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Justification and the Office of the Holy Ministry

The first five articles in this issue were originally papers presented at the 35th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions held in Fort Wayne on January 18-20, 2012 under the theme “Justification in a Contemporary Context.” The final two articles, by Joel Elowsky and Roland Ziegler, were first delivered as the plenary papers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Theology Professors Conference that met at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, on May 29 to June 1, 2012, under the theme “To Obtain Such Faith . . . The Ministry of Teaching the Gospel” (AC V). It has been the practice of the two seminary journals to alternate in publishing plenary papers from this bi-annual conference in order that these studies may be shared with the wider church.

The Editors

Book Reviews

God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God? By John C. Lennox. Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2007. 190 pages. Paperback. \$14.99.

John C. Lennox teaches mathematics at Oxford University, England. He is a committed Christian and an internationally recognized mathematician. His book is a contribution to the debate regarding the universe and its physical laws, the origin of complex biological design, and the purpose of mankind. It comes at a time when many regard evolution as a solid scientific fact, beyond any question. Lennox writes, "The question that is central to this book turns out to be in essence a worldview question: which worldview sits the most comfortable with science—theism or atheism? Has science buried God or not? Let us see where the evidence leads" (13).

Lennox points out that there is a general consensus among scientists that the universe had a beginning. It is also agreed that the universe is incredibly fine-tuned. For example, if the ratio of the nuclear strong force to the electromagnetic force had been different by one part in 10 multiplied by itself 16 times, no stars could have formed. It is also said that, had an alteration in the expansion and contraction forces during the Big Bang event been different by one part in 10 multiplied by itself 55 times, the expansion would have been too rapid for galaxies to form or too slow an expansion with consequent rapid collapse of the entire universe. One scientist, Paul Davies, says, "It seems as though someone has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the universe. . . . The impression of design is overwhelming" (70). Another, quantum scientist Henry F. Schaefer III, writes, "A Creator must exist. The Big Bang ripples and subsequent scientific findings are clearly pointing to an *ex nihilo* creation consistent with the first few verses of the book of Genesis" (29). There are numerous other examples of such fine tuning. For instance, the distance of the earth to the sun must be just right. Too near and all the earth's water would evaporate, too far and the earth would be too cold for life. A change of only 2 percent in either direction would cause all life to cease. This fine tuning argues strongly against the universe having formed itself by chance. It points clearly to a supernatural plan.

Lennox then moves on to present evidence of a Creator to be found in the world of living things. He states, however, "There is a widespread feeling that the theory of evolution has swept God away as unnecessary and irrelevant" (85). Lennox quotes a Chinese paleontologist who, at a conference in America, noted the wholesale inclination to accept Darwinism and said, "In China we can criticize Darwinism, but not the government. In America you can criticize the government, but not Darwinism" (93). Actually, Darwin's theory of natural selection assumes that there are the life forms to start with and deals only with

modifications within these life forms by mutations. Mutations or changes in the gene structure of organisms does not create new anything radically new. Moreover, the vast majority of mutations have deleterious effects. Only one in one thousand are non-deleterious. If Darwinism was the explanation of new and radically different forms of life, there should be an enormous number of transitional forms in the fossil record. But this is not the case. Sir Fred Hoyle is quoted as writing, "The Darwinian theory is correct in the small, but not in the large. Rabbits come from other slightly different rabbits, not from either primeval soup or potatoes. Where they come from in the first place is a problem yet to be solved, like much else of a cosmic scale" (98).

Evolution may be divided into three forms. First, there is microevolution, the variation of already existing organs or structures. An example is the mutation of bacteria to resist antibiotics. No one questions this. Second, there is macroevolution, the large scale change or innovation of new organs, structures, and body plans. No solid evidence exists for this. Finally, there is molecular evolution, the emergence of the living cells from non-living materials. There is no evidence of this either, and it is, in fact, far beyond any likelihood of possibility.

Lennox next deals with the question of the origin of life, with the likelihood of living cells having developed entirely by chance from non-living materials. This is the greatest of all challenges to the evolutionary theory. The complexity of the living cell system that is found in all living organisms speaks loud and clear of an intelligent Designer, of an almighty creative God. Lennox quotes geneticist Michael Denton, who states that even the tiniest of bacterial cells weighing less than a millionth of a gram is "a veritable microminiaturized factory containing thousands of exquisitely designed pieces of intricate molecular machinery, made up of 100 thousand million atoms, far more complicated than any machine made by man and absolutely without parallel in the non-living world" (116). Evolution has no answer to this challenge. Again, nature points to the Creator.

Finally, Lennox treats the question of how living forms replicate the next generation of living forms. Science tells us that a chemical called Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid (DNA) functions as the genetic code that controls the replication process. So the DNA in the fertilized sperm of a human being directs the development in the mother's body of a child. Here, Bill Gates is quoted as saying, "DNA is like a computer program, but far more advanced than any software we have created" (136). Again, the evolutionist would have us believe that such a code developed by blind chance!

Most books promoting the concept of intelligent design stop short of identifying the designer with a Creator God. But, to his credit, Lennox does not. In the epilogue, he writes, "Long before Aristotle, the book of Genesis was penned. It starts with the words, 'In the beginning God created the

heavens and the earth.' This statement stands in complete contrast with the other mythical cosmogonies of the time—like the Babylonian, in which the gods were part of the stuff of the universe." Genesis claims there is a Creator God who exists independently of the universe (177–178). Lennox then quotes the opening verses of John's Gospel and says, "At this point, we once again encounter the statement of the Bible, that God has spoken in the most profound and direct way possible. He, the Word who is a person, has become human, to demonstrate fully that the ultimate truth behind the universe is personal" (178).

Lennox closes his book with the verdict, "In conclusion, I submit that far from science having buried God, not only do the results of science point toward his existence, but the scientific enterprise itself is validated by his existence" (179). *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* is a valuable addition to Christian apologetics.

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ: The Cross and the Crown of Our Savior and Lord. By G. Davis Dean, Jr. Pittsburgh: RoseDog Books, 2009. 305 Pages. Paperback. \$27.00

This is a solid, non-technical, exposition of the book of Revelation written by a Lutheran layman. Davis Dean, who received a Master of Arts degree from Concordia Theological Seminary in 1996, blends reverent regard for the Word of God, careful research on the English text of Revelation, and a clear Lutheran identity in his section-by-section interpretation of a biblical book that is often avoided by Lutheran pastors and laymen alike. Dean sought to offer an exposition that was free from the technical discussions of a commentary written for pastors or scholars (e.g., no footnotes appear in this volume) and yet be much more theologically substantive than most popular Christian literature on Revelation. He regularly notes the differences between Amillennialist and Premillennialist interpretations of various scenes of Revelation, including chapter 20, and is unabashed in expressing his own convictions about the Christological focus of Revelation as a Lutheran. It is apparent that Dean experienced significant spiritual growth through his study and writing of this book, and now wants readers to share what he found: "My hope would be to bless the lay reader above all with an increased love for God and a strengthened faith and hope in the Son, as well as an increased general knowledge of Revelation" (4).

Charles A. Gieschen

***The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel.* By Craig R. Koester. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. 245 pages. Paperback. \$21.00.**

Craig R. Koester's book conveys a scholar's depth of theological insight in layman's terms. Written for the non-specialist, the book is designed to appeal to a broad readership. Koester's prose is simple and engaging, unencumbered by technical language. Overall, it is a very enjoyable read.

Koester poses fundamental theological questions of the Gospel of John concerning the nature of God, human beings, and the world. He devotes individual chapters to God, the world and its people, Jesus, crucifixion and resurrection, the Spirit, faith, and discipleship. Working with the present form of the text as a unified composition, he traces the principal figure or theme of each chapter through successive narratives in the Gospel.

The book has a few shortcomings. Although methodologically sound, Koester's approach becomes tedious by the book's end as he repeatedly draws upon many of the same narratives chapter after chapter. Koester overlooks John's distinctive presentation of Jesus as the Son of Man, devoting only one paragraph to this important christological title in his discussion of Jesus as the Son of God. Koester defines atonement exclusively in terms of reconciliation between God and his wayward creation. Jesus' sacrificial death manifests divine love, but does not propitiate divine wrath. The Lamb of God "takes away" sin by taking away unbelief, not guilt, and evoking faith in a God who so loved the world. According to Koester, atonement in the Johannine sense is not substitutionary. Baptism and the Lord's Supper receive short shrift, relegated tellingly to the chapter on discipleship rather than the Spirit. Sacramental references and allusions, when acknowledged, typically occupy the secondary level of meaning at best. New birth "of water and the Spirit" is primarily a metaphor for entering life in relationship to God evoked by faith with or without baptism (137-143). "Eating" is primarily a metaphor for partaking of the crucified Jesus by faith and secondarily a possible reference to participation in the Lord's Supper (207-209). These are the most obvious examples. Recognition of John's pervasive use of sacramental imagery throughout the Gospel is sadly wanting. As a result, the Spirit's sacramental disclosure of the risen Jesus present and active in the world to which the Gospel of John attests is minimized.

Nevertheless, this book warrants a place next to Koester's *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*. Whether preparing a sermon, Bible study, or online course, this book will prove its worth as an overview of Johannine theology. It would also serve as a good book to whet a prospective one's appetite for the theology of John.

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The Letter to the Philippians. By G. Walter Hansen. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009. 355 + xxxiii pages. Hardcover, \$44.00.

Authors of the Pillar New Testament Commentary series, of which Hansen's *Philippians* is the twelfth volume, seek to "make clear the text of Scripture as we have it" (thus series editor, D.A. Carson, ix). A goal of the series is to present an "even-handed openness to the text" leading to a more reverential appreciation of God's Word than those whose vaunted objectivity is really no more than "a vain chimera" (ix). In keeping with these intents, Hansen considers the following items in his "Introduction" (1-35): the historical setting of the church in Philippi; the nature of the letter; the occasion of the letter; and a preview of two themes—the Gospel of Christ and the community in Christ. By reading *Philippians* in light of the Roman character of Philippi (it was a Roman *colonia*, according to Acts 16:12), one gains an appreciation of Paul's report that his imprisonment had become manifest to the "whole palace guard" (1:13; cf. "Caesar's household," 4:22), his references to our heavenly "citizenship" (1:27; 3:20), his descriptions of outside opposition to the faith (1:28-30), his unusual use of the emperor's titles "Lord" and "Savior" for Christ (2:11; 3:20-21), his sorrow over those who had abandoned their faith on account of the pressures of the surrounding culture (3:18-19), and his promise—not of a *pax Romana*—but of the "peace of God" to guard the believers in Christ Jesus (4:7; cf. 1:2; 4:9). The whole letter, as is generally known, "exudes a joyful spirit and warm affection" (1). Such awareness allows Hansen to discuss "ten expressions of friendship language" in *Philippians* (8-11) and the likely monetary nature of the gifts conveyed to Paul by the *Philippians'* emissary Epaphroditus (2:25; 4:18; pages 19-20, 42, 203, 209-210). Hansen seems to favor Ephesus as the place where Paul was imprisoned when he wrote the letter (1:7, 13, 14, 17; pages 23-24, 30), although he shows an awareness of scholarly arguments for Rome (20-22) and Caesarea (22), and ultimately decides that all such discussion is "speculative and therefore inconclusive" (25).

While demonstrating an impressive command of the scholarship on *Philippians* (cf. Select Bibliography, xviii-xxxiii), Hansen decides most issues exegetically, grounding conclusions on insights contained in a verse-by-verse exposition of the letter (37-332). Hence, Hansen's *Philippians* represents an extremely satisfying blend of both biblical exegesis and scholarly exposition, keeping an eye both on what has been said about the letter at scholarly conferences, yet never losing sight of what *Philippians* brings to the church in today's world. Many Lutherans will approve.

John G. Nordling

Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke. By Seyoon Kim. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. 228 + xvi pages. Paperback. \$24.00.

At the culmination of the Christ Hymn in Philippians 2, St. Paul asserts that "Jesus Christ is Lord [κύριος], to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11 ESV). Later Paul states that from heaven "we await a Savior [σωτήρα], the Lord Jesus Christ [κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν]" (Phil 3:20 ESV). Does Paul betray in such passages a kind of anti-imperial polemic, pitting the theological Lordship of Jesus against the political lordship of Caesar? Such scholars as R.A. Horsley, J.D. Crossan, J.L. Reed, N.T. Wright, and D.G. Horrell typically answer the question in the affirmative: Paul waxes subversive in such places (cf. xiv–xv) and calls for nothing less than the violent overthrow of the contemporary Roman order. However, Kim argues throughout that the anti-imperial interpretation is actually difficult to sustain when subjected to scrutiny. That same observation holds for Luke's depiction of Jesus and the first Christians in the book's second half (75–190). While Luke was aware that the Christian gospel could be perceived as anti-imperial in some quarters, the consistent portrayal in Luke-Acts is of a Jesus who committed no crime against the empire (e.g., Luke 23:13–25, 47) and of a Christianity that even Pilate, Felix, and Festus knew was upright and law-abiding (see Acts 24:22–27; 25:18; 26:30–32).

Christians did, to be sure, refer to Jesus as "Lord" (*kyrios*) in the awareness that this was one of the imperial titles used of Caesar at Rome. Other terms used to sustain imperialism were *parousia* ("arrival"), *apantesis* ("meeting"), *epiphania* ("appearance"), *euangelion* ("good news"), *ekklesia* ("assembly"), *dikaiosyne* ("uprightness"), *pistis* ("trust"), *eirene* ("peace"; cf. *pax Romana*), *elpis* ("hope"), *eleutheria* ("liberty"), and *katallage* ("reconciliation"). Here there is space to engage only *kyrios* ("lord"). Kim demonstrates that κύριος actually came from the Old Testament and traditional Judaism (29, 44, 68, 151), not Romanism. Thus, while the Christian terminology "overlapped" that of contemporary usage, Paul alluded to the Lordship of the Messiah to present Jesus "in a majestic and glorious way" (69). Jesus, not Caesar, was the Christians' true "Lord and Savior," yet this recognition would not have entailed an attempt to overthrow the Roman order by revolution. Jesus' messianic battle was principally against Satan, not Caesar; so while Kim can write of the "diabolic" nature of the Roman empire (110, 116, 123, 131, 177, 182, 189, etc.), he maintains that neither Jesus nor Christianity were against the imperial Roman order, but rather sin, death, Satan, and other spiritual evils. Such argumentation seems suspiciously Lutheran. That is because Kim lets the scriptural evidence speak for itself, and passages plainly support such Lutheran doctrines (e.g., the two kingdoms). So while much is of interest to Lutherans, the arguments never seem novel nor even that interesting: "For many, the lessons drawn here may be only too obvious and familiar" (200). In the New Testament circles wherein Kim runs, however, the arguments counter

tendencies to reduce Jesus to political messiah and Christianity to political correctness and social engineering.

John G. Nordling

Jesus, Paul, and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N.T. Wright. Edited by Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011. 294 pages. Paperback, \$24.00.

In an age of fragmentation and specialization, few contemporary theologians have captured the public imagination. One man, though, draws a crowd wherever he goes. Former Bishop of Durham, New Testament Scholar N.T. Wright is every bit the rock star of biblical studies, and deservedly so. He is not only a churchman, but also a scholar, a vivid writer, and a wonderful raconteur. His quick wit and engaging banter has made him the most popular of speakers, and worthy combatant for the likes of J.D. Crossan or Bart Ehrman. His *Resurrection of the Son of God* has won the admiration of many traditional Christians for its unapologetic defense and proclamation of the bodily resurrection. His work on Paul and the New Perspective has been feted by many, even while drawing fire from Evangelicals and Lutherans.

Given his celebrity status, it is no surprise that a host of scholars gathered together to discuss his work at the 2010 Wheaton Theology Conference. The conference, which forms the basis of this book, explored the many and varied aspects of Wright's theology. Almost all the essays are worth reading. Whatever you say about Wright, he almost never fails to entertain, and he tends to bring out the best in his friends and critics.

On the positive side, Wright has reinvigorated New Testament studies with a concern for history. He is not content with a Bultmanian Jesus, who died and rose, but whose life remains basically unknowable. He is keen to introduce the world to the Jesus of history. For Wright, the Jesus whom we worship must be the same Jesus whose earthly life "is reliably attested in the canonical gospels" (42). Accordingly, he fights against a theology that takes Paul seriously while relegating the Gospels to background material.

According to Wright, it is imperative that we understand that Kingdom Theology (the Gospels) goes hand in hand with Cross Theology (the Pauline Epistles.) He emphasizes again and again that Christianity has to be about more than "going to heaven." Indeed, Wright would emphasize that we, as the people of God, do for the world what Christ did for Israel—that is, we actualize the kingdom of God in the world.

Now, admittedly, many of Wright's statements are grand; occasionally, however, they veer towards the grandiose. For instance, he says things like, "I think that the Western church has simply not really known what the Gospels

were there for" (133). Wright lays much blame on Lutherans, who supposedly have separated the cross from the world and turned Jesus into a distinctly other-worldly figure. He summarily and airily dismisses the ideas that Jesus lived "a sinless life in order that his atoning sacrifice would be valid," or that "Jesus was fulfilling the mosaic law in a life of 'active obedience'" (142). Yet, to be fair, Wright's criticism goes back even further, citing the Apostle's Creed as an example of confession that speaks of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, while ignoring his life and kingdom-work (141).

What does Wright offer in the place of active obedience and substitutionary atonement? He offers Kingdom Theology, that is, a world in which the gospel is put into action. This world is surprisingly vague, but includes not only justice, but also a creation that is "wisely stewarded by the gentle, wise governance of human beings" (272), and "a humanness" that does not "diminish resources, relationships, and responsibilities into money, sex, and power" (275). When Wright begins to speak this way, as he does so often, he appears to offer more of a party platform than a christological vision. It is a wonderful world Wright imagines, as a "kingdom-bearing people" address such social concerns (149).

What is lacking in Wright's theology, it would appear, is the reality of sin and its ongoing power, not simply in the world, but within the Christian. While it would be hard to say that Wright denies the atonement, it appears to play little role in his vision of Christ and the work of salvation. That is not to say that Wright does not raise interesting questions. We do have to ask ourselves in what way the life of Christ, and not just his death and resurrection, matters to us. Wright's encouragement to read the Gospels is an especially welcome challenge to the tendency to make the gospel abstract, or to those who seem to understand the Gospels as simply background material to the primary theology of Paul. Yet, far too often Wright appears to commit the same error of which he accuses others. That is to say, his vision of the Gospels has a way of overpowering what the evangelists actually say, with everything simply falls into Wright's kingdom-building paradigm of social justice and societal betterment. One wonders, in the end, whether Christ's work is integral to the whole enterprise.

Wright also lacks any deep appreciation for the church. In that sense, he is the ultimate protestant, seeming to believe, as he does, that the early church got it wrong, as did the western church, but now, lo and behold, the truth has been rediscovered. Because of this lack of appreciation for the church, perhaps, he does not see the life of Jesus as preparation and template for the life of the church. He sees healing miracles as the way to social betterment, but not towards baptism. He sees feeding miracles as the way Jesus sets the table for our own acts of mercy, which is true. What he does not see is the way in which Christ's feeding leads to the Supper, which finally is the only meal that will satisfy poor and rich alike. For

Wright, the sacraments are simply “acted symbols,” instead of the very reality of Christ’s kingdom-building. Wright is right to spur the church on in acts of mercy towards the world. What needs to be added is that the world needs even more to be brought into the church, where people will be truly healed, washed, and fed. So, we may say with Wright, the church is about kingdom-building, but ultimately this kingdom is not of this world.

Peter J. Scaer

Religion and Resistance in Early Judaism: Greek Readings in 1 Maccabees and Josephus. By John G. Nordling. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010. xxiii + 361 pages. Paperback, \$34.99.

A good language reader should accomplish at least two things: it should serve to increase reading skill in the language in question, and it should engender within the student greater familiarity with the historical and cultural context of the language being learned. Thanks to a judicious selection of texts, a lucid introduction, and carefully written explanatory notes, John Nordling’s *Religion and Resistance in Early Judaism* succeeds on both counts. While there are deficiencies that should be addressed in subsequent editions, these make the text hardly less valuable for its intended purpose.

Following a list of abbreviations and a bibliography, a 19-page introduction provides the student with the necessary historical and literary background to appreciate the significance of the texts included in this reader. The texts themselves occupy only 60 pages, 20 for 1 Maccabees and 40 for Josephus—a fact that should render this volume less intimidating to the student who might otherwise be in dread of a thick volume of pure Greek. The texts are divided into brief selections, each of which is preceded by a brief introduction of its own. Following the 1 Maccabees texts are 26 pages of explanatory notes, while Josephus gets a full 182 pages of notes. Concluding the volume is a 171-page glossary, which makes it possible for the student to carry and use this volume without the need for additional resources. An in-depth study of these texts will, of course, require the use of a stand-alone dictionary, but for the goal of quickly gaining linguistic facility, the glossary that is provided is more than sufficient.

Given the wealth of explanatory material in the introductions and notes, together with the glossary, no intermediate student should find this volume too difficult to be useful. The notes are particularly helpful, providing guidance in actually reading the Greek. Nevertheless, the notes could be improved in a subsequent edition by the removal of frequent unnecessary abbreviations. I found myself turning repeatedly to the list of abbreviations at the front of the volume, only to find that the abbreviation that had me perplexed was not listed. For example, the note on 1 Maccabees 1:35 reads,

"The subj. of ἐγένοντο seems delib. vague. It might refer [to] the irrelig. Jews mentioned in 1:34. The statement reinforces the author's neg. view . . . during the dire circums. recounted" (44). The abbreviation of "subject" may be called for, but "deliberately," "irreligious," "negative" (when not used grammatically), and "circumstances" should not be abbreviated. This occurs throughout the notes and gives the impression that the author's first written draft was transcribed without expansion.

A more serious problem concerns the formatting of the Greek text. Throughout the text, strangely placed extra spaces inexplicably appear and disrupt the flow of the text. Sometimes these spaces come within words themselves, such as 1 Maccabees 1:11, where "Ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις" becomes "Ἐν ταῖς ἡμ ἐραις." Breathing marks are also missing from some of the initial vowels. Problems like these can range from being simply irritating to posing a real difficulty for the inexperienced student. Furthermore, the Cardo font is not easy on the eyes and should be replaced in a future edition with something more legible, such as the Times New Roman polytonic Greek font.

These difficulties can and should be addressed in subsequent editions. In the meantime, *Religion and Resistance* remains a valuable textbook for students who wish to improve their Greek after completing introductory coursework. Any student of the New Testament would also benefit from familiarity with the texts included in this volume.

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***And She was a Christian: Why Do Believers Commit Suicide?* By Peter Preus. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011. 183 Pages. Paperback. \$25.99**

The literature on the Christian perspective of depression and suicide is quite large; the Lutheran contribution to this effort is, however, sadly lacking. Apart from a few pages in pastoral theology manuals and the occasional journal article, the topic of depression and suicide is rarely, if ever, explored in-depth. In addition, with ever new discoveries concerning the illness of depression, new material on how the Christian (and pastor) can most effectually minister the gospel to those affected is always helpful. Peter Preus offers such a resource in this work.

Preus draws from the most intimate of experiences with the subject of depression and suicide and does not shy away from this experience. Preus' wife, Jean, committed suicide after suffering from severe, clinical depression for a number of years. Preus recounts Jean's story and constantly refers back to her

situation and those it affected. Preus is adamant throughout this book that the victims of suicide have been misrepresented in the church, and that their family and friends have not been cared for adequately. This has developed what Preus terms the stigma of suicide, the unjustifiable labeling and/or judging of a person, in this case the victim of suicide (11). Preus attempts in this book to put an end to the stigma that accompanies the suicide of a Christian. Along with the stigma, he identifies various paradoxes that accompany the suicide of a Christian and deals with these throughout the book.

Preus divides his book into five parts. He begins with the story of his wife and the current state of the church's response to the suicide of a Christian. He then proceeds "to provide a strategy for pastors and Christian educators and counselors who offer hope to suicide survivors" (18). In part two he traces the history of the church's articulation of suicide. In this he challenges modern theology as it attempts to add things—obedience, reason, self-esteem, and optimism—to saving faith. Part three deals with the issue of suicide from the perspective of sin and grace, articulating a solid Lutheran theology of both. Parts four and five deal in particular with practical applications of the gospel for the survivors. Preus adds two appendices: the sermon from his wife's funeral and resources for suicide prevention.

Preus addresses what is becoming more and more of a "hot-button" issue in the church. He challenges misrepresentation of depression, faith, and grace with solid Lutheran theology. In addition, he delves into the mind of the depressed and suicidal in order to give a picture to the readers. Not afraid to call suicide a sin, but also not willing to damn the Christian who commits suicide to hell, Preus provides a much-needed and sensitive study of the subject that is likely to challenge the reader, comfort the bereaved, and cause interesting and profitable discussion. The paperback is short and easy to read, perfect for group study. Northwestern Publishing House also offers a free, downloadable Bible study. A must-read for pastors and Christian educators who, when encountering such situations, will desire to administer the pure Gospel in all its sweetness.

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Counsel and Conscience: Lutheran Casuistry and Moral Reasoning after the Reformation. By Benjamin T.G. Mayes. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011. 250 pages. Hardcover. 69.99 €.

That traditional Lutheran theology holds moral behavior in high regard may surprise some contemporary scholars and Lutheran pastors. Works on the law and ethics in Lutheranism during the 20th-century increasingly challenged

the place of a developed, careful moral theology that draws from Scriptural commands and the natural law as foundational sources for human action, to the extent that any instructive use for the law in many Lutheran circles is called into question. (For a summary work on this development, see Scott Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God*, St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002.) However, Mayes demonstrates that, far from there being concern over whether there is a third function of the law, Lutheran pastors and theologians of the late 16th through the mid-18th century—the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy—explicitly sought direction from God’s law in order to inform how better to love their neighbors.

The bulk of Mayes’ scholarly effort is to examine a particular collection of Lutheran casuistry from the 17th century, *Thesaurus Consiliorum Et Decisionum* [Treasury of Counsels and Decisions] (1671), edited by Georg Dedekenn and Johann Ernst Gerhard (son of the famous dogmatician). The *Treasury* was essentially a collection of pastoral counsels, consistorial judgments on church law, and official responses by faculties, ministeria, or respected individuals to difficult theological or pastoral questions (28–37). The *Treasury* was organized topically, covering both theological and ethical questions. Besides examining the *Treasury*’s material, organization, purpose of publication, and method of moral reasoning, Mayes also considers in detail the counsels on marriage as a case study. His findings are that theologians relied on a number of sources in offering their counsels, and that, due to the complexity of some cases and differences in methods of applying source material, there is some diversity in the guidance given in marriage cases. While the detailed consideration of the *Treasury* itself and of marriage cases may be of interest only to specialists, Mayes’ discussion of the methods of moral reasoning among Lutherans in the 17th century is of broader interest.

The primary method of moral reasoning of Lutherans in the 17th century was casuistic. “‘Casuistry,’ broadly conceived, is any effort to apply general moral principles in particular circumstances, particularly when two otherwise valid principles conflict, or when, for whatever reasons, we simply do not know how to apply our principles in our current circumstances” (16). By considering carefully the circumstances, a person would learn which principle(s) of the law should be followed. The choice of action was made with direction from the conscience; however, conscience was to be informed by the law of God.

It is important to recognize that Lutheran casuistry differed significantly from Roman Catholic casuistry, and that collections like the *Treasury* explicitly distanced themselves from Roman Catholic methods. Lutherans rejected Roman Catholic manuals of casuistry because they mixed law and gospel: they misled people into thinking that if the right principle and rules are followed, a person could avoid sin altogether. Rather than clarifying principles and cir-

cumstances for the conscience, they clouded them. This is a subtle yet important difference. Lutheran casuistry did seek the good action, while yet recognizing that an absolutely exhaustive treatment of laws is impossible. Because new situations and conditions continually arise, uncertainty over action cannot be completely overcome. The gospel needs to accompany a careful consideration of the law, in order to comfort those anxious about difficult choices. Roman Catholic manuals suggested that sin could be altogether avoided, sidelining the need to receive the gospel. Essentially, Roman Catholic casuistry hoped to assuage doubts about God's grace. If people could avoid sin, they would not need to be anxious, wondering if they would receive God's grace. Lutherans, on the other hand, offered guidance not to assuage doubts about God's grace (which was accomplished through the unconditional preaching of the gospel), but to overcome doubts about what to do (22–26, 29). To put it another way, the Roman Catholic method of casuistry was rejected because it found ways to permit sinful action while yet denying that the action was a sin. Lutheran casuistry called a sin a sin, and attempted to present the course of action that would avoid sin, while upholding the gospel as the true remedy for sin.

Collections of casuistry such as the *Treasury* differed from theological counsels in that they catalogued and arranged cases for reference in order to treat theological and ethical topics in a systematic and predictable way (34). Thus, collections provided a reference for consciences, rather than direction that had to be followed. When a person faced a case of difficult circumstances, collections of casuistry presented a method of reasoning and argument (106). In other words, persons were not expected always to follow the judgments laid out in the collections, because of variations in circumstances. Instead, consciences could be guided by the method and rationale of moral reasoning through the collected examples (44).

Scripture was always upheld by the Lutherans as the highest authority for theological and ethical understanding. However, "when Scripture is not specific," then the "aristocratic" method is to be used. Individuals should seek counsel from the wisest, such as pastors, theologians, and those gifted in wisdom and knowledge (65–67). If Scripture did not offer applicable counsel, then one could determine the "logical consequences of Scripture" (106). If a decision still was not clear, the aristocratic method relied on further sources, subordinate to Scripture: "church law, civil law, local custom, and natural law" as well as conscience (68–69, 106). All of these sources required intelligence to understand the variety of principles, logic to discern the connections between the principles and the case at hand, and prudence to determine the proper action to take in the circumstances of the case. The variety of sources combined with the complexity of cases suggested the need to rely on wise authorities, including the judgments of previous, similar cases. Nevertheless, the editors of the *Treasury* and other collections did not urge their readers simply to follow

previous judgments, but to consider the logic of argument, method of reasoning, circumstances of the judgment, and their comparability to the case at hand (68–69).

Mayes' study suggests that Lutheran ethics of the 17th century was actively concerned about ethics and relied on numerous, established sources and a developed method for determining right action. Importantly, in contrast to Roman Catholic casuistry, Lutheran casuistry did not set up another authority than Scripture, arbitrating the Scriptural command with the situation of the person. Instead, it presented the application of Scripture to dogmatic and ethical cases, so that the logic of the decision could be observed (40–41). It offered an aid in the proper application of Scripture, not an authoritative directive for action. The individual, after prudent consideration and consultation with the wise, was encouraged to act according to his informed conscience. The conscience is not merely the preference of the individual, but the judge of action that is still ruled by God's law. Scripture, the other sources for determining action, and the guidance of the wise served to keep the individual conscience uninjured (70).

Finally, Mayes also shows that Lutheran theologians of the 17th century recognized the close relationship between theory and practice. The *Treasury* was not merely a manual for ethics, but a manual of theology. Cases included complex questions of belief and understanding. Books of casuistry "aid pastors in the conduct of their ministry, especially in their duty to instruct and console consciences" (106). This required a right understanding of the faith. The word of God grants both right understanding and conviction, and empowers and directs the practices that bear the fruit of good works. The word of God enlightens the regenerate nature with the result that it does the will of God (61–62). In this way, Lutheran books of casuistry included both doctrine and practice, and show the deep connection between the two.

By the mid-18th century, however, a rigorous Lutheran ethical practice grounded in careful understanding of doctrine was waning. In spite of the differences articulated by Lutheran casuists, the general understanding of casuistry had become that portrayed by Roman Catholics: casuistry was seen as seeking exceptions to the law (204). Further, in the second half of the 18th century, conscience oriented to a law outside of itself was criticized in favor of "an inwardly felt conscience. This type of *vox-Dei* conscience, which was not seen as being much darkened by human sinfulness, became more prevalent in the latter half of the eighteenth century. With norms internal to the conscience, there was no longer any great need for instruction from casuistry" (204–5). The role of Scripture and other authorities in instructing the conscience was abandoned. "For Kant and others in the late eighteenth century, the conscience brings moral information with itself and does not need external authority" and it is to act in a universally consistent way (205). Coupled with this, if the

conscience merely acted in a universal way, then anyone with understanding and diligence to understand the law could determine such cases, without the need of the rigorous method and several sources previously used (205–6). A slackness toward moral theology has characterized Lutheranism ever since.

Mayes writes in a clear and organized style, packing much information and explanation into each section. The one exception is his excessively brief discussion of probabilism and related ethical methods (22–24). Mayes' writing remains clear, but the concepts themselves are so tortuous that further explanation is needed for most readers. This volume is highly recommended for specialists interested in manuals of casuistry and marriage cases. It is also highly recommended for pastors and theologians interested in the Lutheran moral tradition and for those who are unaware that the tradition is so rich. This book could be a catalyst for restoring an understanding of the law and deep moral reflection as informative for the conscience and right action.

Gifford A. Grobien

***Good and Bad Ways to Think About Religion and Politics.* By Robert Benne. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 120 pages.**

Once again Robert Benne has provided thinking Christians with a carefully reasoned and profoundly *Lutheran* approach to political involvement. It is a good follow-up on his earlier books, *The Paradoxical Vision: A Public Theology for the Twenty-first Century* (Fortress, 1995), *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life* (Fortress, 2003), and *Reasonable Ethics: A Christian Approach to Social, Economic, and Political Concerns* (CPH, 2005). Avoiding the pressures of modernity to sequester religious convictions in the realm of the private, as well as activists to the right and the left who mistake their political ideology with divine revelation, Benne charts a different path, one of critical engagement. Liberalism can become the shadow of the fundamentalism it deplores. Tolerance becomes rigidly intolerant. Nothing is quite as legalistic as liberalism. Benne demonstrates how the principle of "the separation of church and state" is not to be distorted to prevent a free interaction of religion and politics: "Engagement, yes; straight-line connection, no" (81). Freedom of religion does not mean freedom from religion, so that religious voices are excluded from the public arena. Individual believers as well as corporate communities of faith may not be deprived of the right to express their moral convictions in the secular realm.

Benne is rightly impatient with denominational agencies and leadership that too easily presume to speak for the faithful on a wide range of civic issues where equally committed Christians may draw different conclusions without violating biblical truth or creedal standards. Conversant with theology and political theory, Benne urges Christians to approach politics in a way that

results neither in “fusion” or “separation” but “critical engagement.” Lutherans are equipped for such engagement with our understanding of God’s two governments and the necessity of the political use of the law.

This short book is abundant with theological insights resonating from a Lutheran understanding of law, creation, and vocation. Conversational in style, it would easily be adaptable for use in adult education forums within the congregation. (A study guide for this book is available at www.lcmslifeconference.org.) To play on the title of one Benne’s previous books, this volume speaks to “ordinary saints” who have a vocation as citizens. It is highly recommended as a text that will challenge Christians to think more carefully and clearly about this worldly calling.

John T. Pless

Luther’s Spirituality. Edited and translated by Philip D. Krey and Peter D.S. Krey. Classics of Western Spirituality Series. New York: Paulist Press, 2007. 296 pages.

This is a sampling of Luther’s spiritual writings organized under three headings: Luther’s spirituality in a late-Medieval context, teaching spirituality; and “A New Path to Prayer.” Most of the selections are available in the American Edition of *Luther’s Works*, although several have been freshly translated with an eye toward making the reformer speak in inclusive language. The “Scholia on Psalm 5: On Hope” was rendered into English for the first time for this volume. The preface by Timothy J. Wengert identifies spirituality as reflecting “the down-to-earth approach to the gospel” (xv) evident in Luther’s theology. Wengert notes “that at Luther’s hands medieval piety not only received criticism but found a new home” (xv). A general introduction is provided by Jane Strohl in which she suggests that Luther’s spirituality is best seen as the faith of a “wounded man” in light of the eschatological horizon of the Gospel. She rightly observes that Luther’s spirituality was concerned not with a spiritualistic retreat from the world, but with a more profound discipleship in the context of the mundane concerns of family and day-to-day life.

The late Heiko Oberman is credited with advising the editors in their choice and arrangement of materials. Oberman is well-known for his insistence that Luther must not be understood as a modern man but one who lived with an apocalyptic view of history where the devil is on the attack. Demonstrating this theme in Oberman’s reading of Luther are numerous selections from Luther’s correspondence, commentaries, and devotional tracts that urge the Christian to learn the art of trusting Christ’s promises in the face of demonic terrorist assaults on the conscience. This is exemplified by the inclusion of Luther’s letter to Jerome Weller on how to defy the evil one with mockery

grounded in God's word. This letter is one of the several writings found in Theodore Tappert's classic, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*.

While bearing marks of continuity with medieval traditions of spirituality, Luther's reformational insight of justification of the unrighteous by faith alone trickles through every aspect of his care of souls. The Reformation is also a reformation of spirituality, demonstrated by the inclusion of "The Freedom of the Christian." Luther's application of the theology of the cross to the Christian life is demonstrated in his sermon from Holy Saturday, 1530, "Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering," and "Psalm 117: The Art that Cannot be Mastered."

Luther's spirituality was lived through prayer and vocation. He intended the catechism not only to be learned but to be prayed. This is especially evident in "A Simple Way to Pray, for Master Peter the Barber," which is fittingly included in the final section of the book, "A New Path to Prayer." Also included in this section are excerpts from the Large Catechism and the texts of several of Luther's hymns. The book concludes with a helpful bibliography of books and journal articles on aspects of Luther's spirituality.

Luther's Spirituality is an accessible resource for those who seek to learn more about Luther's understanding of discipleship and the Christian life, the use of God's word and prayer. It lends itself to both devotional reading and use in adult education settings in the congregation.

John T. Pless

Proverbs. By Andrew E. Steinmann. Concordia Commentary Series. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009. 719 pages. Hardback, \$49.99.

Once again, the Concordia Commentary series receives another erudite contribution from Andrew Steinmann, who, as I write this, has scored a hat trick for the now 20-year-old project of Concordia Publishing House (Daniel [2008], Proverbs [2009], Ezra-Nehemiah [2010]). Readers familiar with the series should not need any lengthy discussion of its unabashedly Lutheran hermeneutical presuppositions, such as expounding Law and Gospel, the sacraments, ecclesiology, and, ultimately, "that which promotes Christ" (xiii).

Steinmann's work in Proverbs is saturated with these convictions, which goes all the way down to his foundational understanding of biblical wisdom: "the concept of wisdom is completely theocentric and Christocentric. Without this understanding of wisdom, one cannot fathom the role of the Gospel throughout Proverbs. Wisdom is to be comprehended as God's gracious gift to his people in Christ" (24). As regards Proverbs, then, "the theme that unites the book is Christ as God's Wisdom, and no passages can be properly interpreted if one's understanding of any part of Proverbs is not informed by this

aspect of the Gospel" (44–45). An example of unmistakable faithfulness to this belief is Steinmann's almost excessive reminder that the "righteous" person throughout Proverbs is (forensically) justified by grace (alone) through faith (alone).

The commentary proper quickly reminded me of Steinmann's linguistic aptitude. His textual notes integrate an impressive range of comparative material, statistics on particular words/phrases, probable Aramaisms, and other illuminating features (esp. 8:22, 30; 22:6; 22:20; 30:1; 31:1, 27). Yet Steinmann does not pretend to have all the answers, which is refreshing to hear now and then (e.g., the grammatical difficulties of 12:25–27). He handles the text reverently.

Interpreting Proverbs as Christian Scripture, of course, forces the theologian's hand on a number of weighty issues. Steinmann routinely explains the book's "idealism" eschatologically, inviting frequent recourse to Jesus' discourses (among numerous other NT associations). But he also acknowledges Proverbs' inherent ambiguity (e.g., 13:5 as "purposely elliptical" [317]), and so commends the book's "earthy" value for the Christian as well, without in any way becoming literalistic (e.g., disciplining with rods in 13:24).

Steinmann's insistence that "wisdom" in 8:22–31 (and 3:19, noteworthy [120]) is a "hypostasis" and not a personification (22, 23, 210) felt somewhat reactionary and left me wanting more. Perhaps this discussion was articulated with someone like Tremper Longman in mind, who, contra Steinmann, stresses "wisdom" in 8:22–31 as a personification of Yahweh's wisdom and not a hypostasis. To this extent, Steinmann's substantiating reference to Longman as "A recent commentator who rightly interprets Wisdom in 8:22–31 as Christ" (216, n. 18) is, given their dissimilarity, an oversimplification of Longman's position, who, furthermore, prefers the language of NT "association" and not "identification." Even so, this quibble should not divert anyone from the fact that Steinmann's penetrating work has given Lutheran commentary on Proverbs a tough act to follow.

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***Making African Christianity: Africans Reimagining Their Faith in Colonial South Africa.* By Robert J. Houle. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011. 311 Pages. Hardback. \$80.00.**

American revivalism or African reimagination? While the author, Robert J. Houle, suggests the latter, it appears that the book better represents the former. The focus of the book is the history of a small group of Christians

found in the area surrounding South Africa, specifically the American Board of Missions (ABM) and the American Zulu Mission (AZM). The value of this book comes in the historical accounts, with some of the most interesting information coming from the literature included in the endnotes. In this regard, this book is well worth the time for any student of history. The political motivations of the book become tiresome, however, as the author places a greater emphasis on the secular liberation of the Zulu Christians than he does on the sacred.

As far as the Christian environment of the time, the author recognizes the ineffectiveness of the preaching of the American missionaries. The missionaries failed to accept the traditional veneration rites of the ancestors or the possibility of their healing ministries. Therefore, amidst the tumult of the time the author finds the defining change having occurred through a series of revivals in 1862 led by an American preacher named George Weaver. The author argues that Weaver's Pentecostal-leaning theology provided an opportunity for the Zulu Christians to become spiritually equal to their colonizers. If they had received the same spiritual gifts of healing and preaching, they should also be recognized as equals in the secular realm. Though the author states that this was not a syncretizing movement, the reader will struggle to find proof of his assertions. As a result, this book leans toward a liberation theology hiding under the facade of Pentecostalism. The theological and political implications of this book will therefore be more appealing to a Pentecostal or Holiness audience than to one that holds to Lutheran theology.

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Christopher Boyd Brown, ed. *Luther's Works*, vols. 56-74 (St. Louis: CPH, 2009-). Vol. 58: *Sermons V*. Vol. 59: *Prefaces I*. Vol. 60: *Prefaces II*. Vol. 69: *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, Chapters 17-20.

Most readers of this journal are probably aware of the commitment by Concordia Publishing House to add 20 more volumes to the American Edition of *Luther's Works*. The original series, a joint project of CPH and Fortress Press, consisted of 54 volumes plus an index volume and appeared over time from 1955 to 1986. For many years, it has provided the English-reading world with direct access to Luther's thought, but it included only about a third of what the critical (Weimar) edition contained. Now, however, thanks to CPH, we are going to have even more Luther in English!

In fact, we already do. Four volumes have appeared and, if they are typical (and we have no reason to think that they are not), then the new series will be a very welcome supplement to the original series. To date, two volumes

of sermons and two of prefaces have been released. According to the prospectus, the new series will also include volumes devoted to early works, disputations, biblical interpretation (especially the Psalms), letters, and miscellaneous theological and polemical writings. The publishers are also including a volume devoted to 16th-century biographical material, everything from the sermon Bugenhagen preached at Luther's funeral to Johannes Mathesius's series of sermons on the life of Luther from 1566. Concordia Publishing House is also preparing an index to the entire collection, both old and new.

As was true of the original series, the new one includes excellent introductions to explain the various genres being translated and to point out the significance of each work for Luther's biography and theology. Every volume also includes subject and Scripture indexes. The footnotes provide background information, cross references to other works, and comments regarding textual or translation issues.

The four volumes already published include a great deal of interesting material. Volume 69, for example, devoted to sermons on John 17–20, includes significant data regarding Luther's understanding of the office of the keys in verses 22 and 23 of chapter 20. As late as 1540, Luther was referring to a public office, committed to called ministers, *and* to a private office, committed to everyone (431). In that same volume, the editors are to be commended for including a sermon (349–72), originally published posthumously by Andreas Poach in 1566, for which we also have Georg Rörer's contemporaneous notes from 1529. By using a bold typeface for material attested to in the notes, publishers let the reader see just how much "Luther" may actually belong to his 16th-century editor.

This is just a sample of the treasures that await the reader in the new volumes of *Luther's Works*. In format, binding, and dust covers, they are very similar to the old. At \$49.99, the price is reasonable but not cheap, although subscribers to the entire series can purchase each volume for just \$34.99. Serious students of Luther will want the whole set.

Cameron A. Mackenzie

***The Juvenilization of American Christianity.* By Thomas E. Bergler. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012. 286 Pages. Paperback. \$25.00.**

This is the essential book for understanding contemporary Christianity in America, from the worship styles currently in vogue to the decay of historic theology and practice in favor of emotional, relational, and therapeutic experience. Virtually everything can be explained in terms of what Thomas Bergler calls "juvenilization." This is, in his words, "the process by which the

religious beliefs, practices, and developmental characteristics of adolescents become accepted as appropriate for Christians of all ages. It begins with the praiseworthy goal of adapting the faith to appeal to the young. But it sometimes ends badly, with both youth and adults embracing immature versions of the faith."

This is not a mere critique of contemporary Christianity. Rather, Bergler is making direct, historical connections between "youth ministry" and the church growth movement.

Much of the book is a history of youth ministry. Beginning in the 1930s, churches began worrying about how to transmit the faith to the next generation. They did so using different strategies. Fundamentalists developed a style of revivalism that appealed to young people. Mainline Protestants thought to appeal to youthful idealism by enlisting them in progressive politics. Roman Catholics used sports and recreation with the occasional dash of theology in an effort to create a distinctive Catholic subculture. African-American churches were perhaps the most successful by integrating their young people with their adults, rather than setting up separate structures. In the aftermath of the 1960s, those formed by "youth groups" became adults and brought their distinct brand of Christianity with them into the rest of the congregation. Today, youth culture has become the model for adult culture, so that even grownups have adopted the narcissism, anti-intellectualism, and rebellion against authority usually associated with adolescence.

Bergler is not against youth ministry—he teaches that subject at Huntington University—and he considers some of its influence to be valuable in keeping Christianity as popular as it is. But, drawing on principles of psychological development, he urges churches to cultivate spiritual maturity in both their young people and their adults.

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- Allen, Holly Catterton and Christine Lawton Ross. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community, and Worship*. Dowers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012. 336 Pages. \$22.00.
- Braaten, Carl E. *Who is Jesus? Disputed Questions and Answers*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011. 154 Pages. Paperback. \$20.00.
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