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Martin Luther's theology: its historical and systematic development

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relation that obtains between them in Jesus Christ. This has important soteriological consequences, the chief of which, Green argues, is to make the problem of dominating power — its destructive application and its salutary differentiation from creaturely capacity — central to Bonhoeffer's account of salvation in a way that sets him at some distance from traditional Lutheran emphases. In each chapter, Green extends his thesis to subsequent stages in Bonhoeffer's work, demonstrating how the "theology of sociality" formulated in the early work continues to provide the decisive basis for later developments, thereby illuminating a significant degree of continuity across works often thought to be quite divergent, e.g., *Discipleship* and the *Letters & Papers*.

Throughout, Green also contends for the importance of what he calls the "autobiographical dimension" of Bonhoeffer's theology, i.e., the manner in which certain key themes and emphases in the theology reflect the circumstances of Bonhoeffer's life. This is one of the interesting aspects of the newly added chapter on the *Ethik*. Green's interpretation of these manuscripts lays particular stress not only on the evident impress of the theology of sociality — seen, e.g., in the centrality of vicarious representative action and the characterization of mutually delimiting "mandates" on the model of collective persons — but also on the text's justification of active political resistance and tyrannicide, and the many not so veiled references to the immediate context of Nazi governance in the text.

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Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development

Bernhard Lohse, Translated and Edited by Roy A. Harrisville
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999
393 Pages, \$66.00 Hardcover

Pastors and academics with an interest in Luther will want to keep this book within arm's reach. Bernhard Lohse has produced a masterful study which attends to the wide sweeping scope of Luther's theology as well as the intricate details at the necessary points. The subtitle of the

book describes his interests in linking historical-genetic and systematic methods of reading Luther.

In the introduction to the first part of the book, Lohse both sets forth the traditional criteria for describing Luther's theology and makes a case for his own attempt to attend to the historical development of Luther's thought in conversation with the over-arching systematic interests which drove his theological agenda. Lohse then sketches the situation of the church at the advent of the 16th century and Luther's personal development. In the conclusion to the first part, he describes the uniqueness of Luther's theology in its soteriological engagement of a theology of the cross. In the second part of the book, Lohse covers the genesis of Luther's theology against the backdrop of his early notes and lectures as well as the particular disputes that shaped his thought. Fourteen chapters explore these key stages in Luther's life. In the third part, Lohse sets forth Luther's theology in its systematic context. Fourteen chapters explore topics such as reason and faith, Christology, and *Spiritus Creator*. Although a quick glance at the "Summary of Contents" might leave one with the impression that a Nestorian structure will mitigate Lohse's intention of linking the genetic and systematic methods, the author manages to interweave both throughout the two sections. Lohse's constant insistence that one cannot prescind from the historical context of Luther's formulations reminds us that a certain contingency pressed particular themes to the fore. Nonetheless, Lohse is suspicious of those who focus on the contextual development of Luther's thought to the exclusion of his systematic tendencies insofar as Luther's soteriological interest ties together all of his theology. One can see an organic unity in Luther's thought which transcends a merely contextual theology.

Lohse skilfully identifies caricatures of Luther's theology and both demonstrates their genesis and disposes of them. He provides, for instance, a fine chapter dealing with Luther's understanding of the blessing and bane of reason. Moreover, he establishes that one cannot simply dismiss reason as irrelevant to Luther's theological project, nor can one underestimate Luther's nervousness about this "autocrat," which is pressed into the service of theology by the power of the Holy Spirit. Lohse is even able to talk of a "philosophy of language" that is operative in Luther's thought and enables a sacramental understanding of the merger of word and Spirit.

I was intrigued by Lohse's assessment of formative influences in Luther's theology. Occam is listed as the primary influence in the thought of Luther, followed by Augustine, Staupitz, humanism, mysticism, and Bernard of Clairvaux. Lohse recognizes, of course, that Luther's relationship with Occam is not unambiguous. In relationship to Luther's heritage of nominalism, I anticipated more engagement with the new Finnish interpretation of Luther and its insistence on Luther's indebtedness to an ontology more Thomistic in character. The Finnish contribution to Luther studies was reduced to an emphasis on Luther's interest in deification, which was dismissed as a minor motif in his thought. Missing was the Finnish critique of the Kantian presuppositions hidden in much of the Luther Renaissance work early in the last century.

The text is a veritable goldmine of resources. A separate bibliography is provided for each chapter which will be useful to readers who have some facility in German. The footnotes provide frequent reference both to the American Edition and the *Weimar Ausgabe* and the reader is often given the luxury of comparing the English translation to Latin or German texts.

Finally, the book provides a careful assessment of Luther's attitude towards the Jews. Although Lohse does not excuse Luther for his later harsh words against the Jews, he endeavours to assess Luther's attitude against the backdrop of the anti-Semitism of the period. Formally, I think this section would have better served its purpose by being something other than an appendix. In light of Lohse's interest in weaving historical and systematic considerations together, it would have made more sense to deal with Luther's relationship to the Jews in the same manner.

Martin Luther's Theology will be a fine addition to your study. It serves as both an extended introduction to Luther studies and as a resource for further research.

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