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Book Reviews

***A History of Evangelism in North America*. Edited by Thomas P. Johnson. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021. 368 pp. Paperback. $23.99.**

These are histories, not a history. The scope of this volume of essays by various Southern Baptist professors of evangelism is the entirety of America's history, not Canada's or Mexico's, so titles can be misleading. Why would a Lutheran read a book so deeply Southern Baptist that "your Cooperative Program dollars" are referenced in the editor's acknowledgments? A Lutheran should read this book to understand, without spite or prejudgment, the history and nature of American religion, which is more intimately tied to frontier religion, radio preaching, and the influence of the Jesus Movement (all covered here in some measure) than it is to the forms of church life native to confessional Lutheranism.

You will find here some strange and fascinating connections, such as the role of the radio preaching of Donald Grey Barnhouse in converting D. James Kennedy, who first heard the question, "Suppose you were to die today and stand before God . . . what would you say?" on his radio and was brought to his knees by that question before it became a famous part of *Evangelism Explosion*, or the linkage between Henrietta Mears's Sunday School in Hollywood, California with Dawson Trotman, the founder of Navigators, and Billy Graham. You will find clear coverage of things of foundational importance to American Christianity, such as Jonathan Edwards's method of revival and Donald McGavran's definition of "church growth," by which he meant evangelism, not simply numerical increase in congregations. Many of the leading figures of the history of evangelism are unknown to Lutherans or, when known, are caricatured by Lutherans. Reading these essays will restore some fullness to our ideas and some complexity to our understandings.

These histories cover almost nothing between the antebellum period and the run-up to World War I, the only exception being J. Wilbur Chapman, the mentor of Billy Sunday. Dwight Lyman Moody is not here, nor would one learn anything about revival-like American institutions such as the Chautauqua or the beginnings of radio preaching. Walter A. Maier's absence is conspicuous but unsurprising. The unevenness of coverage leaves a gap between the revivals of the early nineteenth century and the evangelists and evangelistic methods of the later twentieth century. That lacuna is enormous, and one wishes someone had filled it in a little more. In addition, some essays are pedestrian or devotional in tone—Protestant hagiographies. Most essays, however, are thorough, interesting, and well-written, especially the ones on the leading figures of the latter twentieth century.

Even something as apparently esoteric as a survey of Southern Baptist evangelistic literature displays the constant demand for denominationally specific versions of things available outside denominations—Southern Baptist versions of *Evangelism Explosion*, for example, were produced at the height of Kennedy's project. Is this true also in our circles? That history remains to be written, perhaps, but the connections between the history of American Lutherans and the history of American evangelism and evangelistic preaching may well be numerous, strange, and fascinating.

Adam C. Koontz

***Luther's Works*, vol. 56, *Sermons III*. Edited by Benjamin T.G. Mayes. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018. xxviii + 440 pp. Hardcover. $59.99.**

The "new series" of *Luther's Works*—which, when complete, will have added another twenty volumes to the original fifty-five of the now classic American Edition—continues to be a great boon to students of Luther, both academic and pastoral. Volume 56, the third of three new sermon volumes, is no exception. Preachers will surely peruse its sermons in the preparation of their own, as they have with previous collections, whether in the original series or in the translated postil collections of Lenker and Klug. (They might not, however, want to follow Luther's lead when, on New Year's Day, 1530, he exasperatedly announced—mid-sermon—that he "would rather preach to mad dogs," and so would not be returning to the pulpit [p. 320].)

Researchers will benefit no less from these sermons collected from Luther's output of 1522 to 1531 (and the excellent introductions to each, copious footnotes, and substantial index). As Christopher Brown notes in the volume's introduction, more than half of the sermons Luther is known to have preached over his forty-year career (1065 of 2068) are dated to this single decade. This was, of course, the tumultuous decade immediately following his excommunication, in which Luther's theology was being clarified not only in continued controversy with Rome, but also in debate with increasingly "radical" reformers. These years likewise witnessed such significant events as the Peasants' Rebellion and the presentation of the Augsburg Confession. Though Luther's thoughts on such matters have never been obscure, further light might still be shed on them by means of his contemporary sermons. Indeed, some of those compiled here are clearly "first drafts" of subsequent and better known treatises, or are homiletical presentations of previously published works, inviting comparative analysis (e.g., on eucharistic matters, compare the sermons in pp. 8–12 and 69–80 with the works in LW 36:231–67 and 307–28).

Given the necessity of clarifying and teaching his doctrine in a rapidly splintering theological context, it is unsurprising to find him concisely attempting to do so from the pulpit. Thus, in the summer of 1524 he presents a five-point "summary of the chief articles" (p. 68). In a weekday sermon of the following year, he will refer even more concisely to "two chief articles of Christian doctrine: faith and love" (p. 92). In light of the decade's political turmoil, equally unsurprising is the frequency with which Luther returns to these "two chief articles" in explicating God's governance of the world "in a twofold way" (p. 268). His treatments of this twofold government, however, highlight the fact that Luther's thought does not map neatly over simplistic modern dichotomies. While insisting that the temporal sword concerns only "bodily matters" (p. 66), for example, he can also call upon the magistrates to suppress the "abomination of the Papists' Mass" (p. 79). Similarly, while lamenting in 1531 that marriage has "suffered violence and wrong by being labeled a secular estate" (p. 364), he will, only a year later, insist that marriage is indeed a "secular and outward thing" (LW 21:93). Such stark contrasts, though not necessarily contradictions, provide a helpful warning against facile proof-texting of the reformer; the oft-repeated claim that Luther was an "occasional" rather than a "systematic" writer only became a cliché because it reflects something of reality.

Other Lutheran commonplaces also find some confirmation here, as when the Christian is more than once explicitly described as "simultaneously righteous and unrighteous" (p. 112; see also 334). Yet, potential surprises are scattered throughout. Those assuming a Lutheran abandonment of such "medieval" ideas as natural law or guardian angels may be confused to find Luther casually affirming both (pp. 85, 342). His own hearers presumably were similarly confused that, as late as 1529, St. Christopher was still deemed a suitable sermon topic, despite Luther's frank acknowledgment that the popular saint "never existed" (p. 314). More substantive surprises are evident, however, in conclusions that sound, in hindsight, not at all Lutheran. Two examples from the same 1525 series on 1 Timothy are illustrative. Reading 1 Tim. 2:4 as proclaiming God's will that all be "rescued" or "helped" in a general sense, he concludes that "it does not follow that God wills to *save* all men" (p. 125, emphasis added). Less perplexing than the fact that this stands in contrast to the later Lutheran Confessions (e.g., FC SD XI) is the observation that it deviates even from Luther's own allusive use of the passage in the same year's *Bondage of the Will* (see LW 33:140). Perhaps just as scandalous is Luther's reference to the law's function as a "curb" being "its proper use," and his subsequent mention of its sin-revealing function as merely "another use" (p. 107).

Again, Lutheran preachers—and theologians—might prudently refrain from following Luther down every trail he explored, especially in the still-evolving context of the 1520s. They can, nonetheless, remain grateful to the editors and translators of this new series for making available a more complete map of those trails.

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***Debating the Sacraments: Print and Authority in the Early Reformation*. By Amy Nelson Burnett. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. xx + 524 pp. $105.00.**

Three generations of Missouri Synod pastors and theologians have been shaped in their understanding of the Reformation controversy over the Lord's Supper by the now-classic study *This Is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar*, authored by Erlangen theologian and church historian Hermann Sasse. As indicated in the book's preface, written in South Australia in August 1958, Sasse brought together over twenty years of research interrupted by the terrors of the Second World War to address an English-speaking audience—Sasse specifically mentions the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Australia, where the Church of the Augsburg Confession "still confesses, with heart and mouth . . . the faith of the fathers, not because it is our fathers' faith, but because it is the faith of the New Testament." In this book Sasse passionately communicated his devotion to preserving Luther's doctrine of the Lord's Supper in a time when, especially in Germany, that doctrine was being sacrificed on the altar of modern ecumenism and confused by developments in the modern liturgical movement. As its subtitle indicates, the goal of the book was to present Luther's vigorously-fought view; he carries out this goal through sections on the medieval background, Luther's early development of his doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and the Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli's understanding, before analyzing the Great Controversy on the Sacrament, the Marburg Colloquy and its aftermath, and finally the Sacrament of the Altar in modern Lutheranism. The book thus mirrored, from a Lutheran conviction, the important analysis of the controversy by the Zurich/Heidelberg historian Walther Koehler, published in two volumes in 1924 and 1953 (reissued in a single volume in 2017), titled (translated) *Zwingli and Luther: Their Struggle over the Lord's Supper in Its Political and Religious Connections*.

Both studies—Koehler's and Sasse's—were careful and "objective" historical analyses, yet their apologetic purpose was clear throughout: each was a defense of either Zwingli's or Luther's position in the great controversy over the Lord's Supper. Both studies focused on Zwingli and Luther and gave considerable space to their personal confrontation at the Marburg Colloquy. (Sasse's book devotes 52 pages to the controversy of 1524–1528, but nearly 90 pages to the Colloquy and its immediate result, and another 50 pages to its aftermath, while Koehler used the Colloquy as the pivot connecting his two volumes, and also published a reconstruction of the Colloquy in 1929.)

I provide description of these older studies because Amy Nelson Burnett's book *Debating the Sacraments: Print and Authority in the Early Reformation* takes analysis of the sacramentarian controversy of the 1520s to a new level in a book that deserves a place next to Sasse's classic study in the formation of future generations of Lutheran pastors and theologians. Burnett's book originates from a very different context: rather than a church historian trained in the German tradition, Burnett is a cultural historian of senior rank at a major American university (professor of history at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln). Although she certainly knows her Reformation theology, her doctoral education was likewise pursued in history at a secular American university rather than with a theological faculty; she and her husband Stephen, likewise a historian at the same University, are not "trained theologians" or clergy, but lay members of a Missouri Synod congregation in Lincoln.

Burnett's goals in her book are also different from those of Koehler and Sasse. She analyzes the controversy over the sacraments (emphasizing, importantly, that it was also a controversy over the meaning and practice of Baptism), not as a defense of either side but to understand the crucial role the controversy played in the early Reformation. Burnett argues that the controversy exposed a "crisis of authority" among evangelical reformers, as both sides had repudiated the hierarchy of authorities that had governed the papal church for a millennium (or at least for over 700 years, since Carolingian times), and so would appeal finally to Scripture alone (as the highest authority) to define both Christian doctrine and heresy. (For the Sacramentarians, the Lutheran view of the substantial presence of Christ's body in the elements amounted both to Docetism—that is, Christ's body lacks the character of a true body, which must be located in a place—and to idolatry.) The controversy was thus played out not in councils or colloquies but through "print"—the term in the subtitle and throughout the book is Burnett's shorthand for the array of shorter pamphlets, extensive treatises, and expository commentaries on the Bible that were the media of the controversy from all sides. Finally, reference to "all sides" is critical in Burnett's analysis. Koehler's study (and following him, Sasse's) is quite distorting of the character of the controversy through its focus almost exclusively on Zwingli and Luther. Burnett focuses on all the figures who contributed shorter or longer pieces, in fewer or greater numbers of publications and editions, in this great controversy that was carried out in print and was already "settled" as unresolved and unresolvable by the time Luther and his supporters faced the Swiss and the Strassburgers at the finally fruitless Marburg Colloquy in October 1529.

Astoundingly, Burnett's study incorporates both analytical and quantitative analyses of 372 titles, in 905 printings published between 1525 and 1529, that contributed to the debate on the Lord's Supper. By focusing on the numerous authors who contributed to the controversy, and also analyzing the question about who was responding to whom in which publication, Burnett convincingly demonstrates that not only did Luther, as Sasse noted, delay his own response to the Swiss (whose central figure was arguably Oecolampadius and not Zwingli) while several other figures—especially Johannes Bugenhagen and Johannes Brenz—argued on behalf of the Lutheran doctrine, but also that the two "suns" (as Koehler described them) around which the many lesser actors in the controversy revolved were not Luther and Zwingli but Luther and . . . Erasmus! Yes, the many and varied explanations for why "This is my body" could not mean that Christ's true body was eaten in (or "with" or "under") the bread of the Lord's Supper can all be traced to the Platonic dualism (spirit vs. flesh) of Erasmus of Rotterdam. This despite the fact that the conservative humanist-reformer never repudiated the papal doctrine of the Mass, and had begun to withdraw personal support for Luther already in October 1520 after recognizing the radical character (and thus the fatefully divisive and destructive nature) of Luther's critique of the papal sacramental system in his treatise *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*.

It may be too much to expect Lutheran seminarians, theologians, and pastors to master the details of this careful analysis carried out in 314 pages of text (plus another 120 pages of Endnotes followed by bibliographies—30 pages of the sixteenth-century imprints plus another 27 pages of modern editions and secondary literature). However, it is absolutely necessary for Lutherans today to understand the character of this controversy that caused the Reformation to become not one but two major traditions—Lutheran and Reformed—that have so deeply shaped modern culture, both in the church and in society. One cannot understand the Lutheran Confessions, or even the Lutheran confession of the gospel, without understanding the Reformation, and Burnett makes a clear case for understanding the central issue of the Reformation as its controversy over the sacraments (both of them!) and its crisis of authority in the attempt to settle controversies among Evangelicals.

Lutheran theologians and churchmen are mistaken when they view the original Lutheran reform of the sacraments (and the liturgies of the sacraments) as "conservative," and appeal variously to the early church fathers, to dogmatic and liturgical history, to a "eucharistic interpretation of John 6," or to traditions celebrating the Lord's Supper as a Eucharist—all in an effort to re-form ways of speaking about and celebrating the Lord's Supper in Lutheran congregations today. All these arguments were used by Luther's sacramentarian opponents in the controversy of 1524–1529 over-against Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper. Luther defined the meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper by the words of Christ's institution, not only at Marburg (where he chalked the words *Hoc est corpus meum* on the conference table), but throughout the controversy, ever since it erupted from Andreas Karlstadt's attacks on Luther's theology and personal authority as a reformer. Luther viewed the words of institution as words of command and promise (just as with Baptism), through which Christ gives pure gift: communion with the very body and blood that he gave once and for all on the cross as atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, in which communion he promises (and promise requires faith) the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

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