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Two Kinds of Love: Martin Luther's Religious World

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Book Review

Two Kinds of Love: Martin Luther's Religious World.

Tuomo Mannermaa. Translated, edited and introduced by Kirsi I. Stjerna. Afterword by Juhani Forsberg.
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010

Some readers will be familiar with Tuomo Mannermaa's *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification* (Fortress Press, 2005). In *Two Kinds of Love*, Mannermaa demonstrates how Luther's definition of faith as *in ipsa fide Christus adest* (in faith itself, Christ is present) relates to other central themes in Luther's thought. This theme is deemed to be a forgotten point of emphasis in the history of Lutheranism.



Lutherans in the first generation after Luther focussed on the forensic metaphor of justification in an effort to correct certain tendencies of Osiander's theology. While Osiander was critiqued for his Christology, his soteriology with its emphasis on the indwelling of Christ also suffered collateral damage. Luther began to be read as a theologian who focussed on the forensic model to the exclusion of the existential model of justification: Christ declares us right rather than makes us right before God. The Finnish school of research has brought to the fore the significance of the existential metaphor of justification for Luther, who often underscored the indwelling of Christ in the believer. He defined faith as Christ's presence, which results in divinization – in the patristic sense of the word – with wide reaching consequences for dogmatics.

The first chapter explores love as a key concept for the thought of Luther by first distinguishing two kinds of love. Human love is that which loves what is, and so searches for lovable attributes in existents. Divine love, by contrast, creates what is loved and so loves “what is not” (2). This latter point is the basis from which the book proceeds. At the heart of Luther's theology, according to Mannermaa, is this image of God making what is unlovable loveable by loving it, rather than recognizing it as lovely. Many significant themes and questions emerge from this central thesis which Mannermaa considers in turn.

Mannermaa first ponders how these two loves enable union, a theme of some importance for a theology that is concerned with union with Christ. He argues that Luther drastically parts from the medieval paradigm, which located appetitive love in the human and analogically predicated it of divine love. Luther's theology of love accentuated the difference rather than the similarity of the two kinds of love: God makes something loveable by loving it; we love something because it is first loveable. Luther held that the Thomistic emphasis on analogy implies that God's loving is like ours: God loves what is first good, true, and beautiful. In contrast, Mannermaa affirms that divine love creates the beloved *ex nihilo* (23). In sum, God's love directs humans to attend to what is not lovely in order to ascertain God's *modus operandi*: the cross.

Mannermaa next explores a theology of the cross with respect to the theme of union with Christ. He notes that a theology of glory is a theology based on human love, while a theology of the cross is based on divine love (28). In this chapter Mannermaa notes that according to Luther “the purpose of God’s alien work is to bring human beings to where God is, that is, not in heaven and its goodness and ‘what is’ but rather below in the world and in its badness and evil and ‘what is not.’” (33) Human suffer from a two-fold malady: they are separated from God and do not know it. Therefore God’s alien work “forms” us in a way that is parallel to the work of a sculptor, chipping away at what is so that what is not becomes what truly is – the finished product. (36) God forms us by first de-forming us. This is a hidden work, and seemingly not beneficent to the human: God makes us not to be so that God can make of us the beloved. Yet this might invite us to ask: is creation, then, truly good? The topic of the worth of creation is then broached in the fourth chapter. This important theme is addressed by Luther, according to Mannermaa, in his assertion that “God is present precisely in those places that look least like God in the eyes of human beings, namely, in matter and material reality.” (52) This is the basis upon which one can discern a link between Luther’s theology of the cross and sacramental theology.

In the fifth chapter Mannermaa treats Luther’s theology of the Word. This theme builds upon Luther’s distinction between the inner and outer; the inner word is human thought that is made “incarnate” in speech in order to express the self (57). This external word is a double edged sword: on the one hand it is the condition for the possibility of understanding the other, and on the other hand it is the very means for misunderstanding. While something of an analogy obtains between the human and the divine in this respect, a fundamental difference demarcates the two: the divine essence is wholly and perfectly present in the Word God speaks (59). This Word, when spoken, creates the condition for its hearing: faith. “In faith, the ‘Christ Word’ unites with human beings, so that they would unite with the ‘Christ Word.’” (61) This union results in “deification” although not in the sense that humans become *God*. Rather, what Luther intends in emphasizing faith as the presence of Christ is to replace Thomas’ idea of love as the form of faith with the radically new notion that Christ is the form of faith (63). Mannermaa notes that for Luther, this passivity that is of a piece with faith comes with the activity of love in that the two are held together by Christ himself, present in the life of the believer (65). This theme is taken up in the sixth chapter as Mannermaa addresses Luther’s admonition to Christians to be “Christ” to their neighbour. Here he helpfully underscores the manner in which Luther admonishes Christians to “love the sinners and to cover their sins with righteousness” (72). Christians are called to walk the way of Christ so that they seek out those who are deemed not to be by the world because precisely these are the “objects” of the divine love that abides in the believer who is in union with Christ (73).

In the final chapter, Mannermaa discusses whether Luther’s emphasis on the distinction between the two kinds of love results in an other-worldly approach to reality. Is love for created reality always in opposition to love for God who loves “what is not”? Mannermaa stresses that Luther finally does not contrast these two loves in an absolute way and recognizes that they can properly co-exist:

Human beings are supposed to recognize and acknowledge their good and their right, but if they do not manage to obtain them, they are to leave them to God and be trusting and calm, in the state of '*Gelassenheit*' [serenity]. (86)

Mannermaa suggest that Luther commends a certain abandonment that can only be characterized by one who has been united with the God who both creates and recreates in love.

The volume ends with an afterword that explores the state of affairs in Finnish Luther research. For those who have studied Finnish Luther research, this is a veritable who's who of Helsinki and *environs*. It is worth reading in its own right.

In sum, I cannot over-emphasize the value of this book. It allows the student of Luther to see a master at work in exploring how the non-systematic Luther stills sounds motifs that resonate throughout his *opus*. The footnotes at the end are a gold mine, and the introduction and afterword are themselves worth the price of admission. Students of Luther research in general, and Finnish Luther research in particular, will want to explore further how Luther scholars differently understand the relationship between forensic and existential metaphors. Sometimes one reads papers that simplistically contrast the Finnish Luther (existential metaphor) with the German Luther (forensic metaphor). In fact, Luther is a very complicated thinker, and differing themes come to the fore at differing times in his thought, a point noted by Mannermaa and his students even while it is sometimes forgotten by their fans. In short, the theme of union with Christ cannot exhaust every dogmatic mine, even while it is a needed and necessary tool for miners, especially miners who purport to sit at the feet of Martin Luder, whose mining father Hans lovingly held forth hope for a non-mining future for his son. Little did he know how his hope would be bent by another kind of love.

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