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Theological Observer

Here and There on Theological Journals

We have received a few notes reminding us that the dates on issues of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (CTQ) do not correspond to the calendar dates when the issues are being received in the mail. Surprisingly we have not received more, but perhaps not surprising at all.

Theological journals are rarely read, at least in their entirety, at the time of arrival in the mailbox. Summer is the designated time for uninterrupted reading. The *Lutheran Theological Review* (LTR) from the Edmonton and Saint Catharines seminaries of our sister church in Canada arrived a few weeks ago with the years 2004-2005 on the cover. So we are in good company. LTR XVII (2004-2005) along with other issues can be obtained by contacting the Saint Catharines seminary. Among the pertinent topics in the 2004-2005 issue are the dilemma of the Australian church's consideration of membership in the Lutheran World Federation as well as order and submission in the New Testament, topics that surfaced in the December 2006 and April 2007 at the LCMS's consultation on women. Thomas M. Winger offers an essay in the same issue under a familiar phrase "*Simul Iustus et Peccator*" but with the intriguing subtitle, "Did Luther and the Confessions Get Paul Right?" You will have to get a copy to find out.

The CTQ is making up for lost time. Since December 2006, ten issues have been mailed. The 2008 dates of publication will, hopefully, correspond to real time. Credit for overcoming the temporal deficit goes to Charles Gieschen, who became the Associate Editor in August 2006, Graduate Students Jason Braaten and Peter Gregory, and CTQ secretary Annette Gard. Our new Book Review Editor is Lawrence Rast Jr. We hope the many recent issues of CTQ enriched your theological reading. While we are at it, here are some random thoughts about other journals.

Pro Ecclesia tries to put in place again an historic Christianity across the wide denominational spectrum in which a Lutheran voice is often heard. Its founding editors Robert Jenson and Carl Braaten have been lecturers at recent seminary symposia. *First Things* combines religious and secular issues. Classical Lutheranism is not part of the agenda but emerges in the nostalgia of the editor's childhood training. Its Catholic editor was Lutheran from his cradle to pulpit. *Lutheran Forum* provides theological articles on current issues occupying the attention of Lutherans, as does its sidekick *Forum Letter*. Spectacular events in Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) mean less space for the more mundane in the LCMS.

Logia, an explicitly confessional, trans-synodical Lutheran journal, has beaten all odds with 1500 subscribers at its fifteenth anniversary. Its has attracted such German university professors to its pages as Oswald Bayer and Klaus Schwarzwallner along with old standbys from the synods of the old Synodical

Conference. All this bodes well for active theological exchange in a religious culture where theology often is given a back seat.

Purely theological journals are not tightly bound to the calendar. This is our weak defense of the lateness of CTQ issues. Theological journal articles can be read years after their publication. Proof of this is the Spring 1988 issue of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (WLQ 85/2) which was bouncing around unread for nearly twenty years in my study. Some articles are as pertinent today as they were twenty years ago. Others are a window to how things used to be. For example, an overview of the confessional Lutheran situation twenty years ago across the seas is provided by "The Lutheran Free Churches of Europe" (127-139). Now that the LCMS is in fellowship with the Lutheran churches in Lithuania and Latvia and those around St. Petersburg, Russia; things have changed. A free Lutheran church has emerged in Norway and a "mission province" in Sweden: things have changed.

In "News and Comments" of the same issue of WLQ, Armin J. Panning looks at the changing complexion of LCMS colleges in moving from their original purpose as church worker training institutions to liberal arts college. Alan F. Harre, now president of Valparaiso University, deplores the shrinking synodical support "for worker-training education." He states: "For the 1978-79 academic year, synodical funds provided fifty-six percent of educational expenditures of the seminaries and forty-five percent for the colleges. During 1984-85, comparable figures were thirty-four percent for the seminaries and just twenty-four percent for the colleges" (143). Then tuition and room and board came to a robust \$8000. Now it is not only an issue of the lower percentage of church worker students, but the percentage of Lutherans in the student body. Synodical affiliation does not factor into the Lutheran equation. Costs now at Harre's Valparaiso might be around \$30,000 and synodical schools a bit less. So far as funding is concerned, synodical educational institutions are on their own. Twenty years makes a difference.

In the same "News and Comments" section of the WLQ, Wayne D. Mueller comments on "God's Woman For All Generations," more commonly known as the "Report of the LCMS President's Commission on Women." Another report is on the way from the LCMS consultation on women. Twenty years later and things have not changed that much. Even when the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and the LCMS were in fellowship, they did not share a common doctrine of the ministry. Francis Pieper knew this but did not make an issue of it. Mueller gets it right that in the LCMS the ministry focused on the pastoral office, or to put it in his own words: "Missouri sees the pastoral office as the unique, all-encompassing office of the public ministry from which all other offices and authorities derive. So today almost all positions of authority are open to women in the LCMS except that of the parish pastor" (144). LCMS ministers might find it unusual to learn that this is "Missouri's peculiar doctrine of the ministry." Compare this with the WELS position: "Men and women, as private priests and, when permitted by the Scriptures, as public

ministers in the church, must be urged to render service when needed" (145). In other words there is a little minister tucked away in every Christian ready to emerge when called. A contribution by Ernst H. Wendland, "ELCA's Inclusiveness," addresses the ELCA requirement that ten percent of the 250 executive staff position go to minorities. Quotas were a sticking point then and still are.

Wendland's observations are as valid now as they were twenty years ago, which provides a good lead into the Spring 2007 issue of *Lutheran Forum* (LF). One article laments the removal of masculine references to God in the new ELCA hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. This might be called neutering the divine, one step beyond quotas. ELCA pastor Dan Biles entitles his article, "ELW and the Abuse of Language." He concludes with "ELW simply has a hard time saying that the Second Person of the Trinity is the Man Jesus, Son of God, Who addressed His God 'Father.' The Docetists had hard time with that, too" (42). One might ask how this all fits with what St. Paul says, "No one can say that 'Jesus is the Lord' but by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). In the same issue, Jennifer Baker-Trinity sees the appearance of the ELCA hymnal as an occasion for celebrating the work of the Holy Spirit ("The Fruits of our Labors: The Arrival of Evangelical Lutheran Worship" [43-47]). We will watch the sales of *ELW* in ELCA congregations. Some might take the LCMS option with *Lutheran Service Book* (LSB). ELCA readers of *LF* are introduced to *LSB* in a published interview with its editor Paul Grime (14-20). Robert Benne's "A Confessional Lutheran Voice in the Contemporary Scene," originally a lecture given at our seminary's January 2007 symposium, finds its way into the same *LF* issue. *Forum Letter* reported on the vigorous response the lecture received in the seminary's Wambsgans Gymnasium. Good news travels fast. A section in Benne's article entitled "Missouri and Sectarian Tendencies" should not close the ears of some attendees to the next section, "The ELCA and Liberal Protestant Drift."

Sectarian tendencies are like original sin. We all have it. It is just a matter of the form that these tendencies take. WELS theologians might make common cause with Benne in assessing the LCMS sectarian tendencies, even if they might not agree on what they are. Theology is a matter of assessing and reassessing ourselves, and this means seeing ourselves the way others see us. That is what theological journals are all about, even if we are a little late.

David P. Scaer

Philipp Melanchthon, Confessor

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church has called him “one of the most erudite and intellectually powerful figures of his age.” He was born on February 16, 1497 in the Palatinate, in Bretten, near Karlsruhe in southern Germany. He was the first of five children, the son of Georg Schwarzerdt, who was a master of gunnery founding and skilled in forging light-weight strong armor, and Barbara, daughter of a prosperous merchant. His name was Philipp. On March 5, 1509, when he was twelve years old, his great-uncle Johannes Reuchlin, the great Hebrew scholar in the humanist tradition, said to him in view of his brilliant mastery of Greek: “Your name is Schwarzerdt [German for black earth], you are a Greek, and so your name shall be Greek. Thus, I will call you Melanchthon, which means black earth.” A child prodigy and not yet thirteen years old, he entered the University of Heidelberg where he studied philosophy, rhetoric, and astronomy/astrology, and there became known as a Greek scholar. In 1512 he went to Tübingen, where he devoted himself to the study of jurisprudence, mathematics, astronomy/astrology, and even medicine. At the age of twenty-one, he wrote a Greek grammar used for more than 200 years. As a man he reached the height of only 4’10” tall, but he was an intellectual giant, a universal genius having few peers. His contributions to the intellectual and educational life of Germany are too numerous to mention here. He came to be known as *Praeceptor Germaniae* “Germany’s Teacher.”

But his principal and lasting contribution was to theology, and specifically to the theology of the Lutheran Reformation. His Augsburg Confession remains the fundamental confession for Lutheranism and served as a model for other Protestant confessions. Along with the Apology of the Augsburg Confession and the Treatise on Power and Primacy of the Pope, Philipp Melanchthon’s other great contribution to the theological literature, both of the Lutheran church and to the church at large, was his *Loci Communes*, in which he in effect systematized the theology of his colleague and friend, Dr. Martin Luther. The *Loci* were made available in English translation by the late J. A. O. Preus II, one time president of Concordia Theological Seminary and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Despite the emerging differences between them, Luther near the end of his life (1542–1543) could say of Melanchthon, whom he fondly called Philipp:

If anybody wishes to become a theologian, he has a great advantage, first of all, in having the Bible. This is now so clear that he can read it without any trouble. Afterward he should read Philipp’s *Loci Communes*. This he should read diligently and well, until he has its contents fixed in his head. If he has these two he is a theologian, and neither the devil nor a heretic can shake him There’s no book under the sun in which the whole theology is so compactly presented as in the *Loci Communes* No better book has been

written after the Holy Scriptures than Philipp's. He expresses himself more concisely than I do when he argues and instructs. I'm garrulous and more rhetorical. (LW 54:439-440)

On a journey to Leipzig in March of 1560, Melanchthon caught a cold. He died shortly thereafter at the age of 63 years, 2 months, and 2 days. He was buried next to Luther, his friend and colleague in the cause of the Reformation, in the Schlosskirche in Wittenberg. While some have labeled him a "theologian without honor" because of controversies generated in large part by things he wrote in later years, Philipp Melanchthon remains in our living memory as a truly great gift to the church from God, and especially to us in the Lutheran Church. One hymn written by Philipp Melanchthon, *Dicimus grates tibi*, appeared both in *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Lutheran Worship* with the title "Lord God, to You We All Give Praise," and is retained in the *Lutheran Service Book*, where it is now sung to the tune of Luther's hymn, "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word." In this way the two great reformers continue to make the same confession. This hymn is appropriately sung on St. Michael's and All Angels Day, September 29.

Jerald C. Joersz

Associate Director, LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations

The "Pentecostalization" of Christianity

The influence of renewalist movements on global Christianity is predicted to change the look of what is called *Christian* or *Christianity* in the not-too-distant future. It is generally recognized that Pentecostalism has been growing globally at an amazing pace, but the recent Pew report, *Spirit and Power*, documents the first comprehensive study of the phenomenon, which it labels "renewalist movements," conducted by professional researchers in several countries around the world.

Luis Lugo, director the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life writes: "What we found, in short, is that Pentecostal beliefs and practices are literally reshaping the face of Christianity throughout the developing world." He emphasizes the point, adding, "I don't think it's too far fetched at this point to seriously entertain the question of whether Christianity is well on its way to being pentecostalized throughout the world, and certainly in the developing world."

The appeal of Pentecostalism is due, at least in some part, to the "health and wealth" message proclaimed by many renewalist preachers. Princeton professor Richard Shaull and Waldo Cesar, in their book, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches: Promises, Limitations, Challenges*, discovered that many people's earthly lives are improved by becoming a part of a Pentecostal church. They suggest that health-and-wealth theology is perhaps a viable

option in place of the mainline emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith. They also propose that renewalist movements are a more effective alternative to liberation theology, which in the past had been somewhat dominant in developing nations, at least for the lecture-circuit theologians.

A common thread that appeared as a result of the Pew Forum's *Spirit and Power* research was the way in which renewalists generally did not buy into the Western dichotomization between the spiritual and the material. In other words, God is involved in all aspects of the renewalist's life, including health, wealth, politics, and general well-being. "Renewalists all around the world really do believe that God has promised them health and prosperity as a product of their beliefs and religious practice, so it's a very common belief," commented Lugo.

Other discoveries included the adaptability in Pentecostalism to the local culture. Lugo states, "[W]hen an African converts from animism to Pentecostalism, they [*sic*] don't leave behind the world of spirit. They don't become little René Descartes running around. The spirit and the body are intimately connected in many of these traditions and Pentecostalism is very, very successful in making that link."

The sense of community is very strong among renewalists. Most renewalists are internal migrants, and upon arriving in Sao Paulo or Nairobi, they find an acceptance and sense of community among the Pentecostal churches that replaces what they lost when leaving their home villages and towns. Small-group Bible studies and other small-group activities are an important part of fostering this sense of community.

Perhaps the most impressive factor in the rapid spread of Pentecostalism, according to the study, was the personal witnessing that is a part of the typical renewalist's life. The study found that sixty to seventy percent of renewalists witness to at least one other person on a weekly basis.

Yet, one must be concerned, ultimately, about the message being promulgated by this metamorphosis of Christianity. Lugo reports that the majority of people involved in the Pentecostal, charismatic, or renewalist movements, in all of the ten countries where the survey was conducted, "agree that God will grant good health and relief from sickness to believers who *have enough faith*, and in nine of the countries most Pentecostals say that God will grant material prosperity to all believers who *have enough faith*" (emphasis added). From a biblical, Lutheran perspective, while there is much to be lauded about the lives and zeal of renewalists, such beliefs are seriously at odds with orthodox Christianity and can result in many people suffering emotional and spiritual trauma because they have been led to believe that if only their faith were strong enough, they could be cured of their cancer or other disease, or obtain the wealth and prosperity they desire

For more information the complete report can be found at <http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal/>.

Douglas L. Rutt