

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, part 3

Concluding the last two weeks' discussion of the June 25 "Clarifications" on the Catholic – Lutheran "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" [JDDJ] coming from Edward Cassidy, the Vatican's chief ecumenical officer.

Topic: Simultaneity:

To call Christians righteous and sinners at the same time prompts Cassidy's third "big" objection to JDDJ. He says flat-out: "not acceptable." Although "concupiscence remains in the baptized," he asserts in straight scholastic fashion, it "is not, properly speaking, sin." Thus for him "it remains difficult to see how...the anathemas of the Council of Trent on original sin and justification" do not still apply to this doctrine of simultaneity, and thus to the text of JDDJ which affirms it. He knows that the Reformation era conflict on the doctrine of sin [the "bad-news" flip-side of the "good news" of justification] is involved here. And he surely knows the neuralgic reaction ever since Augsburg that Lutherans have when they hear that "concupiscence is not really sin." Nevertheless I'll sidestep sin (ahem!) initially and come back to it later. Instead two other thoughts for starters.

One could meet Cassidy's complaint with just one Bible verse, the words of the despairing father of Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Anyone who makes the same confession with this anxious parent admits the lived experience

of faith and unfaith, righteous and sinner, at the same time. And the man of Mark 9 is no loner in the scriptures. He has co-confessors throughout the Bible. Christian lived experience verifies the simultaneity.

A more sophisticated angle would be to call attention to the pair of terms "righteous and sinner" as a paradox, not a contradiction. Cassidy sees them as an intolerable contradiction. But paradoxes are different. Paradoxes, if I remember my college logic correctly, are paired opposites that appear contradictory until one unpacks them to see that the conditions, the circumstances, of the two terms are not the same. Christ-connected sinners are righteous. Christ-disconnected sinners are not. That is the different set of conditions pertaining to each term. But can a sinner be connected and disconnected at the same time? If one can say "I believe, help my unbelief," it must be so. But how?

St. Paul's proposal for wrestling with this existential conundrum is to talk about two "selves" (his actual Greek term is "two egos") now present within his one skin. The Christ-connected self is a new creation, the other one, the "old" Paul is his lingering "old Adam." He has incontrovertible evidence for the presence of both selves in his daily experience. At times he cries out for deliverance—don't we all?—from the tug-of-war of this double identity. Doxology is his final word for survival in one such instance (Rom.7:25): "Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Since the righteous are Christ-connected by faith alone, this Christ-connecting faith and their chronic "old Adam's" unfaith are the opposites they carry within them. The conflict persists till the sinner self's final death on their dying day. Christians praying the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer, asking for forgiveness "again" this day, admit the palpable

presence of both selves within them. Praying the fifth petition joins us to the proto-believer from Mark 9 and his faith-unfaith simultaneity. JBFA empowers people to that confession: Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief. If/when Cassidy is graced with an "Aha!" about JBFA as the Gospel's own criterion, his problem with simultaneity should disappear.

But as he says, the reality called sin is the deeper issue in the simultaneity issue. When he says "concupiscence in the baptized is not, properly speaking, sin," he's re-opening the can of worms. What is the "proper" way to speak of sin? Just how bad is it? Ay, there's the rub.

A story. The theology department at Valparaiso University in the late 50s and early 60s was a great place to be. Law-Gospel hermeneutics was enjoying a renaissance. We were experimenting with it in the "new curriculum" by using it in Biblical studies focused on the texts for the Sundays of the Church Year. The Sabbatheology series you can also get from this listserv is the latter-day product of that experimentation. And it was early ecumenics. Even before Vatican II we were in dialogue with the theology department of Notre Dame University, an hour's drive away up at South Bend IN. The presidents of our two universities, O.P.Kretzmann (VU) and Theodore Hesbergh (ND), personal friends from ancient days, once agreed—over cocktails, no doubt—that "our two theology departments ought to get together for conversation." And, lo, it came to pass. Typical of the early years of ecumenical dialogue the format was one of them and one of us presenting a paper on a topic. I'll never forget the one, maybe the first one, where the topic was "Original Sin." That should have been easy, since both sides agreed that there was such a thing. I don't remember who made the presentations for each side, most likely it was the dept. chairpersons. But I've not yet forgotten the ND dept. chair's response—either to Bob Bertram's paper or something he said in

the ensuing discussion—"It can't really be that bad, can it, Bob?"

Well how bad is it? If it takes the death and resurrection of the Messiah to "fix" it, it must be pretty bad. Nevertheless in some ecumenical circles Lutheran theology gets bad marks, very bad marks, for its pessimism about humankind. Augsburg set out the terms in Article 2, Original Sin. "All humans born after the fall of Adam are born in sin. That is, to say, they are without fear of God, without trust in God, but with concupiscence." Two items are absent, true fear of God and true trust in God. With fear absent, sinners disregard God's law. With faith absent they disregard God's promise. Replacing these elements now absent in a sinner's heart is concupiscence. What's concupiscence?

The Augsburgers thought they were using the term the same way the NT does with the Greek term that the Latin Bible translated "concupiscentia." The cupidity in the center of concupiscence in the Bible is heavy stuff. It is the yen, the drive, the urge for what today we might call the Sinatra syndrome: "I'm going to do it my way." One of Luther's favorite renderings was to see it as my own chronic incurvature into myself and all the stuff I call mine.

The scholastics didn't see it as quite that bad. Taking their cues more from Aristotle than the apostles, they saw concupiscence as the yens and drives of human psychosomatic existence. Thus they were initially "natural," no cause for alarm. Only when they got out of hand, inordinate (=beyond what is orderly), did they become sin. Then they became vices. Natural hunger became gluttony, natural self-esteem became pride, natural sexual attraction became lust, rightful need for rest became sloth, etc.

So the scholastics could argue, as Cassidy does here, that once

a sinner is baptized, baptismal grace starts putting order back where there had been disorder. Then it follows, that although concupiscence may still remain in the baptized, “properly speaking” it is not sin. The yens are being rescued from disorder by the ordering power of grace. The metaphysical medicine is healing what formerly was sick. The language of 12 Steps is appropriate. Sinners are not fully recovered, but are recovering. And if recovering, their diminishing disorder, their “concupiscence remaining,” is not “properly speaking” sin. Whatever it is, it is less than that. Still serious, it is not a “big deal.”

But, said the Augsburgers, if the chronic malady of the old Adam, my old Adam, is that I do not fear God’s critique, nor do I trust God’s promise, and in addition substitute “my way” for all that, then “concupiscence remaining in the baptized” is still a very big deal indeed. It is not fundamentally linked to psychosomatic pressures at all. Sin is instead a human heart saying no to God and yes (a big yes) to self. That could surface either in stringent control of my yens and drives, or flat out libertinism. At the heart of sin is the heart’s commitment to the Sinatra syndrome. That’s a big malady, and when it surfaces in our simultaneity there’s only one known Christian remedy, called JBFA, executing that sinner self and re-vivifying the Christic self.

Some years back I once complained to Bob Schultz about many students “not getting it” despite my efforts at promoting the JBFA criterion and distinguishing law from Gospel. Kindly not questioning my teaching as the cause of it all, Bob reminded me that besides “learning” such theology, students—and that’s all of us—need to experience the gospel’s rescue in our own lives before we’ve really “got it.” And even then it can slip away fast. This does not say that you “have to” have a Damascus experience to get the “aha!” But for some of us that appears to

be what it takes.

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,” not only documents our simultaneity as really righteous and really sinners. It also signals the saving way to cope with it.

Next Thursday, d.v., back to the Seminex story.

Peace & Joy!
Ed Schroeder

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, part 2

Continuing last week's discussion of the June 25 “Clarifications” on the Catholic – Lutheran “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” [JDDJ] coming from Edward Cassidy, the Vatican's chief Ecumenical Officer.

Last week's [ThTh #10](#) focused on one of Edward Cassidy's three major theological objections to the text of JDDJ, viz., it fails to mention human “cooperation with grace” when describing God's justification of sinners. Today's ThTh #11 and next week's #12 look at the other two items he didn't like in JDDJ. One was the formula “at the same time righteous and sinner” which he calls “not acceptable.” We'll treat that next week. The other was the “difficulty” of speaking of justification “as criterion for the life and practice of the Church.” For Lutherans it has been THE criterion for such assessments. Cassidy wants it integrated

“into the fundamental criterion of the ‘rule of faith,’” namely, the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas “rooted in the living Church and its sacramental life.”

The Criterion Question

Let’s pick up from last week’s concluding paragraph: For the Augsburg Confessors justification by faith alone [JBFA] was not a doctrine strictly speaking, but a hermeneutic, a recommended way, for doing all preaching and teaching. The Augsburgers speak fundamentally of only one doctrine, that is the Gospel itself. “Doctrina evangelii” is their Latin technical term, “the doctrine [singular] of the Gospel.” JBFA, they claim, is the Gospel’s own criterion for how to preach and teach that one Gospel so that it comes across as the radical good news it really is.

It sounds as though Cassidy has a manifold notion of “doctrine” in mind when he make his clarification here. For him JBFA is one doctrine alongside other important doctrines. Consequently it appears as though JDDJ in reflecting the Lutheran hype for justification as criterion says too much. It is making JBFA the most important doctrine of all. But that can’t be right, can it? If so, what about the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines, hammered out in centuries of hard debate in the era of the early church? Don’t they have equal, even prior, claim to being “the fundamental criterion of the ‘rule of faith’?” Seems to make sense. But only if you think of JBFA “just” as a doctrine, even granting it to be a (or even THE) “fundamental” doctrine.

During my year as guest prof in Australia (1994) I heard stories about the German confessional theologian, Hermann Sasse, who had come downunder after World War II and taught for years at the same seminary where I now was. One told of a Kaffeeklatsch in the faculty lounge where colleagues were bantering the question: How often in your ministry have you actually preached on the

doctrine of JBFA? Most allowed as how they hadn't done it enough. Sasse generated gasps by asserting that he had never ever preached that doctrine in a sermon. And why not? Because it is the criterion, he said, for preaching on whatever theme(s) a Biblical text presents. You measure how "good" your sermon was by asking how the Good News you offered your hearers was the sort that renders sinners righteous before God when they trust it. Even if you should mention the words JBFA, you don't seek to have your hearers "believe" the doctrine of justification by faith, but to "be" justified by faith in Christ.

Granted, there are Lutherans today who don't know or practice what Sasse said. Pity. So Cassidy is not alone in his (mis)reading of JBFA as criterion. It could also be that the Lutherans on the dialogue team—for whatever reasons—weren't all that clear on this one themselves. More than one Lutheran theologian I know, unhappy with the final text of JDDJ, pointed to its fuzziness here. Lutherans on the dialogue team—at least the unfuzzy ones—could have picked up in advance on Cassidy's concern, also registered by earlier Roman respondents, for the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas of the ancient "rule of faith." Don't they have ancient and "fundamental" place when we're talking about criteria? Yes, but how do you articulate that?

Here's my suggestion. The ancient church dogmas are fundamental to the faith, but not intended as things to be believed about God and about Christ. They are not "credenda," things that must be believed. Rather they are "praedicanda," things that must be in preaching if that preaching is to be Gospel. One of Sasse's earlier colleagues at the German University of Erlangen, Werner Elert (my own teacher for one semester there), called the church's dogma the "Sollgehalt des Kerygmas," i.e., what's "got to" be in preaching, if it's to be "Christian" preaching. The Trinitarian and Christological dogmas are the ancient church's

specs for how God must be talked about and how Christ must be articulated, in order that God-talk and Christ-talk both come across as “Good News” that sinners can trust.

A few weeks ago in ThTh I mentioned the “whiz-kid” class of 1952 from Concordia Seminary. One of those worthies, whom I probably shouldn’t identify, never tired of reminding us that JBFA was (ahem!) a “bullshit detector.” Once you grasped JBFA, he claimed, you could readily detect when someone was adding something “smelly” to the Gospel, putting something extra into the package whereby sinners get justified before God. The actual Gospel “plus this, or plus that,” is what Paul is fighting in many of his epistles. The Augsburgers saw themselves in a similar situation, signalled by the scholastic rhetoric of “faith plus reward for works.” Their JBFA detector immediately started beeping when it sniffed this “other” Gospel.

It’s not just past heretics or rank outsiders who propose “Gospel-plussing.” Today’s church too is full of such proposals, each of which recommends an addendum to bring us to a “fulness” not yet, not quite, granted in JBFA. The format is: Gospel-plus this Spirit-experience, Gospel-plus this liturgical practice, Gospel-plus this rigorous (or libertine) lifestyle, Gospel-plus this form of church governance, etc. It is the “A” of the JBFA detector that picks up the BS signal. Does faith in Christ and that faith alone justify sinners, or are there add-ons? JBFA detects the add-ons.

The hassle at Augsburg 1530 was not about “grace alone.” Both parties subscribed to that formula—though grace meant something different for each. But it was on the “sola fide” (faith alone) that the Augsburgers riled their critics. And the language of the Roman Confutation of the Augsburg Confession that followed immediately after the AC was presented makes that perfectly clear. More than once the Confutators level the charge: “their

[sc. the Augsburgers] ascription of justification to faith alone is diametrically opposite the truth of the Gospel, by which works are not excluded." The Council of Trent 20-plus years later repeats the charge and adds an anathema to it.

Is this clear either-or-either faith alone or faith plus something—still the one coming from Cassidy? A respondent to last week's ThTh wondered whether Cassidy's claim, "eternal life [is] one and the same time, grace and the reward given by God for good works and merits," might be urging us to distinguish, but not separate, justification and sanctification—and that's surely OK. Maybe so, but will Cassidy's claim pass the JBFA detector?

Helpful for me in my first years teaching at Valparaiso University for getting a better handle on JBFA was Robert Schultz's work of that time, the late 1950s, on the term justification in 16th century jurisprudence and theology. At root it was understood literally: to make justice, to do the right thing. When you talked about justifying a convicted criminal, you were describing the process whereby he received justice, his due reward. If his was a capital crime, his justification was his execution.

So when the Augsburg confessors—all of them laity, most of them leaders in the politics and law of their lands—talk about the justification of sinners, they are thinking of the execution, the rightful death, of sinners. When they then talk about JBFA, they envisioned a sinner undergoing execution "by faith alone." And what, pray tell, could that mean? Read Romans 6 where St. Paul says the same thing: sinners joined to Christ in Baptism are being put to death. That's execution.

But it's an execution of sinners "with a twist." The twist comes from their faith-connection to the one with whom they are being

executed. In this justification process—because of that connection—the sinner dies and is restored to life as well. How can that be? The law, even God’s law, disallows anyone else being executed for my crime. So something more than God’s law is at work here. Of course, it’s law AND Gospel, recompense AND promise. In Christ’s “sweet-swap” with sinners, his “being sin for us,” our legal justification-execution is being carried out as he dies.

But here the law is caught in a bind, for the one being executed is simultaneously the second person of the Trinity . Although the law “must” carry out this execution, in doing so it rebels against the One who created it, its own Lord, the one here being executed. By executing Christ the law discredits itself. Thus Christ is indeed “the end of the law.” Good Friday is both law and the end of the law. Call it promise.

Christ dying in our place abrogates that self-same law that always accuses sinners. God raising him from the dead signals that law’s Lord confirms the abrogation. Thereby the second half of the sweet-swap comes true. Christ is vindicated at Easter, shown to be righteous after all for having befriended sinners. Identically righteous are those sinners who swap with him. Because God raised him from the sinner’s execution, Christ-trusters expect the same. Their grounds for such audacious faith? His offer, his promise that it is so, that promise “alone.” “Faith alone” is trusting that promise alone—with no add-ons. No add-ons needed; no add-ons allowed. That’s JBFA as criterion for God-talk, Christ-talk, justification-talk—in short, for everything preached and taught that claims to be Christian.

Next time, d.v., simultaneity.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

P.S. I'll be away from Email access from July 31 to August 15. The next two numbers of ThTh (12 & 13) are in the pipeline for delivery on their proper dates. Should you need to contact someone about ThTh before 15 Aug, do so with Robin Morgan, Crossings Web supervisor. She's at RobinJMorgan@Compuserve.com Cheers! EHS

Vatican “Clarifications” on the Catholic – Lutheran Joint Declaration on Justification

1. Like day and night. That's what the last two issues of Lutheran World Information (LWI), the fortnightly newsletter of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), were. LWI's issue of 23 June 1998 was all hype and hallelujah about the LWF council members unanimously approving the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)” with the Roman Catholic church. The moment of the event was even recorded: 10:37 a.m. on June 16. The council's action came after it heard that a wide majority of LWF's 124 member churches had said “yes” to the JDDJ. The churches that said “yes” have 54.7 million members, 95 percent of the Lutherans in LWF member churches. A photo shows LWF council members and staff singing “Now Thank We All Our God” after the vote. One headline said: “Passing

'Joint Declaration' is 'big day' for Lutherans." And it was.

2. But then comes the LWI issue of July 9—so sober, so somber. It reports on the Vatican's response to the JDDJ, a series of "yes, but's" over the signature of Cardinal Edward Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Even the date of Cassidy's statement was a bit of an "ouch." It was June 25, which just happens to be the anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession in 1530! But the big "ouch" is Cassidy's text, so serious in its "buts" that some of LWF leaders quoted in the July 9 issue are patently shaking their heads and (almost) wondering out loud where Cassidy has been all this time—even though he's been actively in the mix of Lutheran – Roman Catholic interaction for years. Of course, nobody says that in so many words. Ecumenical etiquette calls for more genteel language. But the hype and hallelujah of June 23 are gone. Captions in the July 9 issue are these: "Vatican's response to Joint Declaration to be carefully examined; High level of agreement achieved; No reason for disappointment or resignation." You don't have to be a rocket scientist to get the message.
3. What are Cassidy's caveats? His term is "clarifications," additional work needed to remove the "cloudiness" remaining in the JDDJ. He then offers "in order of importance, a list of points that constitute still an obstacle to agreement between the Catholic Church and the LWF on all the fundamental truths concerning justification."
 - A. "For Catholics...the formula 'at the same time righteous and sinner' [a notoriously Lutheran expression jointly affirmed in the JDDJ] is not acceptable." Even though the JDDJ claims that the

16th century anathemas—from both sides—on justification have now been laid to rest, Cassidy says: “it remains difficult to see how this doctrine on ‘simul justus et peccator’ [simultaneously righteous and sinner] is not touched by the anathemas of the Tridentine Decree [=Council of Trent, 1546-63] on original sin and justification.”

- B. “Another difficulty arises . . . where a clear difference appears in the importance . . . of justification as criterion for the life and practice of the Church.” For Lutherans justification by faith is THE criterion, whereas Catholics integrate it “into the fundamental criterion of the ‘rule of faith,’” namely, the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas “rooted in the living Church and its sacramental life.”
- C. The JDDJ soft-pedals, maybe even denies, humanity’s “cooperation with grace” in the event of justification. The document’s language of “merely passive reception . . . independent of human cooperation” needs clarification in order to move toward “consensus with the Catholic doctrine.” And what is that consensus? “That eternal life is, at one and the same time, grace and the reward given by God for good works and merits.”
- D. The sacrament of penance in connection to justification is “not sufficiently noted” in JDDJ.
- E. Although “the level of agreement is high,” the “paragraphs [in JDDJ] explaining Catholic doctrine” are incomplete. Cassidy’s “remarks are intended as a more precise explanation of the teaching of the Catholic Church” on these points.
- F. His final concern is that the two signatories of JDDJ, the LWF and the Catholic Church, are

dissimilar entities, one a federation of churches and the other THE Catholic Church. Cassidy praises the “great effort made by the LWF in order to arrive, through consultation of the Synods, at a ‘magnus consensus,’ and so to give a true ecclesial value to its signature.” Yet “there remains, however, the question of the real authority of such a synodal consensus, today and also tomorrow, in the life and doctrine of the Lutheran community.”

4. You can see why the euphoria has died down at LWF headquarters in Geneva. Cassidy’s first three points come very close to being Augsburg Confession time all over again. As a pre-novice in ecumenical politics, and even more benighted about what the Vatican is up to, I have no idea what’s going on here on that turf. I’ve seen and heard Cassidy “live” once or twice and was pleased that he was Rome’s chief ecumenical officer. [After all, anyone named Edward can’t be all bad!]
5. Cassidy surely knows the knee-jerk reaction Lutherans will have to his words about “grace plus reward.” So what’s he doing here? The same goes for his critique of “righteous and sinner at the same time,” words “jointly” approved by the Roman partners who worked on the document. If JDDJ wants to move beyond the anathemas of the 16th century, why does he cite the Council of Trent so liberally to clarify the document’s “cloudy” text? If the Roman participants in the long process that produced JDDJ left important “paragraphs explaining Catholic doctrine” incomplete, why didn’t someone from the front office say so sooner, or get “better” Catholics to represent the doctrine? Other voices in the last LWI ask why this official Vatican response came from Cassidy, Rome’s ecumenical officer, and not from Ratzinger, the chief of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, or from

John Paul II himself. Maybe someday we'll know. What we do have is Cassidy's text and that prompts the thoughts that follow.

6. "Eternal life is, at one and the same time, grace and the reward given by God for good works and merits." That's what the Augsburg Confessors were protesting against. For them God's grace and the language of merits and rewards were two languages that couldn't be merged. Luther called them two differing grammars, each with its own logic that negated the logic of the other. The language of works, merit, reward is easily understood: you do something good, you deserve something good in return. It's the picture of the classic scales of justice. Put something good into the dish on one side, and something equally good in return must be placed in the other dish to bring about equitable balance. Put something bad into one side and you merit "bad" in the other side of the balance. Makes sense.
7. But God's grace, claimed the Augsburgers, doesn't fit into that system. 'Fact is, it contradicts that system. The whole scripture talks about grace—"chesed" in Hebrew, and "charis" in Greek—as something else, both "good" and "new" [i.e., Good News] when compared to the debit-credit balance scales of merits and rewards. Classic is St. Paul (but not only he) in putting it this way: "In Christ God was reconciling the world unto himself, not counting our trespasses against us [i.e., not simply weighing us on the divine scales], but making Christ (who had no sin of his own) to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." The mind-blowing "grace" of this transaction is that our sin gets put into Christ's own scales and he takes the deadly consequences that come in the other dish, while his righteousness gets put into our dish along with all the goodies that God bestows on his side of the scales for anyone so righteous.

8. Isn't Cassidy still working with a scholastic notion of grace? Is it any more Biblical than it was in the 16th century? In my first year as a seminarian, St. Louis 1950, Jaroslav Pelikan took us novices through the Augsburg Confession clarifying for us the different notions of grace in conflict then. In scholastic theology, he said, "Grace is a metaphysical medicine channelled through the sacraments of the church for healing the defective state of sinners. When sinners appropriate it, healing begins, and for their good work of appropriating grace more grace is merited."
9. For the confessors the term had more explicitly Biblical roots. Grace was God's favor toward sinners, a personal, relational reality. In the Augsburg tradition terms such as "forgiveness of sins" or "God's mercy" are synonyms for grace. Scholasticism tended to reify grace, view it as a "thing," to be sure a marvelous divine thing, replete with spiritual healing energy, but still a thing. And as a thing, a commodity replete with spiritual value, you can conduct transactions with grace. The sale of indulgences in the reformers' day was no accident. It was a logical deduction from the scholastic idea of grace.
10. For the Augsburgers linking grace and reward was merging law and gospel, God's two opposite ways of dealing with sinners. Of course, you can utter the two words together and assert their compatibility, just as you can say "square circle." But there is no reality that corresponds to the words. For eternal life it's an either/or. Either God counts trespasses (and good works too) and measures out just deserts, or God was in Christ upsetting the just deserts scales. There's no third option.
11. Is Cassidy pushing Lutheran – Catholic dialogue back to square one? Some of us might want to throw up our hands and say "Who needs this?" Can it be said that evidently it

is we Lutherans who need it, since the Lord of the church has now given it to us.

12. More next time, d.v., on Cassidy's other two caveats: the doctrine of justification as a theological criterion and Christians as simultaneously righteous and sinners. These are both of a piece with the Augsburg foundations discussed above. For the Augsburgers justification by faith alone [JBFA] was not a doctrine strictly speaking, but a hermeneutic, a recommended way for doing all preaching and teaching. Augsburg speaks fundamentally of only one doctrine, the Gospel itself. JBFA, they say, is the Gospel's own criterion for how to preach the Gospel. The simultaneity issue brings the term "sin" in for direct consideration. Here too Cassidy pushes us back to square one. The reality of human sinfulness and the way God justifies sinners were just two sides of THE issue at Augsburg. More about that next time. And after that back to Seminex stuff.

Peace & Joy!
Ed Schroeder

Seminex Remembered—Seminex's own Theology

Both friends and foes—then and still now—talk about “the theology of Seminex.” Just what was that? It's not easy to specify—even for us Seminexers. Critics from within the Missouri Synod painted our theology with the “liberal” brush. For some that meant “Bible-doubters.” I.e., we didn't believe the six-day

creation that the Bible teaches; we were skeptics about Jonah's fishing trip. For others it was a "theology of rebellion against church authority." The acting president who replaced John Tietjen saw it this way. "The only way to respond to rebellion is to crush it," he said.

But since no one of us profs was ever granted the benefit (sic!) of a heresy trial before Seminex happened, "our theology" was never articulated before any tribunal whose proceedings you could then refer to. Even though the New Orleans convention (1973) affirmed by a 60/40 vote that our theology was "not to be tolerated in the Church of God, much less excused or defended," just what made it so frightful was always fuzzy among our critics. Serious searchers had a tough time trying to pinpoint our specific heresy. On the field of world Lutheranism, "everybody" knew that the Seminex crowd was still clearly at the conservative end of the Lutheran spectrum. They knew that "Missouri" leopards don't change their spots. Or if they ever do, it's not very much.

In 1972, the year before the New Orleans convention, the Concordia Seminary "faculty majority" was asked by Missouri's regional district presidents to tell the church what our theology really was. We did that with "An Affirmation in Two Parts: Faithful to our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord." Part I was a "Joint Statement and Discussion of Issues" signed by all 45 of us, and Part II a collection of "Personal Confessions" from each of us. That was the closest thing to a statement of what later could be called the "theology of Seminex." But the hopes of these district presidents for the peace-making and trust-building that this would bring in the controversy were dashed by Missouri's President Preus finessing it to irrelevance for the policy he was pursuing. Both parts are still very good stuff, I think, though I am not unbiased since I was one of the two colleagues assigned the job of composing the joint

statement.

One product from the department of systematic theology just before Seminex was a "Reader in Law-Gospel Reconstructionist Theology." Its title: "The Promising Tradition." The key terms in those phrases signalled the publication's context and its center. One of our accusers had popularized the epithet "Gospel-reductionism" to label what he said was our heresy. For him that meant we acknowledged the authority of anything that was "Gospel" within the scriptures, but everything else in the Bible was fair game for historical-critical hanky-panky. The title we gave to our Reader (my concoction) sought to take our critic's term and re-vision it with the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. That meant a law-gospel hermeneutic for reconstructing our "Missouri" theology, and the Gospel's own promise as the center of it all.

This reader was used for only a term or two at Concordia before the explosion came, and then became our textbook, of sorts, for systematic theology at Seminex. In subsequent editions it grew to include 30 essays from 8 authors.

But for the general public—both churchy and secular—it was the teaching done by the pros in the Biblical fields that had gotten us into trouble in the Missouri Synod, and that later was the hallmark for the theology of Seminex. The exegetes (teachers doing "exegesis" = interpreting the Bible) not the systematicians (we who were teaching doctrine, ethics, the Lutheran confessions) were the heroes (or villains, depending on your point of view) of Seminex's theology. That's not untrue, but not the whole truth. Already at Concordia, and constantly at Seminex, conversations (debates?) ensued about the "law-Gospel" hermeneutic being done in systematics and the "historical-critical method" in Biblical studies. At least once NT scholar Ed Krentz and I put together a semester-long seminar for Seminex

students with the short-hand title: HCM and LGH (Historical-Critical Method and Law-Gospel Hermeneutics).

So I think the “theology of Seminex” was an ellipse with two centers—HCM and LGH. In my judgment we never succeeded to get them completely to coincide.

For more than a generation of students back at Concordia Seminary, “systematics” had had a bad press among the illuminati. By synodical tradition “dogmatics” (doctrine) was on the throne, and the task of Bible teachers was to supply the prooftexts to support what the doctrinal manuals taught. But after World War II many students disdained both that kind of dogmatics and that kind of exegesis. It was really “new” in my student years at Concordia (1950-55) when new professor Martin Scharlemann introduced—very very gently—historical-critical methodology in his NT teaching at the sem. He eventually caught flak for it and in a subsequent convention of the synod “apologized” for the turmoil he had brought. But he never really changed his HCM style of teaching, and shaped a generation of graduates with that sort of exegesis. The whiz-kids among his students went off to Harvard (and other schools) for graduate studies and in a few years were his colleagues in exegesis back at “the” sem.

Understandably Martin’s “new look” for Biblical exegesis discombobulated his own colleagues in the Biblical department, but he was a gifted teacher and by the time his own “brightest and best” came back from grad school to join the faculty, HCM was standard procedure in the department. The irony (or is it mystery?) that no one can satisfactorily explain is that Martin later became the most vocal critic of the Biblical work done by these former students as the battle for the seminary developed. He identified himself with the other four of our colleagues in the “faculty minority,” and wound up as the acting seminary

president when Tietjen was finally suspended.

How LGH got to the seminary I have described in [ThTh #7 \(July 2\)](#). The way Bob Bertram articulated it within the department of Systematic Theology even before Seminex (13 November 1968) was this way:

*"What is most 'systematic' about systematic theology is, not merely that it arranges its material – say, the biblical data – in this or that orderly way, (that much is true of all the theological disciplines) but rather that it consciously and explicitly insists on asking 'Why.' It asks for The Sufficient Reason, The Adequate Basis, The *Fons*, never resting until it has found 'Reason Enough.' Why, for what reason finally, is this or that Christian claim made? By saying that the systematician *asks* for the 'why,' I am not suggesting that he does not know what it is. On the contrary, because he does know, at least in principle, what that sufficient reason is, his asking is meant chiefly to ask it into clarity, into the full prominence it deserves. He cannot even settle for the explanation, 'Why, because Scripture says so.' He still persists and asks again, 'And why, in turn, does Scripture say so?' His job is done only when he has traced the reason back to The Source: namely, God's reconciling the world unto himself in Christ Jesus – in other words, the gospel. The systematician's task is to 'necessitate' Christ." His task is properly to distinguish law from promise. But this distinguishing is not an end in itself. Law and promise need distinguishing so that they can be restored to the original *relationship* in which they already operate within scripture. The trouble is that men come to that biblical law-promise relationship prejudiced by a perennial *Vorverstaendnis (opinio legis)*, and thus recombine law and promise unbiblically, with the resultant loss of both, law and promise. The systematician disentangles this mis-meshing, does his distinguishing, so that he can restore law*

and promise to their original biblical – i.e., evangelical – order.”

Not all (not even most of) our systematics colleagues agreed with that back in 1968 and there was no such consensus in systematics as there was in exegesis that we were all doing our work with a common focus. So it was no wonder that half of the systematics department (4 profs) joined Martin (the only one from the exegesis department) to become the “faculty minority,” the five who were the core for the new Concordia faculty after the 45 of us were dismissed and began our work at Seminex.

The consequences of these two focal points for the ellipse of Seminex’s theology is a topic I’ll try to address next time.

Peace & Joy!
Ed Schroeder

Seminex Remembered—Strange and Wonderful

Warren Rubel, friend of Seminex, says he learned this from his wife on their (first?) wedding anniversary: “Warren, ours has been a strange and wonderful relationship. You are strange and I am wonderful.”

Much about Seminex, like the Rubel marriage, was strange and wonderful—often both at the same time. First of all, it was strange for us to be a seminary without a “mother” church, a supporting denomination. How do you do that? Not just how to pay

the bills, but where do the graduates go?

Early on supporters appeared, eventually calling themselves the Evangelical Lutherans in Mission (ELIM). These were Missouri Synod parishes and individuals who claimed that Seminex was still “their” seminary, even though now set adrift by those in power in the synod. Throughout our 10 years of existence—and of raising our own funds—these ELIMites were the largest single source for meeting our one million-plus annual operating budget. Only later did our “denomination” (actually a non-denomination) come along, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). Even though they gladly partnered with us, their modest numbers required Seminex to continue fending for its own funds and finding placements for its graduates. Though initially strange for us, this became wonder-ful, the wonder being that it worked—year after year for a decade!

Another example: The first classes at Seminex were held on February 20, 1974 in classrooms at Eden (UCC) Seminary and St. Louis (Jesuit) University. Strange and wonderful is that both of those schools once were “enemies” of the Lutheran seminary in St. Louis. Eden was originally the school of the “Evangelical and Reformed” German immigrants, those on the other side of the fence from us Missouri Lutherans and our feisty confessionalism. And when the Congregationalists joined the “E&R” to become the United Church of Christ, their spot out in liberal left field put them even farther beyond the pale of our orthodoxy. Only for athletic duels did Eden and Concordia sometimes get together in olden days—and everybody knew that it was the “true” faith being slugged out on the playing field.

Hospitality from the Jesuits was even more strange and wonderful. The Society of Jesus came into existence after the Reformation in the 16th century to undo what the Reformation had done to the seamless cloak of the Roman Church. But here in St.

Louis 4 centuries later the Jesuits were sheltering us Seminex Lutherans after our own Missouri Synod had found us unseemly for its own seamless robe and sent us on our way “to seek our fellowship elsewhere,” as they said then. But fellowship with the Jesuits? Strange and wonderful!

Not all of us Seminexers—we were after all “Missouri”—were very ecumenical as we entered this exilic world. We had to learn fast. Complete strangers kept turning up to offer help, thus becoming wonderful friends. And not just other Christians. We had to swallow hard and think fast as Jewish supporters showed up with gifts to offer, such as housing for displaced students and faculty. We benefitted from widespread and mostly positive media coverage, not just here in our hometown, but in the church and secular press throughout the land, and even overseas. We didn’t really fit the hero’s mold, though often we were cast as such.

Evidence of the international spread of the Seminex story we learned a year or two later, as news came back to us of an Aoyama Seminex in Tokyo (Methodist) and a Korean Seminex (Presbyterian) in Seoul, both of them seminaries recently exiled who took our name as their own after power purges in their own contexts. A contingent of St. Louis Seminex faculty and students eventually made a pilgrimage to these Seminexes of Asia. You can imagine the encounters—well, maybe you can’t! Call it strange and wonderful. One teacher from Korean Seminex, Steven Moon, later on did an intermester as guest prof with us in St. Louis. He was wonderful, though I think he found us a bit strange. We seemed so tame. Korean Seminex was really radical. Both students and faculty had this common denominator: all had served prison terms before they got to the seminary. They had done their confessing vis-a-vis the “Caesars” of Korea in the 70s, and Caesar made them pay for it. Our losses, such as they were, didn’t quite compare.

The Seminex story told by the media, even the church media, was regularly disappointing. Conservative vs. liberal Bible interpretation, due process, power politics, personality clashes, academic freedom—these were their regular angles for interpreting us to the public. Granted these elements were in the mix. Granted general readers and viewers could comprehend stories focused on such issues. Granted also that church squabbles are complex affairs. But only rarely did the reporters get to the Gospel issue (better the “law and gospel” issue) beneath the surface diagnoses. Not all of us in Seminex caught on very fast either as to what our story really was, though some saw it sooner than others.

One such early “seer” was Doc [Richard R.] Caemmerer. Unforgettable is his chapel homily early in our history on the text of Hebrews 10: 13ff. We Seminexers are in exile, quoth he, not from the Missouri Synod to which we might be hoping someday to return —though that is what most (all?) of us thought at first. No, said Doc, that would be “looking back, to that land from which they had gone out,” which the O.T. patriarchs and matriarchs precisely did NOT do. Not so the Hebrews image of exile. These ancient believers saw exile as separation from a homeland that they had never yet seen, one up ahead where they had never yet been.

Ours too, Doc proclaimed, is a homeland up ahead, a new place where high priest Jesus is leading his entourage. And it’s not just for us; this Gospel notion of exile applies to the entire Christian church. To be bruised and battered by folks thought to be companions on the way, as the Hebrews are in the text, is par for the course. All the more reason to look to the author and finisher of our faith—especially when facing burnout—to get refueled and re-encouraged, and to press on with the journey. Like those ancient folks of faith, we too don’t know where the future will take us, but we do know Who is taking us there. That

is enough, as the Augsburg Confession says: satis est.

More than once our community's internal discussions and debates (I hesitate to say "fights") were on that topic: If exile is following our High Priest toward an unknown homeland up ahead, what's our calling now, as we face a specific sticky wicket, to stay on the path? By my count there were four such extra-sticky wickets, crunch debates, during our ten year existence in St. Louis. Since I was on the "losing" side when each of these four came up for a vote, you will understand that most Seminex colleagues—faculty, students, staff, & board members—saw them differently.

According to my lights these four crunch times were:

1. when we changed our name,
2. when we changed our internal governance structure,
3. when we "chose" seven colleagues for non-reappointment,
4. when we opted to close down in St. Louis and "deploy" to three other Lutheran seminaries as the ELCA merger was coming over the horizon.

It seemed to me that Doc Caemmerer's early "aha" about our exile was central in each of these, and that in these 4 decisions we departed from that image of our calling. Methinks we signalled our exhaustion (and Seminex was wearying), not our excitement (some things were just too strange and not wonderful at all), and hardly any Melchizedekian chutzpah (ala Hebrews) to "keep on truckin'" toward a future we could not clearly see. But Doc had shown us—according to the Scriptures—that we did not need to have it blueprinted for us in advance. Yet the majority vote went otherwise.

More about this next time.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

P.S. Another item strange and wonderful. [ThTh #6 \(June 25, '98\)](#) did somehow get close to the head office of today's LCMS. So close that an assistant to the synodical president sent off an Email the next day to his "Cyberbrethren" to disconnect any linkage between Seminex 1974 and Augsburg 1530. Our farewell march from the Concordia Seminary campus, he said, was a publicity stunt. Augsburg was about serious confessing.

Robert C Schultz's response to the Gay/Lesbian Ordination Resolution

ThTheologians,

ThTh this week comes from Robert C Schultz. It's not directly linked to my Seminex narrative, although Bob himself indirectly is. Bob's a retired ELCA pastor living in Seattle. He's contributed before to our Sabbatheology series. Like me he has Missouri Synod roots. We've been friends since seminary days in St. Louis in the early 50s. His seminary class ('52) was loaded with hotshots. Besides Bob there was Richard Koenig, Martin Marty, Ralph Zorn, Ken Mahler, Ed Krentz, Ken Kraemer, Don Meyer, Bob Clausen [Bibfeldt co-conspirator!], Warren Rubel and others I can't remember since they were, after all, three years "ahead" of me (class of '55).

Bob was indirectly linked to Seminex, I say, though some may dispute that. He may even dispute it; I've never asked him. That all depends on what one thinks Seminex really was. My

take puts Bob in a “godfather” role. After sem graduation he went to Erlangen Univ. in Germany—on Jaroslav Pelikan’s recommendation—and there learned how to do “law and Gospel theology without the verbal inspiration hangup.” Did his doctorate on the role of the “L&G;” axiom in Lutheran theological history, came back into the LCMS a couple years later and started the “L&G;” reform movement within the LC – MS as a prof at Valparaiso University (VU). That reform movement is itself worth an essay or two, maybe even a book someday.

Suffice it to say for now that VU in the late fifties was where “L&G;” theology was happening. Bob Bertram was already on the scene there, I joined a bit later. By presidential edict a department of “theology” replaced “religion,” and a new undergraduate curriculum came to be. The three of us were the junta (others say cabal) that put the pieces together. Nowadays it’s called “Crossings.”

The lingo of “L&G;” was old hat in the LCMS. Missouri’s founding father Walther had made it the fundamental hermeneutic for theology and practice in his seminary teaching. In later Missouri, however, it became a “doctrine” that was then added to the list of other “true” doctrines—to be believed and taught. Schultz jarred LCMSers—within his own English District, and from that base elsewhere in Missouri—by restoring “L&G;” as a hermeneutic, and then putting it into practice vis-a-vis the manifold confusions of L&G; in our denomination. He’s been doing it ever since, subsequently in the LCA from several venues, and still in retirement from Seattle as you’ll see below.

In the 60s and early 70s that tradition, i.e., the distinction between law and gospel is a hermeneutic, not a doctrine, eventually gained prominence at Concordia Seminary, not only with Bertram’s and my appearance on the seminary scene, but also through the increasing flow of VU graduates who came to Concordia as sem students. In the year that Seminex happened there were more “Valpo” students in the seminary student body than there had ever been before, many in student leadership positions. They were articulate “L&G;” theologians in the student deliberations that lead to the

moratorium, that led to..., that led to ..., that eventuated in Seminex.

Schultz doesn't know that I'm doing this preface to his piece. Depending on whether or not he's had breakfast, he may not be amused when he sees it. But willy-nilly he's a piece of Seminex's history. When I get back (next week, d.v.) to some more Seminex memoirs, I hope to touch on the L&G; hermeneutic in the mix there.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

From: Robert C. Schultz

DATE: 7/1/98

Re Thursday Theology #5

This is a response to [Thursday Theology #5](#). Below is my commentary.

Although not a Crossings member, I appreciate receiving the materials posted on the Web. I hope that it is not inappropriate for me to respond to those materials.

The following is not intended to disagree with any specific content of Jim Squire's response but rather to build on his remarks by suggesting the possibility that the [Central States Synod Assembly's] resolution itself makes assumptions and creates a context which must be analyzed before one can respond to it. I understand that this context and these assumptions have wider currency and acceptance in the ELCA.

Specifically, the resolution itself confuses law and gospel. This confusion if unanalyzed seems to require a gospel response. Squire attempts such a response and then attempts to

differentiate law and gospel.

1 Squire's response correctly identifies the theological substance of the issue. The issue derives from our understanding of the relationship of the actions that we experience as those of the Deus absconditus to those which we experience as the actions of the Deus revelatus.

1.1 The reference to the bondage of the will is fruitful. It identifies the terrible reality that all of us without distinction of race, sex, gender, et al confront when we are held accountable for being the kind of people we did not choose to be. The generic condition which none of us has chosen is that of being a sinner under bondage to sin, death, the law of God, and the wrath of God. The confrontation with this reality of accountability without choice is the cauldron in which Lutheran theology is born in every generation.

1.2 The resolution attempts to defuse the terrible reality by defining the actions of the Deus absconditus as evidences or revelations of God's grace for a narrowly defined group of people, those with a preference for homosexual genital satisfaction and the perceived need to act out this preference.

1.3 In whatever way we are fated to express our sinfulness, we may or may not have a choice of the form in which we sin but never a choice about the reality of being sinners.

1.4 Squire properly relegates the church's screening of candidates for ordination as a revelation of the law, an activity of the Deus absconditus.

2 However, the resolution is not formulated in terms of the bondage of the will but rather in terms of baptism, the ministry, and the standards of ordination.

2.1 It is therefore necessary to engage more directly the theological face which the resolution presents. These theses

are an attempt to expand on the basis of Squire's remarks by engaging in such a more direct engagement with the resolution as it presents itself.

2.2 The distinction between law and gospel directly relevant to this discussion is expressed in the principle that any generic definition of being a Christian must be true of all Christians at all time.

3 The resolution's assumption that ministry is a function of baptism confuses law and gospel by defining what it is to be a Christian in a way that is not true of all Christians at all times.

3.1 There is indeed a ministry of the baptized which all the baptized share and to which we are called by God.

3.2 Baptism changes nothing about the person who is baptized except the relationship to the God who works our salvation in Jesus the Christ and in the Holy Spirit. All else, the fate of the baptized in this world, including but not limited to their genetic structures and the experiences which existence will bring to them, are unchanged by baptism until after our baptism into Christ's death is fully experienced in our own death.

3.3 The ministry or vocation of the baptized does not include the ordained ministry which is based on the delegation of public leadership functions.

3.4 All of the baptized may participate in such delegation. This is the truth of the assumption.

3.5 The error of the assumption lies in assuming that all the baptized are by reason of their baptism eligible to receive such delegation without meeting other requirements.

3.5.1 Standards for ordination and continuance in the ordained ministry are the function of an ecclesial organization rather than of the church.

3.5.2 The ecclesial organization must make a decision about each individual candidate for ordination.

3.5.3 The ecclesial organization may make decisions about individuals by identifying disqualifying characteristics which eliminate a candidate from further consideration.

3.5.4 These disqualifying characteristics are properly included in the standards provided for the guidance of those acting on behalf of the ecclesial organization.

3.5.4.1 The ELCA, its synods, and congregations are interdependent entities.

3.5.4.2 Synods are created by the ELCA in order to fulfill certain functions which can be better fulfilled at this level.

3.5.4.3 Synods ordain and maintain rosters on behalf of the ELCA on the basis of ELCA policies.

3.5.4.4 Therefore, no synod may establish its own policies or choose which policies to follow or not follow.

3.5.4.5 The ULCA was characterized by synodically defined ministry rather than a national ministry. This meant that pastors who became eligible for ministry in one synod were not thereby eligible for ministry in any other synod. The LCA and the ELCA established a national ministry.

3.5.5 No standard created by the ecclesial organization for the ordained ministry is beyond question.

3.5.5.1 For example, it is a modern phenomenon that the standards seek to exclude persons with certain kinds of mental illness and/or a propensity for manipulative behavior from the candidates for ordination.

3.5.5.2 At other times, the church has in the past and may again consider such characteristics to be acceptable or even desirable in candidates for ordination.

3.5.5.3 In the ELCA, standards are defined at the level of the ELCA assembly and administered locally by the synod.

3.5.5.4 The resolution under discussion proposing an independent action of the Central States Synod in defining standards for ministry denies this interdependent

relationship and is therefore not valid in the context of the governing documents of the ELCA and its Model Constitution for Synods.

3.5.6 Determining this constitutional invalidity does not respond to the theological issues raised by the resolution.

3.5.7 Standards may be based on any factor, whether or not it is referred to in the Bible, that actually affects the pastor's functioning in a given community.

3.5.8 Different ecclesial organizations may have differing standards for ordination and continuation in ministry.

3.5.8.1 Differing standards for ordination and continuation in ministry must be reflected at the organizational level.

3.5.9 The definition and administration of standards for ordination and retention in ministry should not be confused with the office of the keys.

3.6 When the ecclesial organization creates, interprets, and applies standards for ordination and/or for continuance in the ordained ministry, its decisions are based on considerations of rational prudence. Thus the ecclesial organization in one generation ordains persons who would not have been ordained in another generation.

3.6.1 For example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the ecclesial organization engaged in extensive conversation about the level of regeneration which candidates were required to demonstrate before ordination.

3.6.2 For example, the ecclesial organization has introduced standards through which it seeks to exclude persons with low levels of mental health and with high levels of psychopathology such as manipulative behavior.

3.6.3 For example, the ULCA in the 1960's permitted ordination and continuance of ministry to persons who had been divorced on condition that they demonstrate repentance and amendment of life.

3.6.4 For example, the ALC and the LCA in the 1970's began to ordain women.

3.7 The prudential element in the ecclesial organization's decision is based on various realities which each organization and each generation is responsible to evaluate.

3.7.1 One reality is a decision as to whether the ordained minister will be able to function effectively as the ecclesial organization's representative in the community.

3.7.2 Another reality is a candidate's fitness to represent the ecclesial organization to the congregation.

3.7.3 Another reality is the candidate's fitness to represent the congregation in the community.

3.7.4 Another reality is the candidate's fitness to represent the congregation in relationships with its members.

3.7.5 Another reality is the willingness of the baptized to delegate leadership to pastors meeting the standards defined by the ecclesial organization.

3.8 In ecclesial organizations whose governing documents specify that all ordained ministers meeting the ecclesial organization's requirements are eligible for call and that all congregations call only such pastors, the redefinition of those standards constitutes a de facto revision of the governing documents even though the standards are not explicitly defined in the governing documents.

3.9 Many conditions which have their source in the reality of creation or experience are properly defined by the ecclesial organization as defining eligibility and ineligibility for the delegation of leadership functions through ordination to

ministry (standards).

3.9.1 For example, assuming that the ecclesial organization requires a certain level of education as a standard for the ministry:

3.9.1.1 Many baptized are by reason of conditions of their creation or by experience unable to meet these educational standards.

3.9.1.2 Such baptized may but will often never become eligible for ordination. Inability to meet this standard does not in any way limit or infringe on their exercise of their baptismal vocation.

3.9.2 For example, assuming that the ecclesial organization requires a certain level of mental health or absence of psychopathology:

3.9.2.1 Many of the baptized are by reason of conditions of their creation or by experience unable to achieve that level of mental health.

3.9.2.2 Many of the baptized by reason of conditions of their creation or by experience demonstrate a level of psychopathology that prevents them from meeting the standards.

3.9.2.3 Such baptized may but will often never become eligible for ordination. Inability to meet this standard does not in any way limit or infringe on their exercise of their baptismal vocation.

3.9.3 For example, the ecclesial organization requires certain levels of maturity in Christian experience.

3.9.3.1 Persons suffering from addiction are required to overcome this behavior and to demonstrate success over some

period of time. Many of the baptized are unable to achieve such success.

3.9.3.2 Persons whose personal history contains a confused period of sexual behavior are required to demonstrate fidelity in heterosexual relationships and abstinence when their sexual preference is homosexual.

3.9.3.3 Such baptized may but will often never become eligible for ordination. Inability to meet this standard does not in any way limit or infringe on their exercise of their baptismal vocation.

3.10 Whatever standards for ordination the ecclesial organization establishes and applies, such standards represent the best judgment of the ecclesial organization at a given time and may be changed by the ecclesial organization.

3.10.1 The resolution properly suggests that the ecclesial organization may reconsider and change its standards.

3.10.2 The resolution errs in proposing that eligibility for ordination be reduced to baptism or that the ecclesial organization reduce its standards to those which all the baptized are able to meet.

3.10.3 The resolution errs in assuming that being welcome as a member includes being eligible for ordination.

3.10.4 The resolution errs in proposing a revision of the standards at only one level of the ecclesial organization.

3.11 The ecclesial organization's standards for ordination and continuation in the ordained ministry are valid in so far and only in so far as they reflect the willingness of the baptized to delegate the public functions of ministry to persons meeting those standards.

4 The resolution further confuses law and gospel by defining ordination as an ecclesial action that communicates the gospel. Ordination is assumed to include approval of personal and public behavior.

4.1 The resolution states this negatively by contrasting the ELCA's welcome of "gay and lesbian people as individuals created by God ... to participate fully in the life of congregations in the ELCA" with the simultaneous refusal to ordain practicing homosexuals: "This welcome has not been extended ... however, to gay and lesbian pastors who are living in committed relationships.

4.2 The ELCA's specific welcome to one group of people and the "reconciled in Christ" movement raises the question as to whether there are any people whom the ELCA does not welcome, does not wish to baptize, and whether there are any already baptized people whom God does not wish to reconcile to Himself in Christ.

4.2.1 Pastors and congregation councils do on occasion identify some persons who are not welcome.

4.2.2 The ELCA governing documents give congregations wide latitude in selectively refusing to accept already baptized persons for inclusion on the congregation's roll of the baptized.

4.2.3 The ELCA governing documents give congregations wide latitude in selectively removing members from the roll.

4.2.4 The ELCA governing documents do not distinguish criteria for refusing to accept or for excluding members from the roll of baptized, confirmed, and voting members.

4.2.5 The meaning of inclusion or exclusion on the roll of the baptized is radically different from the meaning of inclusion or exclusion on the roll of voting members. Except that inclusion on the roll of the baptized is prerequisite for inclusion on the roll of voting members, the rights, privileges, and functions of members on these rolls are not commensurate.

4.2.6 The ELCA governing documents are deficient in failing

to establish the difference between the roll of the baptized and the roll of those who are accepted as potential voting members as soon as they commune and make a contribution of record.

4.2.6.1 The Resolution not only mirrors but magnifies this deficiency by assuming continuity between eligibility for inclusion on the roll of the baptized and eligibility for ordination.

4.2.7 The underlying issue here is the question about whom the congregation exists to serve, i.e. to minister to. Four possibilities need to be examined which will be listed in order of their increasing potential for the confusion of law and gospel.

4.2.7.1 The congregation ministers to the community in which it exists and to all persons who are members of this community. God uses this ministry to create faith when and where God wills.

4.2.7.2 The congregation serves the baptized. Persons in the community who are not baptized are not eligible subjects of the church's ministry until they are baptized; until then, the congregation's ministry is defined in terms of efforts to bring such persons to baptism. This ministry is often called "evangelism."

4.2.7.3 The congregation serves only those baptized who are also members of the congregation. Persons in the community who are not baptized are not eligible subjects of the church's ministry until they either accept baptism within the congregation or, if already validly baptized, reaffirm their baptism by affiliating with the congregation.

4.2.7.4 The congregation receives into membership only those previously baptized who presently meet the congregation's standard for what it is to be a Christian. The ministry of the congregation is to screen the pool of candidates (including infants) for baptism and of those already baptized

to select those whom it considers worthy of membership. This is often called "church growth." Persons accepted but later identified as not meeting the congregation's standards are excluded from the roll of the baptized. This is often called "church discipline" and is not be confused with "discipleship."

4.2.8 The governing documents of the ELCA are examples of the fourth alternative. There is no differentiation of the spiritual requirements of retention on the roll of the baptized members of the congregation and voting members apart from the requirement of communing and making a contribution of record.

4.2.9 The ELCA governing documents and practice thus foster that confusion of law and gospel in which the Christian is defined in terms which do not characterize all Christians at all times.

4.2.9.1 This confusion underlies the position that we have a full ministry only to those baptized whose behavior we condone.

4.2.9.2 Specifically, this position assumes that if we are to have a full ministry to practicing homosexuals, we must first designate their condition as God's good gift, approve their behavior, and designate them as "reconciled in Christ" in ways that are not true of others whom God wills to save and who can not be considered "reconciled to God in Christ" because of behavior which we do not condone.

4.2.9.3 This is not the ministry of reconciliation described in 2 Corinthians 5.

4.2.10 This special status of practicing homosexuals is further affirmed and protected by excluding this behavior from the factors which the church properly examines in screening candidates for ordination.

5 When the theological rationale of arguments for the ordination of any special group or revision of the standards for ordained ministry is removed, the remaining questions are matters to be made prudentially on the basis of rational consideration of the effectiveness of ordained ministry. These considerations are not different from those relevant to any candidate for ministry.

5.1 The text of the resolution states:

*"We in the ELCA are living a contradiction in need of resolution. We proclaim welcome to gays and lesbians and we place homosexual pastors in a terrible bind. We need to talk and listen. We need a safe time and place where all voices can be heard. We need to trust that the Holy Spirit will lead us into practice and theology which is consistent with the Gospel we proclaim."Because the ministry of the baptized is central to the life of the church
Because the church is called to inclusiveness in its ministry
Because we believe that we must be faithful to God's calling
Because we desire open, honest, and safe dialog on this issue
..."*

This formulation does not seem to include all of its relevant assumptions.

5.2 The presence of unstated assumptions becomes clear when we attempt to substitute other categories of the baptized. For example, if we examine the level of mental function required for ordination and continuance on the roster from this perspective, we might have to say:

We in the ELCA are living a contradiction in need of resolution. We proclaim welcome to high school dropouts and

*illiterate persons and we place pastors who since their ordination have suffered strokes which have so diminished their intellectual capacities that they could no longer meet the educational requirements of the standards in a terrible bind. We need to talk and listen. We need a safe time and place where all voices can be heard. We need to trust that the Holy Spirit will lead us into practice and theology which is consistent with the Gospel we proclaim. Because the ministry of the baptized is central to the life of the church
Because the church is called to inclusiveness in its ministry
Because we believe that we must be faithful to God's calling
Because we desire open, honest, and safe dialog on this issue*

5.2.1 Mutatis mutandis the same argument might be made on behalf of many other groups whom we welcome into membership but who do not meet the requirements for ordination.

5.2.3 It is of course possible that the framers of the resolution are accurate in their perception of our willingness to receive certain groups of those for whom Christ has died into membership. Perhaps there are many groups of the baptized whom we neither desire to ordain nor to welcome into membership nor do we consider them appropriate subjects of ministry. Different congregations would make different choices: the aged, the poor, the mentally ill, recovering addicts, addicts and their families, addicts without their families, the developmentally disabled, released prisoners, homeless people, convicted sex offenders, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, those in prison, anyone who will consume more of our resources than they will ever be able to contribute.

Robert C. Schultz
July 1, 1998

Augsburg 1530/Seminex 1974

Today's the 468th anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. I thought you'd like to know. The year was 1530. Times were tough. Suleiman the Magnificent was outside the walls of Vienna with 600,000 Muslim troops, having just "scorch-earthed" his way through a big chunk of southeastern "Christian" Europe. That's why there are Muslims in the Balkans today. He seemed unstoppable. Yet he had to be stopped, and it was Charles V's job to do so. But his Holy Roman Empire of Germanic Nations was itself splitting in two as the Reformation movement grew.

So Charles called the conflicting sides to come to an Imperial Diet at Augsburg. His hope was for some sort of unity in the religious conflict—even if scissored and pasted—to get his Christian Empire unified so he could mobilize the troops to head for Vienna. Even under the best of efforts he'd have a hard time matching Suleiman's numbers. Well, the effort for religious unity at Augsburg failed. The Roman Catholic representatives never even got around to presenting their statement of faith. They were, after all, the establishment. "Everybody" knew what genuine catholicism was. So they saw their role at Augsburg to evaluate the confession of the other side and eventually compose a "confutation" to refute it. The emperor sided with the Roman critics. The reformers went home as losers. So what about Suleiman?

Just before the Diet Luther had proposed that there were two enemies outside the gates of Vienna: Suleiman and God. Luther divined that God was using Suleiman as the “rod of his anger” against Europe’s hypocritical claim to be Christian. With such an ally Suleiman was invincible. Repentance, said Luther, is the only weapon that works to dissuade the enemy when that enemy is God. So repentance is what he called for—hoping for at least a few to do so, who might thereby intercede vicariously for the multitudes who would not. For if God did relent as “maybe only ten!” did repent, Suleiman would lose his biggest ally—and his invincibility. Christian Europe might just survive.

The historical record shows that Suleiman halted his conquest (and Islamization) of Christian Europe there outside Vienna’s walls and went back home. Even without religious unity at Augsburg, and the military alliance that Charles V might have gained through it, Christian Europe was spared. Did vicarious repentance do it? Most historians, even Christian ones, cite other reasons.

Thus the main achievement of Augsburg 1530 is “only” the Augsburg Confession. That Confession has become the touchstone for what’s Lutheran, even though the word never appears in the text. The confessors were simply seeking to state what was Christian. Granted, Luther himself is not unimportant for what’s Lutheran, but Augsburg is the standard. So in the constitutions of the 100-plus Lutheran churches throughout the world today, it is the Augsburg Confession, not Luther and his teaching, that is named in the fundamental theological article.

Luther was not present at Augsburg. A prior diet had put a price on his head. Augsburg was not in his safety zone. Surprising for many is that the AC was written by someone not ordained, Philip Melancthon. So too all its signatories were laity, princes and politicians who “fessed up” before the emperor at Augsburg with

their own "Here I stand."

The ethos of Seminex latched on to the Augsburg confessors—not only for theological substance, but also for understanding our own historical situation. We learned that we were living in a "time for confessing." Umpteen times we were called to articulate our faith and have it examined, finally at the Missouri Synod's New Orleans 1973 convention. As was true with the establishment party at Augsburg, we could never get our critics to "fess up" to their working theology—and let it be examined. Like the critics at Augsburg our critics claimed to be "the voice of old Missouri" by definition. Since our disagreement with them signalled that we were not, we "should seek our fellowship elsewhere."

The prospect for unity within Missouri was gone when we in the faculty majority were fired for refusing to acknowledge our most vocal accuser as our acting president. Even though the press, both secular and churchly, interpreted our conflict as a fight about the Bible, i.e., modern vs. conservative ways of interpreting it, within Seminex it became clearer that our conflict was like the one at Augsburg. The issue was the "one Gospel and sacraments," which Augsburg confessed as "enough" for the church's unity. In more ways than one the Augsburg Confession of 400-plus years ago became (again) the debate focus. It was not Biblical interpretation.

One signal of that fact is that of the five loyalist members of the "faculty minority," who then became the core of the new faculty at Concordia after the 45 of us went into Seminex, four were members of the department of systematic theology. That means they didn't teach Bible, but their teaching turf was doctrine, ethics and the Lutheran Confessions. Only one of the five was a Scripture professor. The Battle of Missouri that led to Seminex was about what it means to be Lutheran. It was a

debate about the Augsburg Confession, and that document was confessing what it means to be Christian.

It will come as no surprise to hear that that debate continued within Seminex throughout the ten years of its existence. Pushed into an exile that no one had really planned for, we constantly sought for clarity into what had happened to us, where we now were, and where we were called to be heading. None of that seeking was without vigorous debate and we did not always find consensus. More about that next time.

The word “walkout” (from the world of labor-management conflict) is often used—even by our supporters—in connection with Seminex, as though we went on strike against the administration of Concordia Seminary. Yet that is a misnomer. Admittedly this is one partisan’s perspective. It goes like this:

1. we were tried as a group for heresy at the New Orleans Convention,
2. found guilty by 60% and innocent by 40% of the delegates,
3. ordered to accept (and trust!) our major critic as our new seminary president,
4. fired for refusing to do so. Is that a walkout? In the rhetoric of the Lutheran confessions, we saw it as a time for confessing.

On the day after our dismissal we did indeed “walk” off campus with banners and hoopla in a grand procession to be welcomed by the theological deans of St. Louis University and Eden Seminary. The next day Seminex classes began on those two campuses. Sure there were other options, but none of them seemed sufficiently “faithful to our calling, faithful to our Lord.” We had put the word “exile” into our name, Concordia Seminary in Exile, but only later did we learn what it really meant.

D.v., more next time.

Gay/Lesbian Ordination – The Central States Synod Resolution

Dear Sabbatarians,

Our perusal of Seminex history will begin again next week with Ed's next chapter, "The first days at Seminex, Feb. 20, 1974ff." This week I asked Jim Squire to write about the Central States Synod Assembly which took place this past weekend. THE ISSUE of the assembly was the defrocking of a pastor who admitted to our bishop that she is in a committed relationship with another woman.

I can hear many of you groan, not wanting to look at this "hot potato" again. I sympathize. However, the fact that we find ourselves with our heads in the sand so often over these sexual issues seems to indicate that we need to continue our deliberation.

What I'd like to offer you here is the resolution that came to the assembly floor and then Jim's public response (on the assembly floor) to it. It is my opinion, at this point, that we have explored the constitutionality and biblical exegesis of this issue as far as we can right now, but that we haven't looked at the theological implications as fully as we need to. Both the resolution and Jim's response move in this direction.

If you want more background, I can forward to you Jim's thorough journal of the whole assembly, but I think for the sake of discussion, these two opinions are a good starting point.

Peace and Joy,
Robin

The resolution:

*GAY AND LESBIAN PERSONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS AND IN
PUBLIC MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH*

Background:

In the Reformation, Luther took the radical step of allowing priests to marry. In doing so he affirmed God's good gift of sexuality as expressed in a committed relationship and rejected celibacy as a "higher" calling. Luther recognized that while the Gospel is given freely to undeserving sinners, the gift of celibacy is rare indeed. It is only given to a few and it cannot be made a requirement imposed on people. Our present church discipline, requiring celibacy of gay and lesbian pastors who are called into faithful, committed, monogamous relationships contradicts Lutheran theology. According to our church discipline, pastors of gay or lesbian sexual orientation are to remain celibate. They are forced to choose between God's call to ordained ministry and God's call to be a faithful partner in a committed relationship. Our church stands in the way of their faithful response to the call of God. This creates enormous pain for the pastors involved, their partners, families, friends, and congregations. As a result, many gay and lesbian persons are alienated from our church and our witness

to the Gospel.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ comes to us in our sinfulness and brokenness. Out of God's great mercy we are forgiven, justified, made right with God. All this is a gift of God to us without any deserving on our part. This is the very heart of our faith as Lutheran Christians. In Baptism, the promise of God is given to us, and we are made members of the church. Baptism is given to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, social class, or sexual orientation.

In 1991 and again in 1995, the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA affirmed the "gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate fully in the life of congregations of the ELCA." This welcome has not been extended, however, to gay and lesbian pastors who are living in committed relationships. As a result, our church is removing a growing number of faithful and effective pastors from the clergy roster, because they are in committed relationships. In these cases, the ministry of the Gospel is silenced.

We in the ELCA are living a contradiction in need of resolution. We proclaim welcome to gays and lesbians and we place homosexual pastors in a terrible bind. We need to talk and listen. We need a safe time and place where all voices can be heard. We need to trust that the Holy Spirit will lead us into practice and theology which is consistent with the Gospel we proclaim. – Because the ministry of the baptized is central to the life of the church – Because the church is called to inclusiveness in its ministry – Because we believe that we must be faithful to God's calling – Because we desire open, honest, and safe dialog on this issue

Resolved:

The Central States Synod in Assembly takes the following actions:

- A. During the next seven years, the congregations of the Central States Synod enter a time of dialog, study, and Biblical reflection on the issues surrounding the possibility that God calls gay and lesbian persons in committed relationships to the ordained and other forms of public ministry in the church.*
- B. In order to provide a safe environment for gay and lesbian persons presently serving in various forms of ministry in the Central States Synod, (Ordained, Associates in Ministry, Deaconate, Parish Ministry Associates) during this time of dialog:*
 - 1. A suspension be placed on enforcing section b.4, paragraph 2 of Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline precluding “practicing homosexual persons from the ordained ministry of this church.” This suspension will be in effect until lifted by Assembly, but lasting for at least seven years. Persons who have been removed under current ELCA policy would be encouraged to pursue reinstatement to the ordained and other forms of public ministry of this church.*
 - 2. A suspension be placed on discipline of congregations who issue calls to gays and lesbian pastors in committed relationships. This suspension will be in effect until lifted by Assembly, but lasting for at least seven years.*
 - 3. For the duration of these suspensions, gay and lesbian pastors and persons in other forms of public ministry in committed relationships would be expected to adhere to the same expectations of*

conduct required of their office as outlined in relevant documents.

C. This Assembly of the Central States Synod memorialize the ELCA at its 1999 Churchwide Assembly to adopt this same resolution on behalf of the ELCA.

Jim's response:

"I am speaking against this resolution out of what I believe to be my genuine concern for everyone on all sides of this issue. How genuine they turn out to be I leave to your judgement. I have 2 concerns about the resolution.

First,

I believe that behind the sincere, thoughtful expressions in the background lies a very popular and understandable view of a God who **never** is unreasonable in his dealings with us. We find it easier to talk about a God of hardship when it is obvious to our minds that the hardship is either deserved or at least when it is shared equally by all. Some of us, myself included, would view the hardship described in the background of this resolution as undeserved and unfair, at least from a rational point of view. Others, who believe that sexual orientation can be changed in a healthy, positive way, would, I'm guessing, not view this as an unfair hardship at all. I humbly suggest yet a third possibility: the possibility that we all – myself included – have a deeper purpose: to domesticate God, to keep God's hands clean. The same Martin Luther who is referred to in the background for this resolution, in a writing of his entitled "The Bondage of The Will", opposed such a purpose coming from a person by the name of Erasmus. It's not that he didn't understand it, or even sympathize with it. Yet, he opposed it because it is contradicted by scripture. Maybe the real problem we **all** have here is not simply with each other, but with a God

whose motives are hidden (Deus Absconditus) from us. Maybe the deepest division we *all* experience is not a horizontal one but a vertical one.

Second

Thank God for what that very same God *did* reveal in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Paul put it to the Corinthians, God made him *to be sin* *for us* – Jesus, who knew no sin, so that in us might be found the righteousness of God. If, as our Bishop rightly proclaimed, the Holy Supper is the one truly safe place for all of us to be one with each other, then I humbly suggest that the one truly safe (and truly open, I might add) place for us to talk about our sins with each other is at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ. As gruesome as that might sound, it is safe precisely because of the empty tomb that comes after. If we can just meet each other at the foot of the cross, we can be freed up to talk about our sins knowing that Christ is the one who puts them to death for us. As we seek out a safe and open place to talk about these issues, let us never forget to bring the foot of the cross with us.”

Summer Conventions: Is it New Orleans all over again?

Next month the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod will hold its convention here in St. Louis. The gossip says it will be a hot one regardless of the local weather. One district president (i.e., a regional bishop) is on the carpet for practicing fellowship with the heterodox. He participated in the wedding of his niece in a service held in a congregation of the ELCA

(Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). The LCMS president and numerous overtures to the convention, as I hear from my distant vantage point, are demanding either his apology or his scalp. In a couple of weeks we'll know what they got.

Some of our friends in the LCMS sadly say: "It could be New Orleans all over again." "New Orleans," the LCMS convention of 1973, was exactly 25 years ago in July. There were many more villains at that time, however. Forty-five of us on the faculty of Concordia Seminary here in St. Louis, were on the carpet. We were bunched together in popular rhetoric as the "faculty majority." The five faculty colleagues who were our critics were the "faculty minority."

Like all church conflicts (and family fights too) there was a long pre-history to New Orleans '73. Some claimed that it went all the way back to arguments the Saxon immigrants had before they got off the boat in 1839: is scripture or scripture's Gospel the touchstone for Lutheran theology? In any case the actions taken at New Orleans were cataclysmic by everyone's judgment. They pushed the button that created Concordia Seminary in Exile (Seminox for short) six months later.

Although the entire faculty, all 50 of us, had individually undergone a 2-hour interview by the LCMS president's "fact finding committee" prior to the convention, no one of the faculty majority had been directly charged with any specific false teaching. Yet by the time New Orleans was over we were hereticized by a 60/40 convention vote for teaching which "cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended," a phrase from the Lutheran Confessions. I was not in New Orleans for the convention, but back in St. Louis along with others teaching summer school ostensibly doing just that kind of teaching.

There was an attempt to give substance to what our intolerable teaching was in a document published before the convention. It was the LCMS president's "A Statement of Biblical and Confessional Principles." We later learned that one of the minority five had ghost-written it for the president. It specified 3 doctrines where the faculty majority had gone astray. The convention accepted that document (another 60/40 vote) as a valid statement of Missouri Synod teaching, and then measured us by that yardstick. Three of our senior colleagues, Bob Bertram, Ed Krentz, and John Damm, were given 12 minutes each to tell the assembly what we really taught in the classroom. Thereafter the convention voted, and once more, 60 to 40, we failed to pass.

The heresies ascribed to us were three:

1. Undermining the authority of the Bible in the way we used "historical critical methods" when teaching from the Bible,
2. Practicing "gospel-reductionism," a term invented by one of our critics (John Warwick Montgomery) to designate our alleged granting the Bible absolute authority in Gospel matters, but not in other aspects; and
3. being wishy-washy on our commitment to "the third use of the law," a intra-Lutheran hot potato from the time of the Reformation. That 16th century debate asked whether, and if so, how, the new-born Christian uses God's law to pattern her new life in Christ.

Upon our failure to pass the test, the convention mandated the newly elected seminary Board of Control (sic!), where our critics now had the majority, to take appropriate action. Although the board regularly met each month, for a number of reasons, their timetable was stretched out until January of 1974. And in their meeting of that month, on Sunday evening

January 20, they suspended seminary president John Tietjen for malfeasance in office. He had not exercised proper doctrinal discipline on the faculty while presiding over us. And little wonder, since he too was one of the faculty majority.

As Acting President, Martin Scharlemann, a leading voice in the faculty minority, was put in Tietjen's place. He was my brother-in-law. His wife and my wife are sisters. No one really knew what his mandate was from the board. But that hardly mattered, since the following day, Monday, there was no more "business as usual " at Concordia Seminary. Though Scharlemann was in office, he never presided over the seminary from which Tietjen was deposed. On that Monday the student body convened for day-long deliberations. Their final decision: a moratorium on any future class attendance until those professors be identified whose "teaching was not to be tolerated in the church of God." They knew how serious heresy was, and they wanted none of it! A day later the faculty majority, more stunned by Tietjen's suspension and less savvy, I'd say, than those students, agreed to join the students in their moratorium decision.

That didn't mean that teaching and learning stopped on campus. Students and staff were in non-stop theological conversation and action for the four weeks that followed before the next meeting of the seminary board. Many a student would later say that he (we had hardly any she's) learned more theology during those four weeks than during four or more previous semesters. There was no end of meetings—both intramural in homes and lounges and extramural with LCMS leadership. Our critics saw the moratorium as clear evidence of our rebellious natures. Clearly we needed to be disciplined. The only message we heard from them, and from the synod president as well, was that we submit to Scharlemann's leadership and trust him to do what's right. It was an administrative matter, not a matter of the Gospel itself. The issue of our alleged heresy, which was a Gospel matter, would be

addressed by Scharlemann and the board in due time—and as the accused we were not the time-keepers.

Even supporters—many of them—said we were making a big mistake. But what neither these friends nor our foes sufficiently realized was that “we” the faculty were not in charge. The students had “closed down the place” while we faculty were still numb and perplexed about our new situation. We had not led the students in making their decision. They ran their own meetings and came to their own conclusions. Later on, however, they did call us to “‘fess up” to our involvement in their action. How so? Our teaching, they said, had conveyed to them a clear enough fix on the Gospel to make their own theological analysis of the crisis and then to give them courage to do what they did. We could hardly have been more honored.

What all happened in those 4 weeks is a bit of a blur for me now. I should have kept a journal. Yet even with the memory blur, they were unforgettable! When the board next convened, Sunday evening Feb. 17, they authorized the acting president Scharlemann to give us the following notice: By noon of the next day (Feb. 18) we were to submit in writing our agreement to return to business as usual under his leadership. Otherwise we would be held in breach of contract and considered as having terminated our employment at the seminary. With such termination we were to be out of our offices and seminary-owned housing by the end of the month, ten days later.

We found this resolution in our faculty mailboxes Monday morning, just hours before the high-noon deadline. By 10:30 that morning we assembled in Pritzlaff Hall, together with spouses, and came to the consensus that our only response would be no response. When the seminary bells tolled the noon hour we celebrated our dismissal by singing “The Church’s One Foundation,” a hymn that had become our banner since New

Orleans. Someone opened the windows toward the quad where the students had gathered while we deliberated. They joined our singing. The next day (Feb 19) Seminex came into existence; the day thereafter we had our first classes. More next time.

Peace & Joy!
Ed Schroeder

And Then There Were Three

Colleagues,

A fortnight ago in ThTh (#2) I bubbled about the two Seminex grads, Marcus Lohrmann and Robert Rimbo, who had just been elected to episcopal office in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Robin Morgan, our Sabbaththeology editor, added a good word from Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession to accompany them on their episcopal callings.

Some responses have wondered whether so-and-so, now already serving as an ELCA bishop, were not also a Seminex grad. I checked them all out and none of them were. From what I've heard the names suggested were indeed, as AC 28 says, "bishops according to the Gospel." But then came a note from Jim Friedrich in Saratoga CA with the news that a third one of "ours," Murray D. Finck (Seminex '75), had also just been chosen for episcopacy. Murray is bishop-elect of the ELCA's Pacifica Synod [=southern California and Hawaii]. People in the know say that Murray's election makes him the eleventh of the ELCA's 65 synod bishops who once called the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod home. Hmmm!

In subsequent cyber-exchange I heard from Murray himself. He told me what he did when he learned that he was one of the three remaining candidates at the Pacifica Synod assembly, and thus had to respond to fifteen minutes of Q & A when the next session resumed 2 hours later. So what does he do? Pray, think, reflect, of course, read a little from Romans, and pull out his Book of Concord to re-read some parts of the Augsburg Confession. What a guy!

If he were asked to articulate his theology, he decided to do so in several ways, one of which was the “wheel and hub and spokes” [see note below] which he’s used ever since our seminary class in the Lutheran Confessions 25 years ago. It turned out that the questions from the floor didn’t ask any of the final three to be very theological [aw pshaw!] but the two hours of reflection sent him to the podium with inner peace and readiness. He spoke his piece, “the people voted, and the rest is history.” And then there were three.

The “wheel and hub and spokes” that Murray mentions refer to a blackboard drawing from seminary days imaging Aug. Conf. theology. Each of Augsburg’s 28 articles “articulates” the Gospel, the picture says, like 28 spokes coming out from the Good News hub of an old wagon wheel. Christology, justification, ecclesiology—even the doctrine of the Trinity (AC 1) or the doctrine of Original Sin (AC 2), articulate something about the Good News, that “doctrine of the Gospel” that is the hub of the wheel. The same is so with AC 5 on ministry according to the Gospel and AC 28 on bishops according to the Gospel, and all the rest. So it’s hub and spokes for the shape of AC theology.

Then finally comes the rim around the outside edge. That rim is not a doctrine, but a hermeneutic principle for handling doctrine. In the AC that hermeneutical rim is the proper distinction between God’s law and God’s Gospel. For what

purpose? For the purpose that the rim serves on the wagon wheel, viz., to keep each spoke properly anchored in the hub and to prevent it from flying off into non-gospel space and thus wrecking the whole wheel.

Peace & Joy!
Ed Schroeder

P.S. Next Thursday, d.v., I intend to do a bit of retrospective stuff on Seminex itself. That very term may be a mystery word for some of you receiving ThTh. "Seminex" was shorthand for Concordia SEMinary IN EXile, the alma mater of the three bishops-elect mentioned above. This summer marks the 25th anniversary of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod's 1973 Convention in New Orleans. That convention triggered a chain of events that culminated in February 1974 in Seminex. Finck, Lohmann and Rimbo were there when it all happened. Don't be surprised if their eventual bishop's style bears marks of that birthplace. Some Seminex alums, I've heard, are planning a get-together next year to commemorate the event. I hope they succeed in making it happen.