new testament would not be there. Without the new testament, forgiveness of sins would not be there. Without forgiveness of sins, life and salvation would not be there. Thus the words first connect the bread and cup to the sacrament; bread and cup embrace the new testament; the new testament embraces the forgiveness of sins; forgiveness of sins

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<sup>25</sup>AE 44:201.

<sup>26</sup>Occam, 159 in the Latin/English edition of Birch. Page numbers correspond to English text; the Latin is to be found on the facing page.

embraces eternal life and salvation. See, all this the words of the Supper offer and give us, and we embrace it by faith.<sup>27</sup>

Apart from Occam's and Luther's recognition of the centrality of Eucharistic theology, an investigation of the subject at hand may prove fruitful since little has been written specifically on Luther, Occam, logic, and the Lord's Supper. The most detailed examination of Luther's use of terminist logic, that of Graham White, intentionally avoids addressing questions of doctrine.<sup>28</sup> Those studies which do focus on particular doctrines of Occam(ists) and Luther, whether seeking to prove or refute the idea of influence, most often turn to the subject of justification and related issues such as free will and imputed righteousness.<sup>29</sup> Those authors looking at Occam and Luther on the Lord's Supper, with some notable exceptions, often go no further than merely pointing out a number of similarities, many quite superficial.<sup>30</sup> The most frequently noted parallels between Occam and Luther on the Sacrament are their terminology, their claims that God may, if he so chooses, retain the presence of both bread and wine with the body and blood of Christ, and their discussions of Christ's ubiquity. As the texts of each are examined below, the following questions will be asked: Are there indeed similarities? If so, what exactly are they? And finally, what might explain any such parallels?

What follows will also attempt to answer certain questions regarding any relation between the methods and doctrines found in Occam's *De Sacramento* and Luther's "Great Confession". First, for what purpose or goal was each writing, and what questions did they seek to answer? Second, what data do they draw upon and what concepts and doctrines do they draw from (or bring to) this data? Finally, considering the above, what conclusions are reached by each, and what implications do these have for the theology of the Lord's Supper?

Luther's purpose and goal for writing is clear. For some years Zwingli and others had been writing and preaching against what he and the church

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<sup>27</sup>AE 37:338; WA 26:478<sup>37</sup>-479<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>28</sup>White, 34, 83.

<sup>29</sup>See for example, H. Oberman, "'Iustitia Christi' and 'Iustitia Dei': Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification", in *Harvard Theological Review* 59.1 (1966): 1-26; H. Oberman, "Headwaters of the Reformation", in *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era*, ed. H. Oberman (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 40-88; J. A. Templin, "Justification in Late Medieval Theology and Luther's Thought", in *The Iliff Review* 25.2 (1968): 29-38; P. Vignaux, "On Luther and Ockham", in *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*, ed. S. E. Ozment (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 107-18; H. Oberman, "Facientibus Quod in se est Deus non Denegat Gratiam: Robert Holcot O. P. and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology", also in *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*, 119-41; B. Hägglund, "Was Luther a Nominalist?" *Concordia Theological Monthly* 28.6 (1957): 441-52.

<sup>30</sup>One notable example of this approach is found in Birch's introduction to *De Sacramento Altaris*. See especially p. xxiv.

catholic had always taught and believed—that Christ’s body and blood were truly present in the Sacrament of the Altar. Luther had already written much in response to the fanatics, and in the opening pages of this treatise of 1528 he proclaims that this is to be his final word on the controversy.<sup>31</sup> His stated purpose is three-fold: he wishes to show himself unmoved by Zwingli’s arguments; he desires to look again at the texts in dispute; and he wants, before closing, to give a full and clear confession of his faith.<sup>32</sup>

With Occam’s work, the purpose and goal are not so clear. To some extent, the question of why he writes depends on the answer to the question of when he wrote. While it has traditionally been assumed that he wrote *De Sacramento* prior to his summons to Avignon to stand trial for the ideas found therein, one scholar has recently suggested that the treatise was in fact an explanation and defence written after his appearance at the papal court.<sup>33</sup> If this could be proved then we might have here at least one point of convergence between Luther and Occam—both wrote not for the sake of mere speculation, but in defence of their doctrines of the Eucharist, which had recently come under attack.<sup>34</sup> The only clues we get from Occam himself are to be found near the beginning of his longer treatise, where he writes specifically of the Eucharistic accidents,

Since little has been previously written about the existence of the body of Christ under the species of bread; it remains that some views be set forth concerning the accidents remaining after the consecration of the substance of the bread.<sup>35</sup>

And again, concerning the Lord’s Supper in general,

I have fully investigated the questions concerning the Eucharist for the sake of thoroughly examining and explaining them that I may make known to those not understanding the “quae” and the “qualia” and the “quomodo.”<sup>36</sup>

The specific questions which Occam seeks to answer are conveniently organized in Buescher’s analysis of his Eucharistic theology. They include

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<sup>31</sup>AE 37:162; WA 26:262<sup>13-14</sup>.

<sup>32</sup>AE 37:163; WA 26:262<sup>19ff</sup>.

<sup>33</sup>E. Stump, “Theology and Physics in *De Sacramento Altaris*: Ockham’s Theory of Indivisibles”, in *Infinity and Continuity in Ancient and Medieval Thought*, ed. N. Kretzmann (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1982), 209. Cf. Occam, 211: “I have undertaken the present task because of the misrepresentation of some critics.”

<sup>34</sup>Even here, however, we might note two significant divergences. The most obvious is that the particular points of doctrine which each sought to defend were not the same. Furthermore, while Occam may have written with the understanding that if his teaching were condemned he himself would be judged heretical, Luther’s emphasis is that if the doctrine of Christ’s bodily presence in the Sacrament is denied then the Gospel itself is condemned. See AE 37:338; WA 26:478-79, quoted above.

<sup>35</sup>Occam, 203.

<sup>36</sup>Occam, 211.

how Christ becomes present in the Sacrament, his mode of presence, and the state of the Eucharistic accidents after the consecration.<sup>37</sup> For Occam, as with those before him, Christ's bodily presence was above question. This he makes clear from the outset when, after brief mention of certain opinions of the Doctors, he says, "each opinion, however, acknowledges that the body of Christ is there."<sup>38</sup> And again,

the body of Christ which was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered and was buried, which also rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father, and in which the Son of God is about to come to judge the living and the dead, is really and truly contained under the species of the bread.<sup>39</sup>

This being granted, "because that was clear to all the faithful from the commencement of the Christian faith",<sup>40</sup> the first questions to receive specific attention are by what means Christ comes to be present in the Sacrament and what then becomes of the bread and wine. It is here that Occam first evidences some disagreement with the received dogma of transubstantiation; significantly, it is also here that he first appeals directly to Scripture.

Although it is expressly set forth in the canonical Scriptures that the body of Christ is to be offered to the faithful under the species of bread, yet that the substance of the bread is really converted or transubstantiated into the body of Christ is not found expressed in the canon of the Bible.<sup>41</sup>

And again,

although it may be found expressed in the New Testament, that the body of Christ is to be received by the faithful under the species of bread in memory of the passion of the Lord and for the remission of their sins; yet it is not there clearly expressed that the substance of the bread does not remain.<sup>42</sup>

Though he appeals to Scripture, Occam realizes that the Bible's silence offers no sure proof for one opinion or another. To his credit, Occam does not take this lack of a clear word as an opportunity to assert his own opinion

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<sup>37</sup>These divisions roughly correspond to three of Buescher's chapter divisions.

<sup>38</sup>Occam, 3.

<sup>39</sup>Occam, 163.

<sup>40</sup>Occam, 171.

<sup>41</sup>Occam, 173.

<sup>42</sup>Occam, 183. Though Occam here refers to Scripture, his references here and elsewhere in no way support Birch's assertion (p. xxvii) that *De Sacramento* clearly shows "Ockham's exaltation of the Scriptures over the authority of the church." Contrary to this view, see especially Occam's statements referenced in the following two footnotes.

on the matter.<sup>43</sup> He does, however, especially with regard to the Eucharistic accidents, recognize the opportunity to test the logical soundness of those opinions which have been previously forwarded and which are now held.<sup>44</sup>

Concerning the possibility of the continued existence of the bread and wine, Occam introduces some fundamentals of both logic in general and nominalism in particular—the rule of non-contradiction and the doctrine of God’s absolute power. He notes that Aquinas posits a contradiction in any statement holding that both bread and the body of Christ may exist in the same sacrament.<sup>45</sup> Dismissing the fact that Aquinas is in fact referring to what he believes to be a physical or metaphysical impossibility rather than a logical impossibility, Occam calls upon his predecessor Duns Scotus, who is of the opinion that “although the substance of the bread may not really remain with the body of Christ, yet there is no contradiction involved in the statement that through divine power the substance of the bread may be able to remain with the body of Christ.”<sup>46</sup> Though Occam eventually does deny that the bread remains, he partially hedges his bet by again proclaiming that,

the Christian ought to say that anything can be accomplished by the divine virtue, except that which can be clearly proved to involve a contradiction through reasoning from things known per se, which no one could doubt, and except that which cannot be elicited from Sacred Scripture or the Doctors approved by the church.<sup>47</sup>

The final clause above deserves note, as it highlights a point on which Luther parted company not only with Occam, but with the majority of his medieval predecessors. Luther, unlike many of those before him, was not so comfortable with the equation of reason, Scripture, and tradition. So far as any discussion of how Christ’s body becomes present and what then becomes of the bread and wine, he does not feel it necessary to question the logic of his predecessors. What is questioned, and indeed criticized, is the attempt to make assertions, or even to speculate, where Scripture has given no clear word. Against Zwingli (but equally applicable against the scholastics) Luther states,

we warn people not to ask how it comes to pass that Christ’s body is present in the supper, but simply to believe the words of God. This advice we have

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<sup>43</sup>In fact, Occam will assert nothing that the church has not already asserted in her decrees. And, conversely, he will assert wherever the church does likewise. See Occam, 159, 197, 211, 241. Cf. also 219, 221, 222.

<sup>44</sup>Though he does a bit of redefining, Occam does not feel free to test the logical soundness of transubstantiation itself, this having been “divinely revealed to the Holy Fathers” (see p. 173) and enshrined in the canons and decrees of Lateran IV.

<sup>45</sup>Occam, 185.

<sup>46</sup>Occam, 187.

<sup>47</sup>Occam, 189, 191.

given not for the benefit of common people, for they have no need of it, but for the high and mighty.<sup>48</sup>

Likewise, with regard to the elements, Luther reminds his readers that, "I have taught in the past and still teach that this controversy is unnecessary, and that it is of no great consequence whether the bread remains or not."<sup>49</sup>

Luther here shows himself extremely hesitant to introduce questions where none need be asked. Occam's arguments concerning possibility and probability, inevitably discarded when conflicting with church decrees, seem by contrast little more than exercises in logic. But Luther, too, shows himself willing to bring logic into play, most forcefully in the debate concerning the mode or modes of Christ's bodily presence. The reason, he explains, is that,

Their [the fanatics'] teaching rests on the argument that Christ's body can have no other mode of presence at a given place than like flour in a sack or gold in purse, that is, "locally." This they must prove to us from Scripture.<sup>50</sup>

Neither the manner in which Christ's body becomes present nor the fate of the bread and wine after consecration had touched the heart of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.<sup>51</sup> Neither issue raised doubt with regard to the presence of Christ's body or the forgiveness offered with the same. The discussion of modes of presence, however, had become, in the hands of the fanatics, a means by which to deny the body of Christ a place on the altar. They argued, in essence:

- Christ's body may be present to a place only locally.
  - Christ's body is not locally present in the Sacrament.
- ⇒ Therefore, Christ's body is not in the Sacrament.

In response to such logic Luther was compelled to state, "we must use our reason or else give way to the fanatics."<sup>52</sup> That Luther, by "reason", means logic in particular becomes ever more evident throughout the text.<sup>53</sup> His opponents are constantly harangued for their lack of competence in this basic science. Over and over Luther proclaims that the fanatics are poor logicians who give insufficient attention even to grammar.<sup>54</sup> What they consider logic

<sup>48</sup>AE 37:194; WA 26:297<sup>27-30</sup>.

<sup>49</sup>AE 37:296; WA 26:439<sup>26-27</sup>.

<sup>50</sup>AE 37:285; WA 26:429<sup>28-30</sup>. This final sentence clearly reveals Luther's position; assertions must be "proved" from Scripture. If proofs are forwarded on the basis of logic then Luther is equally willing to use logic in deconstructing them.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. H. Sasse, *This is My Body* (Adelaide: Openbook Publishing, 1977), 82.

<sup>52</sup>AE 37:224; WA 26:337<sup>14-15</sup>.

<sup>53</sup>Cf. B. Lohse, *Ratio und Fides* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1958), 7, who suggests that Luther's use of the terms *ratio*, *Vernunft*, and *Verstand* are primarily epistemological ["des menschlichen Erkenntnisvermögens"]. Luther here uses *dencken*.

<sup>54</sup>See e.g. AE 37:171, 179, 195, 196, 235, 238, 245, 251, 271, 272, 282, 295, 301, 335, 339.

is no more than a “magician’s kit”.<sup>55</sup> “In other words”, he says, “these spirits should be sent to school to study Peter of Spain. They need him very badly.”<sup>56</sup>

As we might expect, logic also plays a large role in Occam’s consideration of the modes of bodily presence. Even a cursory comparison with Luther shows similar terminology and the convergent conclusions that Christ does have more than one mode of presence. In order at this point is a more detailed look at the data and ideas used to reach these conclusions.

In the opening of the shorter tract contained in *De Sacramento* we are given a clue as to where Occam begins his analysis and in which direction it will lead. In his outline of the various opinions regarding transubstantiation he consistently distinguishes between substance and accidents, concluding with the comment,

because this consideration pertains not only to theology but also to philosophy, since it may be the province of philosophy to come to know the natures of things and their distinctions; therefore, it is necessary to investigate what the philosophers have thought of this matter; and especially the prince of philosophers, Aristotle.<sup>57</sup>

Concerning Aristotle’s categories, Occam further states near the end of his longer treatise that “indeed there are no categories except certain predicables and signs of things and simple terms; from which there are made combinations true and false.”<sup>58</sup> This leads to the conclusion that “these names ‘substance,’ ‘quality,’ and ‘quantity,’ may be distinct, although the things signified may not be distinct.”<sup>59</sup> In short, Occam opens his discussion of the Lord’s Supper by frankly stating what benefit he believes Aristotle may bring to the matter. Near the conclusion of his work he makes clear the logical presuppositions he himself brings to Aristotle. What is found between these two points is largely a debate over the proper interpretation of Aristotle; that is, of his definitions of substance, accident, and other such terms.<sup>60</sup> These definitions are the grounds upon which Occam builds his argument. This is seen plainly on at least two occasions where he prefaces the definition of relevant terms with statements such as, “in order that the statements, which are to be presented, may appear to rest upon a solid and immovable foundation, an exordium may then be assumed with respect to which no rational person ought to be in doubt.”<sup>61</sup> Likewise, “that I may rest

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<sup>55</sup>AE 37:233; WA 26:346<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>56</sup>AE 37:277; WA 26:414<sup>30-31</sup>.

<sup>57</sup>Occam, 3, 5.

<sup>58</sup>Occam, 433.

<sup>59</sup>Occam, 435.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. Occam, 47ff., 121ff., 249ff., 357.

<sup>61</sup>Occam, 213.

upon a solid foundation, I shall begin from one distinction of this name 'accident'."<sup>62</sup> As necessary as proper definition may be for formal logic, Occam rarely descends from the abstract realm of such.<sup>63</sup> One example will suffice to illustrate a major difference between the approaches of Occam and Luther.

Occam's shorter treatise takes up the subject of points, lines, surfaces, and bodies. The discussion therein is primarily concerned with supporting the assertion that propositions should not be conceded according to common speech.<sup>64</sup> After a lengthy discussion of the relationship between points, lines, and the like, Occam concludes that, although men commonly speak of points as if they existed independently as *res absoluta*, this is not in fact the case. This preliminary conclusion is used to bolster the main argument of Occam's longer treatise—that quantity does not exist independently or necessarily. Though the matter of quantity is certainly relevant to the discussion of the mode of Christ's bodily presence, Occam only rarely and briefly leaves his formal arguments to make this application explicit. Luther, like Occam, also holds that there must be a distinction between common and true significations of speech.<sup>65</sup> Unlike Occam, however, Luther passes over any implications this might have for definitions of point and quantity; rather, he immediately notes its relevance for biblical exegesis, and in particular, that dealing with the words of institution. In sum, Luther's discussions of language are never divorced from the text of Scripture; they are never allowed to become side-tracked by abstract logical arguments.

This contrast is further made evident when Luther states his own grounds for argumentation. Unlike Occam, Luther is never comfortable grounding his theology in philosophical definitions.<sup>66</sup>

My grounds, on which I rest in this matter, are as follows: The first is this article of our faith, that Jesus Christ is essential, natural, true, complete God and man in one person, undivided and inseparable. The second, that the right hand of God is everywhere. The third, that the Word of God is not false or deceitful. The fourth, that God has and knows various ways to be present at a certain place, not only the single one of which the fanatics prattle, which the philosophers call 'local.' Of this the sophists properly say: There are three

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<sup>62</sup>Occam, 385.

<sup>63</sup>E. Iserloh, *Gnade und Eucharistie in der philosophischen Theologie des Wilhelm von Ockham* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1956), 77, says much the same about Occam's preoccupation with God's absolute power preventing him from getting to revelation and theology proper.

<sup>64</sup>Occam, 41.

<sup>65</sup>AE 37:175; WA 26:277<sup>29ff</sup>.

<sup>66</sup>Cf. N. Nagel, "Consubstantiation," in *Hermann Sasse: A Man for Our Times*, ed. J. R. Stephenson and T. M. Winger (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1998), 246.

modes of being present in a given place: locally or circumscriptively, definitively, repletively.<sup>67</sup>

Not insignificantly, the matter of modes and definitions is listed last among these grounds.<sup>68</sup> Luther's foundations are drawn from Holy Scripture. Even in the matter of modes of presence Luther does not so much follow Occam and his school as simply note their agreement.<sup>69</sup> Most significant in the outline of Luther's grounds, however, is the fact that priority is given to "this article of our faith", Christology. Luther realizes that this article stands at the centre of the Eucharist, and indeed, the whole of Christian theology. Thus he exclaims that Zwingli "has dreamed up" *alloeosis* "in order to rob us of Christ."<sup>70</sup>

His imagination and damned *alloeosis* lead him to divide the person of Christ, and he leaves us no other Christ than a mere man who died for us and redeemed us. But what Christian heart can hear or endure this? This teaching altogether rejects and condemns the entire Christian faith and the whole world's salvation.<sup>71</sup>

Understanding this, Luther also realizes that, more than faulty logic, it is faulty Christology that drives Zwingli's denial of Christ's bodily presence in the Sacrament. Or perhaps more to the point, Zwingli has allowed logic, and poor logic at that, to run his Christology. Of this Luther will have no part. In the matter of Christology and its implications for Christ's mode of presence in the Sacrament:

Here faith must blind reason and lift it out of the physical, circumscribed [local] mode into the second uncircumscribed [definitive] mode which it does not understand but cannot deny.

Now if this second mode must be understood by faith, and reason with its first, circumscribed mode must vanish, how much more must faith alone remain here and reason vanish in the case of the heavenly, supernatural [repletive] mode, where Christ's body is one person with God in the Godhead?<sup>72</sup>

Thus far against Zwingli. But this last quotation also stands in stark contrast to the manner in which Occam is willing to discuss reason:

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<sup>67</sup>AE 37:214-15; WA 26:326<sup>29</sup>-327<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>68</sup>N. Nagel, "The Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar According to Luther", *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39.4 (1968): 228: "Luther is not in the habit of leaving his best point until last."

<sup>69</sup>Luther does indeed borrow the terminology of the scholastics; in discussing such, however, he is quick to draw upon biblical examples (e.g. Mt. 8, Jer. 23) rather than inherited philosophical definitions.

<sup>70</sup>AE 37:207; WA 26:317<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>71</sup>AE 37:231; WA 26:342<sup>14ff</sup>.

<sup>72</sup>AE 37:221; WA 26:334<sup>23ff</sup>.

I am unwilling by virtue of the dictum of any one of the plebs, to hold in check my intellect and to affirm something contrary to a dictate of reason, unless the Roman Church may teach that this view must be held; for the authority of the Roman Church is greater than the whole capacity or human genius.<sup>73</sup>

The extent to which Luther, even while employing it himself, is concerned to displace reason and logic from any foundational role is further evidenced in his statement that “I do not want to deny in any way that God’s power is able to make a body be simultaneously in many places, **even in a corporeal and circumscribed manner.**”<sup>74</sup> With this statement Luther not only rejects poor Zwinglian dialectics; he sets all logic, even that of Occam, on its head. It would appear that he has out-Occamed even the Occamists with an appeal to God’s absolute power: “For who wants to try to prove that God is unable to do that? Who has seen the limits of his power?”<sup>75</sup> And yet Luther refrains from pushing this appeal too far. He states:

My only purpose was to show what crass fools our fanatics are when they concede only the first, circumscribed mode of presence to the body of Christ although they are unable to prove that even this mode is contrary to our view.<sup>76</sup>

Luther is concerned to make himself clearly understood; any speculation regarding the manner in which Christ is able to make himself present is forwarded simply for the sake of refuting the false assertions of the fanatics. He will go no further.<sup>77</sup> He will make no attempts to build upon these excurses. For the task of theology proper, for confession, Luther retreats to Scripture, to the clear words of the text, for “what kind of Supper can that be, in which there is no text or sure word of Scripture?”<sup>78</sup>

Of course we grant them also the right to speak elsewhere about the sacrament in whatever terms they find pleasing or fitting. But we want the

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<sup>73</sup>Occam, 451. Cf. also 127: “I consider it dangerous and rash to wish to limit any one to the holding captive of his ability and to the believing of something which reason dictates to him to be false, unless it may be able to be drawn from Sacred Scripture or from a decree of the Roman Church or from the statements of the approved Doctors.”

<sup>74</sup>AE 37:224; WA 26:336<sup>32-34</sup>. Emphasis added.

<sup>75</sup>AE 37:224; WA 26: 336<sup>34-35</sup>.

<sup>76</sup>AE 37:223-24; WA 26:336<sup>29-32</sup>. Cf. AE 37:207; WA 26:318<sup>1ff.</sup> and AE 37:216; WA 26:329<sup>34-36</sup>. Cf. also Sommerlath’s statement that ubiquity, for Luther, “ist nur eine Theorie”. *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. K. Galling, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1957), 1:36.

<sup>77</sup>Cf. Nagel, “The Presence”, 230.

<sup>78</sup>AE 37:163; WA 26:263<sup>2-3</sup>.

text of the Supper to be unambiguous, simple, sure, and certain in every word, syllable, and letter.<sup>79</sup>

So Luther says at the beginning of his treatise, and again also at the end:

[E]ven supposing that our text and interpretation were uncertain or obscure—which it is not—as well as their text and interpretation, you still have this glorious, reassuring advantage that you can rely upon our text with a good conscience and say, “If I must have an uncertain, obscure text and interpretation, I would rather have the one uttered by the lips of God himself than one uttered by the lips of men. And if I must be deceived, I would rather be deceived by God (if that were possible) than by men. For if God deceives me, he will take the responsibility and make amends to me, but men cannot make amends to me if they have deceived me and led me into hell.”<sup>80</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Though the investigation above is somewhat random and by no means exhaustive, certain conclusions have yet become clear. With regard to the type of logic found in these tracts, one need not shy away from recognizing an affinity between Occam and Luther. Both deal with logic by way of terms and their relations; both are at home in the terminist logic of Peter of Spain and others. It is with regard to how this logic is used, and with which particular terms, that we first recognize significant differences. As noted above, Occam is overwhelmingly concerned with Aristotle’s vocabulary and its proper (as opposed to common) definitions. This is a subject for philosophers, as he himself readily admits.<sup>81</sup> Luther, while also noting a difference between the common manner of speech and what particular terms mean in their given context, is first and foremost focused on the words of Scripture, specifically those spoken by Christ at the institution of the Supper. These are not subject to philosophy; indeed, one need not be a philosopher, a theologian, or even a Christian to understand what Christ’s words actually say and mean.<sup>82</sup>

For even if I were a Turk, a Jew, or a heathen, who thought nothing of the Christian faith, and yet heard or read this scriptural account of the sacrament, I would still have to say, “I do not believe the Christian doctrine, of course, but this I must admit: if they wish to be Christians and maintain their

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<sup>79</sup>AE 37:167; WA 26:265<sup>27-30</sup>.

<sup>80</sup>AE 37:305; WA 26:446<sup>18ff</sup>.

<sup>81</sup>Occam, 5.

<sup>82</sup>Compare Luther’s statement with Lohse’s discussion of “erleuchteten Vernunft”, 117-19.

doctrine, they must believe that Christ's body and blood are physically eaten and drunk in the bread and wine."<sup>83</sup>

Finally, Occam and Luther differ over the purpose for which logic is introduced to the topic of the Supper. Upon a preliminary reading of the secondary literature it was suggested that, at least by way of contrast with Aquinas, Occam's use of logic might seem largely negative or apologetic. The text at hand, however, does not make this quite so clear. In the matter of quantity, for instance, Occam's intent seems as much to prove that Christ's body and blood **cannot** be present on the altar as a quantum as it is to disprove that it **must** be present as such. While he may theoretically insist upon the autonomous existence of philosophy on the one hand and theology proper on the other, Occam, in practice, often blurs the distinction between these two.<sup>84</sup> Such is not the case in Luther's treatise.<sup>85</sup>

A suggestion as to why this might be will serve to highlight the even more profound differences between Luther and his "master", William of Occam. This suggestion is that Luther's consistent distinction, both in theory and in practice, between logic (and philosophy or reason in general) and theology stands in correlation to his consistent distinction between Law and Gospel.<sup>86</sup> Luther's logic serves the Law. It tears down rather than builds up. It reduces the old to rubble so that new and secure foundations may be laid. It refutes faulty assertions but makes none of its own. Its proper work is to silence man's assertions so that those of Scripture may be heard in their clarity.<sup>87</sup> This distinction between Law and Gospel is conspicuously absent in Occam, as it was in so many before the Reformation. Without this Law/Gospel distinction serving to define his logic/theology distinction, Occam seems uncertain as to logic's proper role. This being the case, his logic, fine as it may be, suffers a certain emasculation. This is most evident

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<sup>83</sup>AE 37:359; WA 26:496<sup>34</sup>-497<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>84</sup>Cf. Hägglund, "Was Luther a Nominalist?" *Concordia Theological Monthly* 28.6 (1957): 447.

<sup>85</sup>Luther's clear distinction between the two is part of his "determined break with the Occamist tradition". See B. Hägglund, *Theologie und Philosophie bei Luther und in der Occamistischen Tradition* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1955), 54. Cf. Lohse, 115.

<sup>86</sup>Lohse, 115, also notes that allowing reason to rule in the realm of theology leads to a false understanding of Law and Gospel.

<sup>87</sup>Significant in this respect is the outline which Luther's work follows. Part one is concerned with the refutation of Zwingli. It is in this section that logic plays its part; it is here that the Law is at work. Part two of Luther's treatise looks specifically at the institution texts. Finally, in part three, Luther confesses his own faith. Only in these latter two sections does Luther come to theology proper—exegesis and confession, learning what the Lord has said and saying back to him the same. It is here that the Gospel is revealed and confessed. By contrast, Occam's text is arranged in the reverse order. He first confesses his own faith (i.e. he states that he believes what Rome believes), gives brief attention to the texts, and then proceeds to his logical arguments.

in his unwillingness to completely refute and his equal unwillingness to boldly assert.<sup>88</sup>

But if one remains in the realm of logic—that is, the Law—the whole story is not told. If the focus is limited to dialectics, there remain a number of notable similarities between Occam and Luther. Much of what is said in Luther is also said in Occam. As important, perhaps more important, however, is what is said in Luther that remains unsaid in Occam. For example, we have seen the central place which Christology occupies in Luther’s doctrine of the Supper; any explicit parallel is lacking in Occam.<sup>89</sup> Without oversimplification it may be said that the particulars of the Gospel remain a lacuna in Occam’s treatment of the Lord’s Supper. This is, partially at least, a consequence of Occam’s method. He is a philosopher rather than an exegete. His arguments, though made with respect to the Sacrament of the Altar, rarely return to the words of Christ. Thus the discussion never turns from the “what” of the Sacrament to the “for what and for whom” of the Sacrament. Occam fails to say that which Luther makes a point to state quite early: “These are Christ’s words. We must know what they contain **and what they bestow.**”<sup>90</sup>

Though he may follow Occam in his unwillingness to confine Christ’s body only to a local presence, Luther radically parts company with him by his unwillingness to confine the discussion to modes of presence. But again, this is not merely a distinction between Luther and Occam, but between Luther and the majority of medieval theologians who preceded him. It is the distinction with which the gospel becomes clear in the theology of the Eucharist. The location of Christ’s body, in the Sacrament as on the cross, becomes good news only when it is located for me and given for me, for the forgiveness of my sins. Dialectics may be of some small service in proving that a body has more than one mode of presence; it offers no assurance that Christ’s body is present for me and for my forgiveness. And where this is not sure and certain there is no Gospel. It is this “for me” that Christ’s words

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<sup>88</sup>Occam’s unwillingness to make assertions has been previously mentioned. His unwillingness to refute is most clearly seen in his discussions of transubstantiation. While admitting that fewer logical problems are introduced if one allows the bread and wine to remain in the Sacrament, and while admitting that transubstantiation is not to be found in Scripture, he will not allow logic to trump the tradition of the church.

<sup>89</sup>Occam does not speak in *De Sacramento* of a repletive presence. Sasse notes that he was hesitant to ascribe omnipresence to Christ; nevertheless, on occasion Occam could and did speak of his ubiquity. See Sasse, 126-27, and quote in n. 51. H. Hilgenfeld, *Mittelalterlich-traditionelle Elemente in Luthers Abendmahlsschriften* (Zurich: Theologische Verlag, 1971), 333, calls Occam’s ubiquity an extension of his definitive presence. He also notes that a problem for all nominalist Christology and sacramental theology is the loosing of Christology from consistent confession of the personal union. Cf. Nagel, “The Presence”, 231, n. 23, and 236, n. 43; Iserloh, 33.

<sup>90</sup>AE 37:177; WA 26:280<sup>1-2</sup>. Emphasis added.

alone make clear and certain. It is this forgiveness that Christ's words and Christ's body and blood bestow. And it is this emphasis on the gospel that, above all else, shapes and defines Luther's confession of the Sacrament.

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**SERMON:  
THE BLOOD OF JESUS (MT. 26:27-28)**

*John W. Kleinig*

**B**lood! We are both fascinated and horrified by blood. Blood is a wonderful, powerful substance that nourishes our bodies and keeps them alive. It carries oxygen and nutrients to the cells; then it removes the wastes and toxins from each part of the body. It protects us from infection by its antibodies and fights disease in our bodies. And so we value blood highly. Yet we are also rather squeamish about blood. We avoid the sight of it and are afraid of contact with it, because we feel that it somehow stains us and makes us unclean. We even use “bloody” as a swear-word, as if blood made things repulsive and disgusting.

It is no wonder then that many of us are put off by the whole business of sacrifices in the Old Testament and the message of Christ’s bloody death on the cross. If we are honest, we find the talk in the New Testament about the power of Christ’s blood rather distasteful, so much so that we reckon nothing is lost when modern translations of the Bible speak about his death instead. Most of all, we’re appalled at the thought of drinking blood. Only the most primitive savages do that. And so we avoid thinking and speaking about that part of the Lord’s Supper.

We aren’t the only people who find that aspect of our worship offensive. St John tells us that many Jews who were once disciples of Jesus were so disgusted at His insistence on their need to drink His blood that they left Him for good. And that was quite understandable, given their religious upbringing. Even though blood played an important part in the worship of God at the Temple in Jerusalem, God had strictly forbidden the drinking of blood from any animal. So strict was this prohibition that they had to slaughter the animals in such a way that all the blood was drained from it. The life of the animal lay in its blood. Only pagans and savages drank the blood of sacrificed animals to get vitality and health, energy and power from them. But the Israelites were not allowed to do that. They could not get life-power for themselves from the blood, because all life belonged to God, and God only. In fact, God said that he would excommunicate anyone who drank the blood of any animal.

You can therefore well imagine how shocked the disciples were on Maundy Thursday when Jesus instituted Holy Communion and told them to drink His blood. He asked them to do something that they as Jews had never done before. They had to violate an ancient religious taboo. Yet at the same time they would have sensed that that Jesus was offering them something absolutely new. He linked His blood with the new covenant, His lasting

legacy to them. By giving them His blood to them, He gave something special of Himself to them. In it lay the secret of His life and death for them. In it He offered them something never given before. In it He somehow shared His whole life with them in an amazing way. Later on after Easter, when they had thought long and hard about it as they celebrated His holy supper each Sunday, they came to appreciate its importance. And the whole of the New Testament is full of the wonder at the greatness and power of this gift.

Jesus invites you to come to His supper today to drink His blood. But before you do that, He wants you to know why He gives it to you, so that you can appreciate it and use it appropriately. He offers to do three things for you as you drink His blood: to give you life, to cleanse you, and to make you holy.

### **1. DRINK THE BLOOD OF JESUS AND YOU WILL RECEIVE HIS LIFE.**

Blood is life and the stuff of life for every human being. The heart pumps it around to all parts of the body through the arteries and capillaries. It feeds every cell with nutrients and provides life-sustaining oxygen to piece of muscle and tissue in the body. Blood gives life and supports life. Without blood there is no life. The loss of blood leads weakness and death.

Malcolm Muggeridge, a well-known English journalist, tells how he first began to understand what the Christian faith was all about. He was visiting a remote part of Africa with his wife. While they were there, she suffered such a severe haemorrhage that she was at the point of death. She needed a transfusion, but there was no blood bank there. When the doctor discovered that Muggeridge had the same blood type as his wife, he transfused the blood directly from him into his wife. He saved her life by transfusing his own life-blood directly into her veins.

Jesus has done something far more wonderful than that. He did not become a human being just to model the right way of life for us in human terms; no, he became a man for us to give us His own life, eternal life, divine life, a share in the life of the Triune God. And that abundantly. What's even more amazing, He did not convey His life to us genetically by becoming a father or mother for us. He did not convey His life mentally to us by teaching us about it. Rather, He conveys His life personally and orally to us in the Sacrament of the Altar. There He transfuses His own resurrected life into us as we drink His blood with the wine from the chalice. He says in John 6:53, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat My flesh and drink My blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day." So then, drinking Christ's blood brings His life-giving Holy Spirit right into

you. It gives you spiritual vitality and energy; it makes you more and more alive, as you live in Christ and He lives in you; it gives life to your dying bodies and prepares them for the resurrection; it gives you a foretaste of the resurrection here and now in this earthly life. As you drink it you receive the Holy Spirit and share in the divine life of God already now in this life.

We Christians are like people who suffer from haemophilia. Just as they need repeated transfusions to stay alive, we need Christ's blood to keep us going spiritually. So come to the Lord's table to receive the lifeblood of Jesus. Even though you can't see how it works, take Him at his word and trust in His blood to keep you spiritually alive. Rely on the blood of Jesus to give you eternal life.

## **2. DRINK THE BLOOD OF JESUS AND IT WILL CLEANSE YOU.**

Do you realize that your blood actually purifies your body? As it brings nutrients to each part of you, it soaks up the waste material produced in your body and brings it to the kidneys for removal by them. If your blood did not remove the impurities and toxins from the cells in your body, they would gradually contaminate and poison your whole body. And you would die. Your blood therefore removes the pollutants from your body and purifies its organs from self-pollution. But it does even more than that. It produces antibodies and uses them to destroy the germs that cause sickness and disease. It fights against infection and protects the health of the body by attacking the germs that pollute it.

Paul Brand was a missionary doctor who worked with lepers in India. He tells a story that illustrates the cleansing power of Christ's blood. When an epidemic of measles spread through Vellore, his daughter came down with a very bad case of it. Since he had no vaccine to treat her, he located a person who had recently recovered from measles. He withdrew the blood from the person who had overcome measles and injected the plasma from it into his daughter. She was healed with blood that was borrowed from a person that had overcome measles, the blood from an overcomer of that sickness.

St John tells us that the blood of Jesus does something far greater than that. He says in I John 1:7: "the blood of Jesus God's Son cleanses us from all sin." When we sin we pollute ourselves. Sin contaminates our conscience. It makes us unclean. This does not just happen when we sin; it also happens when others sin against us. Their sin stains us; it taints our conscience just as our own sins do. We therefore feel unclean, unworthy, and out of place in God's presence. No matter how much we try, we can't cleanse ourselves from sin and its pervasive pollution. We all know that; we have all had some experience of an unclean conscience that makes us feel so rotten about ourselves and so unworthy of God.

Jesus gives you His blood to counteract that. His blood washes you clean inside; it gives you a clear conscience. What a precious gift that is! His blood does not just remove your spiritual impurity; it also overcomes the sin that causes it. Remember Paul Brand's daughter. The blood of the person who had overcome measles overcame her measles. It is like that with Jesus. He took on all our sin and overcame every temptation that we could ever suffer. He did this to produce the antidote to sin for us. He took on the sins that we have committed as well as the sins that have been committed against us to give us His righteousness; He took on our impurity to give us His purity; He took on our spiritual sickness to give us His spiritual health. And He conveys all that to us in His blood. The blood of the God's Son who overcame sin for us cleanses us and overcomes sin in us.

The power of Christ's blood to cleanse came home to me when I preached on it in Malaysia some years ago. As I was helping the pastor distribute the Lord's Supper after the sermon, I was struck by a young woman who was crying as she received the chalice from me. She was dressed in drab clothes and stayed on long afterwards at the altar. When the service was over, the pastor told that something remarkable had happened. He did not have time to tell me about it because we needed to greet the people at the door. When that woman came to us, she took both my hands in hers and fell on her knees before me, saying "Thank-you! Thank-you!" After all the people had left, the pastor told me more about her. The last time that she had communed was at her confirmation eight years earlier. But her life had been ruined soon afterwards by sexual abuse from a member of her own family. No matter how much her pastors had tried to help her, they could not remove the awful taint, the crippling sense of shame from that abuse. Since then she always sat at the back of the church, coming in after the service had begun and leaving before the service was over. But her reliance on the blood of Jesus for cleansing changed all that. She is now married and has become a mother of two children.

Do you feel unclean and spiritually unwell? Then come to drink the blood that cleanses and heals your soul. Jesus does not provide it for those who are pure and well but for those who know that they are unclean and infected with sin. Borrow blood from Him. Drink the blood that cleanses you and overcomes sin in your soul.

### **3. DRINK THE BLOOD OF JESUS AND IT WILL MAKE YOU HOLY.**

In the Old Testament God told Moses to use the blood of the sacrificed animals to make people holy and fit for His presence. After Moses had sacrificed some animals at Mt Sinai and had splashed part of their blood on the altar there, he sprinkled the rest of their blood on the Israelites. In this

way he consecrated them and made them God's holy people, His royal priesthood. And whenever a man was ordained as a priest, an elaborate ceremony took place. Some blood was taken from a sacrificed ram and placed on his right ear, his right hand, and his right foot. Then blood was taken from the altar and sprinkled over him and his vestments. In this way that man became holy and fit for access to God's presence. He was covered and empowered by God's holiness.

In the Lord's Supper the blood of Jesus makes and keeps us holy. We do not produce our own holiness; Jesus shares His holiness with us. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says in 13:12: "Jesus suffered ... in order to sanctify the people by His own blood." This means that we are all saints, holy people, people protected and empowered by God's holiness. Because Jesus shares His own holiness with us by giving us His blood to drink, we can approach our heavenly Father with great boldness and confidence as if we were Jesus Himself and had His status as God's Son. We enjoy the privilege of access to heaven here on earth as we receive the holy Sacrament. We can "enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus" and "approach with a true heart in the full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:19-22). We can bring our own needs and the needs of others to God in prayer.

Together with the Word of God and body of Jesus, His blood is the most holy thing that you have from God. It makes you holy through and through. You are as holy in God's eyes as Jesus is. Since you share in Christ's holiness, your body is the temple of the living God. Wherever you go God goes with you. God uses you to reach out and touch other people. Whether they know it or not, they meet Him through you. Since you are holy you live as in God's presence; you belong to His holy priests that bring people and their needs to God in prayer, just as they bring God and His blessings to the people around them. All this is yours because Jesus gives you His holy blood to drink, the blood that consecrates you and keeps you holy. So drink His blood and share in His holiness.

Blood is indeed a remarkable, powerful substance. We depend on it to remain alive and healthy. But the holy blood of Jesus is an even more remarkable substance, something far more powerful than human blood. There is power in His blood. His blood brings life and cleansing and holiness to those who take Him at His word when He says: "Drink from this cup, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Believe it and you will receive its blessings. Believe that you receive eternal life in His blood and He will give you eternal life. Believe that you receive cleansing from sin in His blood and He will cleanse you through and through. Believe that you receive holiness from Him in His blood and He will keep you holy. Believe and receive. Then you will have good reason to rejoice and sing:

Glory be to Jesus,  
Who in bitter pains  
Poured for me the lifeblood  
From His sacred veins. (*TLH 158; LW 98*)

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**BOOK REVIEW:  
THE CREEDS IN KOLB-WENGERT**

*Thomas M. Winger*

*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000. 774pp.

The three so-called “ecumenical” creeds, which occupy a place of unmistakable prominence at the head of the Book of Concord and in the articles of the Augustana, rarely receive commensurate attention in Lutheran theology. The tradition at Westfield House of spending half a term on the study of the creeds alone, in which J. N. D. Kelly’s massive tome *Early Christian Creeds* is thoroughly digested in addition to careful analysis of the symbols in their original language, is somewhat exceptional. The Göttingen critical edition of the Book of Concord, which stands behind Kolb-Wengert’s new English translation, follows up the text of the Apostles’ Creed with five pages of tightly packed “footnotes”, in addition to the five-page historical introduction. While the other creeds receive somewhat less attention, there is no doubting the editors’ opinion of their value.

What, then, of Kolb-Wengert? Compared with Tappert by the coarse measure of volume, Kolb-Wengert is a clear improvement. The historical introductions to each creed are more precise and helpful; the textual notes are more extensive. Yet one pines for the sort of thoroughness that characterises the Göttingen edition. To be fair, we are given to expect shortly the publication of a companion volume of historical introductions. But for those relying on Kolb-Wengert as a standard edition of the texts, more thorough notes in the Book of Concord itself would be helpful. The editors make much of their decision to translate from the original texts of the creeds, yet the footnotes rarely offer insight into the subtleties of the Greek or Latin, neither do they clarify the theological issues standing behind each turn of phrase (e.g. there is not a word about the crucial term ὁμοούσιον, its role at Nicaea, and the subsequent controversy over its meaning).<sup>1</sup> Instead they are content to present textual variants from the major English translations, with

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<sup>1</sup>The translation of the phrase “God, the Father Almighty” in the First Article also deserves comment. Firstly, one must question this punctuation; Kelly, 132-33, makes a convincing case for “God the Father, [the] Almighty”, noting that “God the Father” is biblical language, while there is little data to support the phrase “Father Almighty”. Secondly, Kelly questions “Almighty” (based on the Latin *omnipotentem*) as a translation for the original term παντοκράτωρ, which has the more active meaning of “all-ruling”.

the occasional reference to the Latin and German liturgical texts.<sup>2</sup> If this were the Greek New Testament, it would be the UBS edition, not Nestle-Aland.

Recognizing that its brief historical introductions are not meant to replace Bente, one must admit that they are reasonably accurate and informative. Gnosticism is duly noted as the Apostles' Creed's most significant antithesis—though speaking of “certain gnostic alternatives to orthodox Christianity” is far weaker than one would hope! Gnosticism is a heresy, not an “alternative”. The creeds that confess also condemn. At this point the introductions could more clearly explain that, in accord with Gnostic ideas, the earliest christological heresy was the denial of Christ's true humanity, His fleshliness (rather than His divinity).<sup>3</sup>

The editors make a not insignificant error of fact in their opening sentence about the Nicene Creed: “In 325 the emperor Constantine, troubled by disunity in the church caused by the christological dispute between bishops such as Athanasius of Alexandria and the Arians, called for a synod to meet in Nicea to formulate a unified response” (20). Athanasius, in fact, attended Nicaea as deacon and secretary to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria, and was not himself consecrated bishop until 328.

One regrets also that the editors have not given more weight to Kelly's monumental research. They preserve, for instance, the traditional notion that the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) simply refined and expanded the original creed of Nicaea (AD 325) to produce our “Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed”. Kelly demonstrates, on the contrary, that the Constantinopolitan creed is not based textually on the original Nicene Creed, but was derived from another local baptismal creed that generally conformed to the Nicene pattern. There are simply too many significant differences of wording between the two creeds to conclude that the later is merely an expansion of the earlier.

The editors then give undue weight (a full paragraph) to the *filioque* controversy—due, no doubt, to ecumenical concerns—while more significant matters are left out, to which brief answers are indeed possible. How, for instance, did the Nicene Creed come to have a place in the

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<sup>2</sup>One example: their translation brackets the words “God from God” in the Nicene Creed, noting “The Greek omits these words.” This is inaccurate. These words are present in the Nicene Creed (AD 325), but absent from the Constantinopolitan (AD 381) form. The Latin liturgical text has somehow inherited this phrase from the earlier Greek text.

<sup>3</sup>Textual note 14, commenting of “the resurrection of the flesh”, refers most helpfully to Gnosticism. But referring to Gnostic “myths regarding the immortality of the soul” slightly misses the mark. It was their repudiation of the **physical** that brought Gnostic teachings into conflict with Christianity at this point.

Communion liturgy?<sup>4</sup> What change in liturgical usage led the West to render πιστεύομεν “we believe” as *credo* “I believe”?<sup>5</sup> How did the ecclesiastical function of the creeds differ?<sup>6</sup> These are matters that truly inform the role of the creeds in the Book of Concord.

What one misses most of all, however, is a thorough defence and explanation of the editors’ decision to translate the Nicene Creed from the Greek conciliar text of AD 381, rather than from the Latin or German liturgical texts given by the Books of Concord in 1580 and 1584. This is not a decision that is necessarily to be criticized. Kolb-Wengert do us a great service by providing a careful English translation of this foundational text. The question is, however, what text is the normative confessional text? What was the intention of the framers of Concord when they chose to include the creeds in the Book of Concord? One might argue, on the one hand, that the Book of Concord specifically refers to the historical origin of the Nicene Creed in the Council of AD 325, and pledges allegiance to that council’s decrees. Quoting the creeds in their then-current liturgical form was merely of practical convenience. (In fact, the precise wording of the Apostles’ Creed varies within Luther’s two catechisms.) On the other hand, Kolb-Wengert claims to be a translation of the Book of Concord, and it would perhaps have been more faithful historically if their chief texts were the ones used in 1580/4, with the original conciliar form footnoted where it differed.<sup>7</sup>

In the end, however, it is the translation itself that matters. How does it fare? Firstly, it is clear that the editors’ translation philosophy was to give priority to the style and conventions of modern American English, rather than slavishly following the structure of the Greek or Latin. In general, this is a commendable philosophy. It can, however, result in a flattening of genres, so that the distinctive style of each text is blunted. In the case of the creeds, their elegant, majestic, liturgical language is broken up into the sound bites now normative in American English. Not only is the poetic

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<sup>4</sup>In the West the Council of Toledo (AD 589) and later the Emperor Charlemagne pressed for its inclusion in the liturgy to stamp out the Arianism of the German barbarians. In the East, most interestingly, it was first confessed in the liturgy by the Semi-Arianism, who did so in order to lay claim to orthodoxy; the truly orthodox then borrowed the practice.

<sup>5</sup>For some centuries in the West, the Nicene supplanted the Apostles’ Creed in the baptismal liturgy, in which context the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular was more appropriate. The move to the Nicene Creed was apparently made in order to defend more strongly against the Arianism of the barbarian conquerors.

<sup>6</sup>The Apostles’ Creed was the confession of individual catechumens at Baptism; the Nicene Creed was a conciliar document intended as a test of orthodoxy for bishops and their dioceses; the Athanasian Creed was to test the orthodoxy of theologians.

<sup>7</sup>Roland Ziegler’s review pursues more thoroughly the question of what texts of the Lutheran confessional documents are normative: “The New Translation of the Book of Concord: Closing the barn door after ....”, *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66.2 (April 2002): 145-65.

flavour of the text thereby dulled, but the inner cohesion and logical progress of the text is muddied. (Does anyone remember the semi-colon?) Reproducing the lengthy sentences of the original would not necessarily harm comprehension. The creeds could have been set as poetry, using visual design (e.g. indentations and white space) to clarify the structure. The fact, for instance, that all three articles of the Nicene Creed depend grammatically upon one verb, πιστεύομεν “we believe”, makes a theological statement about the unity of God that is blurred by breaking up the text into short sentences, many of which do not even contain a verb.

As we turn to the details of the translation, we find much that is commendable. The following notes on each creed focus on areas where some improvement is in order.

### THE APOSTLES’ CREED

Since the first “modern” translations of the Apostles’ Creed began to appear half a century ago, modernist theologians have taken the opportunity to express their disbelief in hell. Some versions simply omitted “He descended into hell” entirely, noting that it does not appear in the oldest forms of the Creed. Fortunately, Kolb-Wengert avoid this simplistic and misleading approach. They correctly note, “These words are lacking in the Old Roman Creed”; in fact, our current *textus receptus* of the Apostles’ Creed differs in many other respects from its Old Roman ancestor (none of which are noted). More problematic is the rest of Kolb-Wengert’s footnote, implying that the correct translation of the phrase is “he descended to the dead”. The fact that *Hades* in secular Greek meant “place of the dead” is quite irrelevant to the meaning of the Latin phrase *descendit ad inferna* (or *inferos*, which is identical in meaning). Its biblical basis is “the spirits in prison” (I Pet. 3:19), referring to a place of suffering that more than simply death. Although the purpose of Christ’s descent was variously interpreted among the Fathers, there is no doubt that the place was “hell”. If *ad inferna* means “to the place of the dead”, then it is redundant, saying no more than “He died”.

Similarly, translating *ascendit ad coelos* as “He ascended into the heavens” is a linguistic fudge, which is presumably either based on scepticism about the historical act of the Ascension or meant as a correction to the worldview of the ancients. The fact that “heaven” in both Greek and Latin is usually grammatically plural is a purely linguistic matter, traceable to the problem of rendering the dual number of the Hebrew שָׁמַיִם, a word that can refer either to the spiritual place “heaven” or to the physical places in the skies above. In English, however, the plural form “heavens” is usually reserved for the latter—the sun, the moon, and the stars—and for this reason it is a misleading translation. For this is not the place to which Jesus

ascended—as if He is hiding behind the moon for millennia, waiting to return! The biblical account indicates that Jesus indeed ascended towards the sky, but after disappearing from view behind a cloud He entered into the spiritual realm of heaven (singular).

Note 12 on *catholica* is most helpful, indicating that the translation “Christian Church” is not a Lutheran invention, but is simply the traditional mediaeval (pre-Reformation) German rendering into the vernacular (*christliche Kirche*). Most Lutherans incorrectly understand the use of “Christian” here as anti-Roman polemic. Nonetheless, “catholic Church” has its own inadequacies, for it is not really a translation but a transliteration. More explanation is needed. *Christliche* “Christian” was at least an attempt to give meaning to the word. *Catholica* comes from a Greek word used to refer to the church “according to its wholeness”, but which also was used to distinguish between the orthodox church and heretical sects in early centuries.

### NICENE CREED

I have already noted the main feature of their translation of the Nicene Creed: that it is based primarily on the Greek text rather than the Latin and German liturgical texts. Whether or not this is justified, it will bring a welcome prominence to the “we believe, we acknowledge, we look for” pattern of verbs. The unity of confession that is expressed by these first-person-plural verbs challenges the ungodly individualism of our age, when Christians believe that faith is completely private, even subjective. “I’ll believe what I want to, and you believe what you want, and that’s okay . . . .” It is vitally important in our contemporary context to affirm the corporate nature of the faith, that we believe together, we confess the same thing. This sameness of confession is a vital aspect of Communion fellowship. Although we do not practise the Eastern “dismissal of the catechumens” before the Lord’s Supper is given, we do practise “Closed Communion”. The Nicene Creed functions to confess the essential truths of the faith that are held in common by members of the orthodox church who commune with one another (and thereby excludes others, to whom the doors are “closed”). “We believe” thus confesses that the Christian truth is an undivided whole, received as a gift of God from His Holy Word. The church can say “we believe” because these things are objectively, unchangeably true, given by God’s Word, and confessed back to Him in harmony.

The translation of the classic Nicene term *ὁμοούσιον* is difficult. The traditional rendering “of one substance” on the basis of the Latin *consubstantialem* runs the dangers of portraying Divinity as an empirical, tangible thing. Kolb-Wengert’s “Being” is perhaps better, but “of one

Being” is grammatically confusing, or at least archaic. Perhaps “of one Essence” would be better (like the German *Wesen*). In any case, we intend to confess no more or less than the Nicene fathers intended when they agreed on the use of these terms.

Similar difficulties arise in attempting to put ἀνθρώπους and ἐνανθρωπήσαντα into modern English. Some deem “for us men” and “was made man” to be unnecessarily exclusive. Kolb-Wengert, thankfully declining to omit the “offensive” words as some modern versions do, offer “For us human beings” and “became a human being”. Whatever translation is chosen, it is vitally important to maintain the linguistic connection between what we are and what Christ became. This teaching, based on I Tim. 2:5 and Rom. 5:12-19, was repeatedly emphasized in the late second-century Fathers who opposed Gnosticism.<sup>8</sup> The advantage of the traditional language of “men” and “man” is how clearly it maintained the connection between Adam, the sons of Adam, and the new Adam. This language is nowhere near as “archaic” as feminists would like us to believe. “Human beings”, while clinically accurate, shifts the creed away from common language into scientific terminology.

### ATHANASIAN CREED

Aside from the unfortunate pagination that left the title of this “The Third Confession” widowed at the bottom of the page, there is little to criticize or praise. The editorial treatment is again Spartan—but then, this creed is itself a form of “commentary” on the other creeds, and little is to be gained by further exposition. It is unfortunate that the text is laid out as if it were prose, which it certainly is not; a poetic layout would give this unpopular creed a more favourable showing. At the very least, the division into its Trinitarian and Christological halves could be highlighted. One also notes a few mistakes. Contrary to footnote 34 the “traditional English translations” do not read “Christian” but “catholic” (the appearance of this word in *The Lutheran Hymnal* in 1941 caused great consternation in the Synodical Conference). Footnote 42 notes one place where the German text adds a

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<sup>8</sup>For instance: “He [Christ] caused man to become one with God. For unless a man had overcome the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been legitimately vanquished. ... And unless man had been joined to God, he could never have become a partaker of incorruptibility. For it was incumbent upon the Mediator between God and men, by His relationship to both, to bring both to friendship and concord, and present man to God, while He revealed God to man. For, in what way could we be partakers of the adoption of sons ... unless His Word, made flesh, had entered into communion with us?” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III.xviii:7).

phrase not contained in the Latin, but the editors have missed two others: “on the third day” (par. 36), and “God Almighty” (Par. 37).

The same zeal for inclusive language that was noted in the Nicene Creed also plagues this translation. The Latin *homo* when referring to Christ is six times rendered “human being”, and *homines* rendered “human beings”, rather than “man” and “men”. This, despite the fact that the Latin has other words for the abstract quality of being “human”, such as *humana carne* “human flesh” and *humanitatem* “humanity”, which actually occur in the creed (par. 31).

This reviewer’s final impression of Kolb-Wengert’s effort is not that it is thoroughly misleading or poorly translated, but simply inadequate. As long as this section of the Book of Concord gives us little more than what is already available in our hymnals and the *Lutheran Cyclopaedia*, it will be of little use in the seminary classroom or pastor’s study.

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