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LUTHER ON REVELATION

FOUNDATION FOR PROCLAMATION

AND WORSHIP

Lowell C. Green

The Lutheran *Formula of Concord* virtually made a doctrinal standard out of the writings of that “precious man of God, Dr. Luther” (SD, Rule and Norm, 5, 9), declaring him the chief teacher in the Lutheran church (SD VII, 34), and his writings the standard for interpreting the Augsburg Confession (SD VII, 41). His *Bondage of the Will* and lectures on Genesis were especially cited as examples of his fundamental works (SD II, 44, 89).¹ But after these striking statements of 1577 had been made, scholars in the Lutheran church tended to neglect Luther and particularly these two works, or at least to overlook their specific teachings. Furthermore, in recent years prominent representatives of the Lutheran church have not been reluctant to deliver public disavowals of the theology of her “chief teacher.”

On the other hand, men and women from other religious bodies frequently find his works a norm for understanding the Gospel. The Roman Catholic, Peter Manns, the

1. Theodosius Harnack, *Luthers Theologie mit besonderer Beziehung auf seine Versöhnungs- und Erlösungslehre*, 2 vols. (Erlangen: Theodor Blaesing, 1862-86); reprinted 1927. Peter Meinhold, *Die Genesisvorlesung Luthers und ihre Herausgeber*, No. 8 in *Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte* Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936). Harnack established a milestone in studying the Law-Gospel dialectic of Luther; his work is of unsurpassed value. Meinhold critically investigated the reliability of the transmission of the lectures in Genesis; his work included a theological study of the views of the principle editors, Dietrich, Besold, and Roting, besides Rorer, the most reliable transcriber. He tended to over-estimate the importance of non-Lutheran additions. In my opinion, the idiomatic character of these lectures stamps them as Luther's beyond doubt, especially in such concepts as *Deus absconditus seu revelatus*, which Luther's contemporaries hardly grasped.

Reformed scholar, Brian Gerrish, or the man coming from the Adventist tradition, Robert Brinsmead, certainly take Luther more seriously than many Lutherans. It may well be, however, that Luther is still understood best by confessional Lutherans.

In spite of this, many Lutherans do not comprehend his views on proclaiming the Gospel and the divine-service ("liturgics"). His rejection of the Canon of the Mass has been denounced and recent Lutheran service-books have reintroduced the offertory and eucharistic prayer. The word "sacrifice," made questionable by Luther, has returned. Writers who generally support his distinction of Law and Gospel fail to see how this principle applies to modern "worship," to use the synergistic English term. Many pastors and theologians mistakenly consider these matters to be adiaaphora in the sense of the Formula of Concord, Art. X. In the following lines we shall trace anew Luther's doctrine of revelation—of God hidden and revealed, or of Law and Gospel—and then apply our conclusions to several crucial problems in the theory and practice of Lutheran *cultus* today.

REVELATION AS THE FUNDAMENT

In the mediaeval church where Luther had worshipped as a boy, he had been terrified by a picture of Christ the King, sitting in majesty over the rainbow and judging poor, lost sinners. This picture had tormented him during the years in the monastery when he had sought for a gracious God. His evangelical breakthrough might be described as the discovery that in our relationship with God, we must dislodge this notion of Christ as King and replace it with the babe of Bethlehem and the man of Calvary. The majestic, hidden God was replaced by God revealed in his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. The theology of glory was left for the theology of the cross.

"I did not learn all my theology at once; it was my spiritual struggles which brought me to this place," Luther commented in 1532 (WA Tr I: No. 352). His works before the evangelical discovery of 1518 lacked these distinctions, although they were anticipated. Thus in the early lectures on the Psalms (1513-16) could be found the distinction between the strange and the proper work of God (*opus alienum seu proprium*), a partly-developed concept of God's punitive and saving work. In the exciting lectures on Romans (1515-16), the struggle continued under such categories as the passive and active justification (not justice) of God (*justificatio passiva seu activa*), in which the believer submitted to God's condemnation of his sin, and in that act declared that God was righteous and thereby secured his own righteousness. A much more important advance was his dialectic between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross (*theologia gloriae seu crucis*). This was especially prominent in the Heidelberg Disputation of April 1518. Here, Luther rejected all triumphalism. The theology based upon reason or the majestic attributes of God was spurned, together with works-righteousness and confidence in the Law. Instead, he set up the centrality of the cross as the only fundament of true theology. This was a real anticipation of his mature teaching that God remains hidden until he is revealed in Christ in the state of humiliation. But his perception was still clouded by the teachings of mystic and Neo-Platonic philosophy. Perhaps the "young Luther" was to blame that Zwingli and Calvin permitted Neo-Platonism to influence their thinking, but at

any rate he was largely to overcome its tenets in his own theology.²

In Neo-Platonism, one goes out from the dualistic distinction of the material and the spiritual, with the material principle or the body representing evil, and the spiritual principle or the soul representing good. Epistemologically, true knowledge cannot be gained from the material but only from the spiritual. Axiologically, the material cannot become the vehicle by which the spiritual is imparted (*finitum non capax infiniti*), whether in a strict view of the incarnation or of the sacramental union (Luther's doctrine of the Lord's Supper). The reformers had been schooled in Renaissance humanism. Several Italian humanists had taught the Neo-Platonic notion of divine love or mind (*amor divinus*), which was contrasted to human love or reason (*amor humanus*); truth was pictured as unclothed (*nuda veritas*, the naked truth).³ Applied to theology, this notion urges that God is to be sought out in his hidden and innermost being (*Deus nudus*) by mystic contemplation, and that any thought that God might be found in a material, bodily, or finite form would be inferior and misleading. The young Luther followed such notions, his evangelical breakthrough discarded them, and his mature theology diametrically opposed them.

In his exposition of Psalms 51 (1532 and 1538),⁴ Luther asserted that Ps. 51,3, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord," means to turn away from the naked God (*Deus nudus*) to God clothed and revealed (*Deus vestitus et revelatus verbo suo*), or from the Law to the Gospel. If any one seeks God in his absolute majesty, he will break his neck (*da folget hals stortzen*, WA 40/II:330,12). In his lectures on Galatians (1531 and 1535), Luther repudiated a theology which speculates upon the so-called majestic attributes of God (incomprehensible in power, wisdom, and majesty) in words which applied to the Areopagite, chief of Neo-Platonists, as well as later Protestant dogmatics and liturgics. He insisted, "The theology which is Christian and true, as I have always admonished, does not drag in God in his majesty, as in Moses and other teachings, but Christ born of the Virgin, our Mediator and High Priest" (WA 40/I:77,11). All other religions have begun at the summit, but true Christianity starts at the foot of Jacob's ladder. Therefore, shun speculations about the divine majesty, good works, human traditions, philosophy, and the Law.

Rush to the manger and the bosom of the mother and pick up that little baby, the tiny Son of the Virgin. Watch him being born, suckling, growing, moving among men, teaching, dying, rising again, held up above the heavens, having power over all things. As the clouds are scattered

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2. Discussed at greater length in Lowell C. Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel*. The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation (Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1980).
 3. Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 130-56.
 4. The exposition of Psalms 51 comes both in the classroom notes of the reliable amenuensis, Georg Rorer (= Hs) of 1532 and in the printed version (= Dr) edited by Veit Dietrich in 1538. This *Enarratio Psalmi LI* affords us how Dietrich altered Luther's statement in an instance where we can determine this from Rorer. Rorer gives the typically-Lutherian phrase [*Deus*] in *sua absoluta maiestate* (WA 40/II:330,12), which Dietrich edits in the more scholastic way, [*Deus*] in *sua absoluta potestate*. This illustrates how Luther's pupils often overlooked his distinction between *Deus absconditus seu maiestaticus*, on the one hand, and *Deus revelatus seu incarnatus seu praedicatus*, on the other hand.

by the sun, in this way you will be able to scatter all terrors and to avoid all errors. And this sight will keep you in the right way so that you may follow where Christ has gone before you (WA 40/I:79-80).

In his exposition of Isaiah 9 (Christmas 1543-44), he said that God did not want to be seen and found in heaven, and therefore left heaven and came down to us. He thereby set up a ladder (Christ, the Gospel) by which we might ascend to God. Whoever wants to speculate on the glory of the divine majesty and overlook this ladder places himself in great peril (WA 40/III:656).

This was also the solution to the difficult problem of predestination. Do not pry into the hidden counsels of God; this problem cannot be solved by metaphysic or reason. Instead, gaze at the little babe in the manger, the Son who was given for you. Aside from him (*extra "Filium datum"*) it is dangerous, but when predestination is seen in the light of Christmas, anxiety will vanish (*ib.*, p. 657). In a comment on Gen. 26,9, Luther has God promising to reveal the meaning of predestination: "Out of the God not revealed I will become revealed, and still remain the same God" (WA 43:459,22). Now God promises to become incarnate and to make himself visible in the manger and on the cross.

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," Christ said. If you shall have heard him and have been baptized in his name, and if you love his Word, then certainly you have been predestinated, and it is sure regarding your salvation. But if you curse or despise his Word, then you are a damned person. For, he who does not believe is condemned. (WA 43:459, 30-34).

Luther was of the opinion that *Bondage of the Will*, 1525, was his greatest work. Contrary to the assertions of many scholars, it is not a treatise on predestination; *praedestinatio* and its direct derivatives occur only a few times in the 187 pages of the work (Weimar edition). But it is a treatise on the incapability of unregenerate man to move himself toward the things of God or his salvation. There, Luther affirms that the reason Judas was lost was that he chose to repudiate Christ (*Iudas uolendo prodidit Christum*), and he wanted to do so because his will was evil (WA 18:720,33). He had the choice to do the evil he wanted to do, but he was not able to choose good because his will was evil (*uoluntas not potest nisi malum uelle*, WA 18:721,7). Luther does not entertain the question as to why God did not overcome that evil will in Judas as he did in so many others, but at least he does not postulate the double-predestination which is so often attributed to him by careless scholarship. The problem is impenetrable because God is impenetrable. It had been the fault of Erasmus that in his *Diatribes of Free Will* he had overlooked the distinction between God hidden and God revealed in the preached Word about Christ (WA 18:685,25). God revealed in Christ "wills all men to be saved," I Tim. 2,4 (WA 18:686,5), whereas God hidden in majesty "neither deplores nor takes away death, but works life and death, and all things in all men, nor indeed has he bound himself by his Word, but has kept himself free over all things" (WA 18:685,21). Faith has nothing to do with such a God not preached, not revealed, not offered up, not capable of being worshipped, but hidden and unknown (*ib.*, line 14). But faith turns to God revealed in Jesus Christ.

It belongs to the same God incarnate to weep, deplore, and groan over the perdition of the ungodly, although that will of majesty according to

his purpose forsakes and reprobates some, that they perish. Nor is it up to us to ask why he does so, but to stand in awe of God, who can do and wills such things (WA 18:689-90).

We are here dealing with Luther's celebrated distinction between God hidden and revealed (*Deus absconditus seu revelatus*), a concept closely related to the distinction between Law and Gospel.⁵ As C.F.W. Walther insisted, the Gospel must predominate over the Law in evangelical preaching.⁶ Faith has to do not with a God of wrath and majesty, but a God who has laid his anger aside and reconciled the world unto himself in the humiliation of his Son. The awesome picture of Christ the King is supplanted by the child of Bethlehem and the man of Calvary. The Law exists to convince of sin and to show the Father's will, and therefore it is not abolished. But Law and Gospel are not rightly distinguished unless the latter predominates in the theology, preaching, and text of the divine-service.

If we should attempt to bring together the salient points in a doctrine of revelation in Luther, we should have to begin by noting that, unlike later dogmatists, the contrast does not lie between a natural revelation (nature, reason, history, conscience) and a written revelation (the Holy Scriptures), with the former supplying almost everything that can be known about God (the majestic attributes of God; the "negative way" of Neo-Platonism), and the Bible adding the story of salvation in Christ. Here, the dialectic of Law and Gospel is being ignored. Rather, in Luther all that we can learn from nature, reason, history, or conscience takes us no further than the Law, the Gospel is revealed only in Christ, and the Scriptures are the inspired and infallible record of that revelation, to be interpreted under the distinction of Law and Gospel. In the broad sense, the entire Bible with both Law and Gospel can be referred to as a record of revelation, just as the word, Gospel, means the entire message of Christ, both Law and Gospel, in the broad sense (SD V, 3-6). But in the narrow sense, one does not speak of nature, reason, history, or conscience ("natural revelation") as revelation at all, but one speaks of Christ in his saving work as the exclusive content of revelation (*Deus revelatus*). He reveals the inmost being of God, which is love and mercy in the Gospel, and is revealed in no other way.

Accordingly, let us now see how this doctrine of God (*Deus absconditus seu revelatus*) and the closely-related teaching of Law and Gospel apply to the subject of the *cultus* of the evangelical Lutheran church.

THE EXPRESSION OF REVELATION IN LUTHERAN CULTUS

The Lutheran reformers, confessors, and early theologians developed a theocentric view of the church service under the centrality of the preached Word and

5. A useful study is provided in Brian Gerrish, " 'To the Unknown God': Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God," *Journal of Religion* 53(1973):263-92. Gerrish struggles with the seemingly twofold hiddenness of God in Luther as type I, within his revelation, and Hiddenness II, outside his revelation (p. 268). I suggest adding the hermeneutical principle of the distinction between Law and Gospel, which would go a long way in clarifying the *Deus absconditus seu revelatus*. As it is, I don't think Gerrish has succeeded in interpreting Luther.

6. Thesis XXV in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 403-13 *et passim*.

sacraments. The German term, *Gottesdienst* (divine-service), did not mean that man served God but that God served man: God was the subject and man was the object. The principle Latin term was *cultus*, the perfect passive participle of *colere*, to cultivate; accordingly, the divine-service was the place where God sowed the seed of his Word and nurtured the tender life of faith through the pastors. *Cultus* could also include the honour paid God by the faith of the believer in reciprocation. The response of the congregation was chiefly in the chants and chorales. The activity of God and passivity or receptivity of man were stressed.

A marked anthropocentricism has set in more recently. Many religious words of the English language sound synergistic. "Worship" is the action of man in ascribing worth to the deity, and "liturgy," derived from the Greek words *laos* and *ergon*, suggests the work of the people.⁷ Schleiermacher stressed religion as feeling and experience; it is no accident that he is the founder of modern "liturgics."⁸ Since his time, there has been a growing insistence upon "worship" as the work of the whole congregation. Recent "celebration theology" has marked current Lutheran liturgical endeavors. It contains certain pagan elements, contributed by the school of comparative religions, higher criticism of the Biblical records stemming from men like Heitmüller and Lietzmann, and the ecumenical strivings of a Casel and a Dix. The atoning sacrifice of Christ gives way to sacrificial actions of the congregation.⁹

When we turn to Luther, we find ourselves in a totally different theological world, where the concept of revelation is fundamental, and the acts of God and the acts of man are carefully distinguished, together with Law and Gospel. We shall take note of three groups of ideas: first, that the *cultus* has to do not with a God who must be placated but with one who has already reconciled the world to himself in Christ; second, that the majestic attributes of God, triumphalism, legalism, and human good works must give way to the Gospel, the atoning sacrifice, and the theology of the cross; third, that these ideas have a profound bearing upon the theory and practice of the divine-service, particularly in the structure of liturgical forms and the selection of hymns.

Liturgiologists sometimes quote the early Luther to support certain measures that

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7. On the derivation of "liturgy" and its usage in ancient Greece see Hermann Strathmann in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Vol. IV, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1942), pp. 224-25 and 235-36. On p. 236 Strathmann notes that an important source for the term was the *Apostolic Tradition*. On this work of ca. 380, the Arian tendencies of its editor, Pseudo-Clemens, and its condemnation at the second Trullian Synod, see Berthold Altaner, *Patrologie*, 4th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1955), pp. 43-45. Cf. article on the Trullian Synods in *Realencyklopadie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd ed. by Albert Hauck, Vol. XX (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1908), pp. 143-44. One needs to restudy the history of the ancient church from the Lutheran perspective, rather than unquestioningly binding oneself to the results of searchers from other traditions.
 8. A doctrinal essay on the development of liturgics in recent times under men such as Schleiermacher, Theodosius Harnack, Achelis, and Reed is needed. Space does not permit developing this further here.
 9. See the critical article by Oliver K. Olson, "Contemporary Trends in Liturgy Viewed from the Perspective of Classical Lutheran Theology," *The Lutheran Quarterly* XXVI/2 (1974):110-57. Johann Michael Reu analyzed some of the same views of higher critics in a paper in 1940, reprinted as "Can We Still Hold to the Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord's Supper?" in *Two Treatises on the Means of Grace*, ed. Emil W. Matzner (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1952), pp. 39-120.

he frowned upon in his later works. In his treatise on the New Testament of 1520, he still held that man might offer a sacrifice in the Mass; it would not be the cause of his saving relationship with God, but rather its result (WA 6:368). In the reform-treatise of 1520 on the "Babylonian captivity," he still tried to retain the Canon of the Mass, provided its petitions were referred to earthly gifts or else to the prayers of the people (WA 6:524,18). But a year later he conceded that the Canon of the Mass in its concept of sacrifice was hopelessly at odds with the Gospel of Christ. In his treatise, *On the Abolition of the Private Mass*, he wrote in 1521:

Wherefore we overcome and say, "Give way, O Canon, to the Gospel, and give place to the Holy Ghost, for you are a human word! And although I have held that I was able to find a sound meaning for the Canon, as I have written elsewhere, I no longer dignify it with such honor, but I give glory most fully to the Gospel . . . (WA 8:448,27).

Here, he had abandoned his tolerance of the Canon as shown in the two earlier treatises, because the notion of a sacrifice by man in the service might give the wrong impression that God had to be placated, or that the Christian might do something to assure his place with God. He stated:

When they sacrifice, they think it is necessary to placate God. But to want to placate God is to think that he is angry and unplacated. Now to believe that he is angry is to expect anger rather than love, evil rather than good . . . (WA 8:441,20).

What was at stake was not an aesthetic matter, a mere liturgical nicety; the concept of sacrifice in the Canon of the Mass militated against the doctrine of justification. Such worship was an apostasy from God revealed in Christ and the means of grace (*Deus revelatus*; WA 25:128,37) to the hidden God, the God of wrath who destroys (ib., line 21), and a giving of oneself over to Satan (ib., line 31).

In several remarkable sermons on the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18,9-14), Luther brought out some telling words on sin and grace in their relationship to "worship." When the Pharisee boasted of how good he was, he made of his own works an idol, threw his own righteousness in the face of God, and made God into the devil (WA 27:313,12). This was the sin against the First Commandment, which embraced all the other commandments. But the humble publican said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and thereby he fled from God hidden in the Law to divine mercy in the Gospel. Luther said:

He lets God be God. He keeps his place as a man, as he had been born, and he gives to God the tribute that he is kind. He knows what is the genuine worship of God. This is genuine faith, through which God is paid and given all that is owed God. And here he fulfilled at once all the commandments of God (WA 17/I:404,1).

He lets God be God, *Deum esse Deum*. This is the genuine worship of God, *verus cultus Dei*. This is being justified. This is setting aside all good works, sacrifice, and offerings, casting oneself wholly on the mercy of God, and letting God carry out his saving work. It is not with another good work such as a "celebration" of this gift, but with the mere and passive reception of this gift, that evangelical *cultus* has to do.

In the great commentary on Galatians of his later years, he rejected the Roman notion of worship as a sacrifice offered by the believer and firmly proclaimed Christ's

unique sacrifice of Good Friday as the only offering and sacrifice in evangelical *cultus*. In a comment on Gal. 3,6 he remarked:

Through this sacrifice they render God glory, that is, they believe that he is just, good, faithful, trustful, etc., they believe that he is able to do all things, and that all his words are holy, true, living, and efficacious, which is before God the most acceptable obedience. Hence, no greater, better, or more pleasing piety or worship (*cultus*) than faith can be found in the world (WA 40/I:363,11).

SOME PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

Recent Lutheran liturgiologists have broken with Luther and introduced what they consider to be purged parts of the Canon of the Mass. These matters have been widely discussed and we do not need to review the controversy at this point, except to point out that the preceding discussion shows powerful arguments against the new changes. Instead, we shall concentrate upon the problem that has arisen in the concomitant triumphalism (*theologia gloriae*) and the consequent disturbance of the distinction of Law and Gospel (*theologia crucis*). All too evident is the painful desire to be "ecumenical" and to do things "like the rest," including the importation of new practices not a part of the Lutheran heritage, the tendency to neglect the atonement and Good Friday in favor of the *Christus Victor* or *Christus Rex* and a distorted Easter, and the general mood of celebration, victory, and triumph. "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us" (Gospel) has been replaced by "This is the feast of victory for our God," with a celebrative action, a good work, that must be performed by man. Paul Gerhardt's meditation upon the passion, "Upon the Cross Extended," is omitted in favor of Kitchin and Newbolt's cento, "Lift High the Cross," sung to a catchy and triumphalistic melody. Rubrics on the Good Friday service insist that the Holy Supper should be omitted, gloom should be avoided, the sermon, if it is preached, must not overshadow such things as the action with the cross at the end of the service, and the general tone is one of "celebration." Instead of the most solemn and important day of the year, Good Friday is reduced to a transition between the celebrations of Maundy Thursday and the Vigils of Easter.¹⁰ Here is a drastic departure from the theology of Luther and the church's tradition.

Odo Casel, who introduced and popularized the new meaning of "celebrate," freely admitted that the idea was drawn from the Greek pagan religions in their celebration of the myth of the deity. In the post-Bultmannian period, one cannot help entertaining the thought that in case the resurrection of Christ was not historical, at least one can make it happen existentially by celebrating the myth of Easter. For our forefathers, the word "celebrate" meant for the pastor to carry out a sacramental rite; today's new usage emphasizes human works and the involvement of the whole congregation in an active rather than a passive or receiving role. Here there is grave peril

10. Cf. the rubrics in Philip H. Pfatteicher and Charles R. Messerli, *Manual on the Liturgy, Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979), pp. 320-26.

that the work of God be turned into the work of man, and that the Law be mingled with the Gospel.

New hymnbooks intended for Lutheran congregations have introduced much material from non-Lutheran writers in which the majestic attributes of God are unduly prominent. There is little Gospel and much of the abscondite God in such hymns as "Immortal, invisible, God only wise", "The God of Abraham praise", "All hail the power of Jesus' name", "In the cross of Christ I glory", or "Hail thee, festival day!" In selecting hymns for use in the divine-service, we must always take note of whether the author was heterodox, ponder whether the relation between the work of God and the work of man is proper, and consider how well Law and Gospel and divine revelation are handled. There is no room in the divine-service for hymns that are merely fillers. Someone's eternal salvation may be at stake. The same standards must apply to hymns that apply to the sermon and other parts of the service.

Luther's concern was that sinners be brought to the cross. Not majestic terror but beneficent grace was central. "Though Christ was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich" (II Cor. 8,9). It is a perversion of Law and Gospel when the earthen vessels are recast into earthly riches, as in certain Christmas songs. It is a perversion of the concept of the abscondite and revealed characters of God when Christ is turned into a new lawgiver or his office as mediator is obscured by the intrusion of majestic attributes drawn from reason (Neo-Platonism and the *via causalitas*, *via eminentiae*, *via negationis*).

We are living in an age which seems to pride itself more on innovations than on remaining by the faith of the fathers. Unfortunately, change always brings the risk of forsaking evangelical content, and this has actually taken place in many recent innovations in the theory and practice of the *cultus*. We must sharpen our awareness to see where alien elements creep in to weaken the voice of the Gospel. Like Luther, we must go back to the manger and the cross. We cannot have too much concern for sound doctrine and the proper distinction of Law and Gospel. The eternal salvation of countless men, women, and children might well be at stake. Such concern for the Gospel and for people must outweigh pride and the desire to keep in step with others.