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Book Reviews

C.F.W. WALTHER: THE AMERICAN LUTHER. Essays in Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Carl Walther's Death. Edited by Arthur Drevlow, John Drickamer, and Glenn Reichwald. Mankato, Minnesota: Walther Press, 1987. xxix and 199 pages (212 pages including bibliography). Cloth, \$17.95.

This engaging volume of essays assembles in a very readable manner the salient facts pertaining to the career, theology, and influence of the first president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Dr. C.F.W. Walther (1811-1887), who was in addition the leading figure of confessional Lutheran theology in America in his generation. It also reviews significant events in the early history of the Missouri Synod, which traces its beginning to the arrival of several hundred Saxon German immigrants to the American Midwest in January 1839. The contributors of the foreword and thirteen chapters are chiefly confessional Lutheran seminary professors and parish pastors (active or retired), who evaluate the professional ministry and literary output of Walther from the vantage point of their various areas of theological specialization and expertise. One essay included was written in 1897 by a now sainted author.

A multi-talented individual, Walther is presented in his role within the young synod as scholar, professor, dogmatician, debater, defender of the faith, magazine editor, pastor and preacher, liturgiologist, seminary and synodical president, and promoter of the cause of integrated Christian and secular education on all levels. He was an avid student of the Scriptures and of the Lutheran Confessions, Luther, and the orthodox Lutheran Theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Friends and foes alike have referred to him as a "repristinarian" theologian, because he profusely quoted the Lutheran sources in his sermons, lectures, and writings, as he used every opportunity to inculcate classical Lutheran teaching. Walther never apologized for this procedure, since he held that in most cases the Reformation era theologians had expressed the great truths of God's Word in such a clear, succinct, and persuasive way that little could be said to improve upon what they had written.

Several of the essayists stress Walther's dependence especially on Luther's writings in the development of his own theological thought. The reformer's influence is reflected in Walther's setting the doctrine of justification by grace through faith on account of the completed redeeming work of Christ at the heart of his theological system and relating all other biblical teachings to this core truth of divine revelation. Like Luther, Walther himself distinguished carefully

between Law and Gospel in presenting the faith and taught his ministerial students and other to do so also. He imitated his German mentor in pointing to the use of the means of grace, which he regarded to be the exclusive channel of the Holy Spirit's operation among men, as absolutely essential for the maintenance and extension of the church.

The concerns which troubled the pioneer Lutheran settlers in Perry County, Missouri, who questioned their status in the church of God and the validity of the pastoral ministry serving in the midst, Walther set about to answer by researching Luther's biblical teaching on the subjects of church and ministry. He shared his findings with the people. He assured them of their membership in the church universal and invisible through faith, held before them the privileges and responsibilities of their priesthood before God as believers and members of local Christian congregations, and showed them the divinely established relationship of the laity to its called pastors. Grateful for the religious liberty found in America, Walther set up for Missouri Synod Lutherans a unique form of church polity, an ecclesiastical government which placed the people and their pastors in charge of the affairs of their church body, as Luther (who belonged to a state church) envisaged the situation would be under an ideal arrangement in which church and state were separate.

Walther and his theology were chiefly responsible for keeping the Missouri Synod the soundly Lutheran church that it was in the early decades of its history. Though dead he still speaks through his prodigious writings, the authors of this book remind us. His clear, practical patterns of theological thought, timely and relevant yet today, are a lasting legacy to the church—and particularly to the members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the present generation. They, can be greatly edified and encouraged by considering his theological insights and vision, his example of zealous dedication to the cause of Christ and fidelity to the Word of God. An expression of thanks is due the editors of and contributors to *C.F.W. Walther: The American Luther* for preparing this anniversary memorial book. It offers a compact and fresh look at the life and work of the renowned founding father of the Missouri Synod, through whose labors thousands in and outside our Lutheran Church, both in Walther's time and since, have under God been richly blessed.

Walter A. Maier

CHURCH AND MINISTRY. By C.F.W. Walther. Translated by J.T. Mueller. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987. 366 pages.

The publication in English, at last, of Walther's great classic is perhaps the most fitting and the most important event of the entire Walther centenary celebration. Its theses on the church and the ministry expressed our synod's self-understanding from the beginning and were absorbed into its very flesh and bone by generations of theological students whose ministry was so influenced by Walther's work.

Later, especially after the switch from German to English, Walther's theses became less and less self-evident. Or perhaps, since their full context never appeared in English until now, the theses seemed too self-evident; and so their true import came to be oversimplified, was sidetracked to cliché status, and thus was unable to shape decisively the enormous external expansion of the synodical structure, especially since World War II.

Church and Ministry consists of two sets of theses, nine on the church and ten on the ministry. Each thesis is followed by three sections, of which the first provides the Scripture proof, the second attestation from the Symbolical Books, and the third attestation from the private writings of various recognized teachers of the church, beginning with Luther, but often including also short patristic citations. The German original was entitled "The Voice of Our Church in the Question of Church and Ministry"—"our church" clearly being the orthodox church of the Augsburg Confession. The book was published by unanimous decision of the synod, and thus has a standing rivaled by few other statements on the subject.

In our "ecumenical" age, when even Lutherans take for granted the externalistic notions enshrined in the Lima Statement on *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, (of the faith and order commission of the WCC), perhaps the greatest service Walther's book can render is to recall us to that grand, truly spiritual and evangelical vision of Christ's Church as His holy, mystical body, consisting only of His own believers, deeply hidden under the cross in this world, and accessible only through the pure Gospel and sacraments. The centrality and all-decisiveness of the Gospel and sacraments for all questions of the church's life and well-being is precisely what we need to hear—we who live in deserts of pragmatism, decaying secularism, and relativism.

There are so many quotable gems on virtually every page that the reviewer is tempted to "give away" the whole book. One or two things, however, simply must be mentioned. Very helpful for our time is the sober, churchly treatment of what some now call New Testament "gift

lists" (see pp.293 ff.; also 183 ff.; and on 1 Corinthians 14:30, p. 169). In the theses on the ministry, it would have been helpful to render the central term, *Predigtamt* (literally, preaching office) with one single, standard expression, instead of using four different phrases in different theses.

Many are accustomed—either in praise or in blame!—to identify with some sort of pop-democratism, Walther's thoroughly spiritual stress on the priestly role of evangelically instructed and responsible congregations. Such readers will be surprised by his comments on pages 219-220. Walther says quite bluntly here that if the regularly called ministers of a congregation were to be bypassed in the issuing of a call to yet another minister, such a "call" would be null and void. It is regrettable, however, that the translator has failed to convey the full force of the original here. He translates: "... then there is no longer any call of the 'multitude.'" What Walther actually says *verbatim* is this: "... in such a case the call of the 'multitude' has no validity." In other words, Walther says, not that the "multitude" has not really acted, but that it has acted and that its action is not valid. There is a difference. And this point has profound implications for the summary and secular ways in which pastors and congregations sometimes deal with one another nowadays.

There are other flaws in this, as in any, translation. This reviewer has not made a systematic search, but again one or two examples ought to be given, so that future editions may correct them. In Thesis III of the second part, on the ministry (p. 191), it makes little sense to say that the "ministry is not an *arbitrary* office." The German word Walther used should be translated as "optional." On page 258, in the second paragraph, a sentence is missing, resulting in a strange combination of baptism with the real presence.

More serious is the translator's misunderstanding of the Gerhard quotation on page 105. He translates the contrast as "either exclusively. . . or privately." No wonder he adds this footnote: "This quotation lacks clarity in both the original and Walther's translation" (p. 365). Gerhard's real point is perfectly clear. He is saying that the "true church" may be opposed to a "false church" either in the sense of "non-church" or else in the sense of "impure or heterodox church." In the first case the contrast is exclusive, in the second privative—not private.

Perhaps most worrisome is the mistranslation of Theses VII (on the church) as concerning "visible congregations" rather than "visible communions." Walther's word *Gemeinschaften* means fellowships, communions, which are not to be confused with *Gemeinden*, or congregations. The same theological blinkers, which can no longer imagine anything but individual congregations as churches, bring about, on the same page (87), the anxious addition of "(individual

congregation)" after "every visible particular church." The context may well favor this meaning here, but the impression should not be given that "particular church" is simply equivalent to "local congregation." On page 111, for instance, "the Lutheran church" is expressly called "a particular church." The same translator incidentally also mistranslated Theses XXIII in Walther's *True Visible Church* as referring to "true. . . particular or local churches or congregations" when Walther spoke very precisely of "true Evangelical Lutheran particular [churches] and local churches or congregations." In other words, "congregations" stands in apposition to "local churches" but *not* to "particular churches." The richness and fidelity of Walther's transmission of the precious evangelical ecclesiology of the Reformation are obscure when such distinctions are lost.

Despite such relatively minor blemishes, the book as a whole is overwhelmingly valuable, and will result in great benefits to the church if taken seriously, especially by our public ministry today. Conscientious study of these treasures by pastors and people will be amply repaid, as joyful faith and conviction deepen, ripen, grow sturdy, and bear the precious fruit of confession. In tandem with Hermann Sasse's recently published *We Confess the Church*, Walther's great work summons Lutherans back to the Gospel bedrock whence they were hewn.

Kurt Marquart

JESUS IN HIS OWN PERSPECTIVE: AN EXAMINATION OF HIS SAYINGS, ACTIONS, AND ESCHATOLOGICAL TITLES. By Ragnar Leivestad. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987. Paperback, 192 pages.

This Volume is another study in the so-called "new" quest for the historical Jesus. Unlike the radical criticism of the "old" quest, spokesman for the "new" quest seek to restore some historical credibility to the gospels. Ragnar Leivestad, professor emeritus of New Testament at the University of Oslo and widely known for his "Son of Man" studies, probes the classical theme of Jesus' messianic consciousness in order to "answer the question of whether he was consciously playing a particular [messianic] role" (p.12).

Leivestad begins with an important caveat: "Traditions are to be accepted as authentic as long as there are no pressing reasons for placing them in doubt" (p. 17). Unfortunately, this valid principle gives the confessional Lutheran a false hope about the conclusions of this study. It must be said that Leivestad goes much further than most critical scholars in affirming the authenticity of New Testament

Christology as the following examples illustrate: Jesus understood His baptism as a divine calling; Jesus projects a confidence of understanding God's will; Jesus' word carried an unconditional authority; some of His deeds had a clear messianic flavor; His mission was shaped by the suffering servant of Isaiah 53; and the "messianic Secret" motif of Mark may demonstrate that, although Jesus had a messianic consciousness, He did not make messianic claims because He would not be understood until after His death and resurrection. However, Leivestad's caution allows him to go no further. In doing so, he appears to violate the caveat quoted above over and over: many traditions, such as the Son of Man as judge (p. 46), are declared inauthentic without good reason; the baptism account is a "legendary story replete with symbolism" (p. 39); Jesus' words about the resurrection are open to doubt (p. 94); "Jesus often tried to perform healings without much success" (p. 124); Jesus' attitude towards the dispossessed may have been the spontaneous product of His background in Nazareth (p. 132); Jesus' messianic understanding "developed in stages" (p. 150); it is "completely uncertain if Jesus spoke of his own return" (p. 168); martyrdom "was not part of his original expectation" (p. 170). What suffers is central to the Christian faith—historical and biblical Christology. While Leivestad's quest moves in the correct direction, it does not go nearly far enough. The historical Jesus of the gospels remains lost in the pages of critical analysis.

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LOLLARD THEMES IN THE REFORMATION THEOLOGY OF WILLIAM TYNDALE. By Donald Dean Smeeton. Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1986.

Have we come full circle? Sixteenth-century English Protestants, eager to find historical validation for their point of view, latched on to John Wycliffe and the Lollards as their late medieval prototypes; but modern historians until recently have tended to "pooh-pooh" any but remote connections between medieval heretical movements like the Lollards and the Protestant Reformation. In the early decades of the century, for example, James Gairdner concluded that little was left of Lollardy by the sixteenth century, and in 1952 K.B. McFarlane argued that Wycliffe himself had but slight personal involvement with Lollardy. Thus, the connection to the Reformation was severed at two points.

Now, however, the link is being sewn up again by historians like Anne Hudson rediscovering the impact of Wycliffe upon the Lollard cells and by still others like J.A.F. Thomason and A.G. Dickens documenting the persistence of Lollardy until well into the reformation period. But Donald Smeeton's book is probably the strongest statement of the revisionist point of view yet, for he maintains that William Tyndale, England's greatest first-generation Protestant theologian, was a Lollard! Although he states his conclusion circumspectly ("I do not claim the Tyndale was 'only' a Lollard," p. 251) and argues tentatively ("What Lollard tracts and sermons he may have read, heard, or even used cannot now be determined"), his position is clear: "Tyndale seems to have been very much aware of the general concepts, values, ideas, arguments, and vocabulary of the English heresy" (p. 251) and "The major outlines of his [Tyndale's] thought. . .fit into the parameters already established by the persecuted followers of John Wycliffe" (p. 15).

But how does Smeeton make his case? First of all, he reminds us that Tyndale's theology is not exact duplicate of any continental Protestant's. Furthermore, he shows that Tyndale came from an area of England where Lollardy survived until the sixteenth century. Finally—and this is the heart of his argument—he compares the motifs, ideas, and even terminology of Tyndale with those of Wycliffe and the Lollards and finds them strikingly similar. Ergo, Tyndale was familiar with and influenced by Lollardy.

I remain unconvinced. Not that Smeeton's work is poorly done. Quite the contrary, for Smeeton is a very careful and thorough scholar who has read his Lollard and Tyndale texts closely. It is just that so many of the ostensible points of contact between Tyndale and the Lollards need not demonstrate dependency or even acquaintance with the latter by the former, since such elements in Tyndale's program as anticlericalism, iconoclasm, stressing the Word in vernacular preaching and translations, and even the necessity of good works as the fruit of faith were certainly as much a part of the Protestant agenda as they were of Wycliffe's. Furthermore, Tyndale's emphasis upon justification and soteriology is much more characteristic of sixteenth century reform than of the earlier Lollard movement.

Therefore, Smeeton's book is valuable as an analysis of Tyndale's theology and as a demonstration of many similarities between early English Protestantism and late medieval English heresy. Without, however, some kind of smoking gun, such as actual citations of Lollard literature in Tyndale's work it still seems best to explain Tyndale's thought in terms of Protestantism, humanism, and the cross-currents of sixteenth-century theology rather than the back eddies of fourteenth-century thought.

JESUS FOR JEWS. A Messianic Jewish Perspective. By Ruth Rosen.
San Francisco: Jews For Jesus, 1987. 320 pages. Paperback, \$5.95.
Hardback, \$17.95.

This book of testimonies was put together by the daughter of the founder and director of Jews for Jesus, Moishe Rosen, and his wife, Ceil. Ruth is a commissioned staff-worker of Jews for Jesus who has done considerable writing of articles and pamphlets. In this book Ruth gathers together detailed personal testimonies of fifteen Jewish people who came to know Jesus as their personal Messiah. They are well written and edited and thus make interesting and easy reading. There are testimonies by a doctor, a lawyer, a scientist, a holocaust survivor, business executives, and others. Each of the biographical sketches is different, but all of the people have one thing in common; they are Jews who came to know what Jesus means to them. These testimonies are not intended as proof that Jesus is the Messiah, but they give evidence that all kinds of Jewish people have come to believe in Him.

In the introduction, written by Moishe Rosen, the question is asked, "Why don't Jews believe in Jesus?" He provides an interesting answer with these three points:

1. Most Jewish people have never really seriously contemplated whether or not Jesus might possibly be the Messiah. It is simply not a question for them.
2. There seems to be a commitment to believe that He is not the Messiah. Jewish people have been taught so and it seems to be a commitment to the survival of the Jewish people.
3. The commitment not to believe in Jesus is a negative corollary to the commitment to maintaining one's Jewish identity, as if being Jewish and believing in Jesus were antithetical to one another. Most Jewish people are brought up to believe that one is either a Jew or a Christian. If one comes to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, one is no longer a Jew.

The book also contains a section called "Continuations of the Case" in which there are chapters on the Jewishness of the New Testament, the Messianic timetable according to Daniel, and Christian anti-Semitism. A glossary in the back helps to explain terms that are used by the various people in their testimonies, and a list of suggested additional readings is provided.

In a brief conclusion of six pages, Ruth Rosen, with a parable of two brothers, makes a plea for understanding Jesus as being not only Jewish but also the older brother who continues to seek the younger

brother, the Jewish people. For Jewish people to turn their back on Him, the most celebrated Jew in all history, is, according to Ruth Rosen, a paradox. She says, "We Jews have lost that which is most Jewish, our own Messiah, Jesus. He is the older brother who is seeking us, wanting to enrich our lives, imploring us to be reconciled to Him. Jesus is for Jews; so we are Jews for Him."

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