

# Jesuit Theologians—One More Time

Colleagues:

Last week's ThTh posting was Steve Kuhl's perceptive and probing review of Jesuit theologian Francisco Claver's work *THE MAKING OF A LOCAL CHURCH*. As some of you know, Philippine Bishop Claver is this week our houseguest on a visit to his Jesuit colleagues here in St. Louis and to his Lutheran friends in the Crossings Community. The connecting link is Bob Bertram, who met Claver on an earlier St. Louis visit—perhaps 30 years ago—which then led to a chapter in Bob's *A TIME FOR CONFESSING* dedicated to the Philippine Revolution where Claver is Bob's major source for interpreting this political event of 1986 as another case study in Christian Confessing.

For this week another posting about another Jesuit, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. (1918-2008). But first I want to introduce the author of this appreciative essay about Dulles: Jukka Kääriäinen. Jukka, as you may have guessed, is a Finn, born of Finnish Lutheran missionary parents in the Chinese-speaking world. So he knows two unique languages already from childhood: Mandarin and Finnish. He contacted me some years ago about doing graduate studies linking Christian ethics with mission theology. He had just finished his seminary studies at the LCMS Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. We've continued in e-mail exchange ever since.

Rev. Jukka Kääriäinen is now pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Messiah (LCMS) in Princeton, NJ, Lutheran chaplain at Princeton University, and a PhD candidate in systematic theology at Fordham University, Bronx, NY. His forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation is entitled, "Missio as Promissio: Lutheran

Missiology Confronts the Challenge of Religious Pluralism.”

He keeps sending me chapters as the dissertation progresses. It's a winner. And you all can hear about it early next year. How so? Jukka is on the program for next January's Crossings Conference to tell us what he's discovered in his doctoral dissertation. So, ya'll come.

One of his dear teachers at Fordham was Avery Dulles, S.J. Here's Jukka's appreciation of this teacher.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

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## **IN MEMORY OF MY TEACHER, AVERY CARDINAL DULLES, S.J.**

**By Rev. Jukka A. Kääriäinen**

I had the distinct privilege of being a student of the late Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. (1918-2008) in the spring of 2006 while engaged in my systematic theology Ph.D. program course work at Fordham University, Bronx, NY. I won't bother to recount the main facts and numerous accomplishments of Cardinal Dulles' prolific life; those are well known enough and can be "googled" by anyone who is interested in them. Instead, what I wish to offer in this brief essay are some personal reflections on and memories of my late teacher, in paying tribute to him as a model ecclesial theologian: someone with an incredibly sharp theological mind, yet offering that mind in humble service to the Church's ministry and mission.

I first met Cardinal Dulles when I stepped into his graduate seminar on "The Profession of Faith" in January, 2006. The class examined the history, importance, role, and use of various kinds

of professions of faith, as well as issues related to the proper reception of and dissent to church teaching: symbols and confessional writings, council declarations, statements of the Roman Catholic Church, and, in particular, the 1989 "Profession of Faith." We examined and covered a wide-ranging group of theologians and documents, including documents from Vatican II, Yves Congar, Hans Kung, Roger Haight, Pope Benedict XVI (when he was still Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger), and Francis Sullivan, among others.

The seminar itself was an exercise in ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue among young theologians (all of us in our 20's and early 30's), consisting of myself, an Episcopalian woman, an Orthodox man, and a lay Roman Catholic man. Given Dulles' frail physical condition already at that time, the seminar met in a conference room at his residence. Cardinal Dulles' kind, gentle demeanor and modest humility made a lasting impression on me. In fact, he and my fellow classmates graciously agreed to change the meeting time of our class at my request, making it possible for me to take a "Reading in French" class that same semester.

I doubt I will ever have another chance to have a high-ranking member of the Roman Catholic magisterium acquiesce to my wishes! His friendly attitude toward us was evidenced in the tradition of taking a mid-afternoon break halfway through class for tea, coffee, and biscuits, as well as his treating us to dinner at a local Italian restaurant at the end of the semester.

Cardinal Dulles' deep commitment to being an ecclesial theologian, doing theology in service of and for the sake of the Church, came through loud and clear in various comments he made throughout the semester, of which I wish to offer the following sampling. "It is the responsibility of the Church alone to safeguard the Word of God." "We should not divorce proclamation and teaching. They contain the same content, communicated in two

different ways. Why is this so important? Because it is 'for our salvation.'" "The Church's indefectibility in the truth hinges on the truthfulness of the actual propositions (professions) of its faith!" "Creative fidelity to the Church's teaching," "Martin Luther really should have been made a doctor of the Church." "You know, I'd like to be a devil's advocate in the canonization process, I think they should restore that role!"

OK, I threw in those last two comments just to see if you were still paying attention! Dulles' respect for Luther's theology developed during his service on the Lutheran-Catholic bilateral dialogues, and he actually did believe that Luther deserved to be honored as a doctor/ teacher of the Church! Despite his deep commitment to and respect for the Church, perhaps nothing epitomized his sober realism regarding the Church's fallenness and sinful brokenness as when he reportedly said to another of my teachers, Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, at her doctoral comprehensive exams at the Catholic University of America, "We would easily forget that the Church is 'holy' unless it were written in the creed [one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church] to remind us."

In terms of my work in that seminar, I wrote my seminar paper on the topic of "Church Teaching Authority: Lutheran- Roman Catholic Dialogue." Perhaps choosing that topic was a bit foolhardy, given that Dulles had long served as a member of those very dialogues! However, my interest in and the importance of the topic caused me to overcome any initial misgivings. After my oral presentation and synopsis of my topic, Dulles introduced the discussion time by a memorable few words (paraphrasing him from memory): "Yes, Lutherans have this strong insistence upon the distinction between law and gospel. Of course obedience to the gospel is what is most important, so whenever we sin and fall short, the comfort of the gospel is always there to strengthen and renew us."

The phrase "obedience to the gospel" struck my ears, and my immediate reaction was, "Obedience? No. Trust in the promises? Yes." But as I have had time to ponder that comment, I have come to suspect that perhaps my teacher and I had more in common theologically than I realized, transcending the stereotypical portrayal of Roman Catholics as not appreciating the law-Gospel distinction. After all, our Book of Concord (Kolb/ Wengert, p 164) defines faith as "obedience to the gospel... reckoned as righteousness... because it receives the offered mercy and believes that we are regarded as righteous through mercy on account of Christ." St Paul also distinguishes obedience to the law from the obedience of faith. It would have been fascinating to engage my teacher in a discussion of these matters, but unfortunately I never got the chance to do so.

This incident reminded me once again of the importance of "ecumenical friendliness," of giving someone the benefit of the doubt and extending them the courtesy of letting them speak for themselves and clarify their position, rather than drawing premature, stereotypical conclusions. My teacher modeled such an approach for all of us during our seminar discussions, especially when we disagreed, and I would hope to carry that with me as a lasting lesson.

Dulles' written comments on my paper were very gracious: "Your exposition of Augsburg Confession 28 ["The Authority of Bishops," including the Bishop of Rome] strikes me as thorough and correct. I was pleased that you went beyond an exposition of Lutheran concepts of teaching authority and made good use of the U.S.A. [Lutheran-Roman Catholic] dialogues. Perhaps because I was a participant in that dialogue, I think highly of its achievements. Your own assessment of the current ecumenical situation strikes me as realistic."

In closing, I will always remember Cardinal Avery Dulles as

epitomizing the ecclesial theologian, someone who sought in all he did to live out the attitude and conviction of CREATIVE FIDELITY to the Church's tradition and teaching. From someone who gained a reputation for doing theology with an emphasis on models and paradigms (his two most famous books being MODELS OF THE CHURCH and MODELS OF REVELATION), I believe Dulles' legacy, at least to an aspiring Lutheran missiologist such as myself, centers on more fully articulating and grappling with creative fidelity, both as a model and as a challenge, for doing theology in the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod today. In a recent issue of an LCMS journal, Dr Leopoldo Sanchez referred to the challenge and need to develop three Lutheran distinctives: a "theology of difference (citing Dr J.A.O. Preus III)," a theology of catholicity, with these two factors serving as fundamental building blocks in constructing a robust, Lutheran missional ecclesiology.

I agree therein lies the challenge. To put words in my teacher's mouth (always a perilous task, especially when the person is deceased), Dulles would have said, "You're wrestling with the question of creative fidelity. You're asking the right questions. I think you need to focus on the creative pole of that spectrum." How can we, as a church body, hold unity in doctrine and contextual diversity in mission practice in creative tension? The LCMS has strongly, and rightly, insisted upon FIDELITY to the Church's confessional heritage and tradition, but has not been nearly as bold or CREATIVE in contextual application of such fidelity. What shape and form might such CREATIVE FIDELITY take, what might that look like, in the years to come? A mere repetition of past formulas won't do. That much I learned from my teacher, Avery Dulles. May God grant His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church more teachers of such faith, commitment, humility, and intellect. That is my sincere hope and prayer!

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# The Making of A Local Church – A Lutheran Review of a Vatican II Classic

Colleagues,

You've already heard from me in recent days that Philippine Bishop Francisco Claver is coming to St. Louis next week, and that we Crossings folks here in town get a big chunk of his time. Today's ThTh post already begins the conversation as Crossings president Steve Kuhl reviews Claver's just-published book.

After 40 years as bishop in the Philippines and now 80 years of age, Claver has written a report of his own working theology with a bit of autobiography as well to show us readers how he got there. For a fuller picture check out this URL: <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bclaver.html>

What makes Steve Kuhl THE one to review Claver's book you will learn in his opening paragraph. But what's almost hidden in Steve's later prose is the fact that for many years now he – with a Ph.D. under Bob Bertram – is a theology professor at Roman Catholic schools in Milwaukee. At first he taught at the archdiocesan seminary and now for some years at Cardinal Stritch University. So as he mentions below, he has been teaching the documents of Vatican II to Roman Catholics – seminarians, even! I still wonder how he gets away with that, but my guess is that with his title, Professor of Historical Theology, he is obviously “harmless.” All he does is report on the history of

things that happened – no argument there – and what the documents say that he and the students are reading.

But enough of that. Here's Steve's stunning review. By the time you get to his last few paragraphs you might just want to jump on a bus and come to St. Louis for next week's Crossings get-together with Claver. Steve plans to be in town too. So we can all listen in as the conversation continues. I wonder what Claver will say.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

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## **“The Making of the Local Church” by Francisco F. Claver**

**Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008, ix, 192 pages, Paper, \$24.00**

**Reviewed by Steven C. Kuhl**

Francisco F. Claver, S.J., is a Filipino Christian, a tireless pastor and a model bishop after the fashion of Vatican Council II. He is passionate about nurturing the faith of his flock so as to empower them to make a Christian difference in the world – that is, in the “locale” in which they live. The understanding of the view of church that he presents in this work not only challenges the thinking of many in his own Roman Catholic tradition, but gives much to consider for anyone who strives to connect the nature of the church to the mission of the church in a pastoral way.

I first met Cisco, as he is affectionately called, 25 years ago (in 1984) when he hosted a small band of Seminex pilgrims for ten days at his East Asian Pastoral Institute at Ateneo Manila.



(That visit was the impetus for Chapter 6 in Bob Bertram's book, "A Time for Confessing," where Bertram unfolds how the "Philippine Revolution 1986" reflects marks of a confessing movement by the way it "appeals to and for the oppressed.") Those days were momentous times in Manila and they are briefly recounted in this work under the heading of "faith and ideology" (pp. 70-87). The atmosphere was thick with tension and the desire for change was palpable. Everywhere we went people flashed the sign of the "L" (index finger and thumb at right angles) and shouted "laban" (which meant "struggle") indicating their support for the struggle AGAINST Marcos. Bishop Claver was a leading pastoral voice in this critical time, concerned not only with politics, but with authentic "evangelization": the task of bringing the "faith of the Gospel," as he likes to call it, into the Filipino situation in a meaningful way. What he came to realize in the process, as this book indicates, is that Rome (or any fixation on the idea of the "universal" church) can't do that. Only a "local church" can bring the "faith of the gospel" into a local place like the Philippines. Just as there is no such thing as "the world," sociologically understood, but only local cultures in "the world," so there is no such thing as the "universal church," pastorally understood, but only the local church being the "universal church," the Church of Christ, in its locale. Hence, the task before him as a bishop was to "make the local church."

In the "Making of the Local Church," Claver tells the story of how the idea of the "Local Church" emerged, how it is an ever-evolving idea that is tied to the "action-reflection-action" model of doing theology (6-8, 160-63), and the challenges the idea encountered and still encounters within his own church tradition. The book, therefore, is not the end of the story but part of the story for an emerging idea (148-9). Methodologically, two things need to be noted up front. First,

"orthopraxis" has priority over "orthodoxy," not because "right thinking" isn't important but because "right action," making a difference in people's lives or "doing the gospel," as he likes to say, is the ultimate aim of evangelization (65). Nevertheless, "orthopraxis" is not mindless. Christians reflect deeply ("orthodoxy") on what their actions say and do to others (56, 61-62). Therefore, the Latin American liberation theology idea of "conscientization" (59) is integral to Claver's method, though he has his critique of aspects of his Latin American colleagues, especially their equivocation on Marxist arguments for violent revolution. Second, Claver quite consciously sees himself more as a "cultural anthropologist" in terms of method than a traditional theologian, and is quite up front about that designation (6-7, 108-127). The reason for this is that faith and culture are always intertwined. Indeed, at the risk of oversimplification, the local church is always a correlation of faith and culture, where faith provides the "values" that get expressed in "culture." Here, in my judgment, one sees a very traditional Roman Catholic nature-grace paradigm of theology being translated into the language and outlook of cultural anthropology as exemplified in thinkers like Clifford Geertz (*The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, 1973).

In Chapter 2 Claver sets out to give us a definition of what he means by "local church." The term itself has a complicated and controversial history, too complicated to go into here (See pp. 24-26, 148-9). Suffice it to say that the Roman Catholic tradition (at least since Trent) has usually spoken in terms of the "universal church" and the "particular" church, which were essentially hierarchical or juridical designations. The "universal church" (under the jurisdiction of the pope) was understood as the sum total of the "particular churches" (under the jurisdiction of a canonical bishop). The notion of the "local church" operates on a wholly different plane. The key

feature of a "local church" is NOT a juridical connection to a place far away that governs what it means to be the church. Rather the local church is that community of faith that is "bound to a definite geographical location within one linguistic and cultural area" (22). What characterizes it is that it is "responsible" (key concept), or at least should be allowed to be responsible, for translating the faith into the local culture because it alone has the potential or "competence" (30) to know the culture by virtue of the fact that its members are also members of the culture. Significantly, Claver sees the idea of the "local church" as having deep roots in the Christian tradition, giving a brief (if not caricatured) historical survey of how it manifested itself in every "age" of the church (21-24).

In Chapter 3, Claver shows how the idea of the "local church" has strong resonances with the Vatican II notion of the church as "communion." Indeed, the whole of Claver's argument is intended to flesh out the implications of Vatican II's theology of church. As such, the book symbolizes the internal struggle within Roman Catholicism on what actually happened at Vatican II. Was it a real "aggiornamento" (=updating), the bringing in and renewing of things lost (like the idea of the local church, the priesthood of the faithful, principle of subsidiarity, etc.) that will help "update" the church's evangelization in the modern age, as more "progressive" Roman Catholics, like Claver, claim? Or was it something less, a "kinder gentler" Roman Catholicism, to be sure, but not a substantially changed Catholicism? As a Lutheran living and working among Roman Catholics, I know how fierce "the battle for Vatican II" is, as Claver hints (9, 24-26). Having read and taught the documents, I also have my own sense of why the battle rages. The documents themselves, so it seems to me, often "give" with the left hand (progressives' accent) only to "take it away" with the right

hand (the traditionalists' accent). The fly on the wall at Vatican II, Xavier Rennes (pseudonym), gives great insight into the debate behind the formulation of the documents (Vatican Council II, Farrer, Straus, Giroux, Inc. and Orbis Books, 1996). Therefore, the debate often revolves around the spirit versus the letter of Vatican II. But I digress.

As I said, Claver sees a strong resonance between the VCII idea of church as communion and his idea of the local church. As communion, the church is to be understood as a "participatory" (and "communicative") body at all levels and between all levels. (He has a detailed diagram and explanation of this on pp. 37-40.) Accordingly, whatever "structure" the church takes, and they may vary depending on cultural factors, those structures must serve the church as a participatory fellowship. Here is where Claver says that the practice of his Roman Catholic Church lags the Vatican II vision. The pre-Vatican II model was "consultative," but not truly participatory or deliberative (29). That is, it did not truly bring the bishops, the priests, or the faithful into the decision-making process.

Significantly, Claver does not see a need to change the "hierarchical structure" of the church, per se (38). As a communion of communions the church exists on a grassroots to a global level, and their relationship may be conceived as being hierarchical. What is needed is a change of "culture" or "values" of those who work within the structures-specifically, a change to the values of "dialogue, participation, and co-responsibility" (88). Participatory versus non-participatory, therefore, is the criteria for judging any particular ecclesiastical structure (28, 38). However, Roman Catholics need both to embrace and to learn how to practice the value of participation that it retrieved, though in nascent form (40), at Vatican II. Importantly, for Claver, the notion of church as a participatory body does not mean that the church is a

“democracy.” That’s because the notion of democracy fails to capture the idea that, at its most basic level, the church is a communion in the Holy Spirit, who guides and decides through the participatory process (23, 37, 40, 143-44); a community of the Word which speaks through the Scriptures as they are studied and discussed (94-5).

However, Claver is not so sanguine as to think that as a participatory body the church will always make the right decisions. Mistakes will be made, indeed they have been made. Examples he raises up are birth control (48-9) and mandatory celibacy for clergy (146): birth control because that is a decision that should be left to the family; clerical celibacy because it should be left up to the local church. In both these cases the “*sensus fidei*,” which is an “accepted ‘*locus theologicus*’ in traditional Catholic theology” has not been honored and given expression (145). Essentially, then, what marks a participatory community (immersed in the action-reflection-action method of deliberation) is that it is free to decide again when it discerns it has been wrong, even to the point of welcoming the prophet in its midst (37-8). Above all, the idea of a participatory church means for Roman Catholicism the end to what Claver calls the “infallibility syndrome,” “the conviction that we must be right and correct at all times in what we say and do as church” (145). Above and beyond the value of being right is the value of faith in the Spirit to lead the participatory community into truth, over and over again.

Although in Claver’s thinking the idea of the “local church” doesn’t necessarily challenge the hierarchical nature of the church, it does significantly redefine what kind of ecclesial arrangements qualify as “church.” Most important in this regard is the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) or Basic Christian Communities (BCC) as they are sometimes called (88-107). BECs have become an essential part of the Filipino and Latin American

Church, both with regard to their “inward” (nurturing Christians in the faith of the gospel) and their “outward” (evangelization in their locale) impact (100-101). Yet their status as “church” has been opposed at every level of the hierarchical church (101-103). One might say that the central thrust of Claver’s work of “making the local church” consisted precisely in developing BECs. Therefore, he is adamant that they be seen as “church” in the full sense of the term because they truly embody the participatory nature of the “local church.”

Central to Claver’s defense of the BEC is his 8-fold definition. The BEC is “1) a community of believers 2) at the grassroots level, 3) which meets regularly 4) under the leadership of a lay minister 5) to express their faith in common worship 6) to discern on their common living of the faith 7) to plan and act on common decisions regarding their life of faith 8) in community, as community” (89). Of course, the objections are obvious. Chief among them is that because they lack a priest they lack a sacramental viability and centrality. But as Claver points out, these communities are Eucharistic centered. When a priest is available they have Mass, and if only the consecrated elements are available they have communion. The objection is a false one because “if the Eucharist is missing, it is due to the present legislation of the church restricting the number of priests of the Latin Rite to only celibate ones.” If the BECs were allowed to have married priests, they would have them (104). It is not the fault of the BECs that they are bereft of the Eucharist, it is the fault of the hierarchical church for refusing to allow local solutions to be adopted by the local communities. As Claver argues, the BECs were essential to the “success” of the Philippine Revolution of 1986. For they provided space for the kind of Christian discernment that prevented the rural peoples of the Philippines from being duped by the ideologies of the left (Marxist) or the right (Marcos).

Ministry of the BECs equipped them to think and act out clearly the faith of the gospel. For, as Claver writes,

*“If there is anything that marks the BECs in their being and acting, it is the centrality of faith-and faith that constantly returns to its source in Scripture for renewal and inspiration. It is the faith that brings their members together and sustains them in their praying and acting as community. And the sharing ethic we see they make much of only means that it is the charity of Christ that cements them as communities of faith. That faith, that charity-even without the Eucharist-are they not enough for solid ecclesiality?” (104)*

Throughout the book Claver has been defining and making an argument for the idea of the “local church”: not only because it resonates with the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II but because it provides a view of the church that connects the nature of the church to the mission of the church in a pastoral way. Because faith and culture correlate to make the local church, only the local church is fully competent for the task of evangelization, “the integrating of faith and life.” This “integrating” is essentially Claver’s soteriology, his understanding of what Christian salvation is all about. It goes under the name of “inculturation” and is described in lucid detail in Chapter 8 of his book.

In many ways, so it seems to me, Claver’s understanding of Christian soteriology is rooted in the old scholastic nature-and-grace theological hermeneutic for understanding the Christian message, but now “updated” to correspond with insights from modern cultural anthropology. Faith in the gospel fulfills a basic need that is integral to good culture but which is lacking or waning in it. Obviously, those in the Crossings Community who are convinced of the historic Lutheran Law-and-

Gospel hermeneutic for understanding the Christian message will have much to discuss with Claver in this regard. But our purpose here is to hear Claver out, and to do that we need to look at how Claver defines both "faith" and "culture."

As Claver begins this discussion he alerts us to the fact that he is approaching the task of inculturation from the viewpoint of a cultural anthropologist and not a theologian (108). The reason seems to be that the modern cultural anthropologist's definition of culture as a "people's [whole] way of life" actually provides a comprehensive view of human nature to which the supernatural gift of faith is added. As such, cultural anthropology seems to be setting the agenda for theology the way Aristotelianism set the theological agenda for Scholasticism. Culture as "the way of life of a people," therefore, provides a comprehensive picture of human nature: it is a way of using material things, of behaving, of speaking, of feeling, of thinking, of believing, of meaning, of valuing, and of symbolizing (110-111). The "deepest aspects of a culture," he tells us, "are its values" (112). It is from its values that its character flows. The problem stems from the fact that a culture's "actual values are not always congruent with the ideal values of the reign of God" (112). It is from those skewed values that injustice and oppression emerge, as exemplified in the extreme, for example, in the ideological battle between Marxist socialism and liberal capitalism (73-74).

As Claver sees it, the faith of the gospel is intended to speak precisely to this cultural malady. It's not that cultures do not already have the "seeds" of the values of the reign of God in them, "basic values like love, justice, kindness, mercy, compassion, family, and so forth," but that they are not yet "perfected by the values of faith" (109). They remain simply as seeds, not yet "blossoming out into real and living manifestations of the values of the gospel" (109).



“Inculturation, then, is the mutual enrichment of faith and culture. Culture is enriched in the refining process of its values that faith brings about: whatever is defective in the values of culture is corrected in their contact with faith, the values becoming even more authentically human (and therefore divine) under the salvific influence of faith. Faith, on the other hand, is enriched by the novel ways of living and manifesting its values that culture brings about, since cultures are special ways of being human and those special ways can be enriching to the faith as they provide nuance to its living and understanding that otherwise would not be made” (109).

From this soteriological outlook, then, the major task of evangelization, that is, communicating the faith of the gospel, “is the bridging of the culture gap” (114). That happens in one of two ways depending on the cultural relation of the Preacher to the Hearer. If the Preacher and Hearer are from different cultures, the first moment of evangelization entails cultural analysis so that each person in the dialogue can begin to understand the “way of life” that forms the cultural screen through which they perceive. Once that gap has been overcome, the second moment of evangelization happens in which the Hearer and the Holy Spirit engage in a direct dialogue. This is a very important feature of evangelism for the preacher to know about. Significantly, evangelization is not simply a rational discourse about the nature of the world. Ultimately, it is the work of the Spirit, but a work that is always done in participation with the Preacher. Could this be a talking point between Claver and Luther’s Small Catechism explanation of the third article of the creed?: “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel...”

If the Preacher and the Hearer are from the same culture, the nature of the first moment changes, says Claver. The screens are

no longer cultural but, perhaps, of a psychological nature or a personality difference or differing kinds of life experiences. But like the culture gap when that gap is bridged the second moment begins in which the Hearer and the Holy Spirit engage in a direct dialogue (115).

Of course, Claver is very aware of the objections that might arise from his equation of inculturation and evangelization, especially, the charges of syncretism and acculturation (118-19) that have periodically been leveled against missionaries by the Vatican, the latest of which is the document "Dominus Iesus," issued in 2000 (158). But in closing, let me raise two concerns in the interest of Christian dialogue and mutual understanding about the central soteriological concern of the Christian message and how it correlates with culture.

While I have much sympathy with a theology of culture approach to doing theology, nevertheless, so it seems to me, Claver's wholesale (if not uncritical) use of the hermeneutical approach to culture as exemplified in thinkers like Geertz suffers on two grounds. First, it is profoundly reductionistic and second, it is far too sanguine about human nature and sin.

Concerning the second, Claver's approach is too sanguine about sin, first of all, from a sociological perspective. It ignores the significant work of critical sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists like Alvin Gouldner ("The Dark Side of the Dialectic"), Ernest Becker ("The Denial of Death"), and M. Scott Peck ("The People of the Lie"), respectively. Second, it is also far too sanguine about sin from a theological perspective because it ignores the long standing Catholic Theological Tradition of Paul, Augustine, Aquinas and Luther, to name a few, who all took seriously what is known as the doctrine of original sin. Indeed, outside of two references to sin—"The church's business is sin ... so it has to speak out against sin, against

evil, against wrongdoing” (p. 80) and “The human part of the inculturation process, like all things human, will never be free of an element of sin” (120)-the subject plays no substantive role in either Claver’s discussion of soteriology or his discussion of the structure of the church.

Concerning the first, Claver’s anthropological approach is reductionist in assuming that culture is purely a human construct. True, culture is a human construct, but not PURELY so. Unlike the human scientist who brackets the theological dimension of life, the theologian’s task is precisely to elucidate the theological dimension. Accordingly, for the theologian, culture, like the creation as a whole, is a product, not of humanity “en se,” but of humanity “coram Deo,” humanity in relation to God. As such, culture needs to be looked at not only through the lens of the social sciences but also through the lens of the biblical message which means, as I would argue, the Law-Gospel hermeneutic that undergirds that message. True, culture is a “web of meaning” and a “value laden system,” as cultural anthropologists assert. But even more importantly, for theological purposes, culture is also a “web of accountability,” a reality wherein people not only hold one another accountable for their “whole way of life” but wherein God is holding them accountable too. Culture is essentially a “critical” phenomenon, a “lex semper accusat” phenomenon, a “lex talionis” phenomenon, an as-you-sow-so-shall-you-reap phenomenon. Although I can’t go into detail here, nevertheless, interested persons can read more about this view of culture in my article “The Cross-Purposes of God in the Science and Politics of Food (from “Gospel Blazes in the Dark: A Festival of Writing Sparked in Honor of Edward H. Schroeder,” The Crossings Community, Inc., 2005) [on the Crossings website at <https://crossings.org/book/GospelBlazes.shtml>].

If the first concern has to do with the “law of God” in human

experience and culture, the second has to do with the “gospel of God” as experienced through Christian witness to the cross and resurrection of Christ. While it is true that Jesus exhibits many kinds of values as he encounters people in first century Palestine, what is more important to note is the way he ASCRIBES value to people. His values and his method of ascribing value, PROPERLY SPEAKING, are not the values of the law, which, when confronting “the business of sin,” ALWAYS condemns it. That is not to say that Jesus denies the importance of the role of the law in the human-divine encounter. On the contrary, Jesus is quite adept at using the law: Notice how he over and over again exposes hypocrites and silences his critics. But that is his ALIEN work. The PROPER work of Jesus is contrary to law. That work of Jesus “values” sinners in a way that they (accustomed only to the law’s way of valuation) could never have imagined, unless they hadn’t experienced it for the mselves-personally. Jesus values sinners by going to the cross, taking upon himself the death sentence that belongs to the them and, in return, giving them what they could never deserve, new life in his name. The proof that they are so valued is faith in Christ. Christian Theology calls that valuation by many names-mercy, salvation, justification, reconciliation, forgiveness of sins, etc. But however it is named, it comes about always only through the death and resurrection of Jesus. What surprised me in Claver’s Chapter 8 on “Inculturation” is that that theme of the death and resurrection of Christ never appears. It surprised me because his description of the “orthopraxis” of the BECs sounded like “stauropraxis” to me, a praxis of the cross.

These comments aside, Claver offers up a feast of insight on the “making of the local church” from which every pastor and missiologist can benefit. I can think of nothing more promising and hopeful than the kind of participatory church he describes. It is precisely the kind of church where Christians can talk

about the kind of issues I have raised here, and do so with Eucharist-the Holy Communion yes, but also with true thanksgiving for the partnership we share in the gospel.

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# Preaching the Christian Gospel from Old Testament Texts. One More Time.

Colleagues,

Two items criss-crossed my desk since last week's ThTh posting, which prompt this sequel to the topic of that post. This time with a focus on Luther and the OT. First was Kit Kleinhans' telling me about some Luther stuff she found on that Genesis text (prominent in last week's ThTh) about Jacob wrestling with God. Second was my reading Ralph Klein's article in the current issue of CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION, "Reading the Old Testament with Martin Luther—and Without Him." It prompted me to send something to Ralph.

Here you have both items—from Kleinhans and to Klein..

Peace and joy!

Ed Schoeder

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## NUMBER ONE. Kit's comments

She too attended the LWF consultation in March earlier this year at Augsburg. She was in the congregation for the closing liturgy

where the sermon text was Jacob's wrestling-match with God, and Christ didn't show up anywhere during the homily. In the ThTh570 posting I mentioned Luther's Genesis commentary with reference to that pericope. Here's what Kit told me.

*Ed, More fun, I think, is seeing where Luther makes reference to Jacob wrestling at the Jabbok other than in the Genesis commentaries. A few snippets with clear Gospel connections follow:*

- A. Against Latomus [Luther's Works Vol. 32, Page 193] God cares admirably for us by making us certain of two things. First, he teaches in Gal. 5[:22] what good works are manifest. "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace," etc.; and, in Matt. 7[:20], "You will know them by their fruits." [On the other hand,] He has made us certain that they [the good works] are not sinless and faultless (so that our trust is not in them), with the result that we can acknowledge in a confession without doubt or falsity that we are sinners in all our works and are men whom mercy has found. Further, in order that we may have unfailing peace, he has given us his Word in Christ, on which we rely with confidence, secure from all evil. The gates of hell, together with all sins, do not prevail against that Word. This is our rock of refuge where we, with Jacob, can wrestle against God [Gen. 32:28] and, so to speak, dare to press hard upon him with his promises, his truth, and his own Word. Who will judge God and his Word? Who will accuse or condemn faith in his Word?*
- B. The Gospel for the Sunday After Christmas, Luke 2[:33-40] [LW Vol. 52, Page 129] In Genesis 32[:30] after Jacob had wrestled and fought with the angel, he called that place "Peniel" or "Phanuel" and said: "I have seen God face to face, and because of it my soul has been saved." Now the*

meaning of "Peniel" is "face of God." But "face of God" is nothing else but the knowledge of God. Nobody knows God except through faith in his word. The word and promises of God declare nothing but consolation and grace in Christ; therefore, whoever believes them sees God's mercy and goodness. This amounts to knowing God properly and this makes the heart joyful and blessed, as David says in Psalm 4[:6-7]: "Raise up the light of your countenance over us, thereby you bestow joy upon my heart." And Psalm 80[:3] says: "O God, show us your face, then we shall be blessed." Many things are written in the Bible about the turning away and the turning toward of the face of God. Behold, in this manner all the fathers and saints of old were children of Phanuel, of the divine knowledge and wisdom which made them joyful. Their faith in the divine promises guided them and made them prophets. But they obtained faith and the promise only because they were dear little Annas, i.e., out of God's favor and compassion.

C. LW 18 Minor Prophets. Chapter Twelve [Hosea 12:4] If you want to be genuine followers of Jacob, do what Jacob did, etc. You do not supplant, but you are supplanted. Also, he wrestled with God. This is an example of very great faith. You, however, do not cling to the promises of God as Jacob did.

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## **NUMBER TWO Ralph W. Klein's article "Reading the Old Testament with Martin Luther—and Without Him."**

Ralph and I are old buddies from the trenches during the Wars of Missouri back in the 1970s. Equally dear—so I think—to each other. And that means we've arm-wrestled on theological matters before. Although he is a no-nonsense practitioner of the so-

called historical critical method in his OT scholarship, he's equally no-nonsense about the centrality of God's promise in, with, (and sometimes under, very under) the multi-layered texts of the Hebrew scriptures. So we have lots in common—and we don't always agree.

So his piece on OT and ML triggered some thoughts, which I passed on to him—and now do so to you. Should Ralph wish to continue the conversation, I'll gladly do likewise with his response, if he gives permission. I bet he will. Now just retired after 35 years as editor of CURRENTS (210 issues!) he may be looking for places to say something. Especially when piqued by friendly piquers. So you may hear more on this subject.

The full text of Ralph's essay comes with this post as an attachment in pdf format. I've never added an attachment to any previous Thursday Theology posting, so this is an experiment to see if it all comes to you via our listserve mediator.

*Hi Ralph, Have you read my Second Opinion (well sortuv) to your CURRENTS article, which was posted as last week's ThTh 570? About preaching the Christian Gospel from OT texts. That's actually your own central theme in telling us about Luther and the OT.*

*Too bad you're no longer at the helm of CURRENTS. Here's the outline of a response, an op Ed (in more ways than one), to your April article that I'd propose for you to publish.*

*Too bad that the Seminex 35th birthday party planners didn't think of something like this for the program next month. Not incessant lectures—such old hat—but Ralph and Ed “discussing” ML & the OT. That would surely be more fun for all of us goldie-oldies—and esp. our alums—than those already posted (threatened?) plenary presentations.*



*Items from my side for just such a conversation taken from your ML/OT article:*

- 1. Your several references to ML not being “helpful” in this or that OT utterance of his. Since when has “helpful” [a fairly recent neologism in contemporary analysis] been a valid category for theological adjudication? What makes for helpful or unhelpful? Helpful for what? I recently heard of a pastor who dismisses the notion of “wrath of God” because it is not “helpful.” Would that I could dismiss my diabetes on the same grounds.*
- 2. Though Luther’s promise-focus for the OT is cherished by you too, you find him often “much too christological,” “excessively christological” now and again. What’s the benchmark for “just the right amount” of christological? And just what constitutes “christological” when you are interpreting any Biblical text—OT or NT?*
- 3. And why should “21st century standards” be taken as a rubric for the proper amount of christology?*
- 4. And even more who sets “21st century standards”? Why should “today’s critical scholarship” be taken as a standard? Had you been at the Augsburg LWF bash in March, you’d have heard Asian and African Bible scholars—all of them with Ph.D.s from Western schools—almost unisonally tell you how “unhelpful” all that stuff is—21st cent. standards and critical scholarship—that they HAD TO learn because the Enlightenment still reigns even in allegedly post-modern western grad education—not only unhelpful, but useless, for their life and work in mission and ministry on the barricades in their worlds. [You’ve been overseas too, so you know .] And so they asked us westerners: Why is Christian faith dying in your Europe and N. America, since you have all this supposedly wonderful stuff in Biblical scholarship? By their fruits*

you shall know them?

5. You tell us readers that the Formula of Concord in our Lutheran Confessions contains “lines . . . which we know are not true.” Those are lines about the descendants of the Holy Patriarchs who allegedly were also promise-centered believers. I’d argue that Is. 53 signals one “descendent of the patariarchs” who verifies that “line” which you caveat. And maybe even extend the “descendents” right on into the time of Caesar Augustus.
6. “Perfectly clear” you say now and again about the meaning of this or that OT text.. I say “Hmmm...”
7. Luther on Satan & Gen. 3 “escalates unnecessarily [by whose standard of necessity?] and unhelpfully [aargh!], in my opinion, Satan’s role in the death of Jesus.” OK, prof, just what was Satan’s role in the death of Jesus? Helpfully, please. Have you ever read RWB’s UofC dissertation (1963)? He tracks Luther’s read on that one. It’s now available en toto on the Crossings website.
8. You like the definition of Gospel as “good news for a bad situation.” Not at all a “good” definition, I would say, for what “euagglion” means in the NT. Consult Fred Dankers’s magnum opus Lexicon. Also good is Elert’s concordance study on the term in his dogmatics—passed on to the ThTh crowd some time back <https://crossings.org/thursday/2008/thur110608.shtml>. I think Jack Elliot brought that phrase “into our circles.” Not exactly a blessing, not “helpful” – “in my opinion.”
9. Luther and Moses. You tell us readers what is “unhelpful” from ML in his opinions about Moses and the law. I think you are arguing with St. Paul—and St. John too—on this one, and not just ML. For John it’s beginning right in the prolog with the Moses/Christ “distinction.” If in doubt, see my ancient piece “Mosaic and Christic Ethos in

the Gospel of John" presented to the Society for Christian Ethics back in the days when I was young(er) and foolish(er). On the Crossings website.

10. Your concluding lines about reading OT "without" ML. First paragraph you tell us, reading the OT without Luther "means that we recognize in Judaism a faithful understanding of the OT." What? "Faithful?" And which of today's three American branches of Judaism would you designate as most faithful? I remember a Rabbi from the Reformed branch once telling our St. Louis pastoral conference that "orthodox Judaism" is a "different religion from mine." If "Judaism is a faithful understanding of the OT," why did the Judaism of the time find Jesus such a nemesis? Sounds like you're saying Paul got it wrong about his own fellow Jews, ditto for St. John, ditto for JESUS in John. Is there such a word as retro-sessionism? Maybe "21st cent. standards" make such a verdict "kosher" for what "we Christians" recognize in Judaism, but getting any NT author to agree to that won't be easy.
11. Your second last para. "Try to learn about God from a distinctively OT perspective." Whose "distinctively OT perspective?" Not only of the many different OT perspectives within the OT itself, but the plethora of distinctively different OT perspectives among OT scholars today—and throughout the last 2 millennia of religious history. Sounds like you're proposing "reading the OT with NO hermeneutic lenses at all." But that, I know you know, is impossible.
12. I'll make no attempt to validate Luther's horrific rant about the Jews in his later years other than some understanding why such madness can arise from my own times of paranoia and perceived defeats. On occasion I too have been simul peccator et peccator—no justus

showing whatsoever.

13. One more thought on the historical critical method. Ed Krentz and I did a point-counterpoint on this back in Seminex days when we offered a seminar on "Historical Critical Method and Law-Promise Hermeneutics." As I recall, neither one of us changed the other's mind. Here's my take on it. The HCM on its own does not bring anyone to the "Promise-Aha!" about the OT, so far as I know. That Aha! is what makes your own teaching and preaching, Ralph, so winsome. I'll bet you did not learn that while doing your Ph.D. at Harvard way back when. It's the fact that you see *promissio* as the center (eventually specked out, for example, in Isaiah 53 or Jeremiah 31) for good news in the OT and not Exodus/Sinai. Or, as Dell Hillers once showed us in his monumental book on Covenant in the OT, God's covenants with David (2 Sam7), with Noah, and with Abraham's are all *sola gratia/sola fide* offerings, qualitatively different at the core from God's covenant offers at Sinai and Shechem. THAT'S what trademarked your preaching/teaching when I've been in your audience. HCM can help you make that center even more winsome, but with alternate proposals for what the OT center is (and their names are legion) HCM will just as easily obfuscate *promissio*-finding.
14. And with that we're back to Bertram's probably MOST important essay of his entire life—three pages in the early years of the Wars of Missouri (several years before Seminex) on THE HERMENEUTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF APOLOGY IV. I think the Wars of Missouri arose *de facto* from that hermeneutical conflict, and not the alleged squabble about you exegetes and your HCM. For HCM the same verdict is true as Luther said about "human reason." She will sell herself to any and all customers. And all customers

*have their “Vorverständnis” [commitment, agenda, “angle”] already in place before they hire this agent to assist them in hustling their agendas.*

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# **Instrument for Internal Governance of Concordia Seminary in Exile**

Robert W. Bertram

*Foreword: Bertram is believed to be the chief architect of the Internal Governance Document; but its contents were joyously accepted and endorsed by the Seminex faculty, staff, and administration – and Bob would probably agree that the document is theirs.*

*The Internal Governance Document (IGD) represents a staple in Bob’s thinking, with roots in the Dominican monastic order, that “the decision-makers shall be the consequence-takers, and the consequence-takers shall be the decision-makers.” That approach to responsibility has a long trajectory in theological ethics, and is perhaps most notably at the center of H. Richard Niebuhr’s, “The Responsible Self.” For further reading, Bertram’s most concise presentation on this matter is evident in his article entitled “Responsibility: A Confessional-Ethical Splice” (available in the on-line Crossings library).*

*In many ways, the IGD represents an historical opposite to the top-down manner of operation evident from the experiences of*

*many who came to Seminex. One need only consider that the decisions that were governed at Concordia Seminary were under the jurisdiction of the "Board of Control." How much they sought to extend that control is evident in the controversy in the LC-MS and the resulting exile of faculty and students. This cruciformed-historical episode, I believe, prompted Bertram to prepare a modus operandi at Seminex in the IGD where that kind of top-down management would not be repeated.*

*One might also consult Ed Schroeder's commentary on the IGD in his Foreword to Bertram's book, A Time for Confessing (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), xiii-xiv, which actually inspired me to put the IGD into print once again. I admit, it is not easy reading, but it is best read as a document for the overtones and undertones of its theological composition, for which Bertram was a master.*

*Michael Hoy, 5/20/09, The Ascension of our Lord*

## Prologue

Conceived in crisis, born in faith, Concordia Seminary in Exile is a community of Christian men and women dedicated to confessional witness in the church we love and to the best in theological education.

As a result of the events which have brought us into exile and which characterize our life in exile we have come to a particular self-understanding. We are part of a confessional movement. We have a witness to make of our Lord Jesus Christ because our Lord Jesus Christ is our Witness before Almighty God. As our Lord gave himself to us, so too, we, as the church, give ourselves to the world.

We are members of our Lord's body, the church. Therefore, our ways of living together, dealing with one another, and accomplishing our common tasks will be ways of openness, trust, acceptance, admonition and forgiveness. A primary concern in all our action will be the building up of our community, the expression and cultivation of our brotherhood and sisterhood.

We believe that our special vocation is to be a community whose ministry is teaching and learning, first of all among one another, but also in God's church and His world around us, always under the reliable discipline of His Word. Every member of our community shares mutually in this ministry of learning and teaching.

We have come to appreciate faculty and students as members of two classes, equal in membership status which share equal responsibility for the community's identity, confession, and educational process.

## **Working Assumptions**

- 1) There shall be maximum participation of the members of the community in matters which affect the community as a whole.
- 2) Each membership class has an integrity of its own and is free to make its own decisions, though it considers seriously the implications of its decisions for the other membership class and for the community as a whole.
- 3) The basic distinction between policy formation and administration of policy is a distinction of function, not of person. Every student and faculty person has a role in both policy formation and administration of policy.
- 4) Policy formation decisions are made at the earliest stage commensurate with the scope and significance of the policy, and are reported for possible review at each subsequent stage.
- 5) Policy formation decisions of significance for the community

as a whole are made with the representative or corporate participation of all membership classes; no policy formation decision of significance for the community as a whole shall be made without participation of both membership classes.

6) Policy formation of decisions of significance for the community as a whole normally are made through a process that goes from faculty and students to the Board of Directors and then back from the Board of Directors through the president of the administrators for implementation and to the faculty and students for review and control with the Board of Directors conducting its own review and control.

7) Faculty-student policy committees and task forces assist the faculty and the students in making policy recommendations, in reviewing the effectiveness of policy, and in suggesting necessary policy revisions.

8) Faculty-student administrative committees and task forces assist the administrators in implementing policy.

9) Administrators assist and counsel policy committees and task forces in forming and recommending policy.

10) When a disagreement arises within the community it shall be resolved collegially.

## **Procedures for Internal Governance**

### **I. Policy Formation**

**A.** There shall be a three way division of labor for policy formation and administration of policy within the seminary community: Division of Seminary Relations, Division of Academic Affairs, Division of Community Life.

**B.** There shall be a division policy committee for each division responsible to faculty and students for policy recommendations within its own division.



**C.** The three division policy committees shall perform the following functions:

1. They shall recommend to faculty and students through the Faculty Coordinating Committee (FCC) and the Student Coordinating Committee (SCC) policy proposals on the basis of solicited and determined needs and opportunities seen by the two membership classes and which they themselves perceive within the division.

2. They shall review the implementation of policy within their division in terms of established policy and “against the corporation’s goals.”

3. They shall refer to administrators within their divisions concerns which have to do with implementation of policy rather than policy formation, plus any new ideas for pacing administrative innovation and improvement which are suggested by established policy.

4. They shall report all decisions to the community.

**D.** The three division policy committees shall be responsible for policy formation in fiscal and budgetary matters in their respective divisions. Where fiscal matters overlap, policy committees shall integrate their efforts.

**E.** Each of the division policy committees shall consist of four faculty members (three elected by the faculty and the fourth being, by virtue of their office, for the Committee on Seminary Relations the President, for the Committee on Academic Affairs the Academic Dean, and for the Committee on Community Life the Dean of Community Life) and four students (the fourth year representative, the second year alternate, and two students elected at large serve on Seminary Relations Committee; the second year representative, the first year alternate, and two students elected at large serve on the Academic Affairs Committee; the first year representative, the fourth year

alternate, and two students elected at large serve on the Community Life Committee).

**F.** Each of the three division policy committees shall formulate and periodically review its own job description for recommendation to the two classes.

**G.** The three division policy committees may request the Coordinating Committee to establish task forces within their division of policy consideration and with limited assignment and longevity; these task forces will consist of an equal number of faculty and students when the task is common to both classes. The three division policy committees may make suggestions for task force personnel. The policy task forces and administrative standing committees with policy concerns shall report directly to the respective division policy committee.

**H.** There shall be two overarching committees that deal with policy formation, called the Faculty Coordinating Committee (FCC) and the Student Coordinating Committee (SCC), whose responsibilities shall be to coordinate the work of their respective membership classes and to serve as a channel between the membership class and the policy committees.

**I.** Function and Duties of the FCC and SCC: the Faculty Coordinating Committee and the Student Coordinating Committee, in addition to their general coordinating and channeling responsibilities, shall each for its class:

1. be a committee on committees;
2. schedule meetings and arrange their agendas;
3. coordinate the policy considerations of the three division policy committees, especially in cases where they overlap or differ;
4. keep abreast of the reviewing and referring which these committees are doing within their divisions, so as to keep the

community's whole policy-at-work under a single overview;

5. receive recommendations from the three division policy committees and relay them to their class for approval or, where that seems inadvisable refer them back to the committees for reconsideration;
6. refer to the three divisions policy committees such new ideas as might generate innovation or improvement within their administrative divisions;
7. do its own reviewing, referring and recommending, but then only in those matters which do not fit within the scope of any of the three division policy committees;
8. use its own overlapping membership in the three division policy committees to keep them in touch, firsthand, with larger community-wide issues;
9. stay in close communication and coordination with its parallel Coordinating Committee, as per Bylaw 5.5;
10. conduct a periodic review of all task forces to ascertain which task forces are functioning maximally, which need strengthening, and which are no longer needed;
11. be directly and regularly accountable for all its doings to its class as a whole;
12. facilitate the biennial review of the president (5.9) and the annual evaluation of faculty members (5.10);
13. submit items to the agenda of the Board of Directors on behalf of its class in accordance with Bylaw 5.6;
14. facilitate, in all the above functions, "the aforesaid Guiding Principles of mutual respect, openness and trust among all who share in (the) life" of the community and, to that end, "at all times to seek the counsel and advice of" and to "report openly to" all those to whom it is responsible.

**J.** The relationships of the FCC and the SCC: the FCC and the SCC shall:

1. meet together at least once a month for the purpose of

monitoring the administration of the community's policy and of coordinating the policy-forming activities of the faculty and student classes;

2. communicate weekly through their executive committees (SCC Chairperson and Communications Coordinator, FCC Chairperson and Secretary) to apprise each coordinating committee of the concerns and activities which affect both classes;

3. meet jointly upon the resolution of either of the two coordinating committees;

4. be the channels by which all policy formation matters are communicated from one class to the other through the respective chairpersons;

5. call a "town meeting" of the two classes whenever they deem in necessary. Such a "town meeting" shall take place at least once every two months;

6. arrange for an annual review of the usefulness of the internal governance structure for report to their respective membership classes.

**K.** Policy formation shall proceed through the following stages: from task force to policy committee, to coordinating committee, to membership class, to Board of Directors. Policy recommendations or decisions at each stage shall be reported to the community. At the immediately succeeding stage the policy recommendation may be reviewed, referred back, adopted, or forwarded to the next level as is deemed advisable. The group involved in any succeeding stage shall have the privilege of reopening the matter for consideration.

## **II. Administration**

**A.** The President of the seminary shall be responsible for the administration of policy in the community as a whole and in each of its divisions and shall exercise his responsibility to the

Division of Academic Affairs through the Academic Dean and in the Division of Community Life through the Dean of Community Life. The president may appoint other administrators to assist in the implementation of policy in all three divisions and in the community as a whole.

**B.** The President may create administrative committees and task forces within each division to help implement policy.

The President shall appoint all members of administrative committees and task forces upon recommendation of their respective Coordinating Committee, in the spirit of Bylaw 5.3

**C.** The President shall, within the concurrence of the faculty and in conjunction with the students, appoint an Academic Dean, Dean of Community Life, and other administrative officers for the efficient functioning of the seminary.

The President shall deploy faculty and students on administrative committees and task forces as judiciously as possible so that the primary responsibility of teaching and learning as described in the prologue above and the Articles of Incorporation remains normative.

**D.** The President shall be advised by the Commissioner of the student class on all appointments of students to assignments or positions within the administrative structure of the seminary prior to appointment. The President shall be related to the student class through the Commissioner, who shall act as a channel for handling conflicts between individual students and the administration of the community.

**F.** Administrative committees and task forces shall be convened and chaired by the president or by his immediate assistants, the two deans, or by whichever administrative appointee of his is in charge of the respective administrative area.

**G.** Disagreements shall be resolved collegially:

1. A disagreement whether a particular decision is “policy formation” or “administration of policy” shall be resolved by a joint meeting of an equal number of representatives of the appropriate faculty-student policy committee and the corresponding administrative agency.

2. A disagreement as to whether an issue is peculiar to one membership class or common to both membership classes shall be resolved by the FCC and the SCC meeting jointly. Voting shall be as follows: the FCC shall, as a unit, have one vote, and the SCC shall, as a unit, have one vote.

### **III. Governance of the Two Classes**

#### **A. Faculty Class**

1. Elections: with the exception of the President and the two Deans, the faculty members of the three policy committees shall be elected in April for one non-renewable term of two years. Those whose two year terms on one of the policy committees expires shall not be eligible for election to one of the other policy committees for a period of one year. Auxiliary administrative officers shall not be elected to the policy committee in the division in which they serve.

2. One out of every three years each faculty person shall be excused from membership on administrative committees with the exception of those whose job description requires ongoing membership on a specific administrative committee.

3. The election of the members of the FCC by the faculty shall occur after the meeting of the nine faculty members elected to the policy committees.

4. The following procedure shall be followed in the FCC elections: Of the three faculty members elected to the Committee on Seminary Relations, one shall be elected to serve also on the FCC; of the three faculty members elected to the Committee on

Academic Affairs, one shall be elected to serve also on the FCC; of the three faculty members elected to the Committee on Community Life, one shall be elected to serve also on the FCC. 5. The term of office for FCC members shall be two years and non- renewable.

6. Faculty Officers: the faculty shall elect a chairperson from among the three elected faculty members of the FCC for a one year non- renewable term. The faculty shall also elect a secretary from its own number to serve for one year non- renewable term. The chairperson and the secretary shall not be the president or a dean.

## **B. Student Class**

1. The officers and their functions:

a. The Commissioner shall:

- (1) be a student elected for a one year non-renewable term;
- (2) preside over all meetings of the student class;
- (3) serve as spokesman for the student class to the faculty class, to the Board of Directors and to the public;
- (4) advise the Administration of Seminex when such advice is deemed necessary by either the administration or the student class;
- (5) be responsible for whatever financial matters the SCC and student class require;
- (6) have the right to appoint person(s) to represent him/her in the event that he/she cannot carry out a given duty.

b. The Chairperson of the Student Coordinating Committee shall:

- (1) be a student elected for a one year non-renewable term;
- (2) convene and preside at all meetings of the SCC;
- (3) monitor the committees and task forces of the SCC in order to provide for maximum coordination – pointing out to the SCC any duplication of efforts between existing committees or task forces;

- (4) recommend to the SCC the formation of whatever new task forces or committees are necessary for the student class's needs;
- (5) maintain a list of people serving on all task forces and committees in order to insure that no one student is overworked and that the community involvement is maximum;
- (6) propose to the SCC members for all task forces and committees;
- (7) represent the concerns of the SCC to any task force or committee;
- (8) provide for the evaluation of all committee and task force recommendations and decisions with respect to the community's existing policy as it is articulated in the Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws, and other policy statements which the community adopts.

c. The Communications Coordinator shall:

- (1) be a student elected for a one year non-renewable term;
- (2) keep and publish minutes of all SCC and student class meetings;
- (3) receive minutes of all the task forces and committees and provide for publication of précis of those minutes in a community journal;
- (4) handle all official correspondence of the SCC and the student class;
- (5) publicize all meeting dates and times of the SCC and the student class at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting times;
- (6) be responsible for the running of all student elections;
- (7) be responsible for holding an annual spring leadership conference for the existing SCC and the three newly elected officers;
- (8) be responsible for devising, maintaining, and activating small discussion groups or any other means for making policy



decisions in the student class.

2. The three academic class representatives, alternates and students at large:

a. The representative shall:

(1) be elected to a one year non-renewable term by the members of the academic class (first, second or fourth year) in which he or she is a member;

(2) be elected to serve as a member of one of the three division policy committees (first year representative on Community Life, second year representative on Academic Affairs, fourth year representative on Seminary Relations) in view of his/her competence in that specific area;

(3) serve as representative from his/her academic class to the SCC;

(4) convene and preside at all meetings of the academic class which he/she represents.

b. The alternate shall:

(1) be elected to a one year non-renewable term by the members of the academic class (first, second or fourth year) in which he/she is a member;

(2) be elected to serve as a member of one of the three division policy committees (first year alternate on Academic Affairs, second year alternate on Seminary Relations, fourth year alternate on Community Life) in view of his/her competence in that specific area;

(3) serve as alternate representative from his/her academic class to the SCC when the academic class representative is unable to be present;

(4) serve as secretary at all meetings of his/her academic class.

c. The student at large shall:

- (1) be elected by the student class for a one year non-renewable term to serve on one of the three policy committees in view of his/her competence in that specific area;
- (2) be six in number with two serving on each policy committee.

### 3. Membership of the SCC

- a. The Commissioner, the Chairperson of the SCC, and the Communications Coordinator and the three academic class representatives shall be elected members of the SCC;
- b. The elected members of the SCC may, if they deem it necessary, add two student at large members subject to the concurrence of the student class.

### 4. Student elections:

- a. The Commissioner, Chairperson of the SCC, and the Communications Coordinator shall be elected in April, prior to the Fall semester in which their terms of office begin by the entire student class;
- b. The academic class representatives, the alternates, and the at large policy committee members shall be elected in September of the academic year in which their terms of office begin;
- c. Screening task forces shall be established by the SCC for all student class elections which will:
  - (1) determine criteria and publish those criteria for all positions to be filled;
  - (2) solicit nominations for those positions from the community;
  - (3) present a slate of nominees with their qualifications for election.

### 5. Student Class meetings shall:

- a. be scheduled at least once every six weeks for reports, up-

date and evaluation of the community in terms of the community's goals as articulated in the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws;

b. require a quorum of members (Bylaw 2.6) to conduct official business;

c. be called in special cases by:

- (1) the Commissioner;
- (2) a vote of \_ of the members of the SCC;
- (3) a petition of 10% of the student class;
- (4) a majority resolution of the faculty class or Board of Directors.

**6.** Students who wish to participate on committees or task forces:

Any student who wishes to serve in any capacity in the internal governance of Concordia Seminary in Exile shall give his/her name and qualifications to the SCC Chairperson, if it is a policy position, or to the Commissioner, if it is an administrative position, for consideration. Only those students who have submitted their names and qualifications or whose names and qualifications have been given with their consent for a given position shall be considered.

## **C. Joint meetings of the two classes**

**1.** By concurrent action, the FCC and the SCC may call a joint meeting of the two classes and set the agenda for the same; similarly, ten percent of the membership of each of the two classes presenting to the FCC and the SCC a petition signed by ten percent of the membership of each of the two classes may do the same.

**2.** Such meetings shall be for the purpose of discussion only, not of parliamentary decision except in the case covered by

Bylaw 6.4.

[Internal\\_gov\\_RWB \(PDF\)](#)

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# Preaching the Christian Gospel from Old Testament Texts

Colleagues,

Two recent items of email-exchange have touched on the topic above. Here they are.

One is an email I posted to the pastor who had done the preaching at the closing liturgy of that Lutheran World Federation consultation (Augsburg, Germany) a few weeks ago. In my report to you on that LWF event I noted the 100% absence of Christ's name (or person or work) in the message offered. After a few exchanges with other LWF folks on the topic, it seemed time to write to the pastor directly. So I did that couple of weeks ago. No response yet. We never met face-to-face at Augsburg. After that closing service I tried to do so, but in vain.

The other item is a long appendix on the post to that LWF pastor. It's an email exchange with someone else, someone in Indonesia. But it is about preaching from OT texts. It's a conversation with Dr. Armencius Munthe, fellow-grad-student with me at the Univ. of Hamburg, Germany, decades ago. Armencius is retired bishop, sem prof—and some more things too—in one of the Batak Lutheran churches of Indonesia. He's still constantly on the go in pastoral and teaching tasks. So it came as no surprise

when he sent me a request for “preaching help” on a tough text from the prophet Micah, that was assigned to him as a guest preacher.

Armencius was present at last year’s Crossings conference and he learned (and liked) the six-step style of text study in preparation for preaching. He’s got it down, but OT texts are always tough. So he sends me a note.

All of these messages are here below. Starts with the LWF homilist, and then Armencius. Since Armencius and I are “old Hamburgers,” there’s a bit of German here and there in our exchange. But you can probably cope.

Peace and Joy!  
Ed Schroeder

P.S. In the most recent post from Armencius he tells of three recent pastoral visits he’s made to prisons on the island of Sumatra—worship, sermon, Bible study. “There are about 100 Christians in each prison. Some have Bibles, some do not. I’d like to distribute Bibles to them if I could. A Bible costs 40,000 ruppiahs, about 4 US dollars. That’s expensive in our country. Perhaps 160 Bibles are needed. Thank you very much.” [That’s Sumatran subtlety. My mentioning it to you is a RSV (Repeated Schroeder Version) of the same.]

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To the LWF pastor.

Dear Pastor X,

I think you have heard that after returning to St. Louis (USA) from the LWF consultation in Augsburg I gave a report to my Crossings Community (an internet association of some 700 pastors and laity). In my report (Augsburg2009) I contrasted the two

sermons preached at our consultation—the one on Sunday and the one at the very end of our consultation. I called attention to the fact that in one sermon Christ was mentioned many times—and (even more important) was “necessary” for the sermon to achieve its goal with us hearers, and in the second sermon Christ was not mentioned (nor needed) for the sermon to achieve its goal with us hearers.

Karen Bloomquist, LWF director of Theological Studies, and our host for the consultation, has expressed her unhappiness to me, that I did that. I think I was only reporting what actually happened and made no personal remarks about the respective preachers, although I made it quite clear that I thought the Christ-less sermon contradicted what the Augsburg Confession (and its Apology) confess as necessary for any Christian sermon. And I think that this statement is also a statement of fact, and not merely my opinion. It can be documented from the AC/Apol texts.

I don't think that you and I met when we were in Augsburg last month. It could have happened, but I am an old man and my memory is not so good anymore. I did try to speak with you after the closing liturgy, but I didn't succeed and our train departure was just one hour away.

Preaching a Christian sermon (where Christ's Gospel-promise is “necessary”) on Old Testament texts is not easy. I know that from my own many years of preaching and from my teaching homiletics to students. Yet that is what must be done in Christian proclamation—on any Biblical text—according to the Lutheran confessions.

You may not know that in Lutheranism here in the USA, the Lutheran Confessions play a more important role than does Luther himself. In the constitutional documents of Lutheran churches

here that is true, though not always in practice. So both in the ELCA and the Missouri Synod, it is the Lutheran Confessions, not Luther himself, which are the standard for what Lutheran theology is. And when there is debate—as there always is—it is the Book of Concord, not Luther, that is at the center when we wrestle with the “Ur-text” of the Lutheran heritage.

On preaching from OT texts I need to tell you this. St. Louis has a large Jewish population. In my ecumenical engagement I have been in contact and conversation with Jewish rabbis and Biblical scholars. Even once I was on a TV series for a few sessions with such colleagues. I have heard sermons from these friends. And, of course, it is no surprise that Christ is not necessary (nor ever mentioned) in such homilies. The Torah is for them indeed fulfillable without Christ being in the picture. “Love God, love neighbor. Yes you can do it.” I have not heard one of them preach on the Gen. 32/33 text that was yours—Jacob’s wrestling with God before meeting Esau— but I know what I would most likely hear: “Yes, we too wrestle with God and we wrestle with the sister/brother in daily life. In both cases it is a reconciliation struggle. It is really just two sides of the same struggle. And yes, you can indeed do it. But it is difficult. Yet be of good courage. Strive to be Torah-faithful. God promises also to be faithful and that will bring a good outcome.”

The key difference, as I know you know, is that our Augsburg 1530 confession claims: No, we cannot do it. Apart from Christ we are unable to fulfill the love-God commandment and the love-neighbor commandment.

I’m trying to remember how Luther exegeted this text in his Genesis commentary. I do not have it at hand any longer on my bookshelves. I wouldn’t be surprised to hear him say such things as this.

- Yes, we wrestle with God—actually every day and hour—we live coram deo. We “must” live coram deo whether we like it or not. God is always there (whether we acknowledge it or not).
- To wrestle with God on our own resources is guaranteed defeat, finally death.
- Thanks be to God that Christ intervenes. He “wrestles with God” in the “Froehlicher Wechsel” of Good Friday and Easter—and survives.
- Christ then offers that survival to us sola gratia. As he does to Thomas in John 20. It’s promissio. He encourages us to trust it. And “sola fide” it becomes our own victory in our God-wrestling. “Glaubstu, hastu. Glaubstu nicht, Hastu nicht.”
- From that victory in the God-wrestling match, we have strength and freedom to go and “wrestle” with the sisters and brothers and be reconciled with them too.
- Yes, it is not easy. It is a continuing struggle—both coram deo and coram hominibus. But Christ’s promise is strong. Its Easter power is sufficient for us—from here to eternity.

[Now that I have imagined Luther’s words on this text, I must actually go and check what he does with it. If you find out first, let me know.]

As a long-retired seminary teacher, I am sometimes asked for help by former students. Just yesterday came such a request from Armencius Munthe, a Batak Lutheran, now retired from being bishop and seminary professor in one of the Batak churches in Sumatra.

At the very last minute he asks for help. On Sunday (tomorrow) he is to preach two times in Medan, Sumatra, on a text from Micah. He wants to “necessitate Christ” in his sermon. But the



Micah text is difficult.

In his request he refers to “Diagnosis and Prognosis.” These are terms used in our Crossings Community for text study. In the Diagnosis process we ask: “How does the text diagnose the human situation, the human dilemma, of that ancient context and does that give us insight into diagnosis of our situation (our context) today? We pursue that diagnosis in three steps: on the surface, deeper (in the human heart), deepest of all (coram deo).

Prognosis then asks: What is the Good News offered by the text for healing and solving the dilemma at the time the text was spoken/written, and how might that be Good News for us as we wrestle with the same diagnosis?

We do, of course, hold to the Aug.Conf. conviction that Christ is necessary, the “only” Good News we know of that is “good enough” (=satis est) for healing our human dilemma coram deo (in whatever images, metaphors, word-pictures the text itself provides). So if step 1, 2 and 3 in the diagnosis process always brings us coram deo, the first step of the prognosis-series (actually a “new” prognosis, Good News, for the person/people just diagnosed), is always the crucified and risen Christ, articulated in whatever metaphors, word-pictures, images the text itself provides. [If the text itself—whether OT or NT—does not have an “opening” to get to Christ, then we follow Melanchthon’s axiom (many times in Apology 4) for such texts: “Over and over again we say that the Gospel of Christ must be added.”]

From that first prognosis step (necessitating Christ), then follows the second prognosis step (healing in the heart: new faith, new hope, etc.) and from that comes the third prognosis step: healing of our relationships, our personal and public

life, our callings in the world (once more in whatever metaphors, word-pictures, images the text itself provides). In terms of the Jacob/Esau text, “reconciliation between the brothers.”

If I haven’t completely bored you with this, and you wish to know more, Go to the Crossings web site ([www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org)) and click on Text Study. As you may know, Lutheran churches in America follow a three-year lectionary for Sunday worship and each Sunday has three texts to be read—Old Testament, NT epistle, NT Gospel. So the Crossings text studies often present OT texts. You can see in those studies how our community seeks to practice “Christum necessare” when working with OT texts.

“Zur Information” I will paste below both Armencius’s request and my response.

Christ’s Peace and Joy be yours on Misericordias Domini.

Ed Schroeder

ELCA

St. Louis, Missouri USA

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Dear Ed!

Next Sunday I will preach twice in Medan. The first Gottesdienst will be attended by at least 1.200 people. Could you please tell me how to see the Pericope of Micah 7:14-20 according to Diag- and Pro-gnosis?

Thank you.

Armencius

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Dear Armencius,

Some thoughts.

Peace and Joy!

Ed

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1. The text divides into two major parts.

IN PART ONE there are also two parts – A and B.

In Part A Micah is calling God to be shepherd with his flock “as in the days of old,” and the shepherd-sheep image dominates all of v. 14.

In Part B, those “days of old” are identified as the time when God brought them out of Egypt (v.15) and God is called upon to “do it again.” In doing it again God would do to the nations (the ones who have held Israelites captive in exile) what he did to Egypt at the time of the exodus. They will be shamed, speechless, deaf, licking dust like snakes, crawling on the ground. Even more severe (v.17) they shall have to confront God face to face—trembling, in dread, in fear.

This is definitely not GOOD NEWS for the nations. And the last lines of v.17 are Diagnosis-3 in the Crossings model.

Then comes PART TWO, v. 18-20. All about God’s mercy, forgiveness, compassion. All of this is “Prognosis” stuff (solution to the problem). But it has no Christ-focus, of course, here in Micah’s message. It is a statement of hope, of trust in God’s promise. But the promise is not yet fulfilled. Christ is the one who finally fulfills those words about mercy, compassion, forgiveness. V. 20 is the key to all this expected GOOD NEWS, namely, God’s promise-mercy-covenant with Abraham and his offspring (Jacob—and others).

In order to see the connection between the Abraham covenant and Jesus, you need to go to the NT, to the several places where Paul makes the connection—Romans and Galatians. Or also to those dialogs in John's Gospel where Jesus and his critics are arguing about "Abraham and his connection"—both with the people who are criticizing Jesus and with Jesus himself.

So even BETTER "from the days of old" is the Abraham covenant, better than the miraculous deliverance from Egypt, that also happened in the "days of old." For linked with the Exodus from Egypt is (always) the Sinai covenant. And Sinai is NOT Good News for sinners. Sinai offers mercy (chesed) ONLY to commandment-keepers, not to commandment-breakers, people who are sinners. That is stated explicitly in the very terms of the Sinai "contract." Verses 18 and 19 of your preaching text show that Micah's audience are sinners and need mercy, need something BETTER than Sinai. And what is Better than Sinai? God's covenant with Abraham, which is "sola gratia."

So you might frame your sermon according to "The Days of Old.—Two Different 'Days'"

### **FIRST DAYS OF OLD**

Exodus and Sinai. Good news, yes, but not Good Enough (for sinners).

D-1 Yes, they were rescued from Egypt, and received the law at Sinai, but they failed. Look at all that Micah has been saying in his diagnosis of them for the first 6 chapters. They have "failed" their part of the Sinai covenant. In what sense is that also true of us Christians in Medan today?

D-2 They have become like "the nations," and the "nations" are transgressor nations. And Sinai says that "God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children," on all those people (Hebrews or Goyim) who do not "love me and keep my

commandments.” Is that diagnosis true of us too?

D-3 So the same sort of destruction that comes upon “the nations” is coming upon Israel—and it did. Vv. 16 and 17 also describe what happened to Israel as God sent them into captivity and exile. When we Christians stray from our Good Shepherd, Christ, then we too “stand before God face to face—trembling, in dread, in fear.”

BUT, there is the Abraham covenant. Something even better “from days of old,” better than Exodus/Sinai— even “older” than Exodus/Sinai.

It will not come automatically. But when God himself fulfills the Abrahamic promise, THEN it is present for sinners to receive and enjoy. For all Sinai-commandment-breakers. It never (yet) happened in Micah’s day. Nor anywhere else in the OT times. Although a prophet like Isaiah gives us a picture of such a “shepherd” rescue in his Suffering Servant songs, esp. Is. 53.

So now to the Prognosis.

### **GOD’S “SECOND DAYS OF OLD.”**

P-1. The best thing Israel received in the Days of Old was not Sinai, but God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah. When was that promise fulfilled? God “shepherds” his people, fulfills his Abrahamic promise, in THE GOOD SHEPHERD who gives his life for the sheep, Jesus of Nazareth. See John 10 for details. Micah’s words v.18, 19, 20 give you his own terms to describe it to your congregation.

P-2. Glaubst DU, hast DU. When you trust this Good shepherd, all the Good Things he brings (v. 18-20) become your personal possession. That is real freedom from all oppression. First of all the “oppression” of being burdened by sin and guilt, but

then also even freedom from the “nations,” the principalities and powers, that may still persecute Christians. You, Armencius, have told me many stories about such situations in Indonesia. But they cannot destroy us. Though they may still be active, Christ has defeated them and their days are numbered.

P-3 Now we go back out into the world “hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd, following him” wherever he leads us—joyful and genuinely “free”—sharing with others the forgiveness, mercy, compassion that has been given to us. Even to our enemies who are persecuting us today here in Indonesia. Telling others about the “good voice” of the Good Shepherd, so that they may hear it too, and after hearing it, join us in following him. You have told me, Armencius, how that is actually happening with many Muslims throughout your country, although we in the West have never heard about it.

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## Testing Benedict XVI By the Company He Would Keep

Colleagues,

The Thursday Theology post for February 26, 2009 was Steve Krueger’s analysis of the “working theology” of the current pope, Benedict XVI. I thought it was superb, creme-de-la-creme, so I sent it on to you. Want to check it again? Here’s the URL: <https://crossings.org/thursday/2009/thur022609.shtml>.

Yet one of my dearest Roman colleagues, erstwhile priest and missionary in distant lands—and never one to say (in my hearing, at least) “If the pope says it, that settles it”—was very

unhappy with Steve's analysis and critique. He had some sharp words for Steve and also for the book Steve was reviewing, David Gibson's THE RULE OF BENEDICT. That surprised me, since the Jesuits (seldom inclined to give unmerited acclaim) in their official magazine AMERICA praised Gibson's book: "extraordinarily well-written, informative, insightful, and page-turning (yes, it is a page-turner) book." But for my Roman friend, creme-de-la-creme it was not. More like sour milk. It was all wrong.

What I saw Steve doing—and he told us that more than once in his essay—was taking B16's own claim "I am a decided Augustinian," and laying it alongside Luther's own kind of Augustinianism and showing us what he found. Brilliant, I thought. The very outline of his essay took us through "three Augustinian issues" with ML and B16 side by side. Yes, there are differences, and they are important differences. Steve's conclusion: "Though Benedict claims to be a fan of Luther, the theology of the cross—central to Luther's Augustinianism—is a side of Luther that seems to have eluded Benedict entirely."

Is that a serious defect or not? For the Augustinianism of an "Augsburg-Catholic" it is indeed. So whose theological tradition has a major "defect"? That's the standard Roman term for what non-Roman Christians are missing. And a defective theology of the cross—is that something subsidiary, or at the very center?

In order to show me and Steve the "other side" of the picture about Benedict XVI my Roman friend sent two texts just off the press—one from the pope's own hand and one from a scholarly defender. I sent these directly to Steve. "Does this change the picture?" I asked. What he tells us below is his answer. Though he didn't quote Pilate's famous dictum "What I have written, I have written," he might have. For the texts which purportedly would show the "other side," still show the very "same" side,

says Steve. Granted, that's a verdict coming through Luther's kind of Augustinian lenses. Here's what he found.

Peace and joy!

Ed Schroeder

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### **Testing Benedict By the Company He Would Keep**

A good test for the church is to notice the company it would keep. Robert Bertram used to remind his students that it was precisely the company Jesus would keep that led him to the cross. The haunting question is raised from the Gospels, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matthew 9: 11; see also Mark 2: 16 and Luke 5: 30). The question recurs also with equal force when you notice just who it is at the last judgment who had been in solidarity all along with the hungry, the thirsty, the estranged, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned noted in Matthew 25. The church, with its Lord, would be judged ultimately by the company it keeps.

Ed Schroeder asked me to do a follow up essay to my earlier review of David Gibson's *THE RULE OF BENEDICT* (2006) in light of some new data we have on this pope. Just before Benedict's recent globe-trotting to Cameroon and Angola in mid-March, presumably to keep company with the faithful there, the holy father found himself defending an action he had taken in January. In a letter dated March 10th, Benedict sought to make his case on why he lifted (the Vatican word is "remitted") the excommunication of four right-wing bishops associated with Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991) and his traditionalist Society of Pius X. The papal action is a good test case on evaluating where this pope's pontificate seems to be headed. Why would the pope want to hang out with these guys and the kind of Catholicism they represent?



Of course to a Lutheran, lifting excommunications by the Vatican wouldn't necessarily raise all the red flags and groundswell of criticism which the January 24th action by the pope appears to have triggered. Just on the face of it, lifting excommunications for the sake of bridge building could be seen, as Benedict would want the world to see it, as a rather nice "discreet gesture of mercy." Had Leo X of the 16th century been as generous in spirit who knows what might have happened almost half a millennium ago when one excommunicated Augustinian monk instead got the boot in 1521? Yet a deeper reading of the situation with the Lefebvrists most certainly places them at polar opposites to Luther. We are then left wondering what kind of new company this pope is urging upon his church if he is all that interested in building bridges in the name of Christ.

An old sidekick of Benedict's, Fr. Hans Küng (Küng had once brought the future pope to the University of Tübingen to join him on the faculty), has been one voice to have weighed in on his former colleague's papal action. In "Le Monde" Küng was deeply critical. Küng had once written about the kind of company the church ought to keep but it was of a different crowd than the traditionalist purist crowd represented by the Society of Pius X. Commenting on the "Guilty Church" in his monumental ON BEING A CHRISTIAN (which Benedict had been instrumental in condemning), Küng wrote:

"A Church which will not accept the fact that it consists of sinful men and exists for sinful men becomes hardhearted, self-righteous, inhuman. It deserves neither God's mercy nor men's trust...If the Church self-righteously remains aloof from failures, irreligious and immoral people, it cannot enter justified into God's kingdom. But if it is aware of its guilt and sin, it can live in the joyous assurance of forgiveness. The promise has been given to it that anyone who humbles himself will be exalted" (pp. 507-508).

The folks Küng talks about as worthy of the church's association would not, more than likely, describe the 491 priests, 215 seminarians, six seminaries, 88 schools, two university level institutes, 117 religious brothers and 164 religious sisters (and four formerly excommunicated bishops) which comprise today's Society of Pius X. If anything, the Society's standard condemnation of the post Vatican II church as an "adulterous union" makes one wonder just who didn't want to keep company with whom? Was it the church expelling the Lefebvrists or was it the Lefebvrists expelling the church?

Küng's Tübingen faculty colleague, Peter Hünemann, equally expressed his serious doubts about Benedict's "remission of excommunication" for just this very reason. As reported by the "National Catholic Reporter" (March 20), Hünemann, "one of Germany's most eminent theologians," wondered in "Herder Korrespondenz" about the validity of the papal excommunication-lifting when the four bishops in question had shown anything but remorse for their positions, let alone any genuine repentance required under canon law for the lifting of excommunication. The action, according to Hünemann, "was a grave mistake...one that will be very difficult to correct."

In his criticism of Benedict, Hünemann asked his reader to notice the whole history of the Lefebvrists and of the evolution of the Society of Pius X. The Society was founded in 1970 by French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, an embattled prelate who had once been Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers largely responsible for bringing the faith to French Africa. His traditionalist views, clearly in evidence at Vatican II, ultimately ran afoul of the more progressive voices of his congregation and the French bishop ended up turning in his resignation for retirement in 1968 to Pope Paul VI. Lefebvre had been known for his identification with the defeated monarchists after the 1789 French Revolution who opposed the revolutionary

principles of liberty, fraternity and equality and who had been sympathetic with the French Vichy regime of Marshal Petain which had collaborated with Nazi Germany alongside other right-wing voices and causes in French society.

Archbishop Lefebvre had gained notoriety at the Second Vatican Council for trying to undercut the language on the Council's approved document "On Human Dignity." Failing that, after his retirement in 1968 as Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers, Lefebvre took up his cause by responding to a call from traditionalist French seminarians for a conservative seminary (they had been refused ordination by Rome). The birth of that seminary in Switzerland in 1969 ultimately gave rise to the International Priestly Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) in 1970, given "provisional" status by Bishop Francois Charriere of Freiburg, Switzerland for six years.

By 1975, the "Wildcat Seminary" (as it was known to the unsympathetic French bishops who refused its graduates ordination) had worn out its welcome and after two unsuccessful meetings with the appropriate commission of cardinals for reconciliation, was officially closed by the Vatican which also dissolved the Society of Pius X. Nevertheless Lefebvre, now openly defiant, persisted in his work. When the Archbishop went ahead with ordinations in 1976, he was informed that in order to retain his canonical status he needed to apologize to Pope Paul VI. Instead, Lefebvre in his response blasted the Roman pontiff and the Council's work declaring Vatican II was "a compromise with the ideas of modern man." Paul VI responded by suspending the prelate.

Of particular note, one of Lefebvre's causes had been rejection of the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, especially the introduction of what the Archbishop called "the bastard rite" of the Mass of Paul VI. The Society, instead, defiantly retained

only the Tridentine liturgies and made the Latin mass a major drawing card of support. Lefebvre had even joked that Pope Paul VI had done him a favor by forbidding him now to perform the new rites and tried to argue that "he had dodged the penalty by administering the sacraments using the previous formulas." According to one observer, Paul VI was not amused.

After several failed attempts with both Paul VI and John Paul II at reconciliation (in 1976 and 1978), Lefebvre announced his intention in 1981 to consecrate a bishop to succeed himself. The Archbishop had even finessed an agreement with the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 1988 to regularize the Society of Pius X again and to allow for Lefebvre to consecrate one bishop with Vatican approval. Later that year on June 30, Lefebvre reneged on that agreement and, despite Vatican warnings about "a schismatic act" and of "theological and canonical consequences," consecrated not one but four SSPX priests as bishops: Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson, Alfonso de Galarreta and Bernard Fellay. Bishop Emeritus Antonio de Castro Mayer of Campos, Brazil joined as co-consecrator.

The next day the Congregation for Bishops issued a decree that this was a schismatic act and that all six people involved had incurred automatic excommunication. On July 2, Pope John Paul II condemned the consecration in his apostolic letter "Ecclesia Dei" and said that, by virtue of canon 1382 of the Code of Canon Law, the bishops and priests involved were indeed excommunicated.

Lefebvre himself died in 1991 at the age of 85. His controversial life included not only his support for a pre-Vatican II church purified from "modernism" but support for political right-wing causes. Along with endorsing the authoritarian French Vichy regime (1940-1944), the prelate went on record in 1976 with praise for the regimes of Jorge Videla in

Argentina and Augusto Pinochet in Chile. He also was noted for his historic praise in 1985 of the governments of Francisco Franco of Spain and Antonio Salazar of Portugal, noting that their neutrality during World War II had spared their populations the tragedy of war. In 1985, the French periodical "Present" quoted Lefebvre as endorsing the far-right leader Jean-Marie le Pen on the grounds the politician was the only political leader opposed to abortion. In 1990, Lefebvre was convicted in a French court of opposing Muslim immigration into Europe through hate speech, stating that "it is your wives, your daughters, your children who will be kidnapped and dragged off to certain kinds of places as they exist in Casablanca."

As Peter Hünemann assessed the meaning of lifting the excommunication of the Lefebvrist bishops, it is this storied life and its legacy that he has in mind. He noted that as recently as 2005, one of the bishops, Bernard Fellay, in meeting with the pope, seemed to be the one still laying down the ground rules for reconciliation, continuing to insist that the Lefebvrists are the ones "who stand in true tradition of the church." The Hünemann critique offered two examples of Vatican II changes which the Lefebvrists continue to regard as "criminal:" First off, "heretics and schismatics" (Protestants and Orthodox) became "all our brothers and sisters who share our faith in Jesus Christ" and secondly, "the perfidious Jews" became "the Jewish people, the first to hear the Word of God." Hünemann seemed to be asking, "Is this the kind of crowd we want to be reopening the door to?" As the "National Catholic Reporter" puts it, "'The pope and the cardinals," Hünemann states, "are just as bound to a valid and accepted council as every Catholic is. The lifting of the excommunications were therefore a grave mistake on the pope's part . . . the pope's action is null and void under paragraph 126 of canon law.'"

In his Letter of March 10th, "Concerning the Remission of the

Excommunication of the Four Bishops Consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre," Benedict himself appears to be genuinely perplexed by all the uproar his action created. The pope begins with acknowledging "a discussion more heated than any we have seen for a long time." Even though "many bishops and...faithful were disposed to take a positive view of the Pope's concern for reconciliation, the question remained whether such a gesture was fitting..."

First off, the pope continues, there was that "unforeseen mishap" of the Williamson situation, which seems to have doubly complicated the whole affair. (It turned out that one of the four bishops in question, Richard Williamson of Britain, has had a long history of holocaust denials and very anti-Semitic public comments). "The discreet gesture of mercy," says Benedict, "suddenly appeared as something completely different: as a repudiation of reconciliation between Christians and Jews."

Yet, according to the pope, nothing could have been further from the truth. The flap over this unintended meaning of the "remission" was a "misunderstanding."

In his letter, the pope next argues that many critics have failed to understand the distinction between lifting an excommunication for the sake of the healing of schism among the college of bishops (that's an individual thing) and the doctrinal issue of the status of ministers from the Society of Pius X. "Until the doctrinal questions are clarified, the Society has no canonical status in the Church, and its ministers-even though they have been freed of the ecclesiastical penalty-do not legitimately exercise any ministry in the Church," writes the pope.

However, papal critics who parse pontifical sentences and their meaning could easily conclude that since the Lefebvrists have

never stopped their sacramental ministry, and, indeed have regarded theirs as the truer and more faithful ministry, the de facto effect is legitimacy now by the pope. Hünemann sadly notes that among Benedict's concurrent actions has been to re-legitimate the Latin rites of the Tridentine Church, one of the very foundations of the Lefebvrist movement.

Benedict, however, appears to believe he can finesse the differences. His letter next appeals to the requirement for any group wishing to be in communion with the bishop of Rome to accept the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council along with "the post-conciliar magisterium of Popes." Yet, the pope has added a contextual nuance to Vatican II. "The Church's teaching authority cannot be frozen in the year 1962," he writes with a sobering caveat for the benefit of progressives. 'But some of those who put themselves forward as great defenders of the Council need also to be reminded that Vatican II embraces the entire doctrinal history of the Church.'

However one scrutinizes papal sentences for their nuances, Benedict appears to believe that his version of bridge building to the extreme right as he "strengthens your brothers" (Luke 22: 32), is consistent with his overall pontifical game plan. "The overriding priority is to make God present in the world and to show men and women the way to God...whose face we recognize in a love which presses 'to the end' – in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen." This priority is directed to "the real problem...that God is disappearing from the human horizon, and, with the dimming of the light which comes from God, humanity is losing its bearings, with increasingly evident destructive effects."

The pope then adds that disunity among "all believers...calls into question the credibility of their talk of God." True enough, the pope continues, countering disunity involves "ecumenism" and "interreligious dialogue" and the "social dimension of the

Christian faith.” It also involves for Benedict the ‘gesture of reconciliation” enacted toward the Lefebvrists, who, ironically, have been among the most outspoken critics of the very ecumenism, interreligious dialogue and “devotion to the suffering...rejection of hatred and enmity...the social dimension of the Christian faith” of which Benedict speaks. It’s hard to reconcile this crowd (complete with Nazi sympathies and holocaust denials) to those lofty goals. But, with Benedict, there you are.

In probably a rare moment of self-pitying, obviously meant to produce guilt in his critics, Benedict laments, “At times one gets the impression that our society needs to have at least one group to which no tolerance may be shown; which one can easily attack and hate. And should someone dare to approach them-in this case the Pope-he too loses any right to tolerance; he too can be treated hatefully, without misgiving or restraint.”

So, it appears for the Roman communion the Lefebvrists are more or less back in the fold, at least as far as Benedict is concerned. Benedict has pressed his point that they represent company the church ought to keep. Notwithstanding ending his letter on the note of Easter and its “renewed hope,” I would wonder where in the whole episode was the crucified One, the One who kept company with outcasts, tax collectors and sinners? If, as the pope says, God is missing from the world, where might God be found?

In his LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON, Dietrich Bonhöffer offered a different perspective on the absent-from-the-world-God. There, Bonhöffer wondered if it wasn’t God letting Godself be pushed out of the world as a construct of human ideas (the explanation of everything we couldn’t otherwise explain) and onto a cross where God could do us all so much more good? As Bertram would note in his CRUX, it is only as we are awestruck



and flabbergasted at the foot of the cross, that this is what it cost the Son of God to hang out with the poor likes of me in order to redeem me, that then the greater questions of God's absence and presence can begin to be asked and answered.

From all reports keeping company with the Lefebvrists takes Benedict's church to an entirely different place, far away from the Crucified One.

Pastor Stephen Krueger  
Sunday of the Passion, 2009

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## **The Gospel in “The Shack” and the “Gospel in the Stable”**

Colleagues

When Phil Kuehnert's item on THE SHACK came your way a couple of weeks ago (ThTh564), not everyone of you was satisfied. One very unhappy camper told me “Having read and been troubled by The Shack, I was eager to read a theologically astute critique of the book. Instead what I got was pablum of an enervating sort. This falls far below the Crossings standard.” I tried to comfort this vexed co-crosser by telling him that Phil had indeed met my “standard” (which I claim is a cut or two above pablum), and that's why it was posted as a ThTh offering.

In addition I mentioned that when Phil and I were discussing his assignment, we agreed that he wouldn't do a standard review of The Shack, but use it as a way to show us his own convictions about Pastoral Care (capital P and capital C which means

“necessitating Christ” in Phil’s lingo)—and how he practices it. The Shack is a classic(?) example of pastoral care with no caps. It’s happening everywhere, Phil tells us. In his conclusion he says it flatout (if you missed it beflore) that in the no-caps kind of pastoral care—which dominates Pastoral Care Education programs these days, and thus the practice out in the field—“the message of Christ’s death on the cross is robbed of its power. But The Shack is religious fiction . . . and it does provide pastoral care, but not Pastoral Care.”

In our e-mail exchanges before Phil finished the essay, he conned me into doing something akin to what the unhappy camper asked for. Here’s how it happened. After I’d finished reading the book, I scribbled out “some thoughts,” and sent them to Phil’s tundra-turf up there in Fairbanks, Alaska as we continued our conversation. Here they are.

Peace and joy!  
Ed Schroeder

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Phil,

I read The Shack last weekend whilst you were minus 44 there in Fbknks, and have some thoughts for your consideration as you “press on” doing your own piece for our ThTh crowd.

1. The gospel in THE SHACK and the gospel in the STABLE at Bethlehem are not the same gospel. What the four gospels say about Jesus and what The Shack says about him are two different gospels.
2. The crunch point is not author Young’s surprising and innovative Trinity, but the Good News offered by the Trninty that Young creates.
3. Though Young is down on “institutional religion,” his

gospel is itself at the center of today's non-institutional evangelicalism. And it is an "other" one. Almost "institutionalized" these days in that group's "anti-institutionalism."

4. To wit: Young is clearly anti-nomian with reference to the "lex semper accusat" [=God's law our constant accuser] of the Lutheran confessions. God is never the sinner's critic in his theology. At least, not a serious critic. Thus there is no wrath in God. Or as Bertram so winsomely puts it in his book, there is nothing about sinners that "infuriates God."
5. God –the whole troika of his imaginative THREE person deity–is 100% "s lippy Agape."
6. Anti-institutional. Not only is "institutional church" a "no-no" for his jovial troika, but all of society's institutions. His God says "I don't create institutions." Augs Conf. Art. 16–au contraire–says God DOES create institutions. Only one of those statements can be true. This from the review below:

*Young is no longer a member of a church, nor are his publishing partners, both former pastors. They are a part of a movement that rejects the institutional church, but Young says he doesn't feel "any need to try to yank people out of systems or be negative about them." His hostility, though, shows up in THE SHACK when Jesus says, "I don't create institutions; that's an occupation for those who want to play God. So no, I'm not too big on religion . . . and not very fond of politics or economics either. . . . And why should I be? They are the man-created trinity of terrors that ravages the earth and deceives those I care about."*

7. That's anti-nomian stuff again. First anti-nomian about God's law accusing sinners, and now with reference to the

usus politicus of God's law operating in the institutions of human society. Are institutions God-created or man-created? Because he thinks they are all coming from "man's side," they are no good for Young. Nothing God-sided about them. Luther, of course, reading the Bible with law/promsie lenses, heard God to be the creator of the institutions—for sinners' benefit, good stuff as God's ongoing action of preservation in a sinner-populated world. These institutions are always managed by sinners, sure, but even with sinners running them, God's work of preservation and retribution (also of the magistrates) does indeed happen. Not always perfectly, but nevertheless . . . . And it'd be a helluva (literally) lot worse if sinners set up non-institutional societies, as Young wishes for. Such societies really would be MAN-created, i.e., contra God the creator.

8. But now back to the Gospel according to THE SHACK.

- God's love has only one thing to remedy in the human race: the stupidity, cupidity, of free-will humans. Free-willers who chronically use their free-will "just plain wrong."
- Mack's needed salvation is informational. Fancy word is "noetic" He needs information so he can understand. He does not need forgiveness. He just doesn't see how it all computes—and now radically so after Missy's horrendous death.
- so Mack needs (another technical term) "gnosis," knowledge. He needs insight. His deity supplies it. And what he gets is a gnostic gospel from the troika.
- the redeemed life of humans is primarily a life of love. Just like the troika's own consortium of three. When replicated in humans it's all about sharing, about loving relationships—with a minimal

role (if at all) now played by “faith.” For where is there any need to “trust” at all, after you’ve gotten the insight on how God works this all out and how it all comes out OK in the end?

- There is no “Anfechtung” [challenge to faith, an attack] for Mack any more after the Troika has brought him into clarity. [I ought to re-read it to see how in each chapter this and that “topic” of theology gets explained to Mack—like J.T. Mueller’s dogmatics for us LCMS seminarians in the 1950s.] Is there no Anfechtung for believers? Not so according to Biblical faith, beginning already with Abraham at Mt. Moriah. Faith is always beset by Anfechtung to and through to the final encounter with the last enemy. Christian faith continues to trust the Mangled Messiah CONTRA the continuing life-experiences that negate His promise. My Doktorvater wrote a whole book on “Der Angefochtene Glaube” = “Faith is always beset by Anfechtung.”

9. All the reviews I’ve read (only a couple) signal the autobiographical and that Young says so. Mack IS the author Young. So this is the gospel according to Wm. Paul Young. It’s a fifth option to the canonical four gospels.
10. The gnostic gospel in summary offered to Mack by his tripartite guru: Here’s how it all computes.
  - a. The fundamental theological ellipse is free-will humans and a monist deity in three-flavors but all the same ice cream. There is no conflict within God to get sinners saved. Nor any conflict with other principalities and powers who claim Mack for their own..
  - b. Humans have free will. There is no initial “bondage of the will” where my volition/choices are already under the management of God’s own opponent. [I don’t

remember any mention of God's adversary anywhere in the story. Maybe I missed it.] Luther's Bondage of the Will, his epic arm-wrestling on that topic with Erasmus, is probably unknown to the author. Whether he knows it or not, he sides with Erasmus. So do most of America's citizens—also those in the church (especially “evangelicals”)—and also sadly most folks, I bet, in Lutheran churches.

- c. The horrendous death of Missy is the theodicy [how can God be just when such awful things happen?] question for Mack. He's given a gnostic solution.
- d. The monist deity is in a sense a part of a larger Manichaeian blueprint. It's not two supernatural powers (two conflicting deities), Power of Evil and Power of Good (Love) as in classical Manichaeism. It's sinful humans who are the anti-god to True God. But if that is the sum total of the “enemy” that God has to confront to save these very same antagonists, then their salvation will be no big deal. For who is patently the bigger God in this tussle? Piece of cake.
- e. I'd have to re-read it to get Young's specs on what really happened on Good Friday/Easter Sunday. I'd be expecting a gnostic version here too. “I want to understand” and “We want to help you understand” is a cantus firmus throughout the book. Mack's redemption is to “get his head screwed on right” about linking the living God to his own mangled childhood and Missy's murder. Maybe the reason I don't remember any/much Good Friday/Easter stuff is that it isn't there. Or if so, it is used to illustrate just how sloppy God's agape really is. You, Phil, could check that out. And you can do what I am unable to do—link all this to the mayhem and

madness and Anfechtung you know—for yourself and for those many many of God’s kids whom you’ve shepherded when their encounters with horrendous evil made it “perfectly clear” that trusting Christ’s promise is sheer insanity.

Enough already before breakfast.

Cheers!

Ed

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## **The Lutheran World Federation Needs Help. It’s the “L” Word.**

Colleagues,

It’s not a “Tale of Two Cities,” ala Dickens, but “two tales of the same city,” two “tellings” about what happened at that Lutheran World Federation consultation in Augsburg, Germany, last month. That’s what you received in two posts that came your way in the last fortnight from this computer. One was the ThTh #565 posting (April 9) and then an “In-betweenner” (April 13), reflections on the consultation from Karen Bloomquist, director of the Department of Theological Studies [DTS] of the LWF, the host for the event.

Karen’s telling celebrated what my telling bemoaned.

[One German participant, upon reading my report, told me that he agreed with the theological analysis, but didn’t like my “complaining tone.” And he had four German words that he could

have used were he writing to me in his mother-tongue: “nörgeln” oder “jammern” oder “quengeln” oder “klagen.”]

He was right—though I don’t know if I covered all four of those German verbs. I was indeed complaining, complaining that the “consentire de doctrina evangelii” ( consensus about preaching the Gospel) celebrated (yes, that’s the right word here) in the Augsburg Confession of 1530, Article 7, was hard to find in the confessing done at Augsburg 2009. And that was not a good thing for the “L” in LWF—nor for the “free course of the Gospel” in Lutheran churches today.

In Karen’s telling, she did not dispute that wide variety of Gospel-meanings present at A2009, but she saw it as a plus. Well, was it or wasn’t it?

Chris Repp, ELCA pastor in southern Illinois who was Karen’s student several decades ago, didn’t wait for me to ask you listserve receivers for your opinion, but sent me something right away. He’s given me permission to pass it on to you as this week’s ThTh post. If you wish to take another look at my telling, it’s on the Crossings website<https://crossings.org/thursday/2009/thur040909.shtml> Karen’s is not so easily accessible, so I reprint it here below. Chris’s prose then follows.

Peace and joy!  
Ed Schroeder

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**Karen Bloomquist.**

“That is not the Lutheran theology or church that is familiar to me!” Some Augsburg 2009 post-consultation reflections

Many superlatives have been used to express what participants at



the March consultation experienced. What participants experienced and how they interpreted it varied greatly with their respective contexts, backgrounds and pre-conceptions.

Meeting as we were in the city where the Augsburg Confession was first presented in 1530, and which since then has been the definitive confessional basis for Lutheran churches, some might assume that its tenets would be reflected in all that was said and done. However, the focus of the consultation was not on repeating one set of normative understandings of "Lutheran theology," but on hearing from and interacting with theologians from Lutheran churches around the world today that are quite different from those of 16th century Germany. Familiar Lutheran convictions did come up frequently, but how they were interpreted or applied varied. The focus was not on Lutheran theology per se, but on discerning what being "Lutheran" actually means today, as these diverse churches interpret the Bible, pursue critical theological work, engage in distinctive church practices, and carry out their calling in the world. The approach was intentionally inductive rather than deductive, in order to open up space for daring to explore critical questions that may go outside usual Lutheran categories, for the sake of communicating the gospel and living out God's mission in today's world. This is a complicated challenge that can hardly be accomplished in one week, among theologians of such different backgrounds and understandings. Thus, some may be disappointed that there were not clearer answers that all could readily embrace. Yet that would not have reflected the reality of these churches today.

However, what did occur was itself an important movement in that direction. I sense that nearly all the participants, wherever they came from, repeatedly had surprised reactions to what they heard others expressing: "That is not the Lutheran church or theology that is familiar to me!" For some, this meant that key

Lutheran formulas were not being honored, or certain practices that they have long associated with what it means to be Lutheran. Others expressed boundaries of their theological understandings being stretched in unfamiliar ways. Yes, there were reassurances that there is a Lutheran “grammar”, grounded especially in justification by grace through faith, that we share in common, and many were reminded of emphases in this theological heritage that have been forgotten, or never known. But for nearly all, there was a stretching of the horizon of questions and perspectives that need to be accounted for, in rethinking if not transforming Lutheran understandings and practices in the 21st century.

As I stated in my opening presentation:

*Such a “Lutheran identity” cannot be based only on coded Lutheran formulas, or historical legacies brought by missions, or on the basis of ethnic or tribal identities, or historical accidents. Instead, sifting through, re-conceiving, and “transfiguring” Lutheran theology is a dynamic movement in which the grace and promise of God is communicated through words, symbols and actions that look, sound and feel much different from those in 16th century Germany, or 20th century America.*

That daunting task was only begun at Augsburg 2009. But relationships and conversations were begun there that can and must contribute to this further work in our respective contexts, and now, in more intentionally cross-contextual ways.

Meanwhile, I invite those who participated in Augsburg 2009 to share what was especially surprising, disturbing, or reassuring for them.

Karen Bloomquist

## Chris Repp

There are several straw men that get dispatched in Dr. Bloomquist's reflections: Lutheranism as "coded language," as theology from/for a particular context/culture only, as a limited set of "categories," and one flesh-and-blood chap (as it were), the Augsburg Confession as a "set of normative understandings," who is summarily dismissed without a hearing. In my view, Lutheranism is precisely that latter fellow – a particular claim about who God is and what the gospel is. Of course, that particular claim must be translated for each age and culture. And I'm fully aware that translation is never as straightforward as we would like, never simply a matter of decoding. But it does presume that there is something there to be transmitted. (Another issue here is who is in charge of the translating, and who decides whether it has been successful. But even so, the presumption remains that there is a "something" to translate.)

The methodology of the consultation, as Dr. Bloomquist describes it, effectively treats Lutheranism as something tribal or genetic (despite her own insistence that it should not be treated so) – an agglomeration of churches and ethnic groups who share a common history, but may or may not now share any set of core understandings or principles. Or at least we must now discover what common ground we might have. Or maybe not even that. Maybe we are just meant to rejoice in our diversity and forget about any commonality – rejoice that we have Luther as our ancestor and leave it at that. (But see Matthew 3:9).

Because of my understanding of what Lutheranism is, I can't really fathom what it means to discern what "being Lutheran

means today” without starting with its core theology. The Lutheran Reformation was a theological reformation, as distinct from, say, the political reformation in England, or the legal/social emphasis in Geneva. It seems to me that a Crossings approach would have done exactly what Dr. Bloomquist says was the intent of the consultation without ignoring/forsaking our core theology – crossing the gospel with the diverse contexts and experiences of the various churches. (Are the Lutheran Confessions really the obstacle that she seems to suggest they are, getting in the way of the “real” work of the church? Aren’t they rather the lifeblood of the Lutheran movement?)

By not beginning with a shared core theology, I wonder how we can tell the difference between “stretching boundaries” and transgressing them. How can we tell when “re-conceiving” and “transfiguring” actually become transformation from one thing to another? Who is allowed to say when a practice that no longer looks Lutheran actually isn’t? And on what basis? Dr. Bloomquist identifies a common Lutheran “grammar” grounded in justification by faith, which she said served as reassurance at the consultation. But even Baptists will assure you that they believe in justification by faith. It’s how that conviction plays out in the broader theology and life of the church that makes the difference between Lutherans and Baptists.

Will God simply bless whatever we Children of Luther decide is our calling, whichever direction and however far we choose to stretch? Or is there some external word that addresses us, that norms our encounters with different cultures and times, even while it allows for dynamic, creative stretching that does not go so far as to change the gospel into something that ceases to be gospel?

Chris Repp, Pastor  
Epiphany Lutheran Church

# Two Easter Eggs for my Basket Came on Easter Monday

Colleagues,

Two Easter Eggs showed up in my e-mail Easter Basket on Easter Monday. One was Fred Niedner's Maundy Thursday homily at the Valparaiso University chapel from just a few days before. The second was from Hong Kong, from Ed Strohschein, Lutheran missionary there in the People's Republic of China. Ed's Easter basket offering was passed on to me by Cathy (nee Strohschein) Lessmann, long-term manager of the Crossings office here in St. Louis and Ed's sister. [All the Strohschein siblings are "mish-kids." Their parents were first-wave Missouri Synod missionaries to the Philippines right after WW II.]

I'll start with the one from Hong Kong.

Ed Strohschein is a long-term Crossings junkie and an old China hand. He attended university there (Wuhan, I believe), got his first paying job as a business exec for Ralston-Purina in Beijing. With mish-kid blood in his veins, and now a Chinese wife Shauna, he moved over to the calling his dad and mom once heard. Now for many years Ed has been a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod mission manager working out of Hong Kong.

Back in 1992, when Ed was in Beijing as a businessman, he sent me an email: "Ed, if you can get to Hong Kong, I'll get you up to Beijing and we'll do a Crossings workshop here." I said OK.

He went to work and organized a Crossings weekend workshop right there in the capital of the PRC. By the time it was all put together, a team of 8 of us St. Louis-area Crossers (4 guys, 4 gals) made the journey to that venue in China (also a couple more in Korea, Taiwan and Japan) doing Crossings sort of stuff. At the Beijing workshop, Robin Morgan and Sherman Lee were the leaders for the event. I sat on the side as "observer."

But back to Ed Strohschein and the Easter egg he dropped in my basket this past Monday. He says he was shocked Easter Sunday morning to open his South China Morning Post newspaper, THE English-language newspaper in Hong Kong and see the big "POSTmagazine" cover with "Christ has risen" as headline. And the full-page picture: a photo of the Forbidden City compound on Tiannenmen Square with a huge portrait of Jesus at the spot where Chairman Mao had for decades smiled down on his people.

The point of the 4-page article (cum additional photos) was that there are now more Christians in China (well over 100 million) than there are members of the Communist Party (74 million). Ed photocopied the cover and article and sent it to us through cyberspace. I've read it and Ed's comment is indeed true: "It really is an amazing cover, isn't it? We're quite surprised that the South China Morning Post, our Hong Kong paper, went with such a bold picture on their Sunday magazine cover. So far they haven't posted the article online. I hope they do soon." If/when that happens, I (the other Ed S.) will pass on to you ThTh-readers the URL so you can see/read it too.

Now on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, did you see the Easter issue of NEWSWEEK magazine? A fully black cover with these cross-formatted words in the middle: "The Decline and Fall of Christian America." Cathy Lessmann's comment about this mind-blowing contrast between "Communist" China and "Christian" America was: "Talk about 'Platzregen'! – that the Holy Spirit

moves and pours down where She will, esp. when the territory She HAS been raining over rejects Her for other gospels.” [Cathy says that if you can’t wait to see the Hong Kong piece, ask her to forward it to you, and she will.]

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Segue now to the second Easter egg, Fred’s homily for last Thursday. It shows that the Platzregen hasn’t (yet) deserted our own land. For such proclamation is itself the very Platzregen “platzing.” So I pass it on to you, just in case you are pluvially parched, so you may have—as Bob Bertram liked to say—your own “Eastering.” See if, when you get to the end, you’re not soaking wet.

Peace and Joy!  
Ed Schroeder

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## **“We used to be slaves. . .”**

### **Maundy Thursday, 2009**

The three lectionary texts.

Exodus 24:3-11

3 Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, “All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.” 4 And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen as offerings of well-being to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he dashed against the altar. 7

Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." 8 Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, "See the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. 11 God did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Mark 14:12-26

12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?

13 So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

16 So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. 17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be distressed and to say to him one



after another, "Surely, not I?" 20 He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." 22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." 26 When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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At Passover tables around the world in the past 24 hours, the youngest person present has asked the question that starts the seder. "Why is this night different from all other nights? Every other night, we eat all kinds of things, but on this night, we eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs." Others at the table have responded as they do every year, with a story. "Because we were slaves in Egypt," they begin, "but the Holy One, \*Adonai Elohenu\*, brought us out with a mighty arm and an outstretched hand. If not for that, we would still be slaves."

Jesus and his disciples sat at that same table on the night that we have gathered once more to relive, "the night," as we most often remember it, "when he was betrayed." Someone, a disciple perhaps, asked the opening question, and the rest responded with the story, the great \*Haggadah\*. "We used to be slaves, but no more, thank God. The Holy One stepped in, and here we are, eating and drinking in freedom-but never forgetting either, the hard, flat bread and the bitter herbs of slavery."

And here we are, gathered at the same table, reliving the night

when our Lord relived the night when the angel of death stood ready. We, too, were slaves, but no longer. Into our bondage also, the Holy One came. It will take us all weekend to tell the story. For now, though, we'll relive this one night. It's more than enough to remember.

"Maundy Thursday," we call this day and evening, "\*Mandatum\* Thursday, Commandment Thursday." And for what commandment has ancient tradition named this day? When I asked that as a child, my elders explained that it was Jesus' commandment that we love one another even as he has loved us, "the new commandment," as Jesus himself called it in John's gospel, in a reading we did not hear tonight. I've never had reason to doubt that answer, and the older I get the better I can see that loving in Christ's way, not our own self-protective way, is the only kind that could take one from bondage to freedom in a world where traitors have gone out into the night to do their work-and where any one of us could be the traitor.

But the longer I live the more I see as well that a host of other commandments govern the reliving of the night when the angel of death would extinguish the light in countless mothers' hearts. The list of commandments begins in the \*Torah\*: Choose a lamb. Slaughter it at twilight. Paint its blood on the doorpost. Prepare and eat that lamb. Leave nothing. Do all this in haste. (Exodus 12) And when children ask, even many generations from now, 'What does this mean?' you shall say, 'We were slaves, but the Lord brought us out' (Deut 6:20-25). Do not say, 'Our ancestors once were slaves,' but say, 'We were slaves.'

The giving of commandments continues in the story we rehearse tonight, as Jesus says to all who join him at this table, "Take, eat, drink, do this to remember me." "Love one another as I have loved you." "As I have washed your feet, so you shall wash each other's feet."

On that first Passover night so long ago in Egypt, the slaves had no idea what morning would bring. Freedom? None of them had ever tasted it, except in wild dreams. But oh, did they know slavery! And they wanted no more of that. We latter day slaves who gather with our ancient brothers and sisters on this night may think we're different. We know freedom, and we've never endured slavery, but truth be told, we're every bit as bound and enslaved as any other generation. We mistake the slave-masters who own us for liberators, and we live in a world of self-deception.

I don't need to fear the Pharaoh and all his guys with clipboards who come around checking on how many bricks we made today. I am the Pharaoh. Just ask my students. And we own the clipboards! You doubt me? Come to my office. I have a University-issue clipboard-a Dell Optiplex 755 with a 17-inch monitor and cordless mouse. I can roam the world freely on the World Wide Web and talk to whomever I want on e-mail. Next to that, I have a telephone, and a cell phone, too. (Poor old Moses. His life would have been so much easier if only the slaves had computers and broadband internet service! They could have wrecked the Pharaoh with a clever virus, ordered supplies from Amazon.com, and used Google maps to find a way straight to the promised land. Moses wouldn't have had to listen to all that murmuring.)

Most days you can find me tightly tethered to my fancy, electronic clipboard. My friend Walt Wangerin says I'll some day need a coffin with a bend in it, and a little extension for my mouse arm, because sooner or later I'll surely be ossified in that position, the position of my enslavement.

Walt means that to be funny, but he also knows it's the truth, and we both know it's only the tip of the proverbial iceberg when it comes to recognizing the slaveries in which I toil, and

as many of you do as well, no doubt. I'm a slave to my tools, and to so many things related to my work. Deuteronomy says the difference between a slave and a free person is that slaves don't get a Sabbath, a day of rest. Do you get a day of rest? I don't. I work every day, but truthfully, for a part of every day I steal time, do nothing productive, and feel guilty about it. That's not freedom, but the life of a rebellious, cheating slave!

Actually, I get praised for that slavery, for always being in the position for which Walt has proposed my coffin's design. There are plenty more forms of slavery, however, for which you'd all condemn me if you knew them up close-I'm enslaved to the identity I think I've earned by means of my clipboard busy-ness, and to the belief that I'm better somehow than those who haven't had the same success with clipboards. I'm a dutiful servant to the secret hatreds and prejudices I harbor toward those I interact with every day, to the lusts that sweet-talk me and the jealousies that taunt me every day of my life, and also to the brazen notion that all of this really makes no difference, because most days, the rest of you can't see it, and if I'm careful, neither can God. There's my slavery-it's in all that secrecy and sneaking around, trying my best to look good on your clipboard, and especially on God's.

If you read all of Mark's gospel, or any of the others for that matter, you know that some version of all that was going on in every heart and mind at the table on the night when Jesus sat for a last time with his friends and said, "Someone here will betray me." It's no mystery why every one of them said in response, "Is it I?" It surely could have been. Each knew he could scarcely trust himself, much less anyone else.

But precisely here the story turns. To this group of slaves, bound as they were to every wretched addiction the human heart

knows, Jesus handed himself over. "Take, eat," he said. "This is my body." And when they did so, Jesus' words were true not only of the bread, but of them. They were now his body, the body by which he would hand himself over to countless others, first in and around Jerusalem, and then Galilee, and Rome, and eventually in every place, including this one, where slaves hide out with a duplicitous clipboard and a heart full of secrets. In that moment, he took their lives, and he gave them his. Tonight, one more time, he does the same with and for us. We used to be slaves, but no longer. The Holy One, with broken hands and outstretched arms, has intervened. And now we're free.

What does our freedom look like? It's a precious joke, dear people, something like my friend Walt's joke. From one angle at least, freedom looks just like slavery, or maybe even like a slavery-shaped coffin. Indeed, freedom is a kind of transformed slavery, service of the humblest kind-to our neighbor, our spouse, child, colleague, even to our enemy and the one who betrays us.

Earlier this evening, it took the shape of bending, touching, and gentle words, the words of absolution that dissolve into nothingness all that's come between us. In a few more minutes, it will look like foot-washing, as we gird ourselves with towels, bend low, and wash away the pain, the filth, and the shame of all we've stepped in today.

That's what freedom looks like. The old slavery renders us useless, except to our selfish and insatiable masters, the ones who lurk mostly in our own hearts and who strut about with their fancy clipboards. The free Lord of all, whose body we now are in this world, makes a gift of us, and through us gives life, gives thanks, and sings a song that lifts the lonely, beaten-down hearts it reaches.

And another thing about this freedom: we used to be slaves, but no more, to the lines, walls, and fences that lie between us, the ancient ones between Jew and gentile, slave and free, male and female, but also our own, peculiar fault lines, those made of acronyms, shibboleths, cheap orthodoxies, and fears of who might criticize us or give us a righteous whack over the head with a clipboard.

For the next hour at least, we are free, and particularly free of all those divisions. We are, all of us, nothing more, and nothing less, than a collection of weary, flesh-and-blood souls, sick to death of our slavery, but on this night free to be just this, and this alone-the body of Christ, living in trust and hope, inseparable, serving each other, and headed tomorrow with the courage that freedom gives us to that place just outside the city where we, too, will offer up our lives for the world.

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# **Lutheran World Federation Consultation—The Augsburg Aha! of 1530 at Augsburg 2009.**

Colleagues,

It was agony and ecstasy.

Ecstasy for all 120 of us from 30 different nations just to be together at the Lutheran World Federation consultation for seven days (March 25-31, 2009) in Augsburg, Germany. That alone was heavenly. And the theme: "Theology in the Life of Lutheran Churches. Transformative Perspectives and Practices Today." Focusing on that for a whole week with Lutheran sibs from around the world! Even more heavenly.

So where the agony? Who suffered?

The Gospel suffered—to be more explicit, the Gospel as confessed at Augsburg 1530 [hereafter A1530]. The original Augsburg Aha! about the gospel, documented in the Augsburg Confession of 1530, suffered. That A1530 Gospel was sometimes in agony. No wall-to-wall ecstasy for that Gospel at A2009.

For some participants seeing/hearing the Gospel itself in agony at A2009 was itself a new Augsburg Aha! Well, it may not really have been a new Aha!—not for everyone in attendance. If you've been reading LWF publications over the years, which reflect the "Perspectives and Practices Today" in world Lutheranism—AND if A1530 is central to your own "Perspectives and Practices Today"—you've seen ample evidence of the dissonance. Of course, it's not the LWF that is the cause of this, for it simply mirrors what's going on among the 140 member churches and 70-some million Lutherans around the worldwide Lutheranism. In worldwide Lutheranism today, A1530, Lutheranism's Magna Charta, is not a common confession among Lutherans—though it is claimed to be such, I would imagine, in the constitutions of nearly all of those 140 member churches.

So, even if you knew this beforehand, A2009 gave eye-and-ear-witness to the fact. Saddest of all perhaps was that even though we were meeting just minutes away from the very palace where the AC of 1530 was first read out loud, some of the presenters at A2009 were clueless about, and in some cases flat-out

contradicted, A1530.

Why do I say that? Because “other gospels” were also offered from the podium—both at the plenary sessions where all of us listened to 21 (yes!) presentations during those 7 days, and in the 4 smaller-numbered seminar study groups, where 40-plus additional papers were offered. Now and then one of the offerings explicitly contradicted A1530, though I’m fairly sure the persons making these proposals didn’t know they were doing so. It’s hard to imagine that they would knowingly have done so—in Augsburg of all places! More on this below.

At first these paragraphs may sound like a cranky old Lutheran moaning “They didn’t do it my way!” Not so. I am initially “just” reporting. No commentary—yet. Here’s a case in point.

At the closing communion service the name of Christ appeared 20 times in the printed worship folder, along with 10 or so “Jesus” mentions. In the sermon, by contrast, we never heard either name spoken once. And the preacher was an LWF staffer from Geneva. I’m confident that the preacher didn’t know, didn’t notice, that the homily was Christ-less. But it clearly was. I did listen.

That crass contradiction – 30 times and never once – was the elephant in the living room that no one spoke about. But that grey-eminence was there throughout our time together. “Is Christ necessary, or not? And if necessary, necessary for what?” That was THE issue at A1530. And so it was at A2009. “Is Christ necessary—and why?” really ought to have been THE stated theme for the consultation. For it continued to spook us throughout the conversations, and no one addressed it head-on. Many (most?) seemed not to notice it.

In the language of 1530, as Bob Bertram, m taught many of us, it is the issue of “Christum necessare,” “necessitating Christ” in order for something, anything, to claim the name Lutheran. Of



course, those Augsburg Confessors in 1530 never claimed to be Lutherans. Their claim was that “necessitating Christ” was the sine qua non, the foundation-stone, for any teaching or preaching to qualify as “Christian.” At Augsburg 1530 they confessed that if any sermon didn’t “need” to “use Christ” (that was their verb) to bring Good News to the congregation, it was not a Christian sermon. The labels that A1530 gave for Christless sermons are not flattering.

Throughout the 6 days preceding that closing liturgy at A2009 that same Yea! and Nay!—that yin and yang, that agony and ecstasy, that bang and whimper—about the Gospel itself marked our meeting. But we never addressed it head on. Other yin/yangs dominated.

Publicly discussed were agonies, tensions between the northern and southern hemispheres of world Lutheranism, masculine-feminine theological perspectives, the “oppression” of everybody needing to speak English, and the dominance of European and North American theology in world Lutheranism to the diminution of theology coming from Asian, African, Latin American voices.

As serious as those yin-yangs are, the Christ-necessity question is surely more fundamental. Literally “fundament-al,” at the foundation. It was not only in the sermon at the very end, but throughout the week we heard proposals where Christ was not necessary for the lecturer to bring us to the goal that he or she proposed. That doesn’t mean that Christ’s name did not appear regularly in the “Transformative Perspectives and Practices” that speakers proposed. Instead it was this A1530 measuring stick: was Christ actually “needed” to give the proposed “perspective” its foundations. Was Christ needed to validate a proposed “practice” for the life of the church? More than once the de facto answer was No—though no speaker ever spoke such words.

Those may sound like harsh words—or even worse, “judgmental,” (at the top of the list of no-no’s in today’s p.c. world)—but initially they are simply reportorial. In that closing sermon, though I do not have the printed text before me at the moment, I did listen hard, riding “high” on all the Christ-confessing in the rest of the liturgy, and THAT word was never spoken. It was a Christ-less sermon. But more about the sermon below. More than one of the presentations followed the same pattern. I heard all 21 plenary papers “live” and the ten in my own seminar. The several dozen papers in the other three seminars I didn’t hear, but I’ve checked the printed text for them on the consultation website. I am simply reporting what happened at A2009. Yes, it was great fun, a gift to be personally present in that assembly. But it was not all fun for the Gospel.

Sometimes sparks about that did erupt in the plenary. But no sustained blaze. Example: plenary presentation by a seminary professor (US, ELCA), topic: “What God has Created will not be Lost: Constructing a more Inclusive Soteriology.” First question from the floor: “Your proposal about ‘the demise of hell’ contradicts AC 17. Does that make any difference to you?” “I’ll have to think about that” was the response. Next question, possibly even feistier: “Can you show us how your more inclusive soteriology is different from the all-inclusive soteriology of universalist/unitarian theology?” Answer: I object to being labeled.

Neither of these interventions came from me—which may surprise ThTh readers. Had I spoken it might have been this: “Your overarching thesis, made very explicit at the beginning, is the ‘relationship of love God has with creation.’ Never once do you tell us about the Creator’s criticism of that same creation that is also loved. It finds no place in your proposed “more inclusive” soteriology. It DOES, however, have a place in the soteriology of A1530. So whose soteriology is more inclusive,

whose soteriology less so?

And then this second one, if I would have had the floor-mike a second time: "The major theologians you cite for support are Juergen Moltmann, Ian Barbour, Sally McFague, Hans Kueng, S.Mark Heim. Maybe Moltmann, maybe Kueng, both Germans, know what happened here in 1530, but their own theological confession is different from A1530. They've said so many times. But do any of the others even have a clue about the soteriology of A1530? If they are clueless about A1530—and I've read them, published reviews of their books, so I know they are—why should we here at A2009 take our clues from them?"

There were other sparks. E.g., African voices noting the absence of "mission" anywhere in the titles of the 21 plenary presentation—and never for serious consideration in the discussions that followed. "Those are the Transformative Perspectives and Practices Today that we are looking for in coming here," was their word. Only twice in the 40-some seminar presentation titles did the word Mission occur. One was Seminar III: Worship and other Christian Practices, where Thomas Shattauer (Wartburg Seminary, USA, ELCA) presented his "God's Mission in the Practice of Assembly." The other was my own offering on Luther as Mission Theologian in Seminar II on Creation, Redemption, Eschatology. I don't know what happened in Tom's seminar with his offering. My presentation came as the very last in our seminar and since the clock was ticking very little discussion ensued. Hardly a bang, more like a whimper.

Another spark. In oral reports at the very end from the seminars and discussion groups one reporter asked: "Are we in danger of creating a new Luther-cult here at A2009?" That was a surprise to me. I wonder what had happened in his small group conversations during the week. With A1530 a minority voice all week long in the plenary's 21 proposals—and Blessed Martin

likewise—I wondered where he saw this nemesis. If it had come from his seminar group, then I wish I had been there. For neither Luther nor the AC were in any danger of being put on pedestals in my seminar, nor from anything else I encountered at the consultation.

But ML and AC weren't totally absent. Also in the plenary program—mirablile dictu! Get this—another Augsburg Aha! Four of the plenary speakers at A2009—one Argentinean, one Australian, and two Americans—all of them profs at Lutheran seminaries today were once students of blessed Bob Bertram. Imagine that! Though not to the plenary audience, but at table-talk, all four confessed: “I learned my Lutheran theology—especially A1530—from Bob.” So their presence on the program was extra ecstasy for me. Could that reporter's shreck about a possible Luther-cult have been grounded in these four A1530-faithful speakers? Maybe so. They were persuasive—but then, I'm not exactly neutral on this one.

With my own Aha! about four of Bob's students up at the mike on the podium, I re-focused the introduction to my small part in Seminar II. “We started our seminar 5 days ago with Kristin Graff-Kallevåg's presentation from the ‘Mannermaa-school’ of Luther scholarship. Here at the close of our seminar I want to show you something from the ‘Bertram school’ of Luther interpretation—not only about Luther but from the “Bertram school” of Augsburg Confession interpretation. Here are a few sentences about this school (I ad libbed a bit) But we do not call ourselves the Bertram School. Instead we use the label he proposed, the Crossings-school. It is now a worldwide internet Crossings Community <[www.crossings.org](http://www.crossings.org)> where the theology of the cross is at the center of our work and our agenda is “crossing” the church and world with that theology wherever God has placed us. Here is an example of “Crossings theology” linked to the mission agenda Christ has given us.

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After all this (allegedly neutral) reportorial data, now some analysis and critique.

We were meeting in Augsburg, and frequent mention was made of the historic Augsburg Confession and Apology confessed in this city in 1530, and then the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, and then in our lifetime the Roman Catholic–Lutheran “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” of just ten years ago(1999).

Back to that Magna Charta A1530. Fundamental to that confession was a specific statement of what the Christian gospel is, contra the semi-Pelagian gospel that dominated the church catholic of that day. Central to that gospel confessed in 1530 was “the merits and benefits of Christ” as the heart and center of what the gospel is, of what God in Christ saw fit to do—in that first-ever Holy Week—in order to offer free forgiveness to sinners.

At A1530 it was the “Why Jesus?” question, the same question asked today of Christians by Hindus, Muslims, all other world religions and now prominent in our day, the proponents of secular gospels. We saw and heard at A2009 that the A1530 question is still alive today, now within worldwide Lutheranism—and that not all the answers coming from voices in this worldwide Lutheranism give the A1530 answer. “Times have changed,” we’re told—also at 2009, but have they changed on what’s needed “for us and for our salvation”? For everybody—even today.

That Christ-empty sermon at the end—and I cannot find a printed text on the consultation website, so I’m operating from memory—started out that way. Like this: Luther’s question was “How can I find a merciful God?” That’s not our question today. Instead it’s “How can I find a way of mercy to my neighbor?” And

to answer that the preacher centered on the OT text in the day's liturgy: Jacob wrestling with the Stranger (=God) the night before he "wrestled" with meeting his brother Esau. The two meetings were mirror images of each other. Relating to God and relating to neighbor/sister/brother are Siamese twins. Inseparable. Illustrations followed to verify that. The conclusion came with a focus on the term reconciliation. In both wrestling matches we strive for reconciliation. The two go together. To be reconciled with God and to be reconciled with the neighbor/brother/sister are all of one piece. That is our calling from God. Let us go from this consultation in peace and joy to carry out this ministry of reconciliation entrusted to us.

Comment: lots of God-talk in the homily, but never "The Name." A reconciliation proclamation at the conclusion, but no mention of THE Reconciler—as in 2 Corinthians 5—nor of our need (necessity) to have one. As our segue from the liturgical real presence (umpteenth times) to the Real Presence in the sacrament, we had a "real absence" homily. And I'll bet that the preacher never noticed it.

We had one other communion service during the week, on Sunday where we gathered with the parishoners of "Luther's" St. Anna church in Augsburg. Because of this audience the homily was printed and handed out—in English and German—as parishioners entered. Marie and I sat with dear Roman Catholic friends we know in Augsburg. The preacher came from the "Evangelical Lutheran Church" in Cameroon, Africa. The sermon text was the Gospel appointed for the day. John 12:20-33 with that request from the "Greeks" to "see Jesus" concluding with Jesus' promise "I, when I am lifted up, will draw all people to myself."

So the preacher couldn't avoid "naming the name." Which happened—over 60 times by my count on the printed text—and I

probably missed a few. But it was not just name-dropping. The Christ who was lifted up was needed—Christum necessare—for the preacher to draw us to that Christ that morning, and to animate us, to empower us, to do likewise in mission in the many lands to which we would return at the end of the week.

That same Christ was necessary for the reconciliation urged upon us in the homily at our farewell liturgy. But we didn't receive him.

One Lutheran preacher came from Africa, the other one from Germany. Is that a signal about the Gospel Platzregen, Luther's picture-word for God's Gospel moving like a thunder-shower from one place to another? I wonder.

In one of the seminar papers presented early on in the consultation, the author (also a Bertram student) began by saying "Those of us gathered here recognize 'justification by faith' as 'the article by which the church stands or falls' precisely because 'faith' is understood as faith in God's promise enacted in the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus." That's straight A1530 theology. A2009 showed that that is still the agenda that Lutherans worldwide need to keep working on. It is not yet a unanimous conviction.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

P.S. In subsequent ThTh postings I may do more show and tell on the good and not-so-good essays in that warehouse of A2009 data. You can, of course, see for yourself. You'll find them all at the consultation website: [http://www.lutheranworld.org/What\\_We\\_Do/DTS/DTS-TLC\\_Augsburg.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DTS/DTS-TLC_Augsburg.html)

P.S.2 I do have a couple of others already in the hopper. One is

a follow-up on Phil Keuhnert's review of The Schack, and one a sequel from Steve Krueger following his review of Benedict XVI. One Roman Catholic reader was unhappy—to put it mildly—about Steve's initial piece on B16. And he told me so. He also sent me documents “from the other side” to set the record straight—including the pope's own statement to his flock seeking to calm the waters. So I sent these on to Steve and asked him if they changed his mind. Couple days ago he posted back to me his B16, part two. Steve's RC critic may not be happy, but I am, for his analysis is off the charts in laying papal theology 2009 alongside Augsburg catholicism 1530 (theology of the cross, faith and promise, and all that) and showing the difference. And then even more, why that difference matters—for us and for our salvation.