

How my Mind has Changed? Well, Maybe.

Colleagues,

At the Seminex birthday party a few weeks ago – reported last month in ThTh #578 <https://crossings.org/thursday/2009/thur070909.shtml> – five of us goldie-oldie profs showed up on a panel. Some had prepared their words on paper; I and one other just ad libbed. A glitch in the recording system failed to preserve the words of us ad-libbers for posterity. So we were asked to reconstruct what we said. Here's what I think I said. Well, maybe.

Peace and joy!

Ed Schroeder

When Ed Krentz asked me to be on this panel, he told me the focus was “How my mind has changed.” I told him: “Ed, you know that mine hasn’t.” “Yes,” he said, “we all know that. But we’ll listen to you nevertheless. Ten minutes.”

When folks talk about “how my mind has changed,” they usually refer to something about which they once said “No” and now they say “Yes.” Or vice versa. I don’t have any such “no” to “yes” to talk about on the “big stuff” we wrestled with in those great days. Not even any “yes, buts.”

Instead, it’s “Yes (again) to all of that, and yes to even more that I wasn’t aware of which follows from that first Yes.”

The big additional “yes” for me since those days is mission. I didn’t realize how important Bill Danker was to our Seminex

enterprise. The first ever trained missiologist in the LCMS. Doctor's degree from Heidelberg, Germany with major missiologist Gensichen as his Doktervater. His drumbeat for mission was the next step that follows all our hyping of "confession"—confession of the Gospel, "pure" and unadulterated by add-ons of any kind—during those glorious days of our own "Time for Confessing," as Bob Bertram's posthumous book tells of it. But I didn't see it then.

Once at Seminex during a Kaffeeklatsch in the commons, Bill tried to 'splain it to me. But I was a slow learner. Now I know better. Here's the sequence. [It sounds a bit snazzier when you use the Latin words, because they all rhyme. But even if you're a Luddite about Latin, it's easy to make it English.]

Start with the cornerstone axiom of the Augsburg Confession and Apology.

1. The Gospel is a promise. PROMISSIO in Latin.
2. PROMISSIO calls for CONFESSIO. The promissio—on its own—urges that it be confessed, in the literal meaning of the NT Greek term for confessing, homologeoo, homo-logia. That equals "say the same thing." Appropriate that promise for yourself and, first of all, say it back to God. "You say I'm your forgiven sinner? And your Beloved Son verifies that on Good Friday and Easter? Well, then I'll say the same thing too; I am your beloved kid. I'm hanging my heart on that promise which came my way from your Beloved Son."
3. After which comes MISSIO, the ongoing mission of the gospel. It's a piece of cake. "Same-say" that promise to others still stuck with their hearts hanging on other promises, "other Gospels." Not just in foreign lands where "other religions" reign, but right here at home where "other Gospels" are being hustled everywhere—and scads of

folks are trusting them. You want to pass it on.

But I didn't see the missio-connection back then and I think many of the rest of us didn't either. Yet there were signals. For example, an essay in the "Law-Gospel Reductionist Reader" that our systematics department inflicted on Seminex students. That essay was originally a lecture-long before Seminex—that Bob Bertram had given for one of Bill Danker's mission conferences. Bob's mantra was: "The secret of missio is promissio." I'd read it many times and nodded in agreement. But it wasn't till later that the "Aha!" happened.

So far as I know there is one ELCA seminary that has taken this triad – promissio, confessio, missio – and made it the official mission statement of its whole enterprise. That's Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. But why should that surprise us? Look at who three of the senior profs are at that place—Bliese, Keifert, Simpson—all Seminex alums. All three sitting in this audience. That's one place where Seminex theology is alive and well these days—35 years later.

A major place, better, THE major place, where Seminex theology is operative today is shown in those numbers Ralph Klein just told us about: Seminex grads as rostered pastors. In ELCA 372. In LCMS 110. What we've all been hearing from such folks at this get-together is solid testimony of that. And those 110 in the Missouri Synod! That was a surprise for me. I knew a number of "our folks" were major movers in the DayStar crowd of promissio-confessors in the LCMS, but I didn't know the total number was so large. And, of course, there are those five (or is it six?) ELCA bishops who are Seminex alums.

Another place where Seminex Theology is at home is in the Crossings Community. Already back in Seminex days Bob Bertram got this outfit going, one of the many "sidebars" he concocted. Early on he dragged me into the venture. I'm still Crossings-

connected. And I know that many of you are too. But this is not self-advertising. Well, not "just" that. It's reportorial. What the Crossings Community hustles is Seminex theology–promissio, confessio, missio. That is the Crossings cornerstone.

Now in the era of cyberspace it's on the Internet and WWW where Crossings builds on that cornerstone. And that means an international audience for the two major items posted each week: text studies on lectionary pericopes and a Thursday Theology essay. They go to a listserve (700 addresses) and then wind up archived on the website [www.crossings.org]. Pastors – and laity too – in Singapore, Indonesia, South Africa, Ethiopia, Argentina, Australia, Japan and elsewhere are working with "Seminex theology" in their ministries. Promissio, confessio, missio is what they're up to. The Crossings web site gets over 2000 hits per day. Fifteen hundred pages of stuff is downloaded per day from the site. We don't know WHO they are. We know only their computer addresses and WHERE they come from. At last count it was over 100 countries.

Well, maybe my mind HAS changed. I was not always a happy camper during those Seminex years in St. Louis. Some of you may remember that Bob Bertram had formulated another mantra for our confessing movement back then. He talked about "winning by losing." That mixed metaphor left me frequently curmudgeonly—as many of you in this audience remember. But now I'm more cheerful. Yes, you skeptics, more cheerful. That's my confessio. More cheerful, not only because of all the good stuff mentioned in the paragraphs above. Good News indeed! But this mantra too is clearer to me now. Winning by losing is the Promissio—you get to Easter via Good Friday. But Easter at the end. Good News indeed. And that Easter-Promissio calls for Confessio which leads to Missio. Nudging four-score years in age, I keep telling myself that—and now you dear ones too: Count it all joy!

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