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The Profile of Authority for Luther's Followers

Egil Grislis

*Professor of Religion,
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg*

Traditional Lutheranism accepted Luther's formulation of authority as both theologically tenable and practically operative. Admittedly, the approach did not ensure against all possible dangers. On the one hand, when Lutherans have applied the principle of authority with somewhat consistent rigidity, they have been known to develop a siege mentality, distancing themselves from the modern world. Without a doubt, such a posture can be defended with some statements by Luther, who at times was exclusivist and judgmental. But any permanently inflexible posture betrays Luther the rebel and the revolutionary, whose entire life celebrated creativity!

On the other hand, when Lutheranism, taking its clue from Luther's attempts to be relevant to the problems of his own age, has become too world-oriented and theologically liberal, it has run the danger of losing its total dependence on the Holy Scriptures and accord with the Catholic tradition. Samuel S. Schmucker and Adolf von Harnack offer lessons that Lutheranism should not readily forget.¹

While there is no absolutely secure method of insuring that Lutheranism does not veer from the middle of the road, it is nevertheless in order to acknowledge that certain perspectives and support systems in the past have contributed toward a lively survival of our great tradition.

I

Here three distinctive resources have played a major role:

The *first* place belongs to Luther's writings, saturated with central ideas of Christian tradition. Despite occasional accusations by non-Lutherans, it has been well known that Luther's

writings are not to be viewed as divinely inspired. Luther himself had said that, and *The Book of Concord* is prepared to repeat: "Here he [i.e. Luther] expressly asserts by way of distinction that the Word of God is and should remain the sole rule and norm of all doctrine, and that no human being's writings dare be put on par with it, but that everything must be subjected to it."² Nevertheless, in the Lutheran church the appeal to "Luther said" has carried weight. At best, this has been more than a mere emotional attachment. Luther's views have had a catholic (universal) depth and creative resilience in the hearts and minds of Christian people, from generation to generation in continuous and yet remarkably refreshing ways. Admittedly, at times Lutherans have relied on Luther without reading him all that much. Nevertheless, even such implicit trust has not been totally blind, but was sustained by the repeated experience that ordinarily Luther does not disappoint. Of course, there have been occasions, as in the opinion of John Calvin it happened with Joachim Westphal, who attempted "to hide his disgrace under Luther's shade."³ But we hope that these have been rare exceptions rather than common occurrences! In any event, Luther's lasting popularity in this ecumenical age has been a widely observed phenomenon. Hence it can be safely said that today Luther's renown no longer depends exclusively on being loved by the Lutherans!

At the same time, it is Luther's wide influence which leads us to observe that appreciation of or even enthusiasm for him do not necessarily constitute membership in the Lutheran Church. Put more precisely, high regard, even admiration, do not in and of themselves constitute an acknowledgment of authority. By contrast, traditional Lutheran concern about Luther has had a dimension of authority; even when we have publicly denied reliance on Luther, we have nevertheless more often than not ended up following him.⁴

Second, the administrative shape of the Lutheran church reflects its historic origins. Here the following historic process may be noted. Luther's physical survival had most immediately depended on the stalwart support of his prince, Frederick the Wise. When in the course of time Luther came to realize that a church council will not undertake the necessary reformation of the church, he turned his attention to the only other remaining institution—the secular rulers of Germany.⁵

Not a dreamer, Luther looked for such assistance as was realistically available. Sheldon S. Wolin has noted: "Nostalgia for the apostolic simplicity of the primitive Church did not blind Luther to the fact that a near-anarchistic form of church organization was an inadequate prescription for an actual congregation whose members dwelt in varying states of grace and faith."⁶ Initially the visitation and reformation of the local congregations, and eventually the appointment and supervision of ecclesial administration came to be held in the hands of secular authority. Luther's high view of the government provided the rationale for such a situation.⁷ And Luther's view was not arbitrary, but rested securely on Romans 13 (although neglecting to meditate on the possibility that sometimes these "powers that be" can turn demonic and then dare not be obeyed, in accord with Revelation 13!).⁸ Wolin comments on Luther's "later dilemma": "... the secular powers, whose assistance he had invoked in the struggle for religious reform, began to assume the form of a sorcerer's apprentice threatening religion with a new type of institutional control."⁹ Luther himself certainly acknowledged his high view of government:

The papists call me a flatterer of princes because I was dealing only with the spiritual class [i.e. clergy], and not with the temporal; just as they call me seditious now that I have written in such glorification of temporal government as no teacher has done since the days of the apostles, except, perhaps, St. Augustine.¹⁰

What older Luther scholarship had often overlooked, more recent scholarship has noted with clarity. When in the early 1530s it appeared likely that the emperor might destroy the rising Lutheranism by force, Luther and his close associates began to argue that a tyrannous ruler can be resisted by force.¹¹ Quentin Skinner presents Luther's position as follows:

The subject must follow his conscience, even if this means disobeying his prince. The point is underlined in the form of a catechism at the end of the tract on *Temporary Authority*. "What if a prince is in the wrong? Are his people bound to follow him then too?" The answer is "No, for it is no one's duty to do wrong". Luther is unwavering in his emphasis on this aspect of his theory of political obligation. He treats all claims to absolute power as a misunderstanding and perversion of the authority God has granted princes.¹²

While appreciating Luther's courage to sustain the affirmation that the Bible has the highest authority, it cannot be denied that subsequently there did emerge a Lutheran state church in which the authority of the government played a key role.

Living in a North American context, it has been often noted that our history has been different. Sometimes this difference has been stressed as a special accomplishment. Particularly in the United States the separation between church and state has been at times celebrated with self-righteous enthusiasm.¹³ Without denying the historical differences from the developments in Europe, it may be observed that in either situation the clue for the understanding of authority within the church has been taken from the existing secular authority. Hence Lutheran monarchists as well as Lutheran enthusiasts for democracy—not to mention Lutheran National Socialists—share their reliance on the understanding of order and authority which has been coined outside the church. Thus the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada rely on current North American democratic insights for the formal definition of authority.¹⁴ While such an approach may account for the modernity of the administrative structures of our church, it does not necessarily assure that the democratic process generates the best Christian insights and action.

Third, a comment is in order regarding Lutheran liturgy. Inherited liturgical practices were immediately revised (but not totally rejected!) with the Bible as a corrective. As in the days of the Bible, services were to be conducted in the language of the people rather than in ecclesiastical Latin. The Bible did not know prayers to saints, private confession as a sacrament, and gave no direction for building confessional booths. In addition, the positive role of the preaching of the Word of God received a central attention, to be seconded only by congregational singing. At the same time, the authority of the Bible in liturgical matters did not bring about uniformity. The difference between Lutherans in Sweden and in Southern Germany is quite noticeable; as well as differences in other countries and regions. Nevertheless, without uniformity and with the first rank attention devoted to theology, the remnants of the Catholic liturgical tradition, biblically reinterpreted, have placed a distinctive earmark on Lutheran church life. Although low-key, Lutheran liturgical authority has been effective.

II

However helpful, the various support systems have not always succeeded in protecting Lutheranism from near disintegration. The age of Enlightenment and the Liberalism of the nineteenth century stand out as two such periods—until the most recent dramatic “paradigm shift”¹⁵ occurring sometime in the early 1960s. The process, of course, had begun some time earlier. Its results were felt as a severe shock as immediate and direct appeal to the Bible were no longer operative. Rupert E. Davies has noted: “... the critical study of the Bible and of Christian history has made it impossible for any communion in Christendom, or any group of communions, to point either to scripture or to history as validating its claims, often made in the past, to possess the authentic form of Christianity and to judge other communions by their degree of approximation to itself.”¹⁶ Moreover, all other standards experienced the same re-evaluation.¹⁷ If as brief a time ago as the 1950s “was Luther sagt” had been “elevated... into a self-evident principle,”¹⁸ time has caught up with North America as well. Therefore in addition to the “demythologizing” of the Bible it is now also possible to speak of the “deheroising” (*Entheroisierung*) of Martin Luther because of his violent antisemitism and undue faith in secular authority.¹⁹ We shall not mention here at any length the general impact of the material culture which surrounds us. Secularism in many ways has brought about a situation in which a multifaceted development of the self has been made possible. For example, psychology has entered the common domain and enabled a personal self-understanding on a wider scale than previously. Television has brought the entire world into the privacy of our homes. And there have come to our attention the plethora of various non-Christian religions, both old and new, each with its own attractive message and claims for spiritual authority. Peter Berger, with his usual incisiveness, sums up the contemporary situation as follows:

An individual willing to spend, say, some two hundred dollars can walk into any better bookstore in this country and purchase a collection of paperback books containing good translations, with commentary, of most of the key writings of the world's great religions. If the individual is in a metropolitan area or near a large university,

it is likely that, in addition to reading the books he has purchased, he will find groups that actually adhere to these religious beliefs or academic courses that deal with them more or less competently. Such a situation has never existed in history before.²⁰

Such a situation did not exist even a few decades ago:

D.T. Niles, a Christian theologian from India who was (understandably) greatly concerned with the "problem of the other religions," recounts a conversation with Barth in which the latter stated (as he did extensively in the *Church Dogmatics*), "Other religions are just unbelief." Niles asked Barth how many Hindus he had ever met. "None", Barth replied. "How do you know that Hinduism is unbelief?" Niles asked. Barth answered, "A priori."²¹

Although Karl Barth's views are not yet totally extinct, we must note that their parochialism will be questioned by more people than theologians of Indian descent! In fact, we must be prepared to hear some thoroughly fearful voices wondering whether there is any real authority left at all when we speak about religion!

Without a doubt, these days the authority of religious truth has been repeatedly questioned. In regard to non-Christian religions, many have accepted the concept of a "anonymous Christianity," developed by Karl Rahner, S.J. According to this charity clause (updated from what was previously labelled "invincible ignorance") all sincere adherents of other religions who are outside the Christian faith can nevertheless be saved. While not objecting to charity and the wideness of God's mercy, it may nevertheless be in order to acknowledge that Christianity is only beginning to respond to the challenges of the modern world! More often than not, we are still searching for rather than already possessing the necessary answers. Hence it is realistic to acknowledge that insofar as there is a short supply of insight and wisdom, there is also a certain shrinkage in authority.

At the same time we want to say that not all recent news has been bad. At least three relatively recent developments have brought a considerable measure of succor, although not without some new problems.

First and foremost stands the *ecumenical movement*. Ecumenicity has freed us from the frighteningly oppressive siege mentality with which Lutheranism has lived in North America

for only too long. The famed author of the one-time authoritative study, *The Lutheran Pastor*, the Reverend Professor G.H. Gerberding wrote at the beginning of this century: "We are surrounded by churches, denominations, sects, cults, and heresies without number, all as free and as favored by the State as ourselves."²² He then went on to recount:

Immersionists, revivalists, sanctificationists, Adventists, and healers of every hue, name, and grade, are abroad in the land. They invade the school-house, the barn, and the woods. They spread their tents on the common and on the vacant lot in village, town, and city. Each one offers a new way of salvation.²³

Insofar as the Lutheran Church of the past went on to repel all these and other competitors for allegiance, it no doubt emerged with a far stronger sense of both mission and authority. Yet we should not deceive ourselves by imagining that therefore all was well with it. The authority celebrated in the past, although intense, was a rather limited authority, extending no further than the narrow boundary lines of a relatively small denomination, broken up in numerous warring Lutheran Synods and their several federations.

Contemporary ecumenicity, we note, does not depend only on a shift in perspective but also in content. In 1518 Martin Luther could write:

Therefore, since the sacred Scriptures are abandoned and the traditions and words of men accepted, it happens that the church of Christ is not nourished by its own measure of wheat, that is, by the word of Christ, but is usually misled by the indiscretion and rash will of an unlearned flatterer. We have come to this in our great misfortune that the people begin to force us to renounce the Christian faith and deny Holy Scripture.²⁴

Even as late as 1929 such a wise and renowned Protestant theologian as Reinhold Niebuhr could write: "Cooperation with the Catholic demands connivance with religious practices which reduce religion to magic."²⁵ Today, as a result of ecumenical good-will and mutual understanding, Lutherans can accurately translate the Apostles' creed and speak about a "holy catholic church," to proclaim without prejudice that " 'Catholic' means going beyond the limits of particularity,"²⁶ and to know within one's heart of hearts that Catholics, too, are genuine Christians. We can acknowledge that there have been not only numerous fruitful dialogues but even joint exegetical ventures. Moreover, Catholics can preach, quote from

the Bible, and appreciate as well as author evangelical theology. In both undergraduate and graduate study of religion, it is not at all unusual to encounter Catholics who understand the Lutheran tradition in remarkably profound and precise ways.

I believe that these are thoroughly positive gains, which have enhanced the sense of Christian authority. As bitter divisions have brought into disrepute the meaning of Christian love, and as the absence of love placed a question mark over the faith which was supposed to be active in love—so also, in reverse, the intensity of ecumenical acceptance and mutual Christian love strengthen our faith and witness to the world that we, as Christians, are serious about our Lord's eternal mandate. Admittedly, Lutheran isolationism helped to create an in-group feeling in the past and because of that, questions concerning authority have been limited and/or out-of-order.²⁷ Lutheran ecumenism, freed from a siege mentality, can far more openly face the problem of authority as well as draw on mutual Christian resources in formulating its relevant, late twentieth century answer.

Second, while theology may have been called a divine science centuries ago, it has become that far more visibly in our own time. This is especially true of pastoral theology which, as a legitimate and recognized profession, has gained a professional authority which it did not have before. Once upon a time it was quite possible to learn in seminary all of the theology one ever needed in an entire life-time, and in one's very first parish almost all of the practice. Those old days of quickly-trained generalists are gone forever. In our generation the practice of ministry has developed into a complex science with many specializations and particular skills. A pastor's education is only started in seminary, and completed during specialization in his or her field over the subsequent decades.

Of course, adjustment to any new situation is not easy. Occasionally there are barbed comments against such professionalism. But they are not heard from successful pastors who serve as denominational trend-setters! Indeed, while at times there may be a too narrow preoccupation with methods and skills, the total accomplishment is impressive. The experts in the practice of ministry have a remarkable measure of self-confidence which is to a large degree shared by their parishioners, who are aware of the professional status of their pas-

tor. Of course, the authority gained through successful professionalism is ecumenical, yet it may very well include a special Lutheran emphasis, if the Lutheran contribution to the profession is seen as enhancing rather than debilitating.

The *third* contemporary development which has deepened the authority of the ministry in particular and Protestantism in general has been the ordination of women. While not among the forefront in ordaining women, Lutherans nevertheless made the historic step and visibly disassociated the authority of the church from that of a patriarchal family. Admittedly, while a patriarchal family structure lasted, the church, also conceived as a family, was strengthened by a pastor seen as an authority figure. The patriarchal view of the family, however, has now become obsolete as women refuse to be treated as second-rate human beings whether at work or at home. Of course, in every society there will be hold-overs from a previous era. But those who prefer to live in the twentieth century are aware that the authority of the church cannot be strengthened by long outdated societal activities or structure.

In short, there are dimensions of our contemporary life which detract as well as support the authority of the church. While modernity has indeed brought about a crisis of the previous understanding of authority it also contains many resources for a positive understanding of authority. We have mentioned some of them without seeking to provide an exhaustive account.

III

Such a limitation may be seen as appropriate for Lutherans who have not looked to contemporary culture as a mediator of salvation, but, without denying the activity of the Holy Spirit in the present and through the present age, pointed to the Bible as the ultimate source of all truth and authority.

Here we need to note how our own modern understanding of the authority of the Bible differs from that of Martin Luther. For Luther one of the key words in regard to obtaining truth was "certainty" and therefore in regard to proclamation—"assertion." Against Desiderius Erasmus, the Catholic liberal, Luther thundered: "Nothing is better known or more common

among Christians than assertion. Take away assertions and you take away Christianity. *Tolle assertiones et Christianum tulisti.*"²⁸ And if that were not enough, Luther informed Erasmus that the Holy Spirit was not a skeptic!²⁹ And whether or not Luther actually said at the Diet of Worms, "Hier stehe ich!"³⁰ he most certainly projected a faith as firm as a mighty fortress, built upon a rock, immovable and indestructible. Accustomed to the metaphor, celebrated in the battle hymn of the Reformation, we have not often enough reflected on the contemporary relevance of that metaphor. Mighty fortresses have disappeared with the age of cannons. Trust in them was paid for dearly, whenever it lingered on. Fortresses and swords, cavalry, drum beat, and marching into battle in closed formation all belong to the past. A significant paradigm shift has taken place: we no longer assert our faith—but we *dialogue*. The key word for ecumenical co-existence is not "conversion" but "convergence."

Since our situation has changed to such an extent, the truth from a by-gone age is not simply passed on, as by a bucket brigade. Ancient truth must be translated into modern idiom. Leonard Swidler and Piet Fransen have quoted Cardinal Döpfner at a point which we may recognize as highly relevant:

Dogmas are always statements which are historically determined in a conceptual system; they are tied to a particular time and a particular way of thinking. Dogmas come to be in a concrete situation because of a specific set of causes. Doctrinal statements, therefore, always express the truth which is their object in an inadequate and fragmentary way which nevertheless, is valid from a specific perspective, namely, the perspective of a certain group of hearers. In order to understand a doctrinal truth, one must be familiar with the circumstances.³¹

Hence the warning is very much in order: "The Church we knew as children and the Church we heard about during our seminary years is not automatically The Tradition."³² Must we, as Lutherans, also not recognize that we cannot gain entrance into the past for the retrieval of truth in the same way that we reach into our refrigerators?

Two particular comments are in order. The first is a statement by Father Richard A. McCormick, S.J., who reflects on the value of dissent in the church:

The problem of the church, then, is not dissent, but how to use it constructively, how to learn from it, how to profit by it. Every

magazine editor knows this. Every public servant in a democracy knows it, too...The only remaining problem is to convince some Catholics that dissent is not a threat—unless they conceive the church as an isolated fortress—but an invigorating contribution to continued life and growth. Dissent is an anathema only or especially in their own conceptual fortress.³³

Indeed, if truth is conceived as static and unchanging, then the administrators of this truth require unquestioning obedience—and dissent is betrayal. But if truth is not already possessed, but must be searched for, found, and understood in a dialogue setting, then a responsible questioning of tradition is a stimulant to mutual growth. The authority which then emerges is not an authoritarian institution which issues commands that must be obeyed, but is rather a cooperative and mutually supportive structure which serves to facilitate. Admittedly, even in a serving church there will be leaders and followers, and some orders will have to be obeyed before they have been debated. Nevertheless, the paradigm of an open society—as opposed to a closed society—contains sufficient resiliency for change and improvement.

My second comment is evoked by Aarne Siirala's eminently helpful insight:

When Luther (in contrast to Erasmus' sceptical attitude toward the Scriptures) says that "the contents of the Scripture are as clear as can be," his basic intention is to say: the Scripture is fully clear when it is not put in the context of a mechanistic view, but is heard in the context of life, in the Spirit...The authority of Scripture is not the authority of an objective idea. Its authority lies in the power to bring us from the bondage of our will to the bondage of the living, free will of God. This divine authority lies in its power to create fellowship, to reconcile. The divine reality is expressed in the midst of human existence, as a gift, as something we receive. True humanity, the divine faith, is something given. The Scripture is basically gospel, good news of a truly human life in freedom which is prepared for us and is present among us in the very existence where we are.³⁴

In this modern Lutheran understanding of biblical authority, the ultimate appeal is not to a specific text, but to an emerging life-style of redemptive living. Gustaf Wingren, similarly, has stressed that the Word of the Bible is not to be perceived as a dead letter or a paragraph, but as a Word which is distributed through the sermon and reaches out into

the world.³⁵ Whether emphasizing the end product, as Siirala, or stressing the process, as Wingren, contemporary Lutherans have at least opened the door toward an enriched and dynamic understanding of authority.

IV

To say this, however, is not an attempt to advocate a church completely without walls and inner structures. As the ecumenical movement is built on the respect for the identities of other Christian denominations, an applicable view of authority will need to be multi-faceted. For the basic outline of the available structures I shall thus freely adapt from the insightful work of Avery Dulles, S.J., particularly his *Models of the Church*³⁶ and *Models of Revelation*.³⁷ Dulles proposes five key patterns in which biblical truth and Christian experience have found the richest embodiment.

1. *The church seen as an institution* is a view which does not merely acknowledge the need for an organization, but regards this organization as an all-inclusive and divinely erected society. In this society obedience to the authority structures is viewed as absolutely necessary, since it is the latter that maintain the true exposition of the divinely revealed dogmas.

Lutherans are quite familiar with such an approach from the days when they thought of themselves as constituting an institution in which the verbally inspired Bible served as the source for the correctly formulated doctrines. Since the model is largely authoritarian, complete obedience is seen as the only appropriate response. Although in such "orthodox" Lutheranism the structures for coining and proclaiming the absolutely correct doctrines was never fully worked out (i.e. as there were no publicly acknowledged infallible teachers, and no official, infallible pronouncements, even though the *Book of Concord* was sometimes utilized as the latter), our lengthy Lutheran history can witness that the final results have on occasion been quite specific and very demanding. This is particularly—but not exclusively—the case in reference to the so-called Lutheran orthodoxy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as its descendents in our own century. According to this authoritarian model, there is no concern

about dialogue. Having perceived truth as static, the vision of authority is likewise inflexible.

2. *The church as a mystical communion* suggests that instead of an institution, the church is at heart an interpersonal community and fellowship. The effects of the saving presence of Jesus Christ are not thought so much to be occurring through propositional statements of dogma, but rather through specific guiding events in history. Among the mighty saving acts of God, central roles are attributed to the exodus, the resurrection, and, of course, the personal conversion of the individual.

Rationalism often evokes a mystical reaction; doctrinal rationalism, likewise, often seems to account for the rise of an experiential, inward, and non-dogmatic spirituality. Appropriately, Lutheran pietism found its origins in the age of the dogmatic Lutheran orthodoxy. Similarly, the continued viability of Lutheran pietism may be seen as a creative balance, responding to a situation where the church has not paid sufficient attention to the personal dimensions of the religious experience and the power of the Holy Spirit. It may very well be that the charismatic movement in our own day—often deplored as disruptive, fundamentalist, even esoteric—has nevertheless served to call attention to the legitimate authority of the Holy Spirit in the church.

3. *The church as a sacrament* is a model which suggests that the primary role of the church is to present Jesus Christ to the world. Instead of limitedly perceived revelation, operative within a mystical-subjective realm as in the previous model, here the entire church is viewed as disclosing the reality of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Within a Lutheran framework the church as a sacrament suggests a rather novel and hence unaccustomed vocabulary. The intended meaning, however, is not completely foreign to Lutherans. We may very appropriately point to the growing liturgical movement within Lutheranism as an intensively personal and at the same time ecclesial way of bringing the witness of the ever present Christ through the participating community. As signs and symbols in their intrinsic power transcend the limits of explanation, the intensively powerful liturgical celebration can serve as an authentic witness of the truth and love of Jesus Christ.

4. *The church as a herald* emphasizes the proclamatory role of the preached Word. In this perspective the essential role of the church is to project the kerygma—the essential message concerning the saving role of Jesus Christ. Here the church may not be seen as existing prior to the proclamation. Rather, it is through the proclamation of Jesus Christ itself that the church is born and brought into the world.

Ordinarily the Lutheran Church has tended to emphasize this essential role of proclamation, accomplished primarily through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. Of course, Lutherans are not the only denomination in which biblical preaching has flourished. Hence our distinctiveness must be noted with no inappropriate self-exultation but as a way of recording, that we have been assisted by the *Book of Concord* as by a large and heavy keel, to keep our ship in balance: i.e. to pay attention to the entire Bible and not merely certain portions of it! In this way the kerygmatic authority is none other than the authority of the gospel.

5. *The church as a servant* projects authority through a model of service and mission. It is a community which, experiencing and sharing redemption, at the same time recognizes the practical needs of the world, and in love and compassion serves to liberate from sin and poverty.

Having noted Lutheran embodiment—though at different times and in a divergent measure—of all five models of the church, we are, of course, aware that other denominations can relate to them as well. This fact reminds us that despite denominational boundary lines there is a measure of affinity to Christians in other denominations. The more deeply we are concerned with the realization that in the variety there has been a certain sense of unity, the more likely we are going to view the quest for authority as a joint Christian project of faithful response to God in Jesus Christ. In such a perspective our own fidelity can be practiced without censorious criticism of others who differ from us.

In other words, while a historical exposition can acquaint us with how authority has fared in the past, and even point out five traditionally viable modalities of authority, it is only the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the contemporary experience which supplies a presently applicable insight.³⁸

In this way, in a church without a pope, without a formally recorded apostolic tradition, without a normative tradition, and without any secular government to sustain the activities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada, the reality of authority rests upon the reality of faith. Where faith is generated and sustained, there authority is born and lives according to a Lutheran understanding. Where faith wilts or even dies, only the outward and secular structures of authority remain. While democratically legitimate, they have ceased to be truly Lutheran or Christian. If authority is defined as the living spirit of faith, we must explore it further by turning our attention to authority in the experience in the pastoral office and practice.

Notes

- ¹ Samuel Simon Schmucker, *Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches*, edited with an introduction by Frederick K. Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965); Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, introduction by Rudolf Bultmann (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz, 1950).
- ² Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm, *Book of Concord*, 505:9.
- ³ "Second Defense of the Sacraments, in Answer to the Calumnies of Westphal," *Tracts and Treatises on the Doctrine and worship of the church*, trans. by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958) 2:330.
- ⁴ It has been said about one of my Lutheran teachers that although he often declared that Luther was not infallible, he could never find an occasion where Luther was actually in error!
- ⁵ Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960) 147.
- ⁶ *Ibid.* 155.
- ⁷ *Ibid.* 144, referring to *Luther's Works* 46:163.
- ⁸ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Volume Two: *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 17.
- ⁹ Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 148.
- ¹⁰ *LW* 46:163–164; Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 157.
- ¹¹ Skinner, *The Foundations*, 11; he also notes on p. 74 "If we turn... to the period after 1530, we encounter a complete *volte face*: we find Luther, Melancthon, Osiander and many of their most prominent followers suddenly changing their minds, and arguing instead that any ruler who becomes a tyrant may be lawfully and forcibly opposed."
- ¹² *Ibid.* quoting from *LW* 45:125.

- 13 For a notably sober statement cf. William H. Lazareth, ed., *The Left Hand of God: Essays on Discipleship and Patriotism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).
- 14 *Constitution and By-laws*, May 1985, especially Articles III:1-3, IV:2-5, IX:5-7, and XI:1.
- 15 Cf. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, 2nd ed., vols. I and II, *Foundations of the Unity of Science*, 2:2 (University of Chicago, 1970).
- 16 Rupert E. Davies, *Religious Authority in an Age of Doubt* (London: Epworth Press, 1968) 23; cf. G.H. Gerberding, *The Lutheran Pastor*, 7th ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1915) who could blithely state on p. 31: "The bearer of this office [of the ministry] is sometimes called pastor, at other times teacher, then presbyter or elder, and again episcopos or bishop. These are different names for the same office."
- 17 Leonard Swidler and Piet F. Fransen, eds., *Authority in the Church and the Schillebeeckx Case* (New York: Crossroads, 1982) 1.
- 18 Carl E. Braaten, *The Apostolic Imperative: Nature and Aim of the Church's Mission and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985) 36.
- 19 Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* (Berlin: Severin and Siedler, 1981) 234.
- 20 Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press Doubleday, 1979) 35.
- 21 *Ibid.* 84.; cf. Donald Dawe and John Carman, eds., *Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978) 114.
- 22 Gerberding, *The Lutheran Pastor*, 7.
- 23 *Ibid.* 123-124.
- 24 *Proceedings at Augsburg, LW* 31:276.
- 25 *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, 1929 (rpr. New York: Meridian Books, 1957). In that generation it was not unusual to describe other denominations by way of their differences from one's own, e.g. J.L. Neve, *Churches and Sects of Christendom* (Blair, NE: Lutheran Publishing House, 1944, revised 1952).
- 26 Braaten, *The Apostolic Imperative*, 56.
- 27 *Ibid.* 120.
- 28 *LW* 33:21, cf. Paul C. Empie et al., *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, VI (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978) 109-110.
- 29 *LW* 33:24; cf. Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God: Luther Studies* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953) 272: "The word 'scepticism' enraged Luther."
- 30 Egil Grislis, ed., *The Theology of Martin Luther: Five Contemporary Canadian Interpretations* (Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books, 1985) 120, fn. 4.

- 31 Swidler and Fransen, eds., *Authority in the Church*, 104.
- 32 Ibid. 50.
- 33 "The Search for Truth in the Catholic Context," *America*, 8 November 1986, 280. "... a full and faithful teaching of Catholic doctrine not only allows but *requires* room for responsible dissent. Without such room, Catholic teaching is unfaithful. Unfaithful to the Catholic principle of development of doctrine..." *Editorial*, in *Commonweal*, 28 March 1986, 163; cf. Swidler and Fransen, *Authority in the Church*, 95.
- 34 "Freedom and Authority in Erasmus and Luther," *Dialog*, 7 (Spring 1968) 112.
- 35 "Kritische Erwägungen zum Begriff der Lehrautorität in der lutherischen Kirche," *Kerygma und Dogma*, 10, 4 (1964) 251-252.
- 36 Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1978.
- 37 Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983.
- 38 Paul C. Empie, *Teaching Authority and Infallibility*, 27: "Authority resides ultimately in the power of the proclaimed Word to convict of sin and convince of grace."