

Theological Observer

The 2009 Commencement Address

To the board of regents, governors of hope and vision for this place; faculty and staff, serving in ways seen and unseen to extend the premier reputation of this institution; distinguished President, Dean Wenthe; worthy honorees; cherished family and friends, and Facebook friends, too, and all of you who like the Verizon network stand behind these graduates like a cloud of witnesses . . . we have sixteen nations represented in this room here today; brother pastors, sister deaconesses, those on the doorstep of your holy vocation, graduates; I was more than a little nervous coming to Indiana to be your commencement speaker, after seeing what happened last week over in South Bend.¹ So, let me just say up front and for the record, as a former board member of Lutherans For Life, I reject the scandal that denies God's gift of life from the womb to the tomb. Period. Full Stop.

With that out of the way, I hope, I'd like to talk for just about twelve more minutes (I promise) on what we do for the sake of the life of the world, framing my comments on two short phrases spoken first by Wilhelm Sihler, the tireless founder of this peerless place—two phrases that bracket the beginning and the end of his public ministry. Sihler, born in 1801, highly educated, Ph.D. from Berlin—they say he carried himself like a Prussian army officer. I walked in this evening beside President Wenthe, and I watched him walk in today's procession. Thanks for not walking in like that, Dean.

Sihler began his life in a culture some would designate the center of civilization until a call came to him to come to the fringes, to the American outback, to the frontier edges among the desperate, poor and sick, spiritually underfed immigrants in the U.S. 150 years ago. Conditions were bleak in the village of Fort Wayne. According to historian Lewis Spitz, life here was "primitive, and life expectancy was short." Dramatically, Sihler heard the words, "you must go!"

Hold these three words for yourselves, candidates and graduates: "You must go!" In your own way, you've likely already heard that call, but may I propose another level of awareness in the spirit of Sihler? Fort Wayne seminary nowadays represents a sort of center of theological, liturgical, and confessional sophistication. But even as you walk across this center stage today, remember how you were formed here to teach the faithful, to reach the lost, and to care for all.

Even as you walk across this center stage, you walk out into a world that's more like Sihler's world than you may first realize: a world of immense

¹ [President Obama spoke at the May 2009 commencement of the University of Notre Dame, an action protested by Roman Catholics who support the right-to-life movement. The Editors]

suffering; a world with H1N1; a world with an economy that, economic experts say, sucks; a world where, as the prophet Isaiah says, "Justice is turned back, righteousness stands at a distance, and truth stumbles in the public square" (Isa 59:14). But you must go! You must go toward this world. You cannot walk away *from* it; this world where ten million children under age five die each year from causes related to poverty, like measles, diarrhea, pneumonia, and malaria. You can ask Bishop Walter Obare, here with us today. He can tell you about family members dying from disease. He's had ten brothers and sisters die prematurely from malaria, ten from one mother! These are diseases that, we believe at Lutheran World Relief (LWR), are beatable and treatable; 27,000 children die a day from them, a football stadium full of young children who won't ever make it to their first confirmation class, dying every day—38 a minute, more than 250 since I've been talking. The "go" of the gospel includes these least, last, lost, "leftover" people living and dying on the fringes.

I have three daughters in college and a fourth who is not, but should be. This fourth regularly reminds me that one of the world's wealthiest men never completed his college education at Harvard. But not finishing college was not Bill Gates's biggest unfinished business; according to him, "I do have one big regret." The Microsoft man has remarked, "I left Harvard with no real awareness of the awful inequities in the world, the appalling disparities of health and wealth and opportunity that condemn millions to lives of despair." The Gates Foundation is now making a huge difference. And at LWR we work with them. But we desire to work *more* with you, also—with the church. Because you possess something special: You go into the world—as women and men—splashed in the strong name of the Three-Person God; therefore, the transcendent dignity of every human person is *not* a question for you. People living in oppression need your theology-on-the-go, and your theology, in order not to become docetic, needs them. The first phrase is, "you must go." Let those words from Sihler shake you into service.

The second three-word phrase is from Sihler's deathbed. His wife Susanna asked him, "Is there anything you'd like me to share with the children?" The octogenarian breathed out with one of his last breaths and told them to "abide in Christ." Abide in Christ is my second charge to you.

Abide—there's an archaic, quaint ring to that verb: "Might we abide together to view the NBA playoffs this eventide?" (Bring your ale!) People hang out, "chill" together. To "abide" connotes a sense of permanence, something more than casually skimming the surface. "Abide in Christ" implies an entwining, an immersion, a *perichoresis*, an embeddedness, going deep with God, who, like the poet said, is "the stranger who has loved you / all your life,

whom you ignored / for another, who knows you by heart."² Abiding is simply something God does because of who God is, whether we abide or not.

Abiding from *your* perspective, graduates, is something on which you and the Holy Spirit will have to work. To put a little spin on Alexander Pope's observation, I wish I had known the following when I graduated from seminary: "A little theological learning is a dangerous thing. / Drink deeply or touch not this Book of Concord spring. / For shallow drafts intoxicate the brain, / And drinking largely sobers us again." I am drinking more these days, so to speak, at least weekly at an altar, but I also now have blocks of time on my Outlook Calendar for thinking and praying, drinking contemplatively. Abiding takes time, because, as David Scaer reminds us, "For us Christians, there is never a time when faith is very far from the edge of unbelief. Satan never leaves us Christians alone, but each day works harder to take us away from Christ."³ And especially now for you, graduates.

Abiding in Christ means meditating on the cross, God's victory over human injustice, including the sins of marketeering schemes that misrepresent the mystery of God, like the Golgotha Fun Park in Kentucky featuring a "Bible-themed miniature golf course starting with the Creation at the first hole and ending with the Resurrection at the 18th."⁴

No! Abide with the man of suffering, born humbly in backwater Bethlehem, nurtured in blue-collar Nazareth, not Rome or Athens, crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem, in the words of Sihler again, recently translated by my friend, Matthew Harrison, an alum, who once sat where you now sit, and now spoken for the first time in public: "you will not only confess Christ with your mouth, but also be his disciple. . . . You are a lion in the Lord, but a lamb in your [own] matters. For only when you endure with Christ, shall you also rule with Christ. Only when you die with Christ, shall you also live with Christ."⁵

² Derek Walcott, "Love after Love," in *Sea Grapes* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), 66.

³ David P. Scaer, "Faith Driven to the Edge of Unbelief," *Concordia Pulpit Resources* 18 (Advent-Transfiguration, 2007-2008), 20.

⁴ Michiko Kakutani, "Almighty Empire: Surveying the Global Reach of Religion," a review of *God is Back* by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *New York Times*, March 31, 2009, C1 and C6.

⁵ For reasons of speech rhetoric, I offer in the second person what Harrison's original renders in the third person: "he would not merely confess Christ, but also be his disciple. He is a lion in the Lord, a lamb in his own matters. For only when he endures with Christ, shall he also rule with him. Only when he dies with Christ, shall he also live with him." "Address at the Dedication of the New Building at the Lutheran Preachers' Seminary at Fort Wayne," called the "Wolter House," on August 29, 1850. Given by Dr. W. Sihler, President of the Seminary, and translated by Matthew Harrison.

Yes, abide in Christ, Sihler tells his children, and tells us still, because apart from Christ we are nothing! "Apart from Christ we have no gifts, no worship, no sacrifice of our own to offer God."⁶ No power to bind up a blind and broken world. Abide, as women and men on a mission, going, as you must, like St. Patrick, singing:

I bind unto myself today
 The pow'r of God to hold and lead.
 His eye to watch, His might to stay,
 His ear to hearken to my need,
 The wisdom of my God to teach,
 His hand to guide, His shield to ward,
 The Word of God to give me speech,
 His heavenly host to be my guard.⁷

You must go. Abide in Christ! Thank you, congratulations, and God bless you!

John Nunes
 President and Chief Executive Officer
 Lutheran World Relief

The 10th Anniversary of the Luther Foundation Finland

The Luther Foundation Finland, founded in October 1999, celebrated its first ten years of operation on October 31, 2009. The goal of its work has been straightforward and simple: to form Lutheran communities (also called "koinonias") that provide a loving, social context, built around the gracious gifts of God given to us in the Divine Service.

The history thus far is characterized by rapid growth and controversy. In August 2000, the first koinonia began its work in Helsinki, led by a part-time pastor, Dean Juhana Pohjola. Today, the foundation operates in eighteen cities across Finland and has twelve workers, most of them pastors. Furthermore, quite a few retired pastors are helping the cause, raising the number of ministers serving congregations to over twenty. Sunday service attendance varies, depending on the city, between twenty and two hundred, with a total, country-wide weekly attendance of over a thousand Lutherans.

Although Juhana Pohjola was originally commissioned to his task by Olavi Rimpiläinen, the Bishop of Oulu (the last confessional bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), the Luther Foundation later found its way into headlines—and has stayed there ever since. In March 2004, the Bishop of the Helsinki diocese, Eero Huovinen, attended the service in Helsinki. Juhana, together with his colleague Sakari Korpinen, asked the

⁶ *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, III: 190.

⁷ *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 604, stanza 3.

bishop to abstain himself from the Holy Communion, on the grounds of doctrinal controversy. News of the incident spread rapidly, and the secular media, usually quite uninterested in ecclesial matters, made sure that soon thereafter almost everyone in Finland knew about the religious atrocities of the Luther Foundation.

The resulting scandal had a two-sided effect among the conservatives of the state church. Many of them felt that the Luther Foundation had “gone too far and too fast” and effectively turned their back on them. Others saw what happened as an encouraging example of how “someone is finally doing something!” The result of the media massacre was, in the end, a boost in the Luther Foundation’s work. More and more people contacted the new foundation, wanting to join in the work of building koinonias.

January 2005 saw a new phase begin when the Swedish Mission Province had its first bishop, Arne Olsson, consecrated by Kenyan Bishop Walter Obare. In the ordination service that followed, a Finn—among others—was ordained to the Holy Ministry, and thus the Luther Foundation received its first newly ordained pastor, Niko Vannasmaa. Already seven other men have been called to serve the church as pastors through these ordinations. The bishops of the state church recognize these as Lutheran pastors, albeit with no juridical rights to serve in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF).

This led to a new controversy in the spring of 2008, when Pastor Kalle Väättäinen baptized a child in his own koinonia. The local bishop, Wille Riekkinen, had already threatened Väättäinen with police intervention, should he try to do that. True to the duties of his office, however, Pastor Väättäinen realized he could not refuse if the members of his koinonia asked him to baptize their children. In the ensuing controversy, Dr. Risto Saarinen from Helsinki University even proposed that the baptism performed by the pastors ordained in the Mission Province might not be a real or “valid” baptism at all. Theologians both in Finland and abroad were shocked to hear that baptism “done by using water, in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit” might be considered null. Soon, however, the council of bishops had to give in, grudgingly, and the baptisms were recognized as true, Christian baptisms.

The Luther Foundation acquired its first realty in July 2008, when it purchased a business space in the Helsinki downtown area. Now, a year later, a koinonia center operates at Kalevankatu 53, offering space for a number of congregational meetings as well as the Luther Foundation’s first international koinonia, the International Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, shepherded by a Richard Ondicho, a Kenyan pastor.

From its beginning, the Luther Foundation has had close relations with the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF), and together they have published a great variety of confessional Lutheran literature in Finnish. Among the most notable projects is the translation and printing of Luther’s lectures on Genesis,

never before available in Finnish. LHF has also helped with the hymnal project, through which a number of new hymns are translated or composed for congregational use. This has opened a previously unknown treasure of American and British hymns to Finnish Lutherans, to whom the Scandinavian and German hymnology was more familiar.

"The American connection" is strong also in education and theology: four pastors (Matti Väisänen, Juhana Pohjola, Markus Pöyry, and Esko Murto) have at some point in their careers studied at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Many others have visited there. The theologians of the Luther Foundation have also had the pleasure of welcoming a number of their American colleagues in Finland.

While the cultural and religious atmosphere in Finland, as in all Scandinavian countries, constantly grows darker, the basic atmosphere in the Luther Foundation koinonias is hopeful, even enthusiastic. More and more people are coming into contact with sound and stable Lutheran congregational life, and the work goes forward. Alas, the need is constantly greater than the resources available, which especially calls for wise stewardship. Nevertheless, the trust that this is the path which is prepared for us is strong. *

Esko Murto
Pastor of St. Matthew's Koinonia
Hämeenlinna, Finland

[Esko Murto was a resident student at Concordia Theological Seminary in 2007-2008 and was later awarded the S.T.M. degree. The Editors]

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya's Statement on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Resolution on Same Sex Marriage

The General Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya issued their statement on September 25, 2009, in Kapenguria, on the decision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to roster among her clergy those who are in same sex marital unions.

We, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, have received with shock, dismay and disappointment, the news that the ELCA, in her Churchwide Assembly held on 21 August 2009, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, resolved officially to open the door of the office of the public ministry to those who are in "committed" same gender sexual relations. We, therefore, would like the general public, particularly the Church of Christ here in Kenya and elsewhere in the world, to take note of the following:

1. that the church body involved in this act (ELCA) is not associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya;

2. that we condemn in the strongest terms possible this unfortunate and anti-scriptural development in a church body that bears the name of the great reformer, Dr. Martin Luther;

3. that we condemn sexual perversion in all its manifestations;

4. that same sex marital union is not only contrary to God's will as clearly expressed in the Holy Scripture, but also repugnant to the natural created social order;

5. that God's plan and purpose of marriage is fulfilled *only* in heterosexual (one man-one woman) lifelong commitment;

6. that this act by the ELCA constitutes a loveless and callous disregard of the spiritual condition of those caught in homosexual bondage; and

7. that, most seriously of all, it is nothing less than a denial of the transformative power of the love we know in our Savior Jesus Christ, Who seeks all sinners in order to restore them to communion with the Father through the ministrations of His Holy Spirit in Word and sacrament.

Therefore, we must confess the Word of God and be faithful to it. In the name of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, we call upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to repent of its apostasy from the truth. We feel compassion for those among us who are caught in homosexual bondage and want them to know the transforming power of God's forgiveness and love. Thus we hereby dedicate ourselves anew into the service of Him Who came to serve us sinners, including those caught in homosexual bondage, and Who by the power of His cross and resurrection creates in us a new will to please Him in patterns of living that are chaste and pure. In saying these things, we are standing with our fellow redeemed in the great consensus of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, particularly with those church bodies in the International Lutheran Council. We acknowledge there are many Christians within the ELCA itself who are offended by the action of their church body, and we want them to be assured of our prayers and support.

Signed this 25th day of September 2009:

Rev. Bishop William Lopeta, North West Diocese

Rev. Bishop Richard Amayo, Lake Diocese

Rev. Bishop Thomas Asiago, South West Diocese

Most Rev. Dr. Walter Obare, Archbishop

Rev. John Halakhe, General Secretary

Message from the Meeting of the Baltic Lutheran Bishops

The leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania met in Tallinn on the 3rd and 4th of November, 2009 to strengthen the long experience of unity of the Lutheran churches in the Baltic countries and to pray for the fellowship among Christians of the whole world, recognizing that in our time the ties among and with Christian communities in many places are put to the test. Bishops also discussed tasks and responsibilities of their churches looking for better ways of co-operation in the future. Christian faith means living with Christ and serving one another.

Especially at times of economic difficulties when so many people have lost their external foothold and inner peace, we invite our compatriots to extend their appreciation of their Christian roots and to utilize all the spiritual wealth that is revealed in Holy Scripture and offered to everyone who turns to God and puts their trust in Christ. The present crisis of the world economy is a fruit of a long term failure to act accordingly to the principles which God has laid in the foundations of His creation. Consumerism and individualism of the modern society have taken their toll. To look for a solution only by means of mending the economy would mean to repeat the same mistake. A spiritual renewal must come first, a renewed sense of balance between rights and obligations, communion empathy, solidarity, and mutual support. We believe that the most convincing inner motivation for that change is found in an encounter of a person with the living Christ. To facilitate that encounter by word and deed is the first and foremost calling of the Christian church. Jesus Christ said: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20).

The Christian community as a part of the society is not separated from issues related to the natural and human environment both locally and globally. Justice in the society, life quality of the people, or protection of our Baltic Sea against the state negligence and corporate exploitation are some of the critical examples of this area of concern. As communities gathered around the Word of God and the keepers of the Christian ethos, our churches must address the spiritual root-causes of the contemporary problems. The churches must remember that the main instrument entrusted to them by God is His word—the law and the gospel—and the service to the neighbor in charity.

We also invite our political powers to realize more clearly the spiritual dimension of the human life and the good fruits of a positive co-operation between state, municipalities, schools, and the church. Teaching and implementing Christian principles strengthen the family as well as the whole community. Liberty of conscience and freedom of speech belong to the values of society defining religious life not only as private but also as a public social

right which has to be fostered. Religious education and religious studies form an inseparable part of this right.

At the present time, a common witness of churches is vitally important. Therefore, we express our deepest concern about modern tendencies that weaken the fellowship among Christians and cause divisions among churches. The recent decisions made by some member churches of the Lutheran World Federation to approve of religious matrimony for couples of the same gender and to equate such conjugal life with marriage or to ordain non-celibate homosexual persons for pastoral or episcopal office epitomize these tendencies that are tearing apart fellowship among Christians. We affirm that marriage is the conjugal life between a man and a woman and that homosexual activity is incompatible with the discipleship of Christ. We believe that in following the modern trends, churches are departing from the apostolic doctrine of human sexuality and marriage. We see the Lutheran communion and ecumenical efforts endangered by such decisions and actions because they lead to a situation where the Lutheran churches, members of the Lutheran World Federation, are not able to fully recognize each other's ecclesiastical offices, to exchange ministries and participate together in preaching the Word and celebrating the sacraments.

We call upon our Lutheran sisters and brothers to unity and co-operation based on the foundation of Holy Scripture and loyalty to the Lutheran confessions. Contemporary challenges demand a firm stand based upon timeless truths and values. The common understanding of the Gospel by churches is a treasure we cannot afford to lose and it needs to be passed on to the current and future generations. Our mission is to be faithful in that which we have received, God's mercy. We are to serve our Lord and our neighbors thus until we *all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God* (Eph 4:13).

Archbishop of Riga, Janis Vangas, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
Bishop of Daugavpils, Einars Alpe, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
Bishop of Liepaja, Pavils Bruvers, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania
Archbishop Andres Poder, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Archbishop emeritus Kuno Pajula, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Bishop Einar Soone, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

**On the Nature of Confessional Subscription:
An Explanation on the Action of the Missouri Synod
at New Orleans in July 1973**

[Although written shortly after the 1973 LCMS Convention, this piece was retrieved from the seminary archives and has ongoing relevance especially in light of the article on J.A.O. Preus in this issue. The Editors]

The action of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's convention at New Orleans in the summer of 1973 has raised again the questions of how confessions are made and what is the binding nature of confessions in regard to their origins. The problem most specifically facing many pastors and congregations is how it is possible for one man, in this case, President J.A.O. Preus, or one convention, in this case, the New Orleans convention, to make binding doctrinal or confessional statements. The controversy centers specifically around two actions of the LCMS. The first is the right of the LCMS to adopt or pass binding statements. The second is the action of the LCMS to accept President Preus's *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* (hereafter, *A Statement*) "as deriving its authority from the Word of God." A greater majority recognized the right of the LCMS to pass or make binding resolutions (653-381) than recognized Preus's statement as being such a binding resolution (562-455).

The New York Times (Saturday, July 21, 1973) expressed the feelings of many in stating that with such actions the Lutherans were acting like the Church of Rome from which Luther broke four and a half centuries ago. *Newsweek* made a similar comparison. Many Missourians have concluded that President Preus was "adding" to the Lutheran Confessions or becoming more of a pope than the Bishop of Rome himself. In the midst of such an electrified climate, a few brief words on what confessions mean might be helpful to those who want to shed some light on a confusing situation.

As I have observed the matter in the Missouri Synod, there is a point of view which exists within Lutheranism but which fails to live up to the real intent of Lutheranism. As it has been intimated that President Preus is a pope, it might be best to see what the Church of Rome does teach in regard to doctrinal formulation.

The Roman Catholic Church recognizes three ways in which doctrine may be established and, therefore, be considered binding: first, all of the bishops assembled together in "ecumenical" council; second, the universal or ecumenical consensus of the church; third, the pope. According to the procedures of the Church of Rome, these three different ways never work independently, but together. Some examples will suffice. Before the dogma on the Assumption of Mary was proclaimed, argumentation from history and from the contemporary situation was submitted to show that the pope was simply proclaiming that which was already believed. The evidence offered

might be contested, but this was the approach. Even the infallibility of the pope was endorsed by a council, Vatican I, and there was an attempt to get all dissenters eventually to endorse this action. Vatican II is another example of where the pope endorsed the actions of a universal meeting of the bishops in communion with him.

Strange as it might seem, some ideas basic to Roman Catholicism are found in all corners of Lutheranism. It appears hypothetically like this: "The Missouri Synod cannot formulate doctrine or issue a new binding confession because it is only one segment of Lutheranism. A gathering of world-wide Lutheranism could take such action, but not the Missouri Synod." A few comments on this view are necessary.

There is no guarantee that a convention or conference representing all Lutherans or all Christians would arrive closer to the truth than one man (SD X). It would truly be non-Lutheran to state that even the action of the Missouri Synod was true simply *because* the Missouri Synod did it. No group or man is per se the guarantor of the truth. There are cases when one man has been right and all others have been dead wrong. Luther!

It would not be difficult to demonstrate from the history of Lutheranism where one man in and of himself was recognized as the standard of the truth, though there is no reason to indicate that we would ever be immune from the possibility. There are cases where the individual writings of one man have been recognized as confessionally valued by others. All of the Lutheran Confessions, with the exception of the Formula of Concord, were individual productions by either Melanchthon or Luther. Lutherans have never said that the writings of these men were per se always true. Melanchthon is a case in point where one man was right once and wrong in another instance. Melanchthon is the author the Augustana, the Apology, and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, but later his ideas are condemned in the Formula. Lutherans who unwittingly had endorsed Melanchthon's *Variata* retracted from a deficient confessional formula.

The false concept afloat in Lutheranism is that somehow all Lutherans or their representatives can get closer to the truth than one man or one segment of Lutheranism. This is of course only a Roman Catholic view with the outward trappings of Lutheranism. In addition, such a "conciliar" view of the origin of doctrine works on the unfounded presupposition that "Lutheranism" is a recognizable, unified entity and that synods are parts of the greater whole. There is no agreed definition of what it means to be "Lutheran" by those who are called by this name. Therefore there is at best a unity in nomenclature. To put it bluntly, in reality there is no whole in Lutheranism of which there could possibly be parts. At best we have a good sense of ecclesiastical equivocation. For those who have had difficulty following this argument, maybe this example would be helpful. A convention of the Lutheran World Federation, because it represents a larger segment of those who call themselves

"Lutheran," does not necessarily come closer to the truth than a church which claims only ten thousand members. If numbers did indeed determine truth, then Rome has the most truth.

Any argument against *A Statement* which suggests because Missouri "goes it alone," therefore Missouri cannot be right or cannot expect others to hold to her opinions is totally without warrant. The history of Christendom is replete with examples of where one church, a minority, held to the truth, over against a majority of churches, which eventually were found in error.

Arguments against adoption of *A Statement* seem contradictory or, at best, lacking in uniformity. The charge that Preus is some type of "Lutheran pope" because he issued the statement seems to conflict with the reality that it was not Preus who made it synodical policy, but the synod itself in a regularly scheduled convention. Still the charge of popery or papism against Preus should be studied for a moment. Basically the charge is this. No one man or individual has the right to issue a confession which is binding on others. There is some basic lack of clarity in the charge that should be cleared up before further examination. While Preus issued the statement, it was the convention that accepted the statement as a valid expression of the Missouri Synod's faith.

Now the question is this: Can one man write a confession? If the answer is not affirmative, then even those who have protested Preus's action on this very basis will find themselves in the very embarrassing position of being with very few confessions, if any at all. The Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Augustana, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, the Small and Large Catechisms, each had one basic author! Multiple authorship accounts for the Formula of Concord, but the sections were individually assigned and written. The only creed left is the Apostles' Creed, whose authorship in its present form is not known, but it may be ascertained with near certainty that it is not the product of a council or other synodical group. In addition to the near-total elimination of the historical classical creeds under the principle that one man cannot issue a creed, doubt would have to be cast on the initial Petrine confession (Matt 16) "Thou art the Christ," because it was spoken by one man. Peter at this time did not speak from the authority of his apostolic office—and hence not that type of inspiration associated with the biblical writing—but from the same type of Spirit motivation that instigates all Christians to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. He spoke from faith, and not from the supervisory authority by which he was later to lead the church. It might even be safe to say that all great confessions of the church are produced by individuals first. It therefore becomes apparent that on the basis of the Biblical and historical witness the charge of papism cannot be leveled against Preus simply because the church convention endorsed his statement as an expression of its own faith. Lutherans could hardly be Lutherans if by principle we stated that one man could not express the faith of the whole community.

The charge of papism could only be sustained against Preus if it could be demonstrated that his statement was issued without sufficient biblical warrant. A charge of papism is in order if it can be shown that Preus said that the statement is true because he issued it. But this is hardly the case with Preus. On the contrary, the LCMS has had opportunity to react to it. Each confessing Christian is under obligation to point out specific errors where *A Statement* may be in error and call this immediately to the attention of Preus and to the LCMS. This is perfectly in order and in fact demanded, because it is a public document. Charges against the tone of this or any document are simply too nebulous. Charges must deal with specific statements which are contrary to fact in regard to the Bible. For the sake of witness, it would also have to be shown how a given Lutheran confessional principle is contradicted. But this has not been the case so far. Charges deal with Preus's right to issue a confession and not with specific charges in regard to the content. Matters of punctuation, phrasing, spelling, and other related matters should be speedily noted, reported, and corrected. Grammar is important, but confessional discussions should not degenerate into secretarial nit-picking. Preus has issued materials providing evidence to show why he believes that the document is founded in the Bible and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions. His opponents have managed to smother any legitimate criticisms they might have had by a cloud of rhetoric. Two criticisms, however, do seem to come through at times in regard to *A Statement*. The first is that *A Statement* is not complete. The second is that *A Statement* adds to or replaces the historic Lutheran Confessions.

The charge of completeness is shallow and in principle would invalidate all present confessions. No confession is complete in the sense that each and every possible biblical truth revealed by God is confessed. Dogmatical texts come closer to covering all points in greater detail. Since it is the nature of confessions that they reflect in some way the situation in which they arise and since the world has not yet come to an end, it is impossible from the very nature of confessions that they be exhaustive. Shall we deprive posterity of any and all rights to make confessions? Also since confessions reflect primarily the current dilemmas and past ones in retrospect, it is not satisfactory to criticize a confession because an historical factor, prominent in a past era, is not elucidated more fully in the newer confessions. In the specific Lutheran Confessions, the matter of the Trinity receives comparatively scant attention. If these lacunae are legitimate grounds for criticism, then not one of our present confessions can stand. A lacuna in a confession is only confessionally significant if the point which is overlooked has been one of doctrinal contention. Then this is a serious matter.

Now the second charge. To criticize Preus on the charge that he has added to the Lutheran Confessions also indicates an additional lack of understanding of what confessions are. The church does not add confessions in the sense that it sticks one more out on a string. The preface to the Solid Declaration is also

apropos in the matter of Preus's Statement. Newer confessions grow out of older ones and explicate them. The confession that Jesus was the Lord was not an addition but a further explanation of the Shema of Israel that the Lord God was one Lord. The Apostles' Creed follows the New Testament in the same way. This is the way that the Lutheran Confessions want to stand in regard to the earlier catholic creeds. The church will cease to be the church if she relegates the tasks of confessing its faith to the historical past. It is the glorification, yes, the deification of history to state that even though the Christians in the past could confess the truth to their situations, Christians today *cannot*. To assert that "confessionalism" was an attribute of the fourth or sixteenth century is either to canonize these centuries, putting them on the level of the apostles, or to condemn our century to a hopeless search for the truth, always approximating but never attaining.

What then should be the posture of Missouri Synod members and indeed of all interested Christians throughout the world to Preus's *A Statement*? The action of the LCMS in making *A Statement* an expression of the Missouri Synod's faith does give the writing a more important position than what it occupied before the action was taken. While some, if not most, of the productions of theological leaders may be ignored, a statement formalized by a prominent denomination may not be ignored. The Presbyterian Confession of 1967 demands more attention than for example this essay since it states the position of a larger number of people. More is at stake, more is involved. Missouri Synod members and others interested must examine Preus's *A Statement* to see if the document is in accord with the Holy Scriptures. Without sounding disrespectful of our Lutheran heritage, it must be subjected to the same scrutiny as we subject our historic confessions. The age of a document is no guarantee of its reliability. If after careful examination of Preus's statement (or the Lutheran Confessions, for that matter) we find things which are contrary to the Bible, then we are obligated by the Bible to bring this to the attention of the church. If it is a correct and valid reflection of the biblical revelation, then we are under obligation to endorse it—regardless of the origin of the document. Confessions attain and maintain their validity not by their author or origin, but by their witness to the biblical revelation. If confessional unity is to be attained in the Missouri Synod at least, then this principle of perpetual scrutiny must be scrupulously employed. If the principle is avoided then we may safely assume without prejudice that unity in doctrine or confessions is not really a desired goal.

Some say that it is tyranny to demand subscription to another confession, especially one written by one man. Some of these matters have been treated above. If in a matter of controversy, a confession (this is what *A Statement* is) is prepared that speaks to the issue, then we should willingly submit ourselves to the document. If such a document is contrary to the word of God, then we are conscience bound to indicate this. Issuing *A Statement* is not per se contrary to the word of God. In fact it is demanded. Some statements maintain an

operative validity only for as long as a problem persists in the church. Some problems are more parochial in scope than others and thus confessions arising from these situations will of course be limited by time and place. Other problems are near universal in their scope. The eventual fate of Preus's *A Statement* cannot now be predicted with certainty. For each confession accepted on a wider scale there are many others whose truth content is no less which are lost in the sands of time. The major problem confronted by Preus's statement is whether or not the Bible is historically reliable. This is not a parochial problem limited to the Missouri Synod. The problem is near universal in embracing all corners of Christendom and has been around in the church for about two hundred years. Preus is responding to a truly ecumenical or catholic problem to which other churches should have responded and failed. What the ultimate confessional outcome of this problem will be cannot be predicted now, but at least Preus's *A Statement* will be recognized as one of those documents that either became a confession or became part of the family tree of confessions still to be written. This is indeed an honor also conferred on many prominent documents.

David P. Scaer

Twenty Years Later—Things Have Not Changed That Much

Readers with copies of the January-April 1989 issue of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* on their shelves might find that the contents may be as useful today as they were then. Printed in the back are faculty overtures to the Wichita Convention "To Encourage Use of the Historic Liturgies of the Church"; "To Maintain the Practice of Close Communion"; "To Affirm the Divinity of the Call"; "To Seek and Determine Alternate Routes into the Ministry"; "To Clarify Status with the ELCA and Welcome Confessional Pastors of the ELCA"; "To Reject 'Renewal in Missouri'"; "To Resist the Intrusion of Feminist Theology and Language"; and "To Fund the Association of Confessional Lutheran Seminaries." Perhaps the only thing that has really changed is that with our current associate editor, dates of the issue of the *CTQ* are more likely to correspond with real time, but since a reprint of the issue would be as meaningful in 2009 as it was in 1989, *CTQ* arrival in the mailbox may not be all that crucial. The Association of Confessional Lutheran Seminaries was dissolved at a September 1989 meeting of International Lutheran Conference in Seoul, Korea, and was reconstituted a few years later. Differences about liturgies, who may receive communion, and the office of the ministry persist. Alternate routes to the ministry are already in place. Feminist language is used in the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible and in some churches. The CTCR has subsequently addressed this issue in *Biblical Revelation and Inclusive Language*, A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (February 1998). A few ELCA pastors have found their way into the LCMS, but this

hardly qualified as major hemorrhaging. Things have changed with the September 25–26, 2009, meeting in Fishers, Indiana, of CORE, a group of ELCA pastors and laity who are opposed to the decisions of its August 2009 Minneapolis convention on ordaining homosexual pastors and blessing same-sex unions. Represented in CORE are multifaceted theologies and practices that will require attention by the LCMS officials, but pastors and congregations on the local level are probably already responding to concerns raised by their ELCA counterparts. The ELCA and its counterpart in Canada were a union of approximately seventy-five percent of all Lutherans in North America. What our faculty said twenty years ago still has value in that we recognize ELCA pastors who are “the spiritual heirs of confessionally faithful teachers like Charles Porterfield Krauth” and that the Colloquy Board and others entrusted with these responsibilities “at their discretion adjust the colloquy requirements to ease entry of such men into the ministerium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.” Their congregations would also be welcome, but the formation of their own synod might have advantages for all. Now what about the articles in the issue that presented these resolutions? Walter A. Maier wrote on charismatic renewal in the Lutheran church, John Stephenson wrote on “Open Versus Close Communion,” and the undersigned wrote one on the feminization of worship in ordaining women. The seminary does not have enough copies for those who were ordained since 1989, but some of you might borrow a copy from older neighboring pastors. This offer is also open to ELCA pastors and laity. Individual parts of the issue are now available electronically at <http://media.ctsfw.edu/>.

David P. Scaer

Johann Georg Hamann: Retrieval of a Post-Enlightenment Thinker

Hunter College in Manhattan was the venue for an international conference on Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) on March 20–21, 2009, dedicated to the exploration of the legacy of this eighteenth-century Lutheran philosopher from Königsberg. Hamann has remained something of an enigma, identified by Isaiah Berlin as a modern irrationalist and often dismissed as a minor figure in comparison with his contemporaries G.E. Lessing, Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and David Hume. Yet Kierkegaard called him “the greatest humorist in Christendom,” which is to say “the greatest humorist in the world.” John Betz argues that Hamann prefigures Kierkegaard and is, in fact, in many ways to be preferred to him as a critic of the Enlightenment (see John Betz, “Hamann Before Kierkegaard: A Systematic Theological Oversight,” in *Pro Ecclesia*, Summer 2007, 299–333). Hamann would exert influence on the confessional revival that would emerge in the century after his death. Lowell Green identifies him as a forerunner of the Erlangen School. He is quoted favorably by C.F.W. Walther.

The conference itself was an exercise in interdisciplinary research with theologians, philosophers, and literary critics addressing multiple dimensions of Hamann's life and work. John Betz (Loyola) located Hamann within the history of ideas, drawing on his recently published *After Enlightenment: Hamann as Post-Secularist Visionary* (Blackwell, 2008). Gwen Griffith-Dickson (King's College) probed Hamann's relationship to the Personalist Tradition. Katie Terezakis (Rochester Institute of Technology) took up the question, is "Theology Possible After Hamann?" which she answered in the negative. Oswald Bayer (Tübingen) delivered the keynote address: "God as Author: The Theological Foundation of Hamann's *Autorpoetik*." Kenneth Haynes (Brown), the editor of Hamann's *Writings on Philosophy and Language* published in the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, examined "Tradition and Testimony in Hamann," while Manfred Kuehn (Boston) contrasted Hamann with Kant and Hume on reason. Johannes von Lüpke (Wuppertal), a Lutheran professor of systematic theology and Director of the *Internationales Hamann-Kolloquium*, demonstrated Hamann's dependence on classical Lutheran themes for his understanding of the Word of God. Two panel discussions featuring scholars who did not present full papers took up a variety of questions in Hamann scholarship, ranging from Hamann's linguistic philosophy to his Christology, his impact on German Romantic drama to his fables of dismemberment. The papers, along with the panel-discussion presentations, will be published under the editorship of the convener of the conference, Professor Lisa Marie Anderson, by Northwestern University Press.

Hamann did not see himself as a theologian but as a "Philologus crucis," a philologist of the cross. Hamann's ongoing significance for contemporary Lutheran theology has been most articulately argued by Oswald Bayer. Several of Bayer's books recently translated into English make use of Hamann in arguing that Hamann was no irrationalist but a radical Enlightenment thinker who turned away from the dogmatism of reason to the Triune God, who addresses the creature through fellow creatures. Holy Scripture is not a text to be interpreted but a divine text which interprets the hearer. The imprint of Hamann is evident in Bayer's *Theology the Lutheran Way* (Eerdmans, 2007), *Freedom in Response--Lutheran Ethics: Sources and Controversies* (Oxford), and numerous articles, including "Hermeneutical Theology," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003), 131-147, and "God as Author of My Life-History," in *Lutheran Quarterly* 2 (1988), 437-456. Bayer has also authored an introduction to Hamann written for a general audience under the title *Zeitgenosse im Widerspruch: Johann Georg Hamann als radikaler Aufklärer*. This work has been translated into English by Mark Mattes and Roy Harrisville and will be published in the near future. Hamann's work, mediated by Bayer, has much to offer Lutherans in a postmodern context. The conference at Hunter College laid a good foundation for a broader discussion and appropriation of his legacy.

Latin Lives On

Integral to the well-being of the church on earth is the contribution of the languages—Hebrew, Greek, Latin—for the preaching of Christ crucified, risen, and ascended. Concordia Theological Seminary is pleased, therefore, to offer “Lutheranism and the Classics,” to be held on campus October 1–2, 2010. The goal of this conference is to consider how the classical languages have influenced Lutheranism in the past and how Greek and Latin are poised to enrich church, academy, and culture in both the present and the future. The conference features three plenary papers, a banquet address, and twelve sectional presenters who will deliver shorter papers related to three tracks: Academic, Classical Education, and Concordia (sectional papers will be presented twice). Latin will be used in three worship settings. The presentation by representatives of the John Burroughs School (St. Louis, Missouri) is intended especially for classical educators. Attendees can expect to leave the conference with an awareness of how important the classical languages are for keeping the Lutheran church vital in the world and for the propagation of the faith to present and future generations. Those interested in attending may register online at www.ctsfw.edu/classics.

Lutheran interest in the classical languages also continues to flourish beyond the CTS community: a new Latin e-mail discussion group on the Lutheran confessions, *Confessionum Lutheranarum Studiosi*, has recently been founded, and others are invited to join. The purpose of the group is to have a place where the confessions of our church can be discussed in Latin, the language in which many of them were written, as were so many other theological treasures that have yet to be translated. Discussions are solely in Latin and are not to be corrected unless requested by the writer. Those who wish to observe without directly participating are welcome. Also provided are web pages aiding in Latin conversation and composition and listing Latin editions of the Book of Concord. Colloquium leaders are Jon Bruss, Benjamin Mayes, and Josh Hayes. Information on the group can be found at <http://groups.google.com/group/confessionum-lutheranarum-studiosi>.

John G. Nordling

Errata

There were a few Hebrew and Greek words that were scrambled due to a font transfer problem in the printed version of Reinhard Slenczka, “Agreement and Disagreement about Justification: Ten Years after the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*,” CTQ 73:4 (October 2009): 291–316. We apologize for this error. A version of this article with the correct fonts is available at <http://media.ctsfw.edu/>. The Editors