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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

CTQ 76 (2012): 335–337

Research Notes

The *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*: A Modern Forgery?

Two newspaper articles published on September 18, 2012, broke a story that prompted a lot of buzz in the media.[1] Karen L. King, the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School and a specialist in early Christianity and Gnosticism, shared evidence with both the general public and scholars about a small fragment of papyrus, dated to the 4th century A.D. and measuring about 1.5 inches by 3 inches, with a Coptic text on it that when translated reads (brackets indicate text is missing or reconstructed):

] "not [to] me. My mother gave to me li[fe . . ."
] The disciples said to Jesus, "[
] deny. Mary is worthy of it [
] . . . ." Jesus said to them, "My wife [
] . . . she will be able to be my disciple . . .[
] Let wicked people swell up . . . [
] As for me, I dwell with her in order to [
] an image [

Because there is no extant document containing this precise text of supposed teaching by Jesus that mentions his "wife," King provocatively titled it the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* and immediately set off some speculation that Jesus was indeed married or at least some "early Christians" taught so.[2] To her credit and unlike the shroud of secrecy surrounding the announcement of the *Gospel of Judas* just a few years ago, King released a high-resolution photograph of the fragment[3] and the pre-publication version of an extensive article detailing her research that is scheduled to be published in *Harvard Theological Review* 106:1 (January 2013).[4] It is noteworthy that the third sentence of her article addresses speculation head-on: "It [this fragment] does *not,*

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[1] Laurie Goodstein, "A Faded Piece of Papyrus Refers to Jesus' Wife, *New York Times*, and Lisa Wangsness, "Harvard Professor identifies scrap of papyrus suggesting some early Christians believed Jesus was married," *Boston Globe*.

[2] For example, the conclusion that "Jesus was married" has been drawn by Simcha Jacobovici, known especially for the film *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* that premiered on PBS (March 7, 2007); see http://www.simchajtv.com/jesus-was-married-something-has-changed/ (accessed September 20, 2012). For my response to *The Lost Tomb of Jesus,* see *CTQ* 71 (2007): 199-200. Jacobovici was also produced the film *The Resurrection Tomb Mystery* and has co-authored two related books: *The Jesus Family Tomb* with Charles Pellegrino (New York: HarperCollins, 2007) and *The Jesus Discovery* with James Tabor (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012). The conclusion that "some early Christians believed Jesus was married," taken from the title of the *Boston Globe* article mentioned in note 1, can also be misleading unless it is understood that "Christians" is being used in a very broad sense because the fragment may have been written by Gnostic "Christians" whom orthodox Christians condemned as heretics.

[3] http://news.hds.harvard.edu/files/papyrus_front_lg.jpg (accessed 19 September 2012).

[4] Karen L. King, "Jesus said to them, 'My Wife . . . : A New Coptic Gospel Papyrus," http: //news. hds.harvard.edu/files/King_JesusSaidToThem_draft_0917.pdf (accessed September 19, 2012).

however, provide evidence that the historical Jesus was married, given the late date of the fragment and the probable date of original composition only in the second half of the second century."[5] The release of this information to the general public coincided with her announcement of the find to the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies that was meeting in Rome.

Even with such a limited amount of text, King theorized that the ideas set forth in this fragment indicate that it may have been part of a Gnostic document. Gnosticism is a broad label given to the teaching of various sectarian "Christians" who denied central truths of Christianity such as Jesus' death for the atonement of sins, and in its place taught, among other things, salvation through esoteric knowledge ("gnosis") supposedly given by Jesus but often drawn in part from Platonic philosophy. The teachings and writings of various Gnostic groups posed a significant challenge in the 2nd through the 4th century and were regularly condemned as heretical by Christian leaders familiar with their teachings, such as Irenaeus, who wrote primarily in the last three decades of the 2nd century. The discussion concerning the worthiness of "Mary" (probably Mary Magdalene) to be a disciple of Jesus in the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* does seem similar to texts found in some Gnostic documents also written in Coptic, like the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Mary*, and the *Gospel of Philip*. King's research demonstrates a probable relationship between the ideas expressed in this fragment with the ideas expressed in these Gnostic Gospels.

In spite of the fanfare with which this fragment was announced, widespread doubts among scholars about the authenticity of this text quickly surfaced. Although the dating of this papyrus fragment to the 4th century A.D. has been confirmed by two papyrologists, the ink has not been tested to confirm that it is consistent with ink used in documents of a similar age. Furthermore, hardly anything is known about the history of this fragment. With some finds, like the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Nag Hammadi Codices, the manuscripts that came to the attention of scholars could be traced back to where they were actually discovered. What is known about this fragment's history prior to an antiquities dealer delivering it to King for evaluation in December 2011 is pitifully little. It is noteworthy that some Coptic scholars at the international congress who examined the fragment thought it was a forgery; even a non-specialist like me was suspicious when the Coptic proclitic pronoun translated "my" in "my wife" appears darker than the rest of the text.

Within hours of the release of the photograph of the fragment, several scholars began blogging and conferring about this text. Francis Watson of Durham University was among the first to propose that the text was a modern forgery constructed out of words and phrases from a genuinely ancient text. On October 11, 2012, Andrew Bernhard of Oxford University posted his study that convincingly demonstrates that almost every word from the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* can be found in different portions of the *Gospel of Thomas*.[6] Especially noteworthy is the fact that he attributes several particularities in the Coptic of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*, including an odd omission of

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[5] King, "New Coptic Gospel Papyrus," 1.

[6] Andrew Berhard, "How *The Gospel of Jesus's Wife* Might Have Been Forged: A Tentative Proposal," http://www.gospels.net/gjw/mighthavebeenforged.pdf (accessed 25 October 2012).

a letter, to the fact that the forger used an online Coptic-English interlinear version of the *Gospel of Thomas* originally posted in 1997 that contains a typo that appears to have been copied into the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*. The only detail of the text not found in the *Gospel of Thomas* is the proclitic pronoun translated "my" in the phrase "my wife"; this was probably added by the forger to create more interest in the text. Therefore, although the piece of papyrus upon which the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* is written appears to be from the 4th century A.D., its Coptic text was probably written on it after 1997.

This forgery teaches a good lesson. Where should we look for reliable historical evidence about Jesus, including his marital status? There are four first-century Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—whose testimony was proclaimed and written while eyewitnesses were still alive and whose Greek text is widely attested by many 2nd- through 7th-century papyri manuscripts as well as some 4th- and 5th-century parchment manuscripts that contain the complete text or most of the text of these books. These Gospels testify prominently to many aspects of Jesus' humanity, including that he was known as Joseph's son, had a mother, had brothers, attended weddings, supported life-long marriage, and had several women who were among his wider group of disciples but not one of the twelve apostles. Especially helpful for the study of these women is Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). There is no historical evidence in these Gospels, however, that Jesus was married to a woman. If he would have been, the result would have been a wife and a child (or children) who would have attracted significant attention worthy of mention after his resurrection and ascension. Instead, it appears historically probable that the only "bride" Jesus ever had is the church (Eph 5:25–32; Rev 19:7–8).

Charles A. Gieschen

This is a revised and updated version of the brief analysis of this fragment distributed electronically via the seminary website on September 21, 2012. Gieschen's studies at the University of Michigan (Ph.D., 1995) included the Coptic language and Gnostic writings. The Editors

CTQ 76 (2012): 338–358

Theological Observer

Notes on the NIV

Recently the staff of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations released an opinion concerning the New International Version (2011), an updated version of the popular NIV translation that was first published in the 1970s. In their opinion, this gender-neutral version exhibits "a serious theological weakness and a misguided attempt to make the truth of God's Word more easily understood." The opinion goes on to explain that "the use of inclusive language in NIV 2011 creates the potential for minimizing the particularity of biblical revelation." While the opinion makes clear that this is not an official judgment on this revision of the NIV as a Bible translation per se, it recommends against its use as a text for the reading of Holy Scripture in corporate worship or as a Bible version generally recommended for use by the laity.

This development should not come as a surprise to congregations in the LCMS. When work on *Lutheran Service Book* began in 1999, the Commission on Worship established a separate Translations Committee to examine the issue of Bible translation and other language issues. Already then, Zondervan, the publisher of the NIV, was field testing in Great Britain an updated version of its signature translation. The Commission on Worship did not want to be in the position of choosing to retain the NIV translation for the new hymnal only to discover at a later date that Zondervan was moving on and no longer supporting the original NIV translation. That day, evidently, has now arrived.

The primary concern of the Translations Committee, however, was not whether a given translation would later be supported by the publisher. Rather, the committee focused on choosing the best translation among the many modern versions that were available. From the outset, it was clear to the committee that there is no perfect translation. Inherent weaknesses in the NIV, however, compelled the committee to search for an alternative. Please understand: it's not that the NIV was a bad translation. Its readability made it a favorite of many. But there were blatant mistakes, such as the translation of Acts 3:21 that securely locks Jesus up in a Calvinist heaven ("He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything")! More insidious, however, was the NIV's penchant for leaving out the many conjunctions of the Greek text. That was the tradeoff the translators of the NIV made in order to achieve a more readable text. But therein lies the problem: conjunctions are important! Without the conjunctions, for example, the theological arguments that St. Paul sets forth in his epistles begin to unravel. When a conclusion that Paul reaches is dependent on the points he has previously given, the conjunctions are there to make that connection explicit. (This insight was

brought to my attention by Dr. Jerald Joersz, a former staff member of the CTCR, who once told me that the more he worked with the NIV, the less satisfied he became with it.)

The casual reader of the NIV text—even the more serious student of Scripture—more often than not has no idea that such liberties have been taken with the text. If a translator is willing to sacrifice conjunctions for the sake of readability, the reader has to wonder what else might be missing. This is one reason why the Lutheran Church has always insisted that her pastors study the original languages of Greek and Hebrew. Pastors need to wrestle with the intricacies of the biblical text. But so do the people of God! This concern was at the heart of the Translation Committee's endeavor to select the best translation for this time and place in our history. That search eventually led to the choice of the English Standard Version (ESV), a conservative revision of the Revised Standard Version (RSV). To be sure, the ESV is not perfect, either. The committee was, for example, more than a little disappointed when in the final version of the ESV the Hebrew noun *mishpatim* was translated as "rules," an editorial decision that was apparently made very late in the process. Crossway Bible, the publisher of the ESV, later gave the LCMS permission to substitute the translation "just decrees" wherever this occurred in the *LSB* Psalter and in the lectionary readings. (It is a disappointing that the same substitution was not retained in later resources, such as CPH's *Treasury of Daily Prayer* and *The Lutheran Study Bible*.)

Why is this important for us today? After the publication of *LSB* and its companion resources, the Commission on Worship received anecdotal reports that some congregations were choosing to retain the NIV instead of transitioning to the ESV as provided in the *LSB* lectionaries. Concordia Publishing House even received requests that the NIV text be included in *Lutheran Service Builder* as an optional translation. With Zondervan's recent announcement that they are no longer supporting the original version of the NIV translation—including granting permission for reprinting the text—congregations still using the original NIV translation are left with one of several choices. One option is to transition to NIV (2011), the concerns of the CTCR notwithstanding. Another is to make the move to the ESV as it is provided in the LSB lectionaries and in *Lutheran Service Builder*. Or, lastly, congregations can continue using the original NIV, though they will no longer be able to reprint the biblical text in their bulletins or project it on a screen. Of course, they could continue doing just that, though it would be in violation of the publisher's wishes and copyright law. Last I checked, however, the Bible has something to say about that as well, no matter the translation.

Paul Grime

The Digital 17th Century

The 17th century, the age of Lutheran Orthodoxy, now comes close to everybody with a high speed internet connection. The digitalization of books continues on a rapid pace. Thus, books that would be available only in specialized research libraries and inaccessible to most pastors and students can now be present on one's computer screen. Many readers will be familiar with Google's program to digitize any book ever printed. But there is also a German portal which serves as a catalogue for German books digitized by German libraries. This makes available many more books than are on Google books. For the pastor interested in classical Lutheran theology, the URL www.zvdd.de puts at his fingertips a huge library of publications from the age of Orthodoxy. The texts, in PFD format, can be downloaded for scholarly purposes, though there is as of yet no search function. Of course, the theological task is much more than mere repristination. But the theological enterprise neglects the fathers to its own detriment. There is much to be learned from them for the present theological debate.

The language barrier, however, remains problematic. Even though Concordia Publishing House does the church a favor by publishing translations of Gerhard and Chemnitz, most of the material of the age of classical Lutheranism is not and probably never will be translated into English. Latin, though once the universal language of scholarship, is not high on list of many modern curricula. Lutherans should have an interest in promoting the learning of Latin as a means to connect with an important part of their history. The availability of so many resources in Latin in a digital format refutes the charge that Latin has no use. There are more books in Latin readily accessible than ever. The 17th century is present on your screen. Click and read!

Roland Ziegler

Preparing the First English Edition of Johann Gerhard's *Theological Commonplaces*

Gerhard and the Commonplaces

Johann Gerhard is now recognized among confessional Lutherans as being an important witness to the Christian faith and a true Lutheran confession of that faith. Lutheran churchmen have recognized Gerhard's stature for centuries. In the early 20th century, E. Gerfen wrote, "There are three stars shining most brilliantly in the firmament of Lutheran theology, *viz.*, Martin Luther, Martin Chemnitz, and Johann Gerhard."[1] Such descriptions go back to

[1] E. Gerfen, in *Pastor's Monthly* 8, no. 5, cited in J.T. Mueller, "Johann Gerhard als

Gerhard's own century. His fellow Lutheran Salomon Glassius called him "a stronge and firm column in the house of the Lord," and Hoe von Hoenegg called him "the most deserving and worthy arch-theologian," and "the eye of theologians."[2] The 17th-century Roman Catholic bishop of Meaux, Jacque Benigne Bossuet, called him "the third man of the Reformation after Luther and Chemnitz."[3] He has also been called the "greatest theologian of the age of Lutheran orthodoxy in the period after the Formula of Concord."[4] His works and thought were so influential that he soon was considered a representative of orthodoxy and was so considered by those who followed him.[5] Thankfully, many of his works have been translated into English and published in recent years. Dissertations and papers have been written on his thought both in German and English.

Gerhard himself was born in 1582, two years after the Book of Concord was published. His monumental *Loci theologici* (*Theological Commonplaces*) began to be published in 1610, when we was only about 28 years old. He spent twelve of his most productive years on the *Loci* (1610–1622),[6] and then started over again with his *Exegesis uberior,* which was published in 1625. (The first three volumes of CPH's *Theological Commonplaces* are from the mature Gerhard. These are the volumes of his *Exegesis uberior,* which were printed together with the *Loci.*) In 1616 (about age 34), after serving the church as superintendent (functional equivalent of a bishop) and as a high school teacher, he became a professor of theology at the university of Jena, and served there for 21 years. He died in the Lord on August 17, 1637.

It is his *Loci theologici* that have held the fascination of Lutheran scholars for centuries. Whereas CPH's printing of Martin Chemnitz's *Loci* took up two volumes, and our publication of his *Examination of the Council of Trent* filled four volumes, Gerhard's *Theological Commonplaces* will fill seventeen large volumes.[7] Up until now, no full translation of the *Commonplaces* has ever been attempted in any language, no doubt due both to the size of the work as well as to the difficulty of the contents.

So far, some of the most fundamental of Gerhard's *loci* have been

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lutherischer Kirchenlehrer," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 8 (1937): 592.

[2] J.T. Mueller, "Johann Gerhard als lutherischer Kirchenlehrer," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 8 (1937): 592.

[3] *Bibliothèque des Auteurs Ecclesiast. du 17. Siècle*, vol. 2, cited by J.T. Mueller, "Johann Gerhard als lutherischer Kirchenlehrer," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 8 (1937): 602.

[4] Johannes Kunze, "Gerhard, Johann," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908–1912), 4:463.

[5] Richard Schröder, *Johann Gerhards lutherische Christologie und die aristotelische Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983).

[6] Mueller, "Johann Gerhard," 599.

[7] Even these seventeen planned volumes will not quite complete the *Theological Commonplaces* series.

published: "On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture" (2nd revised edition, 2009), "On the Nature of God and on the Trinity" (2007), "On Christ" (2009), "On the Church" (2010), "On the Ministry" (part 1, 2011; part 2, 2012). With Concordia's completion of "On the Ministry II," Gerhard's compendious work on church and ministry is now available in English with all the detailed annotations and careful attention to works cited that are a hallmark of this translation project. Moreover, the availability of these volumes in particular pairs nicely with the CPH release of a study edition of C.F.W. Walther's *Church and Ministry* (December 2012), which cites heavily from these two loci. Upcoming titles include: "On Creation and Angels," "On Providence," "On Election and Reprobation," "On the Image of God in Man Before the Fall," "On Original Sin," "On Actual Sins," and "On Free Choice."

Challenges in Preparing the First English Edition of Gerhard's Commonplaces

In general, the main problem for any translator or editor of a translation is to understand the content. In the case of Gerhard, this is especially a challenge. First of all, the language that Gerhard uses presents challenges. His Latin is not terribly difficult to get used to, and he does repeat a lot of the same vocabulary. But he often uses terms that cannot be found in the most complete Latin-English dictionaries,[8] or he uses words in ways not covered by these works. In addition, he often uses philosophical jargon without explanation, expecting that his readers will simply understand it. For example, the phrase *praedicatio in quid* could be (incorrectly) translated "making statements into what." Instead, it means "predication according to essence," or "quiddity," that is, making statements about God's essence. In short, the solution is to find other Latin dictionaries: a fine Latin-German dictionary (Georges), a Latin-French dictionary of patristic Latin (Blaise), an enormous Latin-Latin dictionary (Forcellini), two Latin dictionaries for the scholastic philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (Schütz, Deferrari), philosophical dictionaries from the 16th and 17th centuries (Altenstaig, Scherzer, Micraelius), and others.

But not only is Gerhard's Latin a challenge, his Greek is a challenge, too. The Greek technical terms that Gerhard throws around are perhaps the most difficult aspect of his *Loci*. The standard Greek-English dictionaries (Liddell & Scott, Lampe) are not always sufficient. Sometimes they shed some light, but sometimes not. Gerhard drops these Greek terms as if he thinks they will help explain things, as if the terms themselves do not need to be explained. In addition, Gerhard sometimes quotes classical Greek, and even Orphic poetry. Gerhard often does not bother translating these into Latin. But for a modern translation, we must master the translation even of obscure quotations. The solution is to use bigger Greek lexica: a four-volume Greek-German dictionary (Possow) and an enormous, exhaustive Greek-Latin dictionary that Gerhard

[8] Lewis and Short; *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.

himself owned (Stephanus). A team effort, in which outside experts are consulted to ensure the accuracy of select passages, has been helpful.

But as if Latin and Greek weren't enough, Gerhard was also highly skilled in Hebrew and other semitic languages. He often cites obscure medieval rabbis, often with the titles of their books and their names transliterated into Latin (making it difficult to locate bibliography). In addition, his discussion of Hebrew grammar is done in the Latin language, which uses different terms than we learn in our Hebrew training. Gerhard also has no problem citing the Targums and other Hebrew and Jewish literature. For example, he quotes a number of Cabbalistic texts approvingly and uses them to find a trinity of persons and a unity of substance simply in the name YHWH. One saving grace is that he nearly always translates semitic material into clear Latin prose. Also, old Hebrew grammars have been helpful, since many of them make reference to the older Latin terms for Hebrew grammar.

When Gerhard quotes Scripture, he sometimes uses the medieval Vulgate.[9] But in other places he gives a Latin version that agrees with the Greek, but not with the Vulgate.[10] On Jer. 18:17, he says it mentions God's *cervix* (neck), but the Vulgate and Luther read "back" (*rücken, dorsum*). He also had Luther's German Bible before him.[11]

To translate or edit Gerhard, one must also work in long quotations of patristic Latin and Greek.[12] Quotations of the church fathers are found everywhere in the *Loci.* Gerhard nearly always quotes early church fathers and medieval scholastics for support, almost never contemporary Lutherans. This could be because quotations from contemporary Lutherans would not be very convincing against his adversaries. Perhaps he limited his quotations to what would be most useful against non-Lutherans. In any case, the *Loci* are a fine patristic anthology. J.T. Mueller wrote, "Even just because of the excellent, innumerable citations from the church fathers and the later Christian church teachers, one should read his *Loci.*"[13]

Gerhard, however, does not just quote the early church fathers and the medieval scholastics. He also cites his opponents. The *Loci* are filled full with references to other books. Gerhard cites authors in a very shorthand manner. He rarely gives full bibliographic data for his works cited, and he often quotes the same book in different ways. Yet, for a translation, knowing the full title of the work cited is important in order to know how much of the abbreviation is part of the title and how much is part of the text. This has required that we

[9] His quotation of Eph. 4:15–16 matches the Stuttgart *Biblia Sacra Vulgata.* Gerhard, *Exegesis 1625,* locus 2, § 103.

[10] Quoting 2 Tim. 4:8 in *Exegesis 1625,* locus 2, § 103.

[11] In *Exegesis 1625,* locus 2, § 121, on Gal. 3:1, Gerhard reads "praescriptus."

[12] E.g., *Exegesis 1625,* locus 2, § 117.

[13] Mueller, "Johann Gerhard," 602.

create a works cited list, and track down the full bibliographical data for all the works that Gerhard cites. A catalog of Gerhard's library, published by Johann Anselm Steiger, has been of help in constructing the works cited list.[14] That, together with German library catalogs on the internet, have allowed us to construct the full bibliographical data for about 90% of the works Gerhard cites.

Philosophy

If there is one thing for which 17th-century Lutheran orthodoxy is reproached above all others, it is their reception and use of Aristotelian philosophy and medieval scholasticism. Often, these reproaches argue by saying, "Luther rejected philosophy, but Gerhard brought it in again." Or, "Gerhard and the 17th-century Lutherans laid the foundations for rationalism and the Enlightenment." Modern scholars like to play Luther off against Gerhard.[15] But other scholars have not been so negative about Gerhard's use of philosophy and scholastic concepts. Johann Anselm Steiger says that the scholastic concepts used by Gerhard were simply a way of making Luther's unsystematic heritage usable for students and pastors. "Gerhard's *Loci* dogmatics are thus themselves pastoral care in action."[16] In any case, the use of scholastic concepts was a general movement. If blame is to be placed, it cannot be placed on Gerhard alone.[17] C.F.W. Walther writes,

> No matter how true it is that aristotelian philosophy has often crept into theology with the scholastic form, nevertheless, it is this form which a considerable number of our theologians have used to avoid ambiguity of terms and to express their thoughts to their readers without having to heap up many words. Even Baier [and the same goes for Gerhard] made none other than this healthy use of philosophical, technical terms in his theology. Whoever has just once figured this out can only be thankful to him for using this form.[18]

Despite Gerhard's assertion that Scripture is the only judge of doctrine, he

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[14] Johann Anselm Steiger, ed., *Bibliotheca Gerhardina* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2002).

[15] E.g., Schröder, *Johann Gerhards lutherische Christologie,* 3, 5, 26; Johannes Wallmann, *Der Theologiebegriff bei Johann Gerhard und Georg Calixt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1961), 61; Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 41, 46, 55–56, 193, 198, 355–356, 374; 109, 163, 288–289, 399–400, 407, 510.

[16] Johann Anselm Steiger, *Johann Gerhard (1582-1637): Studien zu Theologie und Frömmigkeit des Kirchenvaters der lutherischen Orthodoxie* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1997), 32; see also Mueller, "Johann Gerhard," 598–602.

[17] Martti Vaahtoranta, *Restauratio imaginis divinae: Die Vereinigung von Gott und Mensch, ihre Voraussetzungen und Implikationen bei Johann Gerhard* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1998), 18.

[18] Walther, *Lehre und Wehre* I, 342.

also uses arguments from reason. The latter does not overthrow the former. Gerhard uses Scripture to nail the case shut on his arguments. Then he uses reason and the Fathers to "set the nails," so to speak. Gerhard seems to use reason as Thomas Aquinas does. There are some things that we can know about God, ourselves, and the world from the book of reason, but this is not saving theological knowledge. Gerhard quotes Thomas with approval, "We know some things about God that exceed the common reach of human reason and are knowable only through revelation (for example, that God is one and three, that Christ is God and Man), but some are demonstrable." And this way of arguing goes back to the early church. Gerhard says, "We can prove that God exists both from nature and from Scripture, and for this reason the knowledge of God, according to Augustine, can be divided into natural and revealed knowledge."[19] Of course, St. Paul had much the same thing to say in Romans 1.

When giving proof for a thesis, Gerhard first goes to Scripture. Second, he presents rational arguments. When he gives these arguments, they are nearly always in the form of a syllogism: major premise (*major*), minor premise (*assumptio*) marked by an adversative (e.g., "but"), and then the conclusion marked by "therefore." Following this, he gives an explanation of the cogency or soundness of the major premise and of the factuality or truthfulness of the minor premise. Then he sometimes considers objections to the argument (usually a challenge to the minor premise), and gives a reply.[20] Gerhard uses these *rationes* in a secondary way to prove his points. He often, but not always, makes rational arguments where the minor premise is supplied by Scripture. He refutes the *rationes* of others with the use of rational arguments. Yet sometimes he appeals to revelation to show that an unbridled use of reason would overthrow the articles of faith. For example, he says that the Calvinists misuse reason "when they attack articles of faith set forth in clear and open passages of Scripture on the basis of philosophical principles that they poorly understand or apply. They abandon the genuine, proper, literal meaning of Scripture and look for an understanding harmonious with logic."[21] Thus, despite assertions to the contrary, Gerhard did indeed give warnings against the improper use of philosophy and reason.

Why Study Gerhard's Commonplaces?

After telling people about my work with Gerhard, they often ask, "Why are you doing that?" Their question is not meant to imply that translating and publishing Gerhard is of little value. It is a good question, and the following reasons come to mind.

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[19] *Commonplaces (Exegesis 1625)*, loc. 2, § 59.

[20] For example, *Commonplaces (Exegesis 1625)*, loc. 2, § 33.

[21] Gerhard, *Commonplaces (Exegesis 1625)*, loc. 1, § 452, p. 421. See also his appeal to the incarnation in loc. 2, § 154.

(1) Gerhard's *Commonplaces* are more *thorough* than any work of classical Lutheran theology that we have in English. For example, Pieper devotes barely a page to God's immutability, whereas Gerhard devotes about four times as much space to the same topic. Pieper is three volumes; Gerhard will be seventeen volumes.

(2) Gerhard's *Commonplaces* are *educational.* By reading him, one can learn an enormous amount about God's Word, church history, philosophy, and clear thinking.

(3) Luther and Melanchthon use the same terminology. For example, FC SD VII 93–103 gives a lengthy quote from Luther's *Large Confession Concerning the Holy Supper.* In this quotation, Luther outlines three modes of presence—the local, the spiritual, and the divine—and then says God has even more modes of presence. These three modes of presence were not made up by Luther. He was bringing forth a way of speaking that was used by Gabriel Biel and other scholastics. Gerhard, in turn, discusses these same modes of presence in his discussion of God's immensity.[22]

(4) The *Commonplaces* are filled to the brim with quotations from the church fathers, many of whom have never been translated. One can read large quotations from Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria, for example, and also quotations from figures less well-known to American Lutherans, such as Alcuin, Bernard of Clairvaux, Savonarola, and Jean Gerson.

(5) Gerhard lived in an era that is basically unknown to us. We know a lot about the time from the Reformation to the Formula of Concord, and then from C.F.W. Walther to the present, but not about the 250 years in between—fully half of our entire history since the Reformation! It's as if someone buried a treasure and left us a treasure map. We've known about Gerhard for a long time—that's the treasure map. But only now are we beginning to dig up the treasures themselves.

(6) Gerhard's *Commonplaces* give us a window into how the Formula of Concord was understood in the generation after it was written.

(7) German scholarship has taken a renewed interest in Gerhard in recent years. Johann Anselm Steiger's editions and studies have made a very significant contribution to Gerhard studies.

(8) Many of Gerhard's opponents had incorrect views which are popular today. For example, in Commonplace II, *On the Nature of God,*

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[22] *Exegesis 1625,* loc. 2, § 172.

Gerhard is constantly arguing with Conrad Vortius, a late 16th- and early 17th-century Reformed theologian who was condemned at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619). Vorstius denied God's eternity, using the very same arguments used by certain modern theologians.[23] Instead of being eternal, God is (for Vorstius) a temporal, everlasting being, bound by time just as we are. Nowadays, open theism and various modern theologies, which redefine or deny God's attributes, have found open ears in many Lutheran circles. Gerhard's *Commonplaces* can help pastors and theologians today connect to the entire Christian tradition, which from the early church through the Middle Ages and the Reformation affirmed such things as God's impassibility, eternity, immutability, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Gerhard can help us to break free from modern theology.

(9) Gerhard is thorough in his use of polemics. Although it may not be popular these days, polemics is still an important discipline in helping us to go beyond saying, "This is what we believe," to saying, "and this is why." Gerhard especially argues against Socinians (anti-Trinitarians, who were commonly called "Photinians"), Roman Catholics, and the Reformed.

(10) Yet Gerhard was not overly polemical. He loved the truth and was willing to attack errorists, but he did so with moderation. He always endeavored to represent his adversaries truthfully. This makes his writings all the more accessible to us today.

(11) Gerhard gives thorough consideration to issues dealing with pastoral practice and ethics. Marriage is the largest volume in the series. (It deals also with celibacy, polygamy, forbidden grades of relationship, etc.) Many scholars have noted that Gerhard's *Commonplaces* are not just intellectual, they are also pastoral and devotional.[24] Steiger notes that for Gerhard dogmatics does not exist as an end in itself, but is always to be applied in preaching and personal pastoral care. Theology is not to be speculative, but *"eminens practica."*[25] Robert Preus noted that for Gerhard theology has the goal of God's glorification and the intermediate goal of man's salvation. All other knowledge is not "theological" but only "mere logomachy."[26] Robert Scharlemann recognized that Gerhard did not neglect the *usus*

[23] Nicholas Wolterstorff in Gregory E. Ganssle, ed. *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

[24] Steiger, *Gerhard,* 31.

[25] Steiger, *Gerhard,* 37-38.

[26] *Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* I, 117.

practicus of theology. The "practical use" was "the employment of the doctrine *in concreto* to 'strike down' and then 'lift up' the hearer."[27]

(12) Gerhard is the third most important classical Lutheran theologian after Luther and Chemnitz. He quickly became a standard for all later Lutheran doctrine. Everyone quoted him and interacted with his writings, at least until people stopped reading Latin. This is seen especially in C.F.W. Walther's claim that his own doctrine of church and ministry can be found in greater detail in Gerhard. Until now, however, Gerhard's presentation of Church and Ministry remained inaccessible to most people. Now finally we have access to the sources and can see the careful manner in which Gerhard formulates his own doctrine of Church and Ministry.

Now, some 375 years after his death, Gerhard's monumental *Theological Commonplaces* are finally being translated for the first time. Concordia Publishing House invites readers to subscribe to the series, which locks in a 30% discount off the volume price as well as the ability to purchase previously published in-stock volumes at the same 30% discount. For more information on the series and to sign up as a subscriber, visit cph.org/gerhard.

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Can There Be Peace?
Violence in the Name of Religion

[*These reflections concerning the atrocities that occurred in Norway on July 22, 2011, and what they reveal about the situation of the Church of Norway were delivered at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on September 13, 2011. The Editors*]

Norway is a small country. We have only 4.9 million citizens. On July 22, 2011, we were hit by terror, an attack on the government with a car bomb (8 dead) and a slaughter of idealistic youth gathered in a political summer camp (69 victims, the youngest only 14 years old). The terrorist reportedly shouted with joy each time he succeeded in killing a youth.

In those first days the whole nation was struck with horror. It left us numb. In a sense, the Norwegian naïveté and innocence had also been killed. How could this happen to us—the country of the Nobel Peace Prize? Part of the shock was caused by the fact that this was not an outbreak of Islamic terror. It

[27] Robert P. Scharlemann, *Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 5.

had been done by "one of our own." Gradually both sorrow and a strong feeling of national unity overtook the nation. Roses became a symbol of our sorrow and hope. It was not uncommon to see people crying openly in the streets and embracing even total strangers for comfort. In a national memorial event, our King Harald V publically shed tears during his speech.

Norway had been hit by evil, and evil always needs to justify itself. The best way of doing this is by maintaining that terror is done for the sake of an honorable and good cause (cf. communism, Nazism, inquisition).

Anders Behring Breivik has maintained that he is "a Christian," not in the sense that he prays, attends church, and has a personal faith in Jesus, but Christian in a cultural sense. The day after Breivik had been apprehended, one of the leading police officers stated that Breivik was a "Christian fundamentalist." Of course this terrorist is no Christian in any sense of the word, no more than he was a police officer even though he dressed up as one.

Breivik regards himself as a knight fighting against the great evil represented by Islam, an evil that only can be defeated through military means. One of his great role models is Charles Martell, who in AD 732 prevailed in the battle of Poitiers against Muslim expansion in Europe; another is the order of Knights Templar from the period of the crusades. Ideologically, the closest parallel in the United States is probably the 1995 Oklahoma bomber. Timothy McVeigh's thoughts in many ways seem to resemble those of Breivik.

It all comes down to "the battle between civilizations." In his manifesto that was published on the Internet the day before the atrocities, Breivik regards himself as the defender of Christian civilization against the barbarism and tyranny of Islam. His enemy is Islam, and all who have opened the doors for the Muslim immigration into Europe. He regards as traitors all those who advocate a pluralistic society, where tolerance and respect is given to every belief and conviction. He believes they have left our society defenseless against a future Muslim takeover. He calls the secular idea of tolerance within the framework of a liberal democratic society "cultural Marxism," and to him the political establishments that advocate the modern pluralistic welfare society are Judases and "the enemy within." Consequently Norway's government has become his prime target, his first attack in a war. The slaughter of vast numbers of youth was intended to quench the interest of youth in the Labor Party and to prevent further enrollment into this party. In the wake of the events of these days, the result has been quite the opposite.

The reaction and sorrow, especially to the shooting of the youth, was national. This was our 9/11. Prime Minister Stoltenberg was very quick in stating that this was an attack on our democracy and the values that have almost unanimously been regarded as fundamental to our society: tolerance, openness, and multiculturalism. What he wanted as the national response to this act

of terror was "more democracy, more openness, more tolerance." If the society did not react in this way, the terrorist would have achieved his exact goal. He believed that Norway should not allow its society to be defined by the extremist's agenda.

Four days after the attacks, a large rally of mourning and resistance to violence and terror was organized in the capital city of Oslo. Oslo has about 600,000 citizens, approximately 200–300,000 people attended. In his speech, the mayor of Oslo said, "we shall punish the terrorist. We shall punish him by not letting him achieve any of his aims. We shall punish him with tolerance, with openness, with love."

A second, important part of the nation's reaction was religious. The churches around the country were opened up and filled with people lighting candles for the dead, laying down flowers in their honor and memory. Ministers and bishops within the state church system suddenly got the important role in bringing grief counselors together with psychologists and were given the responsibility of caring for the mourners, families and friends of the victims, and the survivors of the shootings. Certainly many of the youngsters from Utøya have been traumatized by the horrors they experienced and are in need of help, comfort, and treatment for months and perhaps years to come.

What is conspicuous about the role of the Church of Norway and its servants is that it has walked into this therapeutic role, defined by public need, without hesitation. Suddenly, vast numbers of people in a secular and irreligious society seemed to stand in need of some kind of religious comfort. When the Church realized that its ministry was needed, it grabbed the opportunity without questioning the premises. A number of years ago, a former professor of practical theology, Olav Skjevesland, now bishop, made a comment on the transformation of the ministry of the Church, a transformation that has taken place as a growing number of women have been ordained. He said: "The ministry of word and sacrament has been replaced by the ministry of caring and comforting." Two important features of the national church's role may here be pointed out: First, the name of Christ has scarcely been mentioned. The leaders of the church have limited themselves to a general and very unspecific "God-talk." But which god? Second, the god that has been preached is a therapeutic one, "a shrink," to say it a bit disrespectfully. This means that the Church of Norway in this situation has reduced itself and its message to be part of the social welfare system, taking care of psychological health and religious comfort. A secular journalist comments on this as follows: "After July 22nd the church has taken up the role as administrator of public sorrow, willingly paying the price through ideological self-annihilation."

In the history of the church, national disasters have been met with a totally

different response: The people sought out the church to repent and confess their sins, to cry out for the mercy of God, that he might turn away His wrath. The difference between the present religious reaction and the past reveals a deep shift in the mentality of our nation. This shift also brings to light the psychology of secularization. The main problem is that we hurt because we are hit by evil, not that we ourselves are evil. Our problem is "the others," those who not are as tolerant as we are. Consequently we do not need grace or salvation, only comfort and explanation. The Church now portrays God as the sympathetic God, God on our side. God's job is to fulfill our felt needs.

What we here have touched upon is the result of a transformation of the Church of Norway (the state church system) that has been going on over the last half-century. In a way, the thinking of Anders Behring Breivik and the horrors that he has brought upon our small country can, in this age of secularization, shed some light on the role and development of Christianity in Scandinavia and Europe as a whole. Here are some thoughts.

When Breivik looks upon himself as a crusader in the "war between civilizations," he is promoting a view of Christian civilization that goes back to Constantine the Great, emperor of the Roman Empire from AD 312–337, an empire that reached its peak in the medieval period. Constantine brought about the most important turnaround in the ancient world, both for the early Christian church and the Roman Empire. Up until the year AD 313, the church had periodically been persecuted in the cruelest way. Under Constantine's predecessor, Diocletian (AD 305–311), the worst and bloodiest of all persecutions in the Roman Empire took place. But in AD 313 Constantine authored the "Edict of Milan" (or "Edict of Tolerance"), which gave full acceptance to Christians within the empire and put a final end to the ancient martyrdom of the church. Eleven years later, Constantine made Christianity the favored religion within the Empire, supporting the church in every possible way—including the building of large churches and cathedrals all over the empire. This development reached its peak under the Emperor Theodosius (AD 379–395), who in 380 made Christianity the official state religion and in 391 the only legal religion, closing down and destroying heathen temples and forbidding heathen worship.

These decisions by Constantine and Theodosius framed and laid down three fundamentals of what became the basic characteristics of European culture for the next 1500 years. First, the strong bond between church and state; the state is a Christian state, and Christianity the only legal religion. Second, Europe identifying itself as the Christian culture. Third, the identification of the population as a whole with the church: the people are a Christian people.

Since the reign of these two emperors, western culture has shaped a historical epoch that may be called "the Constantinian Era," an era that now is coming to an end. The Constantine linking of imperial power with ecclesial

authority, by and by, resulted in deep consequences for the church that remolded Christendom. I here will highlight only a few important features. First, while Jesus said that his "kingdom was not of this world" (John 18:36), the church to a large extent now became of this world. Second, although Jesus taught that the use of force, power, and violence belonged to the princes of this world, his church should be characterized by meekness, willing service, and love of one's neighbor (Matt 20:25–28). The church was to suffer evil rather than inflict it on others. This is also an important part of the message of the Sermon on the Mount. St Augustine struggled with this question: was it acceptable that the emperor used the sword to bring people(s) into the fold of the church? He found—although hesitantly—the theological foundation for legitimating this in the words in Luke 14:23 (the parable of the great banquet): "... compel them to come in" (KJV). This set a path for an expansion of Christianity that dominated much of the medieval period, even up to the religious wars of the 17th century. The sword—royal power—became a most important "missionary" instrument. Third, Christian morality became the norm of legislation within the civil society, and regulated all parts of European life. Finally, Christian faith became the formative influence in all parts of what we call "culture": literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture and so forth.

The crusaders' war on Islam in the name of Christ was mainly a part of this Constantine inheritance: defending Christian faith and defending the Christian nations was one and the same thing. It is this tradition that Anders Behring Breivik is utilizing in his war on the infidels. But it is not the way of Jesus. In the New Testament we find an episode where Peter tries to defend Christ with a sword (Matthew 26:51ff). We all know what our Lord has to say about this. It is deeply significant that Peter cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest: violence in the name of Christ disables hearing!

The connection between church and state, faith and secular power, that characterizes the Constantinian era has been a persistent spiritual trap and temptation to the church, a kind of prison. Jesus taught the separation of secular and spiritual power, but they have been mixed together. The two governments, according to Jesus' teaching, are to be ruled in totally different ways. The kingdom of God shall rule men's hearts by the sword of God—His word only; the government of this world is to rule over our physical life through secular power—if necessary, police and military force (Romans 13). The mixture of worldly and spiritual power that the state church system implies too often results in some kind of tyranny, either in the form that the church seeks worldly dominion, which was the case during the medieval period and in Calvin's Geneva, or when secular power exercises dominion over the church, the so- called "caesaropapism". The princes of this world always have abused religion as part of their "power-play." Religion is an

excellent instrument to control people. The Scandinavian churches, particularly in Denmark and Norway, probably hold the world championship for governmental rule over the church.

Augustine's idea to "compel them" has, as we have seen, legitimized the use of violence in the name of Christ. It is sad to observe how even the church's best theologians and teachers may err in the need to justify the *status quo*. The idea of using force in service to the gospel is totally contrary to the gospel for two primary reasons. First, the expression "the weakness of God" (1 Cor 1:25) is an expression that belongs to the essence of the gospel. Second, the only means that has been given to the church for the salvation of men is the means of grace, and, particularly, "the word of the cross" (1Cor 1:18).

"The weakness of God" is God's way of salvation. Jesus says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12: 24 KJV). God is revealing himself under what seems contradictory to what he is: his almightiness looks like weakness; his wisdom like stupidity; the man that he wants to live must die; the cross on which Christ was gloriously victorious over sin, Satan, and death looks like a total and disgraceful defeat in men's eyes. In this way God conceals himself to all flesh and disbelief. But he reveals himself to faith and faith alone. Human strength which expresses itself in might, force, and violence, becomes the opposite of the gospel. The will to exercise power appeals to the flesh, and is a satanic temptation to the church. The state has, in contrast to this, been given a mandate from God to exercise power as a barrage against evil (Romans 13:1-7). The church, on the other hand, is a spiritual kingdom, and individual Christians have no such mandate. This is why our Lord extols that which is small and weak, but degrades that which is big and strong (Matt 18:1-5; 20:25-28).

Second, God's "mode of operation" is through his word. When God wants something done, he speaks. This is how it was in the beginning when he created heaven and earth, and this is the way he spreads and enlarges his spiritual kingdom on earth. God's word is the secret of his kingdom. All other means are flesh. Through his word God speaks to our hearts. Efforts to coerce the heart have never been Christ's way. This means that all true and godly work in Christ's kingdom on earth rests in faith in the efficacy of the word. In the end we cannot do God's work. Only God's word has this power.

When the Lutheran Reformation came to Denmark and Norway and these two countries became Lutheran in 1537, this was a royal decision quite in line with Constantinian tradition. There is no reason to doubt that the king was personally convinced by the Lutheran teaching. It also served his self-interest as he now could confiscate all church properties. Vast riches fell to the crown.

In his struggle to protect the newborn evangelical church, Luther allied

with the princes. This resulted in a bond between church and state in the Lutheran countries that was far stronger and more reaching than what had been the case during the medieval period. The Roman Catholic Church maintained relative independence in its relation to royal power. Such independence was almost totally obliterated in the Lutheran countries. Church and state became one. The state was a confessional state and the king was *summus episcopus* of the church (Peace of Augsburg 1555: *Cuius regio, eius religio).* This also is the reason why Denmark and Norway never accepted the Book of Concord, like other Lutheran nations. When King Fredrik II was presented the Book of Concord during the winter of 1581, he threw it into the stove, stating that he "had enough of the quarreling of the theologians." During the pietistic period, Denmark and Norway adopted "state pietism," and the inhabitants were forced by law to attend church (e.g., "The Sabbath Ordinance" of 1735). For instance, people were not allowed to marry if they were not confirmed. Consequently, young men and women who had difficulties learning Pontoppidan's Catechism by heart were not able to have their own families. This use of political force on behalf of the church has not been forgotten and caused quite a bit of resentment against the Christian faith in our countries.

The bond between church and state was preserved in Norway's democratic constitution in 1814. The king remained head of the Church of Norway. In 1884, parliamentarianism was introduced in Norway, with the result that the king was forced to give governmental power to the majority of the national assembly (Stortinget). To the church this meant that the head of the church no longer was the Christian king but a government elected by the people. In the constitution the king was and still is bound to the Lutheran confession, but the various political parties and their representatives are not.

Since World War II, the Social Democratic Party (the Labor Party) has been the major political force in our country. This party has a distinct religious agenda and policy which is in line with caesaropapism. It has made the most of this power, to such an extent that many within the church would call it an abuse of power. The prevailing ideology is that since almost all Norwegians are members of the state church (about 87%), the elected government represents the people in the church. Their leading thinkers hold that "the state is the church" (Castberg, 1953; Børre Knudsen-dommen, 1981). Because the whole people are members of the church and, as such, baptized Christians, it is the people's will that should govern the church and what the church believes. The word for this kind of thinking in German is *Volkskircheideologie*. The church is the people and the people the church. One of the members of the government said it this way upon the appointment of a liberal bishop: "the king (government) leads the way; the church follows." Sadly, this is exactly the case in the church. Popular religiosity and ethical indifference have become normative.

The government further undermines the confession of the church through its legal right to appoint bishops and deans. In the last decades, they have installed bishops with a liberal persuasion. By now eight of eleven bishops are in favor of gay marriages, and the other three are teaching that this is an *adiaphoron,* an issue that is not of such importance that we need to break up ecclesial unity or to fight over it.

What kind of men and women are those who are willing to go along this way, who preach what the people like and what the Social Democratic Party propagates? In the state church system, theological education is offered in state universities, not in confessional seminaries governed by the church itself. Since the Enlightenment, theological education has been dominated by the so-called Historical-Critical Method, over time resulting in the most radical criticism of the Holy Bible and its message. In Norway we have had a free theological institution since 1907, "Menighetsfakultetet." The Menighetsfakultet has educated most of the pastors that held office in the state church for a century. Even though the Historical-Critical Method was accepted there from the start, the Menighetsfakultet managed to safeguard a conservative Lutheran position until the 1960s. It changed its stand on women's ordination in 1973, years after the first female pastor was ordained in Norway in 1961 and this fueled a development away from biblical authority that gradually became a landslide within the Church of Norway. Presently it seems that about half of the professors (five or six of 11) at the faculty are in favor of homosexual marriages.

In Sweden some of the theologians setting the tone have advocated what they call "open revelation" in contrast with "closed revelation." Closed revelation means that what God has revealed about himself and his will has been given in Holy Scripture. Open revelation implies the idea that God continues to reveal himself through history. The Holy Spirit speaks through "the spirit of the times," and it is the bishops who, as leaders of the church, have been given the prophetic office of interpreting this revelation. In such a perspective the Bible is reduced to an accidental expression of "the spirit of its times," conditioned by the interests and hopes of accidental religious groups in ancient Israel. The Bible only reflects the subjective ideas of these groups, and consequently cannot be said to represent absolute truth, far less an infallible source of faith. To the church, then, the task is given to extract what is of "religious value" in the Bible and scrap all else that is contrary to our ideas. We end up with a church that, to a large extent, adapts to popular religion, a religion that Reinhold Niebuhr already in the 1930s characterized like this: "God without wrath permits (a) man without sin through a Christ without cross into an eternity without hell."

This is, of course, nothing else than a postmodern version of subjective religiosity, sharing the basic postmodern rejection of absolute truth and all that is holy, advocating tolerance and openness as its fundamental creed. You may

believe whatever you like as long as you limit yourself to saying that this is "true for me" and as long as you do not confess your faith to be absolute truth. This has become the ultimate requirement for a bishop in the Church of Sweden, and the church of Norway is going down the same path, only a bit slower. Secularization in Europe and Scandinavia not only means that the Constantinian era is coming to an end and the Christian faith no longer has any influence on society. Churches are so secularized, that they are void of a confessional backbone and dilute their message into a wishy-washy humanism.

The adapting of the church to what modern man thinks and holds true is a kind of ecclesial counter-strategy; it is an attempt to halt the flow of people exiting the church and Christian faith by demonstrating that Christendom is relevant to modern man. Paradoxically, while making journalists and mass media more "positive" towards the church, this strategy has had the opposite effect. The churches are being "preached empty." When the church tries to be "relevant" on the conditions set by secular man, it loses its relevance; it has nothing of real importance to say. The sad thing about all this is that the church through all this ceases to be "the salt of the earth." But "if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt 5:13 KJV).

I here have to add that there still are a number of faithful pastors within the state church systems in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, but their number is diminishing. They often are in very difficult situations, even facing persecution. The church establishment strongly dislikes their presence, and the mass media has often given them a hard time. The confessional movement in Norway, "For Bible and Confession", 40 years ago still was a strong movement within the church, has lost its fevor over the last 20 years. Most pastors participation in this confessional movement now regard it as a heavy burden and unhelpful to their ecclesial careers.

I also have to mention an initiative that was taken four years ago, called *Carissa* (the Latin word for beloved ones, which John the Apostle uses in his first letter when addressing the congregations). The men behind this initiative are ministers and theologians with clear heads and warm hearts. Their goal and hope is to secure a safe haven for confessional ministers and congregations within the state church system through the establishment of a confessional diocese within the church, guaranteeing episcopacy in line with biblical Lutheran faith and practice. The number of ministers supporting this petition was so substantial that the bishops could not ignore them for fear that they would resign, and create a clergy shortage. Consequently, for a few years now there have been a number of meetings and negotiations, but it will probably come to naught. A couple of ministers have already given in and left, and I think more will follow.

The sad story of the downfall of the Lutheran churches in Scandinavia—I have here, of course, mainly concentrated on the situation in my own country—is the story of what happens when false doctrine, unbiblical teaching, is not refuted. It is like gangrene: if not cut off, it will spread and in the end lead to death. The guarding of biblical doctrine to the Christian church is the same as the immune system is to our bodies. It safeguards us from dangerous infections that might threaten life itself. We all know what happens if the immune system fails.

In conclusion, Lutherans are today an endangered species in the Scandinavian countries and the Lutheran faith is threatened with being reduced to a historical parenthesis. The national churches have, as a whole, left their Lutheran and biblical basis; they are now Lutheran in name only, not in reality.

The state church system is gradually coming to an end. In Sweden this already has happened. In Norway the national assembly has decided to dissolve the bond between church and state in 2014. In Denmark there seems to be no such process at present. What is interesting with the cases in Sweden and Norway is that the politicians have wanted to preserve the state church system and thus to be in control up until the time that the biblical and confessional backbone of the churches had been broken. At that point, the churches no longer represent any theological salt that might represent a threat to those in power.

The growth of pluralistic secular societies means the end of the Constantinian era, along with its unified and singular national culture and religion. In such eras of transition there always will be unrest and uncertainty about the future. A number of people are looking back, wanting to reverse the development because of the fear this is creating. Anders Behring Breivik is an extreme representative of this nostalgic trend.

Can there be peace? In a democratic secular society, it is self-evident that tolerance is a basic condition for peace between the different religious and ethnic groups. What is alarming is that the word tolerance also has been given a new meaning. It now implies that it is no longer acceptable to maintain absolute truth or that there is an absolute line between good and evil. The word tolerance has become a crowbar to leverage everybody into relativism and an instrument to change Christian churches into silent cowards, particularly on ethical issues. Thus tolerance has become repressive. For instance, it has become hate speech to preach the biblical message of God's will in holy matrimony, how the violating of the Sixth Commandment is sinful. This may be persecuted under civil law. The strange thing is that this seems only to apply to Christians, but not Muslims.

Can there be peace? We do not know the future. What is happening now in western culture is signaling a more difficult situation for Christian faith. Here we have solemn promises from our Lord:

> Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).
>
> These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

In the end the church of Christ never has been given anything else to build upon than his word. On this foundation we may be of good courage, whatever the world might do to us.

So the Constantinian era is coming to an end. This means that the true Christian church today will gradually find itself in a situation similar to the church of the first three centuries in becoming a despised minority and losing the privileges to which we have become accustomed. This may be an advantage to the church, as it always has been during times of adversity and trouble that the church of Christ has gained health and found her way back to her true identity. Yes, we can be of good courage!

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