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Observing Two Anniversaries

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther was born on October 25, 1811, in Langenchursdorf, Saxony, Germany. It is appropriate that this issue honor C.F.W. Walther on this 200th anniversary of his birth because of his significant influence as the first and third president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (1847–1850 and 1864–1878) and also president and professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1850–1887). Most of the articles below, which were first presented at the 2011 Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions in Fort Wayne, reflect his influence in many areas of biblical teaching, confessional subscription, and the life of the church in mission. These historical and theological studies are offered here so that Walther may be understood in his context and continue to be a blessed voice in our synod as we face the future.

This issue also recognizes one other anniversary. The venerated King James Version of the Bible, first printed in 1611, is now 400 years old. The article below on the King James Version was originally given as a paper at the 2011 Symposium on Exegetical Theology in honor of this anniversary. The importance of this translation for the English-speaking world is widely acknowledged. Although many may think that its day has passed, this article demonstrates the ongoing influence of the King James Version through other translations.

The Editors

Book Reviews

Walther, DVD, four disks. Directed by Dale Ward. Produced by John Klinger. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 2011.

Arriving in time for the 200th anniversary of C.F.W. Walther's birth, *Walther* is the story of the Saxon immigration under Martin Stephan in audio-visual form. The first president of the Missouri Synod is the most prominent figure in the account, but it is really about the Stephanite immigrants, their troubled settlement in St. Louis and Perry County, and the resolution of their identity as a Lutheran church leading to the formation of the Synod.

Movies have to be understood by people who have no previous knowledge of the story, have to maintain a narrative flow, and are expected to portray a conflict, its development, and resolution. *Walther* succeeds in all three areas. Historical and theological commentary background materials are supplied by historians from the St. Louis and Fort Wayne seminaries. The archivist of Trinity Lutheran Church in Saint Louis provides the perspective of the congregation that was at center of the Synod's founding. The fourth disk offers reflections about Walther from synodical and seminary presidents, Ralph Bohlmann, Karl Barth, John F. Johnson, Dale C. Meyer, Robert Kuhn, Gerald Kieschnick, Matthew Harrison, Dean Wenthe, and Lawrence Rast. On the same disk is the 1938 commemorative movie, *Call of the Cross*, as well as deleted scenes from the 2011 version, printable poster, discussion guide, and bibliography. All four disks are congregation friendly.

Since the question of a balanced treatment comes with all attempts to depict the past, commentary from historians might have been added. For example nothing is said of Walther's insistence on organizing the Synod on the basis of all of the Lutheran Confessions. The story would have more intriguing by calling attention to Johann Grabau's attempt to subordinate the Saxons to his authority, a threat that Saxon pastors recognized and was a factor in both the Altenburg Debate and the formation of the synod.

This movie continues the time worn impression that the synod was primarily or even exclusively a result of the experiences of the Saxon Lutherans who settled in Missouri. Sihler and Lochner are included, but more could have been said about these and others whom Wilhelm Löhe sent to America. Their ideas had a role in what the Missouri Synod became and is. These critiques do not detract from the educational experience provided by this movie and its executive producer John Klinger—an opportunity to tell the whole story, one that Lutherans can ponder in understanding our Synod!

Martin R. Noland
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The Second Church. Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400. By Ramsay MacMullen. Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series 1. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009. 210 + xii pages. Paperback, \$24.95.

The bishops—Chrysostom, Augustine, and others—liked to speak of Christianity as it should be. Theirs was a theoretical, often normative, view, represented in countless tracts and sermons that have come down to us in pristine form. Unfortunately, opines MacMullen, the episcopal proclamations reached perhaps 5% of the population originally, and only the upper-crust at that. The majority of the rest (95%) rarely attended church, ate memorial meals to ancestors, and venerated the blessed martyrs at cemeteries. Their “faith” (if one could even call it that) was more pagan than Christian. What MacMullen tries to show is how little influence Christianity had, practically speaking, upon the populations of the towns and cities (and in the country, none at all):

[T]he formal, organized, scripturally supported, public, well-seen and well funded parts of religion—could be left in the hands of the 5 per cent. For other worshippers, address to a superhuman Being for strength and favor in return for prayers and vows might be imagined as only an occasional thing, untaught or at least not consciously learned. Yet they were not irreligious. There was, after all, never a catechuminate [sp] in Isis-worship or the worship of Athena; yet each in her time had her millions of the faithful. They came to her when they needed to. Religion can only have been spontaneous; in people’s homes it was perhaps little thought on[,] though comforting; and that comfort, by many, was only rarely sought in any serious way (113).

The book is organized geographically into five chapters: (1) The Eastern Empire; (2) Greece and the Balkans; (3) North Africa; (4) Italy and the Northwest; (5) Conclusions. Lengthy and very densely written endnotes comprise nearly one third of the book. (I was constantly flipping to the back, then to the bibliography; such “reading” is not pleasant!) Specialized studies in languages other than English abound in the bibliography (177–203), and the book is crammed with maps, tables, site plans, photographs of ruined mausolea, and artists’ reconstructions of the martyr-memorial services (e.g., Fig. 2.7 on pg. 43).

Nevertheless—and in a manner reminiscent of a mosquito attacking an elephant—I think MacMullen’s thesis could be challenged. The picture of the emerging Christian movement in the NT, at least, is that of constant, if not explosive, growth (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7; 9:31, 42; 11:21, 24; 14:1, 21; 16:5; 17:12—in Acts alone). The idea that at most 5 percent of the population attended church or were catechized (because there was not enough room for such crowds in the existing churches) does not ring true. Nor does it take long

to find scholars who hold differing views: W. Harmless, e.g., supposed Augustine preached to a wide swath of North African society, and “the majority seems to have been poor townspeople” (William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995], 162, n. 21). But Harmless based his opinions on literary, not archaeological, evidence—in his case, upon the sermons of St. Augustine, rather than the physical remains of the cramped basilicas wherein Augustine preached. Still I wonder whether one really can evaluate Augustine on the basis of isometric reconstructions wherein each worshipper requires one square meter (12). What about the multitudes who could not fit, but would have done almost anything to hear Augustine preach? (See my “The Preaching of St. Augustine,” in *Preaching Through the Ages*, ed., J. A. Maxfield [The Pieper Lectures, vol. 8; St. Louis, MO and Northville, SD: Concordia Historical Institute and The Luther Academy, 2004] 35–63). And Augustine preached two or three times *per day* (not just Sundays), sometimes for as long as *three hours* per occasion! I am not persuaded, therefore, that physical remains ever do a sufficient justice to what must have been the reality. Still, it is hard to argue with MacMullen’s facts and figures, and he has long been an authority in such matters. MacMullen has provided an extraordinarily well-substantiated volume which challenges glib assumptions.

John G. Nordling

***The Scandalous God: The Use and Abuse of the Cross.* By Vítor Westhelle. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006. 180 pages. Paperback, \$17.94.**

Building on Luther’s argument at Heidelberg that the theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is, the Brazilian-American systematic theologian Vítor Westhelle seeks to articulate the raw scandal of the crucifixion for contemporary proclamation.

Engaging those who finally dismiss the cross as incongruent with the narrative of God’s love as well as those who would blur the terror of the crucifixion by dogmatic domestication, Westhelle strives to use Luther’s potent *theologia crucis* to let the offense of the cross stand unmitigated by what he sees as theories about the atonement or sentimental reconstructions of Christianity devoid of the word of the cross:

The particularity of the cross, its literal meaning and the attributes attached to the person of Jesus cannot be washed away with an allegorical soap. Its meaning is at once ultimate and yet fragmentary. Ultimate, because it has the apocalyptic urgency of calling the event God’s final revelation; fragmentary, not because it is a disjointed narrative, but because it fragments our attempt to hold it as an integral whole, administer and control and it at our whim. This is what the scandal means; it disrupts an expected fulfillment and enclosure of meaning (15).

Westhelle examines "the early stages of a theology of the cross" in the New Testament, asserting that the servant poem of Isaiah 53 is not used as a frame of reference for the passion narrative without giving a convincing argument as to why this is the case. He does not, for example, engage with contemporary scholars, such as Richard Bauckham (see *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*) or Peter Stuhlmacher (see "Vicariously Giving His Life for Many, Mark 10:45 [Matt 20:28]" in *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology*). Westhelle sees the New Testament as transmitting, in a variety of literary forms, the apocalyptic reality of Jesus' death as contradiction and reversal of the powers of this age with their expected and predictable patterns. Thus, Westhelle maintains that in the early church only the language of paradox would suffice to confess the event of the cross. Without paradox, doctrinal formulations are muted abstractions.

Taking a synthetic approach to narrating a theology of the cross, Westhelle is wide-ranging in his movement from biblical text to contemporary literary and artistic works, including indigenous poems and songs from South America. Clearly he reflects themes from various liberationist theologies in that context. He is conversant with postmodern figures such as Michael Foucault and René Girard. John Douglas Hall and Jürgen Moltmann are significant conversation partners for Westhelle as he seeks to address questions of human suffering and victimization, faith and reason, creation, epistemology, and eschatology through his version of the theology of the cross.

Perhaps the most helpful section of Westhelle's work is chapter three, which is devoted to Luther. Here the author demonstrates Luther's creative transformation of the medieval triad of *lectio, oratio, contemplatio* to *oratio, meditatio, tentatio* in his 1539 "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition" as providing space for the cross as affliction of tribulation. This chapter includes a rich and instructive treatment of Luther's use of language and the distinction between "seeing" and "hearing" in the Christian's life in this world.

The Scandal of the Cross: The Use and Abuse of the Cross is not an easy read. The author assumes an audience that is acquainted with contemporary theology and social theory as well as postmodern philosophy and literature as he seeks to deconstruct what he sees as mistaken affirmations and dismissals of the theology of the cross. His engagement with Luther is valuable. The late Gerhard Forde often warned against turning the theology of the cross into an "ideology of the cross." I am not sure that Westhelle has sufficiently escaped this difficulty.

John T. Pless

The New Testament in His Blood: A Study of the Holy Liturgy of the Christian Church. By Burnell F. Eckardt. Kewanee, IL: Gottesdienst, 2010. Paperback. 217 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.

Author Burnell F. Eckardt, who has made a name for himself for his interest in things liturgical through his periodical *Gottesdienst*, has gathered his thoughts into this easy to read paperback. In the first of three sections he discusses the biblical basis for liturgy and then proceeds to show the all-embracing character of the liturgy. A final section deals with how one does the liturgy. Eckardt is never uncertain in presenting his arguments and so the reader is constantly responding with assent and dissent. In working towards and never really achieving liturgical uniformity among Lutherans, the author has provided a place to begin and continue discussion. Recommended for private and conference study.

David P. Scaer

Two Kinds of Love: Martin Luther's Religious World. By Tuomo Mannermaa, translated, edited, and introduced by Krisi I. Stjerna with an afterword by Juhani Forsberg. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010. 125 pages. Paperback, \$19.00.

Tuomo Mannermaa, Emeritus Professor of Ecumenical Theology at the University of Helsinki, has long been recognized as the pioneer of what has come to be known as the Finnish school of Luther research. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson were largely responsible for introducing this novel and, more often than not, controversial approach to Luther studies to an English-speaking audience as they edited a volume of seminal essays by Mannermaa and his associates under the title *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Eerdmans, 1998) with the hope that this approach would lead Lutherans into a richer ecumenical engagement by freeing them from categories overly dominated by a forensic definition of justification. Since 1998, Mannermaa's *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification* (Fortress, 2005) has also appeared in English translation, as have numerous journal articles and chapters by Finnish scholars influenced by Mannermaa. A helpful roadmap to this scholarship is provided in the lengthy "Afterword," entitled "Finnish Luther Research Since 1979," by Juhani Forsberg.

Mannermaa works with the distinction made by Luther in thesis 28 of the Heidelberg Theses that there are two kinds of love, God's love and human love. Luther formulates the distinction between these two loves by asserting that divine love does not find but creates its object, while human love is attracted by the characteristics that made its object desirable. Thus, Mannermaa observes that for Luther God's love and human love are "polar opposites." Yet Mannermaa seeks to argue that for Luther these "opposites"

are not mutually exclusive but rather that they constitute a paradox that provides an entrée into the reformer's entire theology.

Engaging continuity and discontinuity with Thomas Aquinas, Mannermaa argues that Luther's critique of scholasticism's understanding of love is twofold: (1) human love as a unifying power; and (2) the assumption that human beings can comprehend the essence of God on the basis of creaturely realities without the cross of Christ. This leads Mannermaa to work out Luther's contrast between the two kinds of love as a contrast between the theology of the cross and a theology of glory. Mannermaa rightly points out that "the core of Luther's Reformation program finds its expression in the following statement: 'But where they [the scholastics] speak of love, we speak of faith'" (p. 46). Faith receives God's love in Christ. Yet, according to Mannermaa, there is reciprocity with God's love that enables the human being to love God. Hence the Christian is seen as participating in the love of God.

It is at this juncture that the continuity with Mannermaa's previous work becomes most apparent. Drawing on an exceedingly early Christmas sermon (1516!), Luther, it is argued, makes use of a doctrine of divinization which he is said to have received from the early church, although Mannermaa provides no textual evidence for this claim. While Mannermaa references Luther's later works, like the 1535 lectures on Galatians, he does not give adequate attention to shifts in Luther's thinking. Finally, Mannermaa seems to divide love for the neighbor from love for God, while Luther sees the Christian's love for God as expressed in one's love for the neighbor. God is loved through the neighbor.

The readability of this short book is severely hampered by the translator's attempt at inclusive language to the extent of eliminating masculine pronouns for the deity by substituting the awkward term "Godself."

John T. Pless

***Christology and Ethics.* Edited by F. LeRon Shults and Brent Waters. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 224 pages. Paperback, \$21.28.**

These eight essays, originally presented at a conference sponsored by the Stead Center for Ethics and Values, held on the campus of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in 2007, seek to link the doctrine of the person and work of Christ to faithful living in the world in conformity to the way of Christ. The authors, in their own ways, attempt to overcome what they see as a bifurcation of Christology and ethics.

Brent Waters argues for a correspondence between the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ and the cardinal virtues of charity, hope, and obedience in an essay on "The Incarnation and the Moral Life." Barthian scholar John Webster seeks to broaden the presentation of the moral life from the

Haustafel of Colossians 3:18–4:1 to a more cosmic scope embodied in the Risen Christ who is head of all things, asserting that Christ establishes “the order of moral knowing” (p. 46). Drawing on Jürgen Moltmann, John Zizioulas, Miroslav Volf, Leonard Boff, and Catherine LaCugna, the contribution of Kathryn Tanner, “Trinity, Christology, and Community,” cautions against inflated claims made for Trinitarian theology in contemporary social ethics, suggesting that the incarnation itself establishes a community of kinship.

Bernd Wannewetsch enters into a conversation with Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Christology (in particular, his 1933 lectures on Christology), investigating the formulae *Christus totus*, *Christus praesens*, and *Christus pro me* and teasing out implications for Christian moral discourse that avoids both idealist and foundationalist tendencies. “Forgiveness as New Creation: Christ and the Moral Life Revisited” is the title of Lois Malcolm’s chapter. Malcolm argues for a reading of Pauline Christology that holds the forgiveness of sins together with the new creation while examining secular appropriations of Christian notions of forgiveness (Hannah Arendt, Julia Kristeva). Referencing the final judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 as the basis for his study, Jan-Olav Henrikson sees divine judgment as entailing both justice and surprise. J. Wentzel von Huyssteen’s essay, “Should We Do What Jesus Did?: Evolutionary Perspectives on Christology and Ethics,” asserts that an understanding of Jesus within the matrix of evolutionary history keeps tradition and innovation in tension. Revisiting Schleiermacher, van Huyssteen suggests that an evolutionary sense of God consciousness provides a frame for moral direction through ongoing critical discernment. A final chapter by F. LeRon Shults, “The Philosophical Turn to Alterity in Christology and Ethics,” examines the categories of “sameness” and “otherness” in light of cross-disciplinary approaches to ethical theory.

Each of the essayists, in his or her way, attempts to provide a theological grounding for ethics both in theory and practice via Christology. The results are uneven.

John T. Pless

***Lucas Cranach the Elder: Art and Devotion of the German Reformation.* By Bonnie Noble. New York: University Press of America, 2009. 227 pages. Paperback, \$36.99.**

This is a good book—and not just because it has pictures! Bonnie Noble, professor of art history at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, not only exegetes some of the most significant works of the Reformation master but also gently guides the reader through the complexities of art appreciation. It should come as no surprise that Cranach’s creations are more than just

pretty pictures; the strength of Noble's book is that she helps the reader understand why Cranach's paintings are so noteworthy.

Noble begins with a brief survey of the literature on Cranach's artwork. As one might expect, much of this work has appeared only in German. Noble is less than satisfied with the consensus view that there exists a "perfect reciprocity between Luther's ideas and Cranach's images" (7). Of course, the interpretation of art is never that easy. Throughout her treatment, Noble addresses the age-old discussion of the relationship between art and text. Can a piece of art lead the viewer to discover new theological insights, or is the purpose of the work of art to illustrate the theological texts that exist independently of it?

From the outset, Noble offers a helpful summary of the way in which Cranach's paintings aided in the development of a Lutheran understanding of art: "Broadly speaking, art functioned to instruct believers in theology and grace and helped define the theological parameters of religious communities" (10). Noble goes on to summarize specific functions of that art: (1) the paintings "are didactic, instructing believers in the Lutheran doctrine of salvation by faith without works"; (2) the artist limited his selection of subjects to those found in the Bible; (3) "Lutheran art redefined sacraments," especially as it related to the faithful reception of these gifts; and (4) the inclusion of portraits of significant religious and civic leaders redefined the understanding of piety (more on this below).

Noble organizes her study around several significant groupings of Cranach's paintings. These include his famous *Law and Gospel* paintings (comparing and contrasting two examples of this style in Gotha and Prague), which attempt "to reduce complex theological issues into a (pictorial) slogan" (52). What Noble demonstrates regarding these paintings is that, despite their intended simplicity, they are amazingly complex, inviting the viewer to wrestle with the intricacies of scriptural interpretation and theological discourse.

The next two paintings that are examined are the *Schneeberg Altarpiece* and the more famous *Wittenberg Altarpiece*. The latter, completed a year after Luther's death, is best known for its inclusion of both Philip Melanchthon (at the font) and Martin Luther (in the pulpit). Because it is not possible to include images of these altarpieces in this review, any attempt to summarize Noble's discussion is virtually impossible.

One side issue that applies to both altarpieces concerns the inclusion of portraits of various individuals. These include not only religious leaders like Luther and Melanchthon but also significant political leaders and sometimes donors of the artwork. Noble points out that in pre-Reformation art the portraits of donors were often included as a nod to the piety of the individual—more precisely, to signify that by commissioning the work of art the donor was performing a good work. For Lutheran art, the focus was different.

The inclusion of the donor's portrait was intended to signify that person's faith in Christ, with the proximity of the individual's portrait to the image of Christ in the painting reinforcing this perspective (79–84).

One final topic concerns Noble's examination of Cranach's *Madonna Panels*. Both pre-Reformation and post-Reformation examples exist of these panels, thus making it possible to contrast the two. After 1520, Cranach stopped painting images of Mary that were based on extra-biblical legends and focused on images of Mary with the Christ child. Halos, crowns, and backgrounds of gold—so prevalent in the pre-Reformation panels—are replaced with an image of Mary that is best summarized as a real, earthly mother (170). As Noble explains: "The Virgin Mary became a paragon of Lutheran virtue rather than a worker of miracles or guarantor of salvation. No longer an intercessor, the Virgin became the quintessential, ideal model of perfect grace" (10).

As I said, this is a great book, pictures and all. It is too bad that the pictures are only in black and white. While color plates would have made the book cost-prohibitive, the publisher could have established a Website where the color images might be quickly accessed. There is, of course, nothing that prevents the reader from making his or her own search on the Internet to locate color images of each painting; it can only add to the enjoyment of reading Noble's book!

Paul J. Grime

Books Received

- Belcher, Kimberly Hope. *Efficacious Engagement: Sacramental Participation in the Trinitarian Mystery*. Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011. 199 Pages. Paperback. \$29.95.
- Braaten, Carl E. *Preaching Christ in a Pluralistic Age*. Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press, 2011. 172 Pages. Paperback. \$18.00.
- Deutschlander, Daniel M. *The Narrow Lutheran Middle: Following the Scriptural Road*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011. 235 Pages. Paperback. \$18.50.
- Nass, Thomas P. *End Times: Jesus is Coming Soon*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011. 398 Pages. Paperback. \$18.50.
- Panning, Armin J. *Life in the New Testament World: Understanding Professions, Practices, and Politics*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011. 139 Pages. Paperback. \$16.00.
- Piper, John. *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011. 304 Pages. Hardback. \$22.95.
- Preus, Peter, *And She Was a Christian: Why Do Believers Commit Suicide?* Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011. 183 Pages. Paperback. \$25.99.
- Reimringer, John. *Vestments: A Novel*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2011. 407 Pages. Paperback. \$16.00.
- Springer, Carl P. *Luther's Aesop*. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2011. 249 Pages. Paperback. \$39.95.
- Walther, Karl A. *Grand Themes and Key Words: Exploring Important Bible Terms*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011. 157 Pages. Paperback. \$17.00.
- Wüstenberg, Ralf K. *The Political Dimension of Reconciliation: A Theological Analysis of Ways of Dealing with Guilt during the Transition to Democracy in South Africa and (East) Germany*. Translated by Randi H. Lundell. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009. 434 Pages. Paperback. \$50.00.