

Luther's Rehabilitation in Recent Roman Catholic Opinion

Colleagues,

Today's posting comes from Jose [Joe] B. Fuliga, one-time president of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines. Fuliga has an ancient connection with Crossings. Here's how: Cathy Lessmann, Crossings executive director for ages, is a "missionary kid" born in Davao City in the Philippines when her parents were missionaries there. Cathy's father, Arnold Strohschein, was a conduit for Joe's move from Roman to Augsburg-Confession catholicism. "I remember him dearly," says Cathy, "he always teased us kids when he came over to our home."

Thereafter Joe came to Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) for graduate study in systematic theology. The initial semesters of that grad study were back in the days when Bob Bertram and others of us were still considered kosher at that place. Joe knows—and practices—the Augsburg Aha!

Besides the LCP presidency, Joe has served as principal of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines; as Tutor and Overseas Research Fellow (1991-1996) St. Simon of Cyrene Theological Institute, London, UK; and other ecumenical work. Now retired, he lives near one of his sons in Chula Vista, California. The other two sons live and work in the Philippines. Joe and wife Lily are members of Hope Lutheran Church (ELCA).

Joe's been tracking Luther's reputation among recent Roman Catholic theologians. Here's what he's found.

Peace and joy!

Ed Schroeder

REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH

It has been said that the Church needs constant reformation. October is the month when Protestant Christians, especially Lutherans, all over the world celebrate the reformation of the Church. Seven years from now on October 31, 2017—the day Luther posted his 95 theses for debate on the practice of indulgences—the world would be celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. In the course of about a hundred years the Roman Catholic Church has taken many steps in reforming itself. Today Luther and the reforms he has fought for are viewed favorably by Catholic theologians. Here are what some of them say.

“Luther was correct in claiming that the concept of transubstantiation came out of Greek philosophy (Aristotle)... The Catechism of the Catholic Church, for example, doesn't use the word 'transubstantiation' at all in its discussion of the Eucharist.” (Father John J. Dietzen, CATHOLIC Q & A: ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT CATHOLICISM (New York: A Crossroad Book, 2009), p. 146.

“If we use 'faith' as Luther did and as Paul did in Romans and Galatians, that is, heart-faith, then this is saving faith. It is sufficient for salvation, for it necessarily produces the good works...” Peter Kreeft & Ronald Tacelli, HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1994), p. 31.

“The official teaching of Catholics (as distinct from the popular misconception) is that salvation is a totally free gift that we can do nothing to 'buy' or 'produce' it.” Kreeft & Tacelli, Ibid., p. 321.

“The Roman Catholic Church today accepts that there was the need

of reform most obvious in the exaggerated practice of indulgences [which] by the Middle Ages ... had been vulgarized to include remission of punishment in purgatory and even remission of sins themselves." Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig, eds. THE MODERN CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), p. 506.

Louis Bouyer makes identical claims in his book, THE SPIRIT AND FORMS OF PROTESTANTISM. According to Bouyer, Luther's view of salvation, in its most basic form, "is in perfect harmony with Catholic tradition, the great conciliar definitions on grace and salvation, and even with thomism."

Catholic scholar George Tavard wrote in his book PROTESTANTISM that there is no real contradiction between Roman Catholic theology and Luther's gospel. Tavard explains that when Luther began his work as a Reformer, the gospel was in "partial eclipse." "Today many Catholic scholars think Luther was right in his central doctrine of justification by faith and the [sixteenth century Catholic] church was blind to the point he was making...Both Lutherans and Catholics agree that good works by Christian believers are the result of their faith and the working of divine grace in them, not their personal contributions to their own salvation. Christ is the only Savior. One does not save oneself... Luther's doctrine of justification by faith needs to be recognized and endorsed as an expression of the perennial Catholic tradition."

Reflecting on Christian history, a plurality of scholars has chosen Martin Luther as the most influential non-Roman Catholic Christian of the past 2,000 years.

Dr. John Dwyer, who teaches at St. Bernard's Institute in Albany, named Luther because he "grasped – and was grasped by – the theological vision of Paul of Tarsus as virtually no one had

been before his time and few after it. He discovered Paul's vision of faith as the acceptance of God's unmerited love and mercy, and Paul's understanding of the cross as God's participation in the pain and estrangement of human existence."

Joseph F. Kelly, professor of religious studies at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio said: "Oddly enough, Luther was a Roman Catholic when the Reformation began and he had every intention of staying one. He wanted to reform the church to which he belonged." "Luther insisted upon the importance of Scripture and its central place in Christian life, a point not recognized by the Council of Trent but accepted by Vatican II," Prof. Kelly explained. "Luther encouraged Bible reading by the laity, as did Vatican II. He also insisted that Protestant clergy be educated, and the Council of Trent recognized the importance of this by establishing the seminary system in 1563, only after educated Western Europeans noticed how well-trained the Protestants were."

Lawrence S. Cunningham from the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame chose Luther "for his setting the religious agenda for the post-medieval period; his brilliance as a commentator on Scripture; his critique of excesses in the Church; his power as a hymn writer; and his role as the trigger of the Reformation which radically reshaped Christianity and whose questions still energize theology to this day."

Francesco C. Cesareo, associate professor of history and director of the Institute of Catholic Studies at John Carroll University, chose Luther "because I believe that his own personal struggle for salvation, which eventually led him to break with the Catholic Church, served as the impetus for the Church to look at itself more critically in light of the many abuses that had made their way into Catholicism."

Luther also got the vote of Rev. Robert Scully, SJ, assistant professor of history at Le Moyne College in Syracuse. "Although the Reformation ended up causing a tragic split in Western Christendom, such a development was neither intended nor desired by Luther. His emphasis on justification by faith alone, the total dependence of each human being on the grace of God in order to attain salvation, and the central role of the Bible in Christian belief and practice, all had a transforming impact on Protestant – and ultimately on Catholic – orthodoxy and orthopraxy."

Cardinal Kasper said: "We have much to learn from Luther beginning with the importance he attached to the word of God." It was time for a "more positive" view of Luther, whose reforms had aroused papal ire at the time but could now be seen as having "anticipated aspects of reform which the Church has adopted over time."

"In the light of Christ the Catholic will no longer wish to regard Luther as an apostate monk who broke faith with his Church. He will recognize the many lights in his character...the holy defiance with which, as God's warrior, he faced abuse and simony; the heroism with which he risked his life for Christ's cause; and not least the natural simplicity and child-like quality of his whole manner of life and personal piety."

Fr. Karl Adam.

"It is widely recognized that Luther was justified in attempting to reform the theology and abuses in the Church of his time and that his fundamental belief – justification given to us by Christ without any merit on our part – does not in any way contradict genuine Catholic tradition, such as is found for example, in St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas."

Bishop James F. McCue.

Officially the Roman Catholic Church no longer considered Protestants as "Separated Brethren" but simply brothers and sisters in the faith. (Pars. 818, 819, 1271 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

"The repeal of Luther's excommunication by Rome is overdue." Hans Kung, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: A SHORT HISTORY. Kung insists Luther remained a Catholic to the end.

Franz Xaver Kiefl, German Catholic Historian. "Luther never denied good works or holy living . Rather good works are the way in which faith expresses itself."

Sebastian Merkle, German Roman Catholic Historian. "Luther's motives were religious, not revolutionary or psychological."

Anton Fischer, German Roman Catholic Historian. "Luther was a man of prayer."

Hubert Jedin, German Roman Catholic Historian. "Catholicism never condemned Luther by name at Trent. No official judgment on Luther exists by which a loyal Catholic is bound."

Joseph Lortz, German Roman Catholic Historian. "Luther was a theologian of the highest rank. Luther was a profoundly religious man, a true Christian, who lived by a deep faith in Jesus Christ."

Yves M. J. Congar, Catholic French Scholar. "The Reformation was a religious movement, an attempt to renew religion at its source." He considers Luther a profoundly religious man who had a deeply sensitive conscience and was obsessed by the longing to find peace of heart and a warm, living, consoling contact with God.

There are many more Catholic scholars and theologians who praised Luther and the reformation he undertook but the above is

enough. God bless you all and may you continue what Dr. Martin Luther preached and lived for.

Rev. Dr. Jose B. Fuliga Th. D.

Some Items on Mission Theology

Colleagues,

Back once more to 1994, the year Marie and I spent in Australia at the Luther Seminary in Adelaide. One course I taught was Theology of Mission. Here are two artifacts that came from that.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

[The #1 book about Christian mission at that time was David Bosch's just-published TRANSFORMING MISSION. David was a superstar missiologist, a Dutch Reformed pastor/theologian from South Africa. In 1985 I was guest in the Bosch home in Pretoria. No surprise, his book was the textbook for the course. Here's the class handout for one of the chapters.]

David Bosch: Transforming Mission

Chapter 8 The Missionary Paradigm of the Protestant Reformation

The Nature of the New Movement

Luther re-discovers Augustine who had rediscovered Paul. That turned medieval Christian theology away from Aristotle and thus

away from Aquinas. Rom1:16f. became the core text for Christianity and for mission. Thus the contours of a Prot. theology of mission are:

1. Theology starts at JbFaith. (grace, Christ, faith are THE truth about Christianity, not A truth)
2. Humans are viewed from the perspective of the Fall (everybody = sinner)
3. Subjective dimension of salvation. (Better term perhaps is "personal," God favor toward me, not God per se)
4. Priesthood of all believers.
5. Centrality of the Bible.

Each of these had its plus and its minus side.(242f.) See especially Küng's caveat (243)

The Reformers and Mission

Basically they have had a bad reputation with reference to missions. Is it also a bad track record? Yes and No. Depends on your definition of just what mission is. Overall it was a mixed bag. There were serious practical obstacles: Reformers' focus was on reforming European Xianity; had no real contact with non-Xians; War was going on in Europe over religion, survival was the priority issue; with no monks anymore who was going to do it? and finally unending internal disputes [Calvinists vs. Lutherans, "genuine" Lutherans vs. "so-called" Lutherans, etc.]

Significant exception in the first generation of the Reformation were the Anabaptists, a pain in the neck for Luther and Calvin, but being such a pain because of their missionary paradigm.

One good guy from that first generation is a contemporary of Calvin, Dutch theologian Adrian Saravia (Bosch too is Dutch!). He saw the great commission of Matt. 28 still to be in force. But he was hung up on apostolic succession, and thus made no

headway on the continent with Calvinists –and of course not with the Lutherans. Finally went to England and became an Anglican.

Lutheran Orthodoxy and Mission

(The period after the publication of the Bk of Concord 1580. 2 centuries in Europe, even longer in non-European Lutheranism) The self-understanding of the Protestant churches is decidedly inward-looking. Who we are and why we are different from those other groups. Not outward looking to our task and calling in the world. Philip Nicolai (Lutheran) gives the picture for the NON-mission paradigm of the age of orthodoxy:

1. Great commission (Matt. 28) applied only to the apostles. They fulfilled it.
2. Salvation is God's initiative. Ergo no running around to find folks to convert. Your neighbor—and your “calling” touching that neighbor—is your mission field. Serve her/him.
3. Though Nicolai is upbeat about RC overseas missions (surprising) [“If they're promoting Christ at all, their work can't be all bad”], the pessimism about how evil the world was – and that God was already on his way to bring the Last Day – pushed people to be passive.
4. If mission was to be done by Lutherans, it could only happen where Lutheran authorities ruled a region. And Lutherans had no colonies.
5. Besides, according to Romans and other Biblical sources, God's Word had long ago gone out to the nations. If they were still unbelievers, it was because of their rejection. So for them the verdict was already in.

There were exceptions within orthodoxy, e.g., J. vonWetz, but they never carried the day. It took the renewal-movement of Pietism within Lutheranism to break open Lutheran missions.

The Pietist Breakthrough

Spener and Francke, theology lecturers at the Luth. University of Halle, and nobleman Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (taught by them) brought a whole new focus to what Christian faith and life was all about. It's not pure doctrine and intellectual understanding, but faith in the heart and a life that demonstrates that. From that "aha!" about the Christian gospel there arose these consequences for mission: ordinary Christians are missionary-candidates; improvisation was the Spirit's preferred mode of operation; spiritual and material needs go together; faith means commitment and commitment means risk; Christian fellowship transcends boundaries of nations and confessions; and mission is not the job of Christian rulers. (summary 255).

The Pietists did not really crack open the Lutheran establishment in Germany, but they opened the door to what was to become the way of the future for missions—both world missions and social ministry in the home churches.

Second Reformation and Puritanism

This is the Calvinist side of what followed the Reformation era. Called the 2nd reformation in Holland, and Puritanism in the UK and the N.American colonies. The "reign of Christ" is a central concept. It led to a mission paradigm with 1)theocratic images of a Christian society, 2)focus on God's sovereignty, and 3) God's glory, but not without clear accent on 4) God's grace and mercy. And all of this within the framework of 5) European colonial expansion, which brought with it then 6) the "cultural uplift" as uncivilized peoples learned European civilization. Interesting is 8) that the Great Commission played no role in the operation.

Summary: Bosch's evaluation of the plusses and minuses of the

“Reformation paradigm” on p. 261.

[Another of our study documents was Bob Bertram’s essay DOING THEOLOGY IN RELATION TO MISSION. Full text is now on the Crossings website. To find, click on “Library,” then click on “Works by R.W.Bertram.” Scroll down to the title.]

To help students with Bob’s text I gave them this paragraph-by-paragraph tracking of Bob’s line of thought:

1. Mission makes gaps that theology straddles. Theology is “trans-mission.”
2. The gap inherent in mission is between the Sending Christ and the world.
3. There are 2 gaps: horizontal and vertical, a time gap and a credibility gap.

THE HORIZONTAL GAP (between the time of Jesus and our time today)

4. Our age is attuned to this gap—we’re busy with history and hermeneutics; the Luth.Reformers knew it too.
5. The Reformers’ secret can also help us with our gap-spanning.
6. They don’t just repeat the Bible, they add something.
7. Times change. New problems; new forms of old problems; new heretics. So “doing theology” is relating the message of THE SENDER to each new challenge.
8. Danger: substituting later confessing for the biblical original. [E.g., The Lutheran confessions or the doctrinal statements of the LCA or any church.] Nobody claims to be doing that, but . . .
9. . . . it can happen, especially with “quia”-confessing Lutherans. [Code term among Lutherans. Subscribing to the Luth. confessions “because” they affirm the scriptural

Gospel. In contrast to “quatenus” = “in so far as” they affirm]

10. The Luth confessors do not want that. They want their readers to “check them out,” to see if they are indeed confessing in today’s world the same Gospel that came with Jesus. Open accountability.
11. Anachronistic reading of the Bible happens. Reading the confessions back into the Bible. Under-playing the horizontal gap and thus de-valuing Scripture’s own history.
12. How the word of God has “ruled” down through history thus loses its wonder. As though nothing different ever happened. De-historicizing the Gospel’s power.
13. For bridging the historical gap we have today the “historical critical method.” The criticism it exercises critiques our anachronistic interpretations, the things which we read back into the Bible. So the HC exegete says: No, that is not what Isaiah meant when he said such and so.
14. Of course, the HC exegete might protest too much—and say that a Biblical text can never mean more than it did at its origin. This denies the text a post-history.

THE VERTICAL GAP (between the Gospel’s credibility and us)

15. Faith’s need for biblical history, but what sort of biblical history?.
16. The vertical gap is more oppressive than the horizontal one.
17. There’s a popular myth about unbelievers, namely that their unfaith is “plain and simple” unbelief. Not so.
18. What scandalizes us about the Gospel’s credibility is not Jesus’ cross/resurrection as such, “but rather our own need of them—our need of Him.”
19. Thus the Confutators (first critics of the Aug. Conf. in

1530) rendered Christ “unnecessary,” (not really needed, or not much needed), by denying the sola fide, that it is ONLY faith in Christ which rescues sinners.

20. Jesus’ own “history” dare not be reduced to mere fides historica [“I believe the facts are true”], itself a form of unbelief.
21. On this item contemporary systematic theologians may well have failed. The Confessors can help.
22. The “systematics” of the Luth. Confessions takes the form of a hermeneutical procedure: (you guessed it) properly distinguishing Scripture’s law and promise.
23. Comes now a definition of each term, and then the question before the house: How to commend good works without sacrificing the promise? Answer: Promise dominant; law sub-dominant.
24. Is this just a systematician’s compulsion (putting asunder what God has joined together)? No, it’s because there is that other compulsion in all of us, the opinio legis that makes law dominant and promise its servant.
25. As an opinio it is an illusion, namely, that the law offers a soteriology. To preserve that illusion opinio-legalists must practice law-reductionism = scaling down the law to manageable size.
26. Therefore we need to distinguish because this prior perception (Vor-verständnis = prior-understanding), this opinio is finally fatal.
27. So we need to take this unbelief, this vertical gap, with full seriousness (for the Gospel really is incredible!). But then when the Gospel is believed, the believer can assimilate the law as well: take its criticism, even profit from it, advance the law’s commendable good work in society. “Promissio is the solvent (pun!) for the world’s hard unbelief.”
28. Promissio is the secret of missio. The Sender himself

keeps keeping his promise. As we theologians do “promissory” theology to span the gaps, the Promissor himself is building bridges throughout the world by the Spirit through His Word.

ehs June 1, 1994

A Confession of Faith prompted by the Dodoma Statement

Colleagues,

On April 29, 2010 the Lutheran bishops of Tanzania issued The Dodoma Statement, a critical response to the actions of other churches in worldwide Lutheranism with reference to homosexuality. [The URL for the full text of the Dodoma statement is <http://www.elct.org/news/2010.04.004.html>]

Crossings board member Peter Keyel, research-immunologist by day, offers this “Confession of Faith prompted by the Dodoma Statement.” He is a member of St Andrew Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

1. INTRODUCTION

1. We confess a Lutheran doctrine of justification-namely, that faith in the Gospel, God’s promise to

forgive sinners on account of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection alone and only, brings salvation.

2. We confess that it is this doctrine of justification that is the subject of the Augsburg Confession, the rest of the Book of Concord, and the works of many theologians, ranging from early church fathers to the present. With Luther, we confess that "...if this article stands, the Church stands; if it falls, the Church falls."
3. All of these secondary sources derive their understanding of justification from the Holy Bible, which in turn derives its authority solely as the cradle carrying Christ to the nations.
4. We confess along with Luther, the Lutheran Confessions and John 1 the inerrant Word of God. God's Word is specifically the Gospel promise, which became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. We confess that God's Word ("Wort Gottes" in Luther's writings and the Confessions) is Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and not the Bible ("Bibel" or "Heilige Schrift" in the same literature). That is to say that the Bible is not the final word on just any matter, but rather witnesses to the Word of God that is forgiveness in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, God's final Word on the problem of human sinfulness, nothing more, and nothing less.
5. Christian unity is the common confession of and trust in the Gospel most concretely exemplified in the common partaking of the Eucharist. As such, we confess along with Luther that Christian unity does not arise out of fellowship with one another or because people "have something to do with each other," but rather that Christian unity arises when we each individually place our trust entirely in

God's Gospel promise alone.

6. We understand Christian unity to be articulated in the 7th article of the Augsburg Confession:

"The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike."

Thus, since our Christian unity arises solely from our individual trust in the Gospel, we confess that it is not dependent on or subject to the social or legal institutions of any nation, state or country.

2. SEXUALITY AND THE GOSPEL

1. In 2009, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA hereafter) adopted the social statement "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" and four changes to its ministry policies. The social statement describes four positions of faithfulness within the ELCA regarding publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender unions.
2. While there are fundamental differences in these four positions, we have witnessed faithful Christians described by each of these positions. Specifically, within the ELCA co-exist Christians who have different understandings of the content of God's Law, but are united in recognizing both that they are convicted by God's Law as sinners and freed by God's free Word of forgiveness in the Gospel.
3. That God's Law for marriage has been understood

differently by different cultures is witnessed to both by the Bible, including Gen 28:9, Deut 25:5-10, Mark 10:8, 1 Tim 3:2, and by the different civil laws that have governed marriage in different countries and different times.

4. We confess that in spite of different cultural understandings, God's Law is yet eternal and unshaken because two vital functions of God's Law remain intact: each society is structured to preserve its people's welfare (God's law of preservation), and we are accused of our failings and short-comings, including those pertaining to our abuse and misuse of God's good gift of sexuality (God's law as the sinner's accuser).
5. We confess that out of great love for us, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake, God forgives us our sins. Our rebellion against God is ended with the cross, and new life in Christ begun with the resurrection, when we place our faith in God's saving grace.
6. As our Christian unity rests not in our old life ruled by God's Law, but in our new life freed by God's Gospel, different organizations of marriage, family, government, economics or labor do not threaten our shared Christian unity. We understand this to be articulated in the Defense of Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession: "Similarity of human rites, whether universal or particular, is not necessary, because the righteousness of faith is not a righteousness bound to certain traditions."
7. As shared faith in Christ crucified and risen for us alone and only, Christian unity is destroyed whenever other standards are raised in addition to or in place of Christ. This includes requiring any

particular stance on subjects within marriage, family, economics, or government. We confess that it is the placement of other standards for unity and other requirements for salvation in addition to or instead of Christ crucified and risen for us that is the source of discord within the church.

8. In discussion over human sexuality, we confess that we all have set up our perceived "moral right" as a standard in addition to Christ's death and resurrection. This has destroyed unity both within our denomination and in the world-wide church. We confess that our disunity is rebellion against God, and is a lonely death sentence for each of us.

3. IN CONCLUSION

1. We confess that out of great love, Jesus Christ died for us, alone and forsaken on the cross ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46)). We confess that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead into new life, and raises us out of lonely death to new life united in Christ.
2. We confess that it is thusly that we are joined together in Christ, and not out of what we have done, or which moral standards we have adopted. We confess that along with the old Adam or old Eve within us, God has put to death all of our iniquities, failures and rebellions. The new creation God makes within us is free of sin, death and the devil.
3. We confess that our new life in Christ is not a continuation of the old life, but an entirely new creation for which the Law is no longer necessary. The "newest" element in that new life/new creation is the new FAITH, the heart that now hangs on Christ in place of any and all other alternatives. That new

faith makes Christ the ethical guide for our lives, not God's Law—as good and holy as God's Law indeed is. Yet until God kills the old creation within us, however, we live in tension between old and new creations.

4. As a confessional Lutheran church, the ELCA is called to proclaim to all nations the good news that new creation through Jesus Christ is God's solution to our sin. We give thanks for all of our partners in this mission that God has given us. Trusting in God's resurrection promise, we do not fear to proclaim the Gospel, even in places where civil, religious or other institutions will bring us physical, psychological or emotional harm.
5. We recognize that it is left up to each church body to choose their ministers. We confess that the ELCA trusts, permits and calls all of our ministers, regardless of whether or not they are in or support same-gendered relationships, to proclaim the Gospel and rightly administer the Sacraments.

Peter Keyel, St Andrew Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, PA

African Lutheran Churches Rebuke their Western Siblings

Colleagues,

This past week two of you on the Crossings listserve sent me copies of documents from national Lutheran churches in

Africa—one from Kenya, one from Tanzania—both of them rebuking the ELCAmerica and the Lutheran church of Sweden for their “apostasy” regarding homosexuality.

The “shock, dismay and disappointment” expressed in these documents as well as their counter-confession “Here we stand, we will NOT do otherwise” is itself dismaying and sad. For these reasons:

1. It’s all about the Bible, and these African churches learned how to read the Bible from the European and American missionaries who brought that way of Bible-reading to them. And they learned it well. But what they learned was a less-than-Lutheran way to do it. It was reading the Bible with the mindset of “*opinio legis*,” as the Lutheran confessions label it, the “mentality of law,” and not with the “mind of Christ.” That’s even more serious than “less than Lutheran.” That’s less than—yes, even worse—CONTRARY to Jesus’ own way of reading the scriptures as the four NT Gospels present him. That’s the stuff of super sadness and dismay. [More on this below.]

And we Western Lutherans taught it to them as our conservative, evangelical, pietist, often biblicist and (possibly) legalist missionaries brought the Gospel to them. It is the authority of the Bible—never once “the Gospel”—that is the drumbeat of the African message back to Western-world Lutherans. Over and over again these two documents confess—now sadly and dismayingly—that their “hope is built on nothing less” than the Bible’s authority, not on “Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”

Now that’s a frightful statement. But what would you conclude from your own reading of the two documents? The Tanzanian one is five pages. It’s called The Dodoma Statement. You can find it

here: <http://www.elct.org/news/2010.04.004.html>

The Kenya text is closer to one page. You can access it at <http://steadfastlutherans.org/?p=7287> No surprise, I found it on the website of the “Steadfast Lutherans,” the LCMS group that succeeded in unseating synod president Kieschnick (not steadfast enough) in this summer’s Missouri Synod convention. Their candidate, Matthew Harrison, super-steadfast, was elected in Kieschnick’s place. So it’s also no surprise that the Kenya confessors praise the “International Lutheran Council,” a Missouri-Synod-generated affiliation for steadfast Lutherans worldwide who choose to eschew the less-than-steadfast folks in the Lutheran World Federation.

IN THE TANZANIAN TEXT

Over and over again:

*weaken the authentic Biblical truth
Word of God dating from time immemorial
ELCT stands firmly on the foundation of the Word of God
as taught in the Bible
the Bible is self-interpreting
Holy Scripture is accurate, fixed and unchangeable
[gay] marriages that the Bible has not countenanced
in the Word of God dwells principles of life
sabotages the foundation of the Word of God
mindful fo the Word of God and its profound meanings
ELCT vehemently refuses misinterpretations and scandalous
use of Holy Scriptures
We must remain forever mindful of the Word of God
stand up, study the Word of God, and refuse strange
teachings.*

IN THE KENYAN CONFESSION

*anti-scriptural development
rejected the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of
God.
under the authority of the Scriptures
contrary to God's will as clearly expressed in the Holy
Scripture
we must confess the Word of God
remain faithful to the Scriptures
by the Scripture the Lord will save the Church in the
World*

2. I was struck by one sentence in the Kenyan text, which provides a deeper clue, I think, to this adamant drumbeat for the authority of the Bible—not only that “we” mission-sending Lutherans taught them, but how it now is at work within them.”. . . we further state that it beats our logics and saddens us very much that the church of Sweden, which at the reformation was the pillar of Biblical Reformation within Christendom has now decided to go apostate”

“It beats our logics” is a revealing statement. Probably more than the Kenyans intended. Throughout the church’s history two logics have been in conflict, the logic of opinio legis and the logic of the mind of Christ. Two different mindsets. In Luther’s Galatians commentary he calls these two different grammars. Labels for the two in Reformation days were semi-pelagianism vs. faith alone, theology of glory vs. theology of the cross.

3. Isn’t this what St. Paul was confronting over and over again in his mission ministry? Not only in his Galatian congregaation, but also in Corinth. Go to 2 Cor 3:6ff. I’ll appropriate some of Paul’s “boldness” (v.12) and give an EHS-rendering of his text, linking it to our

topic.2Cor.3:6-17

“God has made us competent to be deacons of a new covenant, not of the law’s verbatim letters—“this is kosher, this is NOT kosher”—but of the Spirit, the Spirit now loose in the world since Jesus was raised from the dead. For the law’s kosher/non-kosher letters always kill the ones trusting them, even when these letters are words in the Bible—as they are by the zillions. But the Spirit emanating from Easter gives life.

“That ministry, that divine operation, of death was chiseled into the tablets of the decalogue. No life coming from it at all—even for alleged commandment-keepers. Au contraire! Yet it did have its glow-ry, its razzle-dazzle. So much so that Moses had to veil his face lest the Israelites get scorched as he brought the tablets to them. But it was the glow of death, now set aside—Hallelujah!—by the super-glow of the divine operation of the Spirit emanating from Easter. The glow in the prior covenant resulted in condemnation for its adherents, the second one in their justification; that’s the difference between dying and surviving the heat coming from those tablets. One divine operation was set aside, the second one that came is permanent. Guess which one has the more glow!

“Well then, since we’re basking in the glow that doesn’t incinerate, that lasts, we’ve gotchutzpah. We don’t veil our face about the new divine operation that’s been entrusted to us. Yet we need to look again at the Moses operation. It was not only Moses, there also was a veil that afflicted the Sinai congregation too. This veil was not on their faces, but inside their heads. Their minds were hardened. Not God’s law itself got into their mindset, but an “*opinio legis*” got added on to God’s law, an opinion that said “If you do what the law says, you’ll

be kosher with God.” It moved into the mind with sclerotic effect. No self-purgation could correct it.

[And, sadly, it’s still going on. To this very day when folks with that affliction read the old covenant (or for that matter both old and new testaments) in the 21st century, that same veil kicks in. It blocks folks from reading the old covenant aright, and they never get to the new one.]

“Only in Christ is the veil set aside. When one turns to the Lord Christ, the veil is removed. And in the transaction, as the opinio legis veil disintegrates, the mind of Christ moves in. Now the Lord Christ and the Holy Spirit are in cahoots, of course, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” [ESV]

4. Wouldn’t this help the Kenyan and Tanzanian Lutherans? I can see that they are not helped by what I remember of the rationale that accompanied the ELCA action last year—and the lengthy study documents that preceded it. Most of it about “love” and “commitment” and pages of social science research to support the ELCA’s move into open arms for its homosexual members. Though they don’t actually say that, the Africans are critical of “sloppy agape” and social science groundings for church action. Rightly so, I’d say. Both doctrine and practice need better foundations—like patent linkage to THE cornerstone.

Seems to me that the ELCA action was the right thing, but for the wrong reasons. The reasons did not come from Lutheran Reformation roots. No wonder the Africans reprimand us. The proposals offered now and then on the Crossings website have sought to ground such open-arms welcome in a Lutheran theology of creation, and a law/promise hermeneutic for reading those “killer texts”

in the Bible.

The Bible IS an authority, but not the authority that *opinio legis* gives it, namely, a legal authority wherein “everything that this book says is God’s Word telling us what we must believe and do—or else!” The authority of the Bible is derivative from the authority of the Gospel. The Bible is the authority for learning/hearing what the Good News is. It opens our eyes to see that the term “Word of God” as used in the Bible itself never refers to printed words on parchment.

That is an item for which today’s Lutherans world-wide should thank Luther, though the African statements don’t reflect it when they speak of God’s Word. “Wort Gottes” (word of God) when Luther uses the term, is the Gospel, the merciful promise, not the book. When Luther refers to the Bible he uses “die Bibel,” or “die heilige Schrift” (holy scripture). When he says something like: “We have God’s word for it that sinners are forgiven,” he does not mean “we have the Bible” for it, but “we have God’s promise”

5. Imagine how the African statements would be different if God’s Word as promise were to replace every reference to God’s Word as the Bible. And that goes for the current hullabaloo in the ELCA too, where God’s Word as promise seems lost in the rhetoric coming from either side. Neither the allegedly liberal ELCA establishment, nor the ex-ELCA purist new North American Lutheran Church builds on that cornerstone. Which shows that both Biblical liberals and Biblical purists can be afflicted with the *opinio legis* veil when reading the Bible. So long as that persists, the rescue offered in Corinthians 3 never happens: “Only in Christ is the veil set aside. When one

turns to the Lord Christ, the veil is removed. And in the transaction, as the opinio legis veil disintegrates, the mind of Christ moves in. Now the Lord Christ and the Holy Spirit are in cahoots, of course, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

I don’t expect to be alive when this conflict may someday come to closure. It’s been 150 years in the USA since slavery of Africans, once claimed to be “based on the Bible,” was formally abolished. Yet in the USA that racial gap is still not completely bridged. So this one too may take generations. Nevertheless Paul’s conclusion to his discourse on the veil is encouraging: “Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.”

Which are sufficient grounds for saying
Peace and Joy!
Ed Schroeder

“Simultaneously Sinner and Saint,” a Second Opinion for the ELCA Journal THE LUTHERAN

Colleagues,

Last month’s ThTh 634 amounted to an Op Ed to Peter Marty’s piece published in the August issue of the ELCA national magazine THE LUTHERAN. It wouldn’t have been so vexing if the article had not carried the caption: “A Lutheran Christian Life

for Today.” For *Luther-an* it was not. Straight Erasmus instead. That August article was the second in an on-going series under that caption in THE LUTHERAN.

Comes now the September issue. This one in the series is “Simultaneously Two People.” It focuses on the Siamese-twin character of Christian life using Luther’s phrase “simultaneously sinner and saint.” Before I got around to doing my own grumbling—for this one irritates too with its off-center presentation of that “Lutheran” predicate—Richard Jungkuntz, Jr. sends me his own Second Opinion. He’s done it better than I could. I pass it on to you today.

Is ThTh on the verge of its own Second Opinion series—one a month—as the series continues in THE LUTHERAN?

[These surnames, Marty and Jungkuntz, as some of you know, were prominent during the “Wars of the Missouri Synod” in the previous century where the fathers of Peter and Richard were allies in the struggle. Two tidbits. Jungkuntz, sr. wound up getting sacked (twice!) by Jacob Preus as he stormed to power in the LCMS. Marty, sr. (“safely” employed outside the synod) was commencement speaker for the first Seminex graduating class in 1974.

Both Marty senior and Jungkuntz senior published books on Lutheran theology of baptism during those days, Marty 1962, Jungkuntz 1968. When the Jungkuntz volume went to a second edition, Marty, sr. wrote the foreword. Marty, sr. wrote a book on Luther that was featured in ThTh 296. You can find it at <https://crossings.org/thursday/2004/thur021204.shtml>]

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

“Where’s Luther...?”

The “action step,” if you will, of the column, “Simultaneously Two People”(third in the series of “A Lutheran Christian Way of Life” in THE LUTHERAN), is that we carry around two notes in our pockets – one saying, “You are the apple of my eye;” the other, “I am dust and ashes” – never favoring one pocket over the other (“at our peril”), to remind us that we are completely and at the same time both loving/lousy, saint/sinner, apple/failure, good/bad ... “...WHOLLY REDEEMED/wholly sinful...”

I was glad to see the words “wholly redeemed” in that grab-bag of positive and negative attributes, for if not for those words, “(are)...redeemed” [passive participle], one might think that being “loving,” a “saint,” an “apple in God’s eye,” and “good” are examples of what we are by nature on the “plus side” as Christians – or so it seemed from the column overall. Fortunately, those words, [are] redeemed, give the lie to that kind of thinking, and provide the true meaning and significance behind Luther’s so-called paradoxical Christian identity. That is, they correctly point us in the right direction by placing us on the receiving end of God’s action with respect to our being “good”; the other positive descriptive adjectives leave the impression that there is something about us that is so, as we are. In that regard, the Christian is no better than (and more often less so) than the non-Christian.

UNfortunately, the column does not tell us, or give us a clue, how it is—why it is – that, as Christians, we ARE redeemed – and therefore “good” in terms of that side of our Christian identity: “wholly saint[s] and wholly sinner[s] at the same time.” And, absent the fleshing out of those words, one is left to conclude that Luther’s great insight was not that we are

sometimes one and sometimes the other, or partly one and partly the other, but that we are, paradoxically and contradictory to logical thinking, one hundred percent each at the same time as a matter of course – and that our great challenge is but to recognize that fact, albeit avoiding smugness and self-denigration while doing so.

It's true that there is something "Lutheran" in an admonition to avoid either smugness or self-denigration with regard to our status before God, but we are not told why this is so, namely, that "think[ing] that this victory is or ought to be complete [in this lifetime] drives either to despair or to pride, i.e., to DISBELIEVING IN THE GOSPEL AS GOD'S TRUE DESCRIPTION OF HIM. 'Forgive us our trespasses' is the constant prayer of the believer, not the unbeliever" (from commentary on C.F.W. Walther's "Gesetz und Evangelium" in "The Orthodox Teacher and the Word of God," THE CRESSET 25 [March, 1962], p.16, emphasis added).

The "great insight" Luther derived from pondering Romans, then, was not the great paradox that we are both one hundred percent good and one hundred percent bad persons at the same time; that presents an incomplete picture and does not properly distinguish Law and Gospel. Rather, Luther's insight regarding the "at-oneness" of our simultaneous two natures was that, just as a sick man, who (being treated by a doctor) is "both sick and well at the same time... sick in fact, but...well because of the sure promise of the doctor, whom he trusts and who has reckoned him as already cured..." so too, the Christian is "at the same time both a sinner and a righteous man; a sinner in fact, but a righteous man by the sure imputation and promise of God that He will continue to deliver him from sin until He has completely cured him. And thus, he is entirely healthy in hope, but in fact he is still a sinner..." (LW 25,260). Some important Lutheran concepts here: imputation, promise of God, trust, hope.

[This commentary, from his Lectures on Romans and written between 1515 and 1516, is where the well-known apothegm attributed to Luther, “simul iustus et peccator” (at the same time righteous and a sinner), first occurs – except here Luther has written the reverse: simul peccator et Iustus. It is in his Lectures on Galatians, in 1531, that he writes in the more familiar order, “Sic homo Christianus simul iustus et peccator...” (WA XL(I), 368, 25-26). His other frequently quoted apothegm, “simultaneously saint and sinner,” is also from his Lectures on Galatians, except again, as in Romans, it is reversed, “...simul peccator et Sanctus” (WA XL(I), 368, 8-9).]

Even the very language Luther uses conveys the “grammar” of our paradoxical status: we are actively sinners – sinners “in truth” – while passively righteous/just(ified). In Latin, the nominative suffix -TOR indicates agency (and is evident in many of our English words: actor, senator, janitor, editor, inspector, director, and so on). Thus, to be a PECCATOR (sinner) is to be someone who sins. To be IUSTUS (righteous), on the other hand, is to be thus only in a passive sense, “the adjectival -TUS suffix (indistinguishable in form from the ending of a passive participle) ‘[having] the force of provided with.’ The righteous man, in other words, is not ‘just,’ which no man can be, but ‘justified,’ by God’s act, not by his own” (John C. Leeds, *RENAISSANCE SYNTAX AND SUBJECTIVITY: IDEOLOGICAL CONTENTS OF LATIN AND THE VERNACULAR IN SCOTTISH PROSE CHRONICLES* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010], 26-27). Brian Cummings, in *THE LITERATURE OF THE REFORMATION: GRAMMAR AND GRACE* (Oxford University Press, 2002) has an extended treatment of Luther’s use of active and passive GRAMMATICAL categories in his theological treatment of activity and passivity.

For Luther, then, we are wholly sinners by nature, actively – it is our origin – even though no fault of our own – except that it is! We are wholly saints – righteous/just(ified) – passively, by

the grace of God: it is a righteousness given (“imputed”) by God; not imputed willy-nilly, because God is “a nice guy” (to quote Bob Bertram from another context), but imputed through Christ, into whose death and resurrection we have been baptized and whence comes our being MADE righteous—being a “saint” – which is but to be a forgiven sinner. For Lutherans, justification, baptism, forgiveness of sins are all synonyms. In other words, it is through God’s acting in Christ, that is ours by faith, and not because of any character trait with which we may be endowed, that we are saints, are righteous – are “good.” This passivity, this trusting reception of grace (= faith) as the source of our “goodness” – and not something of our own doing or being – was missing from the article, except for that barest hint with the words “(are) wholly redeemed,” where GOD is the agent who says “Yes” to us in Christ; and so, Luther went missing.

Kathryn Kleinhans put it well in an earlier column of THE LUTHERAN: “Our dual identity as saints and sinners reminds us that our righteousness always depends on God’s grace, never on our own religious behavior. At the same time, our recognition that sin, while forgiven, remains a powerful force in the world and in ourselves gives us a realistic ability to confront cruelty and evil, confident that God will have the last word” (“Lutheranism 101: Culture or confession?” THE LUTHERAN, June 2006).

As for the two notes, why not just one note in one pocket – a Luther note, “I’ve been baptized!”– that covers both in the way he intended?

Richard W. D. Jungkuntz

Theopaschitism [Yes, that's the topic. Pronounced (OED): theo-PA-skit-ism.]

Colleagues,

The OT reading for last Sunday (Pent.16) in our congregation told of Moses beseeching God: “change your mind.” And God did. The world-wide media chatter for the weekend was all about Islam – 9/11 remembrance, the Muslim festival Eid-al-fitr, the Qur'an as tentative-tinder in Florida. Got me to wondering. Would the deity revealed in the Qur'an ever change his mind?

I did some Google-gagging. One item I stumbled onto was <http://www.reformedreflections.ca/other-religions/islam-doctrine-of-god.html> “Islam's Doctrine of God” by Johan D. Tangelder, theologian from the Christian Reformed Church. Although Tangelder didn't explicitly answer my question, I learned some things from his “compare and contrast” presentation. And it seems to me that the conclusion is clear: Muhammed's god speaking in the Qur'an would not do what Moses' god did in last Sunday's reading. So there is a difference. Does that difference MAKE any difference? In Moses' case it did: the difference between life and death for the people. When Israel's God changed his mind, he switched from giving them their just deserts to giving them what they didn't deserve—forgiveness. Does the Qur'an, could the Qur'an, report such a switch in the deity?

In this case the switch also includes another switch. The one

who bears the “ouch” is God, not the ones who deserve it. God suffers. Does God, can God, in the Qur’an suffer? I think the answer is No. If so, does that make any difference? Once upon a time in Christian history it did. But in order for us to get there, please follow this “scenic route” segue.

Last Thursday just-retired Pastor Ron Neustadt and I began a re-run of the happy venture we tried two years ago. Namely, team-teaching a Lutheran Confessions course under the auspices of the Lutheran School of Theology [LST-STL] here in St. Louis. Guess what? Islam gets mentioned in the very first article of the Augsburg Confession! Do you Lutherans out there know that? Title of that first article—no surprise—is Doctrine of God. After stating the affirmative the article concludes: “Therefore all the heresies which are contrary to this article are rejected. Among these are the heresy of the Manichaeans . . . Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and others like them” And there’s an editor’s footnote: “The Reformers frequently referred to Mohammedanism as an anti-Trinitarian heresy.”

Islam a “Christian” heresy? If we started from there nowadays, where might we wind up?

The issue of whether or not God can suffer is in the mix here too. And so I’m going to pull another “item from Oz” out of that computer file “Australia 1994” for the rest of today’s ThTh post. It’s about God suffering, aka theopaschitism. I can no longer remember how it came to pass that I was asked by an Anglican congregation in Adelaide to talk about that very topic. But it did happen. So I went and basically told them what I had learned from Elert’s work on that topic, “Die Theopaschitische Formel” (1950). Here it is.

Peace and joy!

The Church of St. George, the Martyr (Anglican), Adelaide, Australia

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE TRINITY

A series of 6 seminars with discussion exploring the essence of Christian Faith.

Seminar #5 Friday, July 1, 1994 WHO SUFFERS IN THE TRINITY?

An odd question. Yet the Trinity is an odd god. Who cares about God suffering? Who gets any benefit?

From the 3rd to the 6th century the “Who Suffers in the Trinity?” question was one that divided and united the Christian churches. It was a hot-potato—and it was so hot because they thought salvation hung on the answer.

The technical term was “theo-pa-schi-tism” [God suffering]. So long as the Christians restricted their talk to the language of the Bible, there was no problem. No question about Jesus, the Son of God, suffering. And in the Hebrew scriptures, the God whom Jesus called ABBA is clearly also one who suffers. Israel’s God Yahweh continues in covenant faithfulness with his chosen people vis-a-vis their constant and manifold unfaithfulness. That hurts.

The debate arose in the early centuries of the church’s history as Christians sought to talk about their faith in the language of the non-Jewish Hellenistic world. Even though the NT was written in Greek, its thought world is fundamentally Hebrew. And the conflict arose when, in talk about Jesus, the Jesus of the gospels, the word God was predicated to him. Fancy word for this is Christology.

- A. In the first and second cent. with an undeveloped Christology there is no problem talking about God suffering.
- B. The early Christians came to their picture of God via their picture of the Biblical Jesus. Not the other way around. From Ignatius to Tertullian there are God-suffering statements without any concern.
- C. But with Clement of Alexandria the process is reversed: the Christ-picture derives from a pre-existing God-picture. Plato's axiom about God's "apathy" [God-by definition-cannot suffer] becomes the apriori, the premise, for any orthodox concept of God. It is never argued. It is just taken for granted. "Everybody knows...." [Everybody knows that God is the opposite of humans. Humans are mortal, "passible" (=capable of suffering), limited in power, knowledge, space-occupation. God is the exact opposite. Just as it was a few years ago when: "Everybody knows" that capitalist market economy and socialist planned economy are opposites. You don't have to prove that. Then we discovered that they were both post-industrial bureaucracies competing in a global economy and the opposites weren't so obvious anymore.]
- A. How it was nuanced: IRENAEUS said "the impassible became passible in Christ."
GREGORY THAUMATURGOS said that God did it with style-willingly, on his own accord (not resisting suffering as humans do)-to become Lord over suffering, & without fear.

For the ARIANS God's apathy was an absolute axiom. Therefore the Christ who suffered on the cross couldn't possibly be homo-ousios [=same substance]

with God.

For the NICAEANS who were committed homoousians, suffering was true only of the human Jesus, not the divine LOGOS, the second person of the Trinity.

Yet even ATHANASIUS could say "The One who was Crucified is God," using the concept of "idiopoesis" (=the Logos appropriated everything that constitutes the human) as his instrument for doing so.

- B. In the West, LACTANTIUS, JEROME, HILARY found Latin language to say yes and no at the same time to God's passibility.
- C. Back in the East conflict arose with APOLLINARIS and his concern to join the apathy of God with the sentence: "God was crucified," and doing so with his "one nature" notion [mono-physis] to join apathy and passibility in the incarnate Christ. But it was not really a union. Instead an add-on. The "orthodox" response was the necessity— because of the reality of suffering in the incarnate son of God —to talk about two natures. Only the human can suffer, for suffering is something that requires a body, if it is to take place at all.

Summa: "With [the Alexandrines] Gregory Thaumaturgos, Athanasius, Hilary and Apollinaris the reality of the suffering, where it is not just ruled out, is nonetheless reduced. With the Antiochians [Syrian theologians] the possibility of God suffering is not questioned, but because of the apathy-axiom the completeness of the incarnation gets fuzzy."

III. Even the opponents of these proposals still granted the apathy premise, but then worked to show how in the

incarnation God had changed. CYRIL of Alexandria is the one who consciously worked to attack the dominance of the apathy-axiom in Christology.

IV. Council of Chalcedon One person (hypostasis) two natures (physeis) in Christ is the orthodox language for Christology. Condemned therefore were the monophysites [Christ had but one "nature"]—many of them churches of the Middle East who didn't speak or understand Greek: Armenians, Syrians, Persians. The monophysite response was that Chalcedon (as interpreted by Pope Leo in his Tome to Flavian) had two distinct acting subjects in Christ, thereby dividing the incarnation in two—one did the miracles, one suffered injury. Splitting Christ in two cannot be orthodox teaching.

Chalcedon gave Cyril's perspective the victory. Yes, the divine nature can and does suffer in the incarnate Logos. Yet Christ's cry of dereliction (My God, my God...) was for Cyril a stumbling block and he backed away from saying that the one uttering that cry was God-in-Christ.

V. The term theopaschitist became the dirty-word for labeling the monophysites. By saying God suffered, they were charged with denigrating God. But they were unconcerned with such a charge in their own use of the term. Rather they were concerned with the salvation agenda (in their perspective, the divinization of human nature) via the one-nature formula. Thus God had to come all the way down to the lowest human level if all of humanity was to be divinized again. The orthodox Eastern Chalcedonians fought the monophysites with dull weapons, since Christ's suffering had no fundamental role in their own notion of salvation. For them the incarnation (Bethlehem) was already full salvation. The Christ of the Eastern Orthodox churches is not the Suffering Christ.

VI. In the West.

A. Christ's cross moves to the center. God-suffering is at home in folk piety, but not in scholastic theology—neither in its Christology nor in its doctrine of God.

B. Au contraire Luther, especially in Christ's cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why . . .?" His entire theology is theology of the cross..

VII. Today?Theopaschitism? It has disappeared in theology too. Ho hum. Since Leibniz the tables are turned: Not God's suffering is problematic, but the world's suffering, our suffering—the so-called "theodicy" issue—that is the question. Can God be a just God if suffering abounds in the world he created? A Copernican revolution, a child of the Enlightenment.

Yet vis-a-vis human suffering the Christian gospel offers God-suffering as an answer, a good-news answer. A faith-answer, of course, but an answer. Better than no answer at all.

Why has theopaschitism been forgotten? Theology has forgotten its world-connection. Christology entails an interpretation of the whole world, all reality. Christianity has let our Enlightenment culture squeeze it back into the thin area of religion, personal religious feelings and convictions. Today's physicists are again pushing theological questions about the world. The world is helped with the suffering of God.

Third world Christologies are speaking of the suffering God. Some samples: Kozei Kitamori's "Theology of the Pain of God" from Japan and his fellow citizen Shusako Endo in his novel "Silence" with its "fumie" [trampled upon] Jesus. Also Gabriel Setiloane from Botswana in Africa.

Edward H. Schroeder

A Book Review on Science and Religion

Colleagues,

For this week's ThTh post Dr. Peter Keyel offers a Science-and-Religion book review. Newly elected to the Crossings board, Peter is a layman who works in immunology and was raised in the ELCA. Just a few weeks ago he was asked to submit an essay on this theme for an ELCA publication. He's showed me what he wrote. If his prose makes the cut, Crossings will get some publicity—possibly for the first time—in the church-wide regions of the ELCA. Even better, of course, is that ELCA readers will get some good stuff. Peter lives and works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

Marilynne Robinson

ABSENCE OF MIND: THE DISPELLING OF INWARDNESS FROM THE MODERN MYTH OF THE SELF.

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. hardcover. xviii-158 pages,

\$24 [\$16.32 @www.amazon.com \$17.28 @www.bn.com]

The interplay between science, philosophy and religion has fascinated people since the birth of these fields. Although today this often plays out as proving the existence of God, it has not always been observed as such. In 1905, Dwight H. Terry formed a foundation with a specific perspective on science, philosophy and religion:

"The object of this foundation is not the promotion of scientific investigation and discovery, but rather the assimilation and interpretation of that which has been or shall be hereafter discovered, and its application to human welfare, especially by the building of the truths of science and philosophy into the structure of a broadened and purified religion. The founder believes that such a religion will greatly stimulate intelligent effort for the improvement of human conditions and the advancement of the race in strength and excellence of character."To this end it is desired that a series of lectures be given by men eminent in their respective departments, on ethics, the history of civilization and religion, biblical research, all sciences and branches of knowledge which have an important bearing on the subject, all the great laws of nature, especially of evolution ... also such interpretations of literature and sociology as are in accord with the spirit of this foundation, to the end that the Christian spirit may be nurtured in the fullest light of the world's knowledge and that mankind may be helped to attain its highest possible welfare and happiness upon this earth."

This foundation has sponsored since 1923 an annual series of four lectures usually given by the same person to fulfill this mandate. The 2009 Terry lectures were given by writer Marilynne Robinson, best known for her works GILEAD (awarded the 2005 Pulitzer Prize) and HOUSEKEEPING. Her latest book, ABSENCE OF

MIND, is written from these Terry lectures. True to the mandate of the lectures, ABSENCE OF MIND attempts to reconcile science with religion, specifically through consideration of how the concept of "mind" has not been properly treated by modern and post-modern philosophers of science, starting from Auguste Comte up through Sigmund Freud and Richard Dawkins.

Each lecture forms a chapter of the book, and is a complete essay in and of itself. Along with the introduction, the first chapter "On Human Nature" lays the groundwork for Robinson's story. This is the best chapter of the entire book because it systematically and critically examines modern descriptions of the mind that are written from what she calls "a posture of science." It especially focuses critical thought on the assumptions underpinning these arguments. Using examples from Richard Dawkins, Bertrand Russell and others, she shows how they rely on a common set of unproven assumptions, and fail their own proposed tests to permit only "rational" thought.

Most importantly she shows that this literature rests on the myth of a threshold, before which we were ignorant savages, and afterwards enlightened beings. Once past this threshold, whether it be Darwin's, Freud's, or anyone else's version, views that previously were assumptions are now taken as solid fact that are not permitted to be examined rigorously. This view further posits that since all views prior to this threshold were borne of ignorance, they are safely discarded and forgotten. This leads to startling "novel" discoveries that are further used to discredit the older viewpoint.

Robinson's example of this is how older viewpoints understood the existence of Babylonian and Assyrian narratives of the Flood as proving the account in Genesis, while the modern viewpoint is that the Babylonian and Assyrian accounts are startling discoveries that threaten the authenticity of Genesis. She also

examines how many of these authors, including Russell, use the introspective abilities of their minds to tackle problems, but fail to consider introspective aspects to religion. Because of all these problems, the beliefs of the “modern, scientific thought” are termed “parascientific” throughout the remainder of the book.

The second chapter deals specifically with the issue of altruism, which for Robinson is one of the primary areas in which parascientific arguments fall well short of the mark. Although she does consider a number of arguments in this chapter, it falls short on at least two accounts. She dismisses game theory with a single sentence, which fails to do justice to this branch of mathematics. Also, she does not consider any variant of social exchange theory, which would be one powerful counter-argument to this chapter.

The third chapter abruptly changes to focus on Sigmund Freud. While this book generally assumes a scholarly audience, this chapter marks the most abrupt change that may mystify the average reader. Robinson presumes the reader is already familiar with Freud’s view that religion is an expression of underlying sexual or “psychosexual” problems, and so launches her apology without firmly laying that groundwork. Here Robinson attempts to rescue religion from Freud’s assessment by reducing his views of self, mind and religion to artifacts of his social and cultural context. She presents evidence that his writings served as a counter-narrative against the dominant anti-Semitism and nationalism in his home of Vienna and elsewhere. In place of that narrative, Freud offered one free of the cultural and religious traditions underpinning that dominant world-view and instead grounded his narrative in the same assumptions used by the parascience writers earlier discussed.

The final chapter outlines Robinson’s view of the mind, or at

least the kinds of questions we should be asking about the mind and experience, and the possibilities for the advancement of science, religion and culture if her views are shared. While it is fairly logically consistent, her flawed chemistry example will provide a ready straw-man for anyone wishing to disagree with her.

However, for a Christian audience, straw-men are the least of the worries. Although Martin Luther receives mention on p.15, and Lutheranism is the only Christian denomination named in the book, there is nothing Christian, let alone Lutheran, in the entire book. At its best, ABSENCE OF MIND exposes irrational and unproven assumptions underlying parascientific and anti-religious arguments, and does this from within a scientific point of view. However, what is erected in its place is a vague mysticism of the mind and the idea that if we give religion its due and ask the correct questions, science and religion will complement each other and bring us to a higher level of joy, insight and prosperity.

Nowhere is Christ's death and resurrection mentioned, likely because it is not necessary for, and perhaps contrary to, her story. Christ is not needed because there is no consideration of sin, which would also challenge her thesis (and that of the Terry lectures in general) that the "truths of science and philosophy" can be built "into the structure of a broadened and purified religion." Implicit is an assumption that sin and other problems can be overcome by finding and applying the correct combination of science, philosophy and religion. However, if our sin is a problem that only God can solve, then all of our efforts in science, philosophy and even religion will fail to solve that problem, and even serve to make that problem worse.

While Robinson does affirm mystical experience of God (or more strictly, the mind), that mystical experience is robbed of

greater meaning by removing it from the context of humankind's standing under judgment before God. It never engages the question of humankind before the divine judge, even though Freud, along with others, have considered that question in various forms. In this light, one powerful question that she fails to ask is whether the desire to completely eliminate religion and replace it with a scientific/parascientific paradigm is not itself a result of God's wrath.

Thus, for a Christian audience, this book can serve as only part of the story. Although Robinson relies on a gospel of progress instead of the Christian Gospel, ABSENCE OF MIND may be useful in pointing out that nonbelievers need something more than the parascientific viewpoint, or at least that they see some of the flaws inherent in that viewpoint. It still remains with the reader both to articulate and trust that this something more is God's forgiveness borne out of Jesus' death and resurrection, as received by faith, not reason.

Peter Keyel

09.07.10

More Artifacts from Earlier Days in Australia. Ethics

Colleagues,

Digging around in those old Aussie file folders (from 1994) some more—this time the one on Ethics—I found these two items. The first was an imagined letter to Dietrich Bonhoeffer—and then, his response! The class was reading DB's Ethics book. The second

is a “crossing” of John Stott’s book on ethics (also a class textbook, chosen before I was assigned to teach the course) with St. Paul’s epistle to the Galatians. Here they are.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

P.S. Also in that Ethics file was a 13-page “Vademecum for Bonhoeffer’s ETHICS,” literally a “Go-with me” step-by-step as we walk/talk our way through his entire ethics book. Maybe that could be posted somewhere on the Crossings website.

August 18, 1994

Dear Dietrich,

We’ve just finished the first 37 pages of your Ethics book, here in our class at Luther Seminary in Australia. On the very first page your “Stations on the Way to Freedom” brought to mind a man you probably never met, Martin Luther King, Jr. The titles of your four stanzas are also the four cornerstones of MLK’s theology of freedom. And that includes the jolting title to stanza four, “Death.” I wonder if his theology of freedom borrowed these four elements from you. I don’t know if MLK ever saw or named you as his teacher. If not, he doubtless got this quartet of terms for freedom from the same source you did, the Christian Gospel.

For ThTh readers today (2010), here’s the DB text for “Stations on the Way to Freedom.”

Discipline

If you set out to seek freedom, then you must learn above all things discipline of your soul and your senses, lest your

desires and then your limbs perchance should lead you now hither, now yon. Chaste be your spirit and body, subject to yourself completely, in obedience seeking the goal that is set for your spirit. Only through discipline does one learn the secret of freedom.

Action

Not always doing and daring what's random, but seeking the right thing, Hover not over the possible, but boldly reach for the real. Not in escaping to thought, in action alone is found freedom. Dare to quit anxious faltering and enter the storm of events, carried alone by your faith and by God's good commandments, then true freedom will come and embrace your spirit, rejoicing.

Suffering

Wondrous transformation. Your hands, strong and active, are fettered. Powerless, alone, you see that an end is put to your action. Yet now you breathe a sigh of relief and lay what is righteous calmly and fearlessly into a mightier hand, contented. Just for one blissful moment you could feel the sweet touch of freedom, Then you gave it to God, that God might perfect it in glory.!

Death

Come now, highest of feasts on the way to freedom eternal, Death, lay down your ponderous chains and earthen enclosures, walls that deceive our souls and fetter our mortal bodies, that we might at last behold what here we are hindered from seeing. Freedom, long have we sought you through discipline, action, and suffering.

Dying, now we discern in the countenance of God your own face.

DBWE [=Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English] 8, Letters and Papers from Prison, 512-14 German text available at <http://www.helmholtz-bi.de/projekte/religion/Nationalsozialismus/html/texte.HTM>

All four of these terms, Dietrich, are the clear opposite for what freedom means in our common culture today. We use freedom as our word to avoid discipline (do whatever you want). And when you talk about “action” (stanza two) our culture thinks freedom is not to “have to do” anything, or to be so paralyzed in trying to decide the right thing to do that we do nothing. And no one connects suffering with freedom as you do and surely not death. We see freedom to mean escaping suffering and postponing death as long as scientifically possible.

MLK and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference made discipline, and training in discipline, a fundamental piece of the civil rights movement. The movement’s motto was “nonviolent direct action.” Members of the movement trained themselves to endure suffering. They anticipated it and when it came they endured it in a way that mystified Americans, both secular and Christian. Aware that, like you, he could expect to be killed for his practice of freedom, he articulated the link between death and freedom many times, including his words on the eve of his assassination.

Both his written and spoken theology was less clearly Christocentric than yours is, but given the fact that he was a Baptist preacher who did his graduate studies at a Methodist university that taught him a liberal American protestantism, it is surprising that his Christology was not even poorer. Yet his enacted theology looks very similar to your own and your “stations” is a marvelous point of crossing between the two of you – even though in those four stanzas you don’t mention “the Name” either.

But the opposite is, of course, the case in the first 35 pages of today's text where you are radically Christocentric. Your opening statement is jarring: that the attempt to do ethics at all is a sign of our fallenness, our fracture with the God who created us. To know (or want to know) good and evil, you say, shows that we already are disconnected from God in the pattern of Genesis 3. Were we connected, we would not have to ask.

If I read you aright, you then pick up two common realities that all of us know only too well, shame and conscience, and you demonstrate how these two realities also verify our disconnection from our "origin," as you like to say.

You then offer a radical rehabilitation of the Pharisee (11 pages, in fact) to show him not at all to be the scoundrel that our own moralist piety has made of him. Instead he comes out as a tragic figure. He is inescapably hung up on "being good." Real freedom for him – and for all of us so concerned about ethics – would be to let Jesus liberate us from the very quest to be good and do the right thing. That means to be liberated from doing what is usually called "ethics" at all.

You formulate a jolting conclusion: disciples of Jesus are no longer concerned about ethics, but about doing the will of God. Yet we are so brainwashed by our own Pharisee-heresy that we think "doing the will of God" is ethics. That yen to do ethics, you say, is what Jesus seeks to overcome.

By reconnecting us to God, Jesus removes from us any need or desire to "try to be good." Therefore knowledge of good and evil is irrelevant to this new Christ-connected hook-up with God. Who needs it? Farewell, ethics!

Jesus Christ himself, you say, is the criterion in me and for me for my own doing. Insofar as I deliberate and even wrestle with the business of "doing," the agenda is not that I look "good"

after the doing gets done, but that what God and Christ want for this person gets done. If anyone should come out looking “good” in the process, that one is God and God’s Christ. They get the glory.

Your twist on the Mary and Martha story is illuminating. Martha is not the doer and Mary the hearer, you say, since hearing and doing are all of one piece for a Christ-connected disciple. Martha’s hang-up is that she is still “doing ethics,” by giving “not-good” grades to her sister and even to Jesus. Her kitchen-work under those rubrics does not serve Jesus at all. It’s another version of the Pharisee-heresy.

You wind up our section for today with an exegesis of the N.T. term “agape” wherein you use that one word as the good news opposite for all the bad news in the preceding 30 diagnostic pages. Your summary statements (first two paragraphs, page 36) pull it all together, but they are still overwhelming.

Okay, now my question. With all the radical theocentrism and Christocentrism, with God the active one and we humans passive, does that not feed the hang-up we Lutherans have about being inactive and passive, and letting God (or other activist Christians) care for the world’s ills? Doesn’t your chapter here, where you knock ethics in the head as signal of our fallenness, reinforce do-nothing Lutherans never to get off their duffs to do anything Christian in the world we live in?

Sincerely yours,
Edward Schroeder

[And then, miraculously, an answer arrived from the other side!]

Lieber Edward:

Thanks for your letter. I’ll let your fellow students decide

whether your exegesis of my chapter is on target or not. To your question I'll say the following:

If your Lutherans in 1994 are like "mine" 50/60 years ago, then:

1. They are already "doing" all sorts of things, but not in freedom, not in Christ, not liberated from the Pharisee-heresy, the "do-gooder" cancer.
2. They are in bondage to one kind of activity that is coupled with bondage to a Christ-less kind of passivity. I ask you: what is all the activity going on in the Lutheran Church of Australia and in Lutheran churches elsewhere today?
3. The passivity that I am promoting is the posture of faith, namely, receptivity in our encounter with Christ. It does not entail doing nothing, but entails abandoning Pharisaic activity.
4. From that posture of receptivity no one can just sit there. Remember my Mary and Martha exegesis. Or the classic "Lutheran" passage, John 15:5, "without me you can do nothing," and its affirmative mode, "with me you can NOT do nothing." Or look again at my two paragraphs on page 36 with that definition of love I gave. It is indeed active, active in the same way an electric motor is active when the switch is turned on. The motor is passive in that all the current it runs on comes from the power-generating station, but it in no way does nothing when the current moves through it.

I wish I could be there to listen in to your students continuing the conversation. I'll be looking forward to their letters in the days ahead.

Pax et gaudium!

Dietrich

Ethical Issues Class
Luther Seminary, Adelaide
March 15, 1994

Crossing John Stott's "Ethics of the Workplace" with Galatians 4 & 5.

[Stott: chapter 9 – Work and Unemployment]

The ethical issues of the workplace are negative attitudes toward work (it's a curse, it's meaningless) and the trauma of unemployment. For the first he proposes the Bible's idea of work as fulfillment, as service to the human community, as co-operation with God's purpose (=worship).

With work so important in Biblical ethics, the trauma of unemployment is today's big ethical issue in the workplace. It humiliates, depresses, demoralizes, dehumanizes. What to do? The real solution lies in the realm of macro-economics. Yet even there no solution seems to be in sight that looks obviously good or possible. Are there then palliatives (short-term remedies)? Yes, but they are micro- and piecemeal. They don't impact the macro-economy. Here the role of the Church is this: 1) Change people's attitude (church people's attitudes and that of society) about the unemployed. 2) Take its own initiatives (numerous samples given). 3) Publicize and act upon the distinction between "work" [=in the 3-fold Biblical sense] and "employment" [=getting paid].

"A More Radical View" of some futurologists is to brainstorm about work in the 21st century (only 6 years away—when our children/grandchildren are adults). There simply will not be work for everyone to do—no matter how the economic pie is divided. What then? Three scenarios: 1) business-as-usual, but that'll be impossible; 2) a society even more radically divided

(between the haves and the have-nots); 3) a Sane/Humane/Ecological one, which sounds like it would need Christ-connected sinners to populate it. For the changes it calls for are changes in people's thinking—actually people's hearts, equivalent to what the NT calls metanoia.

Stott summarizes on p. 183. He does not seek to “cross” the radical reality of unemployment in any of the 3 scenarios he reports on.

[Stott: Chapter 10 – Industrial Relations]

The ethical problem is “industrial civil war.” The Biblical Principle of Mutuality (mutual service, mutual respect) is violated by the “them vs. us” of industrial war. To apply that principle to industry means:

1. Abolish discrimination in the wage differentials between top and bottom wage-earners.
2. Increase participation by moving from an “institution” mentality to a “community” perspective in the factory, i.e., moving from being an “inmate” (someone else decides everything for you) to being a “person with self-determination, autonomy and freedom of action.” The code word is “industrial democracy.”
3. Emphasize Co-operation (It is after all only just, and it works— see the management success of Japanese industry.) Co-operation is a product of shared vision and values. Which brings up key terms as accountability (responsibility) not merely to shareholders, but to workers, consumers and the community at large. Look at the language of Stott's final page and a half: social audit, responsibility (again and again), responsible = just, “If you serve them, [then] they will serve you.” [Question: isn't this the language of “usus politicus legis,” the law's use in human society? Isn't Stott's last paragraph

more of the same, even though he mentions Jesus Christ? Is Stott being a Lutheran here?]

Crossing Stott's material with our Crossings paradigm from Galatians 4 & 5

His own key terms are so close to St. Paul's that it looks almost contrived: work as a curse, meaningless; the bondage worked on people by unemployment; industrial civil war; "them vs. us" mentality; wage-discrimination; the "inmate" mentality of the factory as "institution," accountability; "just-ness" in the workplace; the "If..., then..." axiom of law imperatives.

Stott is describing the workplace today, St. Paul might say, as Life Under the Law of God. The alternatives are slavery and freedom. Stott proposes the kind of freedom that is possible when the law is rightly used in its *usus politicus* (even though he seems to think such freedom comes from the Gospel, but that is another issue.) His own diagnosis goes only as deep as D-1 and D-2 in the Crossings paradigm. He has no D-3. All the solutions he poses are plausible in terms of God's law as society-preserver, are they not?

Stott's paradigm goes something like this:

D-1 THE UNFREEDOM OF DAILY WORK (The curse in human relations at the workplace today)

It's dog-eat-dog in the workplace today. Work itself dehumanizes (Paul's word "devours") people. It's a curse; it's meaningless. Unemployment dehumanizes even more. People measure each other by them-vs.-us categories of performance. Industrial war is negotiated in "If you . . . , then we" terms. You get treated as though you really are an "inmate" in a prison.

Worse still is

D-2 THE SLAVERY IN THE HEART (The curse in the heart)

Mentalities and attitudes about work, about “them,” about “us.” These are what people believe, what they hang their hearts on; what they fear, love or trust. Relying on work, on pay, on prestige, on the responsibility you have—all of these as the measure of people’s worth, or the measure of their unworth when they don’t have it. Believing that you really are an “inmate” owned/controlled by the company. Relying on such “laws” as the measure of your worth, your “right-ness,” your being “OK.”

Even worse than that is

D-3 SLAVERY AT THE GOD-LEVEL: GOD’S CURSE, Paul says. But Stott does not go that deep. Instead he starts now to propose solutions.

Note that he begins at his own deepest level of diagnosis—in our language D-2 (what’s going on in people’s hearts). His key terms for this inner arena are “attitudes” & “mentality.”

Stott’s P-2 (to remedy the D-2 he has exposed): ATTITUDE CHANGES (FREEDOM) IN PEOPLE’S HEARTS

These new attitudes are from the Bible: work is for human fulfillment, for service, for co-operation with God; “change people’s attitude about the unemployed;” move people from inmate-mentality to community-mentality. He urges all to rely on them. The grounds for all of them are in the law of preservation (of the workplace itself and therefore of the shareholders, the managers, the workers, the customers, society at large), the law of fairness (equity, justice), and the priority of the larger social fabric over the vested interests of management, or of the shareholders.

Stott’s P-3 (to remedy the D-1 he began with): From these changes in human hearts flow CHANGES BACK IN THE WORKPLACE: no more industrial war; work has value; even non-paid work is valued; humans find fulfillment in the workplace; service to

others happens; God gets co-operated with; no more "it's a curse," for work has meaning; more equitable wage differentials; the workplace is community with participation and co-operation; a "social audit" unfolds to the 4 parties involved: shareholders, workers, customers, society. The operating axiom is "IF you serve them, THEN they will serve you."

Now, can we in this ethics class do any better, with the biblical/confessional resources we bring to bear on the ethical issues of today's workplace?

Try this: Add St. Paul's own D-3 from Galatians: the workplace problem is even worse than Stott diagnoses it to be. It is God's curse on sinners, on their faith-less slavery in the heart, working itself out on a macro-economic scale. As this continues, with no repentance at this D-3 level, all remedies drawn from the law will never cure the whole problem. The law can, however, be a resource for interim stop-gap remedies. Stott's "social audit" actually has One More Auditor operating: God. God is "auditing" (Latin audio = listen) for our answers to his audit of our responsibility at all 3 levels: D-1, D-2 and especially our D-3 responsibility to God. Doubtless that is far too much responsibility for anyone to bear! Call it The Curse beyond all curses. How to survive? How to get freedom from God's audit?

Answer: P-1, the Curse-swapper—in his body on the tree. [Sadly absent from Stott's consideration.]

From Christ those under God's curse get un-cursed and receive instead God's Blessing, God's promise to Abraham. Call it freedom with God.

From that follows a P-2 different from Stott's P-2: faith's kind of freedom in the heart.

Then follows what in Paul's model is P-3:

Thoughts, words and deeds of freedom lived out publicly in the

workplace. How to do that concretely? For the Christ-truster Stott's remedies are still good options—now to be done with even greater freedom than Stott mentions. For unbelievers (who might hold this faith-stuff to be nonsense) there are still the motivators in God's law to urge support for many of the same workplace actions. Altho Christians are different, they have theological reasons for making coalitions here for such actions. That won't stop God's final Apocalypse, but can preserve a piece of creation from an Apocalypse Now.

Colleagues,

FYI. The remaining items in that Aussie file from 1994 are:

- A. Three syllabi: Ethics course, course on theological prolegomena, course on sanctification.
- B. [Egghead lecture] Who suffers in the Trinity? Theopaschitism then and now.
- C. Good News/Bad News in the NT
- D. Barth and Luther in Bonhoeffer's theology
- E. David Bosch: The Missionary Paradigm of the Protestant Reformation
- F. Concept of Authority (exousia) in the NT
- G. Kerygma & Dogma
- H. Ecclesiology in the Aug. Conf. and Apology
- I. R. Bertram's Theology of Mission
- J. Bosch (again): What the Enlightenment did to Christian Mission
- K. Study helps for doing ethics
- L. Ethics: Homosexuality, Different views from our assigned readings
- M. From the Murray to the Mississippi: Aussie Lutheranism and the LCMS
- N. Some sermons

These might be bunched into 4 or 5 ThTh posts. Could serve as fillers when a dry spell comes.

EHS

More Discoveries from That Year Downunder 1994

Colleagues,

A few weeks ago (TT631) you received an item that I'd once composed, but completely forgotten. However, Bob Schultz had not. Its theme was: seminary education, going down the aisles of the supermarket or cooking in the kitchen? It came from my first post-retirement year 1994. Marie and I were year-long guests of the Luth. Church in Australia, she working in the seminary library, I in the classroom. Schultz's discovery prompted me to open the long-untouched Aussie file folder on my computer. Eureka! Some twenty additional relics that were confected for various audiences in that year downunder. Forgotten "treasures"? Well, maybe. You decide. Here are four samples.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

Luther Seminary, Adelaide MISSION AND EVANGELISM Semester 2, 1994

Some helps for putting together your own theology and strategy

for mission.

1. Articulate (in terms of your own experience, your own favored images and metaphors) what the movement is when a person not-trusting-Christ moves to be a Christ-truster.
2. In your analysis of the particular people focused on for your mission theology and strategy, spell out the “culture” in which they are currently living, their symbols, myths, rituals.
3. Then analyze that culture to expose its soteriology. Why does it seem “good”—or even “saving”—to the folks who “believe” it, who hang their hearts on it?
4. Relate this to your #1 (above) statement and the way you described people “before coming to Christ” there. Can you connect that description with the cultural soteriology you discovered in #3 above? If not, back to the drawing board to take another look and revise either #1 or #3.
5. When you have that “false” soteriology spelled out so that it makes sense to you, i.e., so you can say that you too would be “grabbed” by it if you did not have the Christ-alternative, then spell out the Good News of Christ in a way that might make sense to folks trusting that “false” soteriology. Do this first, if possible, in theological language, working to the point of showing how the Christian Gospel is actually “better news” than whatever the “good news” is in the cultural soteriology you’re working with. Do this first of all for your own sake, for achieving theological clarity about what you are doing.
6. Then work out a strategy for picking up conversation with someone hooked by that cultural soteriology and then moving the conversation to the “better news” of the Christian Gospel. This time avoid using professional theological terms in the language of this conversation. Remember that your goal is not to prove to the candidate

that the Gospel is correct or true, but to help him/her see personally that it is indeed “good news,” yes, “better news” than they are living on now. What you are inviting them to do is to switch from the cultural gospel they are trusting to the Gospel of Christ.

7. If you have time, sketch out some organized way (in a Lutheran congregation, or an ecumenical community-wide project, or in an LCA district, or the whole LCA, or some other specific context) to get this into action.

ehs 17.10.94

Luther Seminary

Handout for students in the Ethics Class

THE DEBATE ABOUT THE THIRD USE OF THE LAW

An in-house Lutheran debate in the late 1500s arising after Luther and Melanchthon had died.

The language of the various uses of God’s law (Latin: usus legis) came from Luther and Melanchthon themselves. Luther frequently spoke of duplex usus legis. Melanchthon sometimes spoke of triplex usus legis.

The “uses” were eventually numbered as follows:

first use = God using the law to coax, cajole, force sinners to do more good and less damage than they would if the law were absent. Carrots and sticks as motivators.

second use = God using the law to convict us of sin and drive us to Christ.

third use = God using the law (encouraging Christians to use the law) as a guide for living the new life of faith.

It was about this third use that the argument arose. It went

something like this.

Statement: The law of God is a resource for the reborn Christian to serve as an ethical guide in living out his/her Christian life. Since Christ removes the law's accusatory (2nd use) role against us, the law now is helpful information about what God wants us to do.

Arguing for the affirmative:

1. That's what the Bible teaches—even though the expression “3rd use” is not in the Bible.
2. That is what the Formula of Concord Article 6 teaches when the Formulators sought to settle the argument.
3. Christ and the Holy Spirit use the law (and other means) to guide us in living the Christian life.
4. Without a third-use we are open to anti-nomianism, defenseless against libertinism—in short a law-less life with no guidelines or restrictions at all.

Arguing for the negative:

1. There never is a law of God that is just information about how to behave. God's law is always accusatory, *lex semper accusat* (Apology IV). Thus its purpose is always to drive us to Christ, not to assist us in our Christian ethics.
2. Formula of Concord 6 does not use the term “third use” in the sense of the statement formulated above. FC 6 directs the law's “use” in the life of a Christian to the Old Adam that exists in every Christian, not to the new person in Christ now resident there.
3. When God's law addresses the Old Adam in every Christian, the law carries out its first two uses: to coerce/coax sinners—with carrot and stick—to preserve and care for others, and also to accuse them of their sin. Call it a curb and then a mirror.

4. Safeguards against anti-nomianism and libertinism returning to threaten the life of a Christian, and guidance for living the new life of faith, all these come from Christ himself (He our Lord, we his disciples) and from the Holy Spirit ("led by the Spirit"), not from the law.
5. If Christ-trusters go to the law for ethical help, they necessarily desert Christ/Holy Spirit in doing so.

EHS 8.6.1994

CROSSING FAITH AND THE WORKPLACE

An In-Service Seminar with the faculty of Yirara College, a government college for aboriginal students—in the "Red Center" of the country—recently turned over to the Luth. Ch. of Australia because of its historic good track record in work with aboriginals.

Alice Springs, Northern Territory

July 18-19, 1994

Monday 18 July

1. 8:45 – 10:15 a.m. TRACKING MY DAILY WORK – Taking an inventory of my daily work, (daily work = not necessarily what I get paid for, if I do get paid, but what I do all day that makes me tired when bedtime comes around), what that work does to me, what it means to me, how my work shapes who I am. Participants reflect on their own daily work, show and tell those reflections in conversation with another participant, and contribute the shared exchange to a group-produced specific agenda for the seminar. Tea Break
2. 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon GROUNDING – Christian sources, Christian roots, for linking faith and daily work.

Biblical study of text(s) from the church lectionary, specifically, the texts for these current several Sundays, John 6.Lunch

3. 12:45 – 1:45 p.m. CROSSING – Intersecting the Biblical case study just done with the agenda produced from session one above.
4. 1:50 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. CHRISTIAN CALLINGS in Today's Secular Society A Model for Reflecting on Christian Vocation: "We dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you, God, have made." (Offertory collect in the LBW/USA)Wrap-up and Closing Devotions

Tuesday 19 July

5. 8:45 – 10:15 Once More the Workplace. TRACKING the macro-Issues (systemic, structural, cultural) in society and church that impact daily work at Yirara College.Tea Break
6. 10:30 – 12:00 GROUNDING Sample Biblical text: I Peter "Modeling the faith in an alien culture."Lunch
7. 12:45 – 1:45 CROSSING the Macro-Issues with I Peter
8. 1:50 – 2:45 REDEEMING the symbols in today's workplace: "It's just a job." "I've got my career." Calling? Unemployed., Superannuation.Wrap-up: Where do we go from here?
Closing Devotions.

Edward H. Schroeder
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**Presentation to "Lutherans for Life," Adelaide chapter.
May 28, 1994**

OUR CHRISTIAN CALLING: THE CARE AND REDEMPTION OF GOD'S CREATION

Intro: Last Sunday's Pentecost story: Acts 2: 42,44-47. Sounds so peaceful. Wouldn't be difficult to carry out the calling in that context. "Having the good will of all the people. Daily the number of Xians grows." Sound like Australia? Not quite. Sound like the USA? Not really. (Cf. statistics of mainline churches.)

Our assignment takes place in a world more like the one described in the the opening words of the First Epistle of Peter: Peter, an apostle of JC, to the exiles (Greek word "parepideemois" could be "refugees") of the diaspora in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia. (1:1) In 2:11 they are called "aliens" in addition to "exiles/refugees. The descriptors for them are "suffering various trials, moral warfare, maligned as evil-doers, do right and suffer for it, get abused, fiery ordeal, sharing Christ's sufferings, reviled for the name of Christ, suffer as a Christian," and at the end in chapter 5, "that roaring lion stalking his prey hungry to devour."

That's probably closer to our own time with its distance between our culture and our Gospel. Not much fiery ordeal in Australia for Christians, more likely, just ignored or sneered at. But there are places even in the so-called "free world" where Christians pay with marks on their bodies for the faith. [One of my grad students, Keun Soo Hong, is in a Korean prison with charge of treason for what he preached.]

I want to pick up the word "exile" and un-pack it. The two big OT terms that start the same way are exodus and exile. First one is a good-news term, the second is bad-news. The NT (as far as I know) mentions the word exodus only once—Luke's account of Jesus' transfiguration— but the term exile surfaces as the major metaphor here in I Peter and again in Hebrews. In both places the term is literally turned-around from its OT meaning. Easiest place to illustrate that is from the description in Hebrews. Cf. Hebrews 11, the great litany of OT heroes who coped with their

own hostile environments “by faith.” And right in the middle of that list [Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham (“by faith” 4x) Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses (4x), the exodus marchers (2x), Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, prophets, etc.] comes a footnote on exile, vv.13-16. Namely this, these “by faith” folks, says the writer, were in exile, not from a homeland where they once had lived and to which they longed to return, but from a homeland up front in the future where they had never been before. They were (still) in exile from a future homeland, not from their past one.

So Christians are exiles/refugees/aliens/displaced persons currently living in a country that is not their home country. You might say they carry two passports: one for the country they currently live in (Australia), the second for a country they haven’t got to yet. But they will, and they already carry the passport that documents that place as their rightful home. (Maybe your baptismal certificate?)

Some clues from First Peter for living in such circumstances:

1. “Hypotassein” (Greek = “hang in there”) with all human institutions. Don’t opt out, and don’t cow-tow under, but get back “in-under” and live your Christ-life within the secular structures that God still has going in the society you live in: emperors (=govt), marriage, economics.
2. And in these structures “do good” – 2:20; 3:6,17; 4:19.3.
3. Break the retaliation cycle 3:8ff.
4. Be serious, be disciplined. (Cf. The centrality of discipline in MLKing Jr. and the U.S. Civil Rights movement)
5. You know who is to be feared, and who is not to be feared. Give “honor, respect, value” (Greek: “timee”) to everyone, even the emperor, but not “fear” (Gk: “phobos”). “Fear” is fitting only for God. Fear is a first commandment item.

Only God qualifies for it. Cf. Luke 12:4f. on whom to fear and whom not to fear.

6. Suffering for the NAME. Today's new focus on the Name of Jesus. Why Jesus?

Conclude with these selection from the Epistle to Diognetus [dated sometime in the second century A.D.]

CHAPTER V – THE MANNERS OF THE CHRISTIANS.

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life.

They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives.

They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown

and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.

To sum up all in one word—what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the world. . . . God has assigned them this illustrious position, which it were unlawful for them to forsake.

“The Lutheran Message” – Just What is That?

Colleagues,

At last week's annual meeting Chris Repp was elected to the Crossings Board of Directors. So was Peter Keyel. I'm glad. You've already seen Peter's and Chris's gifts and skill in past postings of ThTh. Here's a brand new one from Chris.

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

Lutheran Message?

Lutheran congregations receive all sorts of solicitations for publications and programs from a variety of purportedly Christian sources. At my congregation in southern Illinois we get lots of phone calls from non-denominational Christian organizations out of Texas trying to sell us the next best thing in youth programming, or men's ministry, or Bible study. At first I would try to explain why their material probably wouldn't be suited to our distinctive Lutheran take on Christianity. After repeatedly hearing "oh, our material is non-denominational and non-sectarian – we don't get into doctrine of any kind" and futilely trying to explain that that is precisely the problem, I have abandoned that attempt at Lutheran witness. Instead I now say – usually about halfway through the first sentence, "Let me stop you right there. I don't think we're going to be interested. Have a nice day."

And then there are devotional materials and other "Christian" publications. When I came to my current congregation they had a number of such subscriptions. One that I remember off the top of my head was called "Christian Living," which featured the testimonials of celebrity Christians. After looking at a couple of those I decided that the version of Christianity offered up there was not helpful to my task of preaching and teaching the gospel, and so discontinued it. We also received something called "The Lutheran Message," a collection of devotional articles and poetry. Because it had Lutheran in the title, it passed under my radar. I didn't look closely. And it wasn't costing us anything since it is funded by local businesses, which receive ad space for their support on pages added in for the area to which they are sent. At some point "The Lutheran Message" stopped arriving – perhaps there was not enough local advertising? – but recently they called, offering to send us their publication (free of charge) and asking us if we would be

willing to distribute it. Instead of just saying yes, I asked them to send me a sample copy. As I looked it over, I was disturbed by the decidedly un-Lutheran working theology of many of the articles. I thought to myself, "If I were to distribute material like this I would be directly contradicting the content of my teaching and preaching in this congregation, undermining what I have been called to do here." It occurs to me that well-intending, pious publications like "The Lutheran Message" are often uncritically accepted in our congregations by well-intending pastors simply because they have "Lutheran" in their title (or others because they are "Christian.") Of course we pastors should be monitoring all such publications to see if they pass muster, but I suspect that most of us abdicate this responsibility under the press of other obligations. As you see, I have done it myself, but I hope I'm learning.

I decided not only to decline "The Lutheran Message's" offer, but also try to explain why. I do not expect that it will do any good, but I felt I had to try. The text of my letter to the editors follows. I think it will make sense even to those who have not read the edition under review.

Chris Repp, Pastor
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The Lutheran Message
P.O. Box 251245
Woodbury, Minnesota 55125

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the invitation for our congregation to receive your devotional publication, The Lutheran Message, free of charge and for sending a sample copy to review. At this time I

must respectfully decline your generous offer, but want to give some explanation for that decision.

Although I was born and raised a Lutheran, I am still a Lutheran today because I have come to believe and treasure the unique Lutheran insight into the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, I am not simply a Christian who happens to be Lutheran, but someone who is convinced that the Lutheran way of being Christian is the most authentic option available, and this conviction is crucial to how I understand my vocation as a pastor in Christ's church.

Central to the Lutheran insight is faith. But what we mean by this is not the abstract faith that has been stripped of any meaning in our culture, as exemplified by the phrase "you gotta have faith" (faith in what?), or the generic religious faith that simply assents to God's existence. The faith that is central to Lutherans is a specific faith and trust in specific promises of God for Jesus' sake – forgiveness of sin, freedom from the power of sin and death, new and genuine life in Christ through Holy Baptism (new life not only after we die, but also here and now, on this side of the grave) – and the promise that all of this is ours purely because of the grace and mercy of God, and not through any work or deserving or attitude of our own. Lutherans are so radical that we are bold to claim that even the faith that grasps these saving promises is a gift of God through the Holy Spirit (see Luther's explanation to the third article of the Apostles' Creed).

Unfortunately, your publication does not reflect strongly enough these central Lutheran affirmations. Instead I find at the root of some of the articles a decision theology that owes more to Billy Graham than to Martin Luther. Examples of this are such statements as "...as long as we keep Jesus in our hearts we get to be in heaven with Him after we die" (p.44) and "He has promised

me his forgiveness, by His grace, through Jesus His son, if I just accept the gift as it is given. That promise is good, forever. Your decision to accept it or reject it will last a long time..." (p.63) Other articles emphasize what we should do or how we should act, without any perspective on how our behavior is related to the Gospel. Without that perspective, such an emphasis can come across as legalistic: don't be judgmental, (p.15ff) pray more (p.6ff). Incidentally, I consider "the power of prayer" (used for the title of the article beginning on p.6) to be an idea that is foreign, even hostile, to Lutheranism. It is not prayer that is stronger than death, as the epitaph on page 18 claims, it is God who is stronger than death, and who conquers its power through Jesus Christ. Again and again, many of your articles make it seem that what is crucially important is not what God does for us, but what we do for God and for ourselves. In this way, so it seems to me, our American "can do," self-help culture ever so subtly alters the trajectory of the Christian Gospel and distorts its substance in the pages of your publication.

On the other hand, there are a few articles in the edition you sent me that are not far from the mark. Especially good, I thought, was "The Taste of Wine" (pp.20-21), although I would have rewritten the last sentence to somehow de-emphasize the taste of the wine in favor of emphasizing what it is and does. And I would have concluded with a quote from hymn #469 in Evangelical Lutheran Worship:

Send us now with faith and courage to the hungry, lost, bereaved. In our living and our dying, we become what we receive: Christ's own body, blessed and broken, cup o'erflowing, life outpoured, Given as a living token of your world redeemed, restored.

Another article that I would be happy to have my congregation read is "Our Father" (p.22ff), although I would have edited out the red herring about the supposed importance of saying the Lord's Prayer in traditional language. My own wife grew up in the Church of England, and learned to pray "Our Father which art in heaven..." Why not insist on that even more traditional King James variant? It's not even true, as Doris asserted, that she and her husband have even that in common, because George carries on praying after his Catholic wife has stopped at the words "...deliver us from evil." What they do have in common is the same heavenly Father, and the gift of being able to receive the Lord's Supper together (thanks to the merciful rule-breaking of Doris' priest in allowing her to commune at George's Lutheran church). Still another useful article, in my estimation, was "Learning to Receive" (p.32ff).

In spite of these few good articles, I would find it counter-productive to my ministry to distribute The Lutheran Message, as it is currently constituted, in my congregation. I appreciate what you are trying to do, and pray that you might take my criticism in the spirit that it is offered, out of a genuine desire that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the treasure of our Lutheran heritage, be proclaimed in its purity (Augsburg Confession, article VII) and that we not send mixed messages to our people. I am open to reconsidering this decision if the tone and content of your publication move in this direction in the future.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Chris Repp, Pastor