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Errata

There is an error on page 339 in the research note by Benjamin T.G. Mayes, “Apology of the Augsburg Confession Comparison Chart,” *CTQ* 80:3–4 (2016). A line was accidentally omitted. The missing line reads as follows:

Of Confession and Satisfaction [Triglot, etc.]: XII (VI) 1–81 [Tappert, etc.]: XII 98–178

Theological Observer

2017 Commencement Speech

What follows is the commencement address delivered by Dr. Gottfried Martens at Concordia Theological Seminary on May 19, 2017. Dr. Martens was also awarded the Doctor of Divinity degree, honoris causa, on this occasion. —The Editors

Dear future pastors and deaconesses, dear professors and colleagues in the ministry, and to all my sisters and brothers in Christ,

“You are the future of the church!”—Is it this what you expect to hear in a commencement speech? If you expected this, I will have to disappoint you: you are not the future of the church. I am not the future of the church—and I have never been it, and you will never be. If you want to know who the future of the church is, listen to Martin Luther, who never was the future of the church either. Still, he put it very precisely: “For after all, we are not the ones who can preserve the church, nor were our forefathers able to do so. Nor will our successors have this power. No, it was, is, and will be he who says, ‘I am with you always, to the close of the age.’”¹

You are not the future of the church—fortunately not. But as you are going to serve in Christ’s church in the future, you are allowed to know that you work in an enterprise with eternal sustainability. You cannot say this about any other enterprise on earth. But it’s true that you work in the enterprise with the best prospects that you can imagine at all. Well, I do not directly speak of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, even though I am totally convinced that the confessional Lutheran Church is, humanly speaking, the church of the future. But I speak of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, in whose service you will be called and who cannot be overcome even by the gates of hell. That’s a good basis for a lifelong ministry, that’s for sure!

But as we are not the future of the church, we have to concede that Christ very often builds his church against all our plans and expectations, and often enough against all our efforts. Christ is not religious background music for our own efforts to build the church as we would like to see her. Often enough, in fact, he slams doors in front of our nose, before he starts to open them again.

It was twenty-five years ago, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, that we realized in our work at St. Mary’s Lutheran Church in Berlin-Zehlendorf that more and more Russian German migrants were coming to Germany from the former

¹ Martin Luther *Against the Antinomians* (1539): vol. 47, 91–120, in *Luther’s Works, American Edition*, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1971), 118.

Soviet Union. We visited them in their camps, brought them coffee and cake, even performed a Christian puppet play for them. I think we were pretty good. But nothing happened. Nobody came to church; nobody wanted to be baptized. “Well,” I said, “at least we tried. Now we know they do not want to come. Let’s look for a different task that we might tackle.” But while we were still looking for this new task, suddenly twelve Russian Germans came to us after a church service and told me that they wanted to be baptized. Now, they knew almost no German, and I only knew “yes” and “no,” “da” and “njet” in Russian—aside from words like wodka, which were not too helpful for the baptismal class. I tried to teach them Luther’s Catechism with my hands and my feet; I still have no idea how much these twelve understood. But finally, I baptized them—and then in the ensuing months and years another four hundred Russian immigrants, with the result that we often heard more Russian than German in our church. We had to give up first, before Christ would start.

Nine years ago, two Iranian Christians came to our church in Zehlendorf. It is always nice to have a few Persians in the church. Then you can show that you are very tolerant and open-minded. There were just these two Iranians for one year, for two years, for three years. Nice, but nothing special; I did not expect anything from these two gentlemen. But then finally a third came, and then a fourth. And then, nearly six years ago, I baptized my first Iranian. Then I baptized the first female Iranian a couple of months later. Matthew Harrison preached on that day in our church. I do not know whether this was the reason, but during the following weeks more and more Iranians came to our church and wanted to be baptized. One year later we had almost a hundred of them in our church—and they were in the strange habit of coming to church every Sunday. It looked like a big success story, don’t you think? A couple of weeks later I found a letter in my pastoral office. Members of our congregation had collected signatures telling me that they believed that I did not care about the real congregation anymore, that I only loved the refugees and that the members of the congregation were not willing to accept this any longer. One day later the board of elders approved of this letter as well, telling me that I should send these refugees away so that everything could be as nice as before in the congregation. I told them that if they sent the refugees away, I would go with them. And thus, I had to go.

That was four years ago (2013). My work had come to naught. I had totally failed in what I had done all the years before. People with whom I had worked for more than twenty years did not want me any longer. I had to move into an old church building a few miles away that the church had considered tearing down several times before because it was in such a bad condition. Almost nobody wanted to go to services there anyhow. Many laughed at me and told me that I would be without a job within six months, having only a group of Iranians and Afghans with

me who would certainly disappear after a short while. That's how our refugee work started in Steglitz—as a result of a deep disillusion, of a failure that absolutely brought me to my limits. Yet that's how Christ begins to build his church, showing us that we ourselves are certainly not the future of the church. Remember this when at some point in your ministry you realize that things are totally at odds with what you planned and expected. Christ has his own very special sense of humor.

Meanwhile, we now have more than 1,500 members in our church in Steglitz, 1,300 of them being refugees from Iran and Afghanistan. What did we do? We celebrated the Lutheran mass, at first once a week, then twice a week, then three times a week. We used the advantages that we have as Lutherans, namely, that you not only hear but see something in the worship service: vestments and liturgical gestures. You can feel something, such as when the pastor puts his hands on your head and forgives you your sins and when you receive with your mouth the holy body and blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrament. If as a refugee you do not speak a word of German, you are pretty much lost in a Protestant preaching service. But you know why you travel to church for three hours, as many of our members do, if you receive the Holy Absolution and the medicine of immortality there. It was not us, but Christ himself, who built this congregation by word and sacrament, and not by fancy inventions, not by clown ministries, but simply by the gifts that he himself distributed. What did we do in baptismal classes? We taught what is in Martin Luther's Small Catechism. We taught simply Law and Gospel. The refugees realized that this was *the* real contrast to Islam they were looking for. This was not even as close to Islam as the Reformed stuff that quite a few of them had experienced before as well. Let us never forget these treasures that we have in our Lutheran church. Do not get talked into thinking that these treasures are impediments for missions! Seeing the hundreds of young Afghans and Iranians in our church reverently receiving Holy Communion every week, you understand that we do not need special techniques. We Lutherans have much more to offer than Joel Osteen!

And do not forget what you have learned during your years here at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Sometimes we think that doing missions means forgetting theology. Nothing could be further from the truth than this. I never had to do so much theology in the classes and conversations in my congregation as I am doing now with my Iranian and Afghan refugees. Refugees are not simple-minded or stupid. Our Iranians and Afghans know their Bible and they like to discuss theology. You really have to know the Formula of Concord when you lead the Farsi Bible Class on Saturday and they start asking questions. Again and again you experience that the Book of Concord is not an old book, but it is so topical that it can answer the questions of former Muslims in the twenty-first century as well. And you really have to know your Bible, when, for example, they start to compare Bible

quotes or ask you about some expressions in the letter of Jude. Yes, it is good and necessary for you to continue your theological studies. Always be grateful for the theological basis that was laid in your lives during these years here in Fort Wayne. As a former Fort Wayne student, I know what I am talking about.

We as pastors and deaconesses are not the future of the church. We will not be able to effect faith in one single person. Even less so are we able to decide who should or should not come to our churches, who seems to fit into our congregations and who does not. Christ might have totally different plans for you and your congregation than what certain church growth programs try to tell you. I have always worked in parishes in wealthier parts of the city. But the people who joined our church were always people from the bottom of society. I still remember a rich lady from our congregation in Zehlendorf leaving our church with the words: "Now they are beginning to take in everybody here!" She could not have made a better compliment to us. Our Lutheran church is not a middle-class church, and we do not ensure our future by looking for new members with a decent salary. I acknowledge that we are grateful in Steglitz for American donors with a decent salary. We depend on miracles in our work. But it is so helpful to learn to pray the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer every day anew: just pray for the *daily* bread, for nothing more. Ask God to open your eyes that you begin to realize the wonderful promise that he has given to us in Matthew 25: that we serve the Lord himself by giving food to the least of his brothers who are hungry, by giving drink to the least of his brothers who are thirsty, by welcoming the least of his brothers who encounter us as strangers, as refugees, as migrants in our cities and neighborhoods. Central for our faith is that we encounter Christ himself in his word and sacrament, receiving his gifts for eternal life. But it is a real encouragement for our faith as well to realize that we encounter Christ in brothers and sisters who are treated like the garbage of society, who are defamed and calumniated, whose lives seem to have no value. It is not a sacrifice to work with these people, it is an incredible blessing. I am sure that Christ, our Lord, is willing to open many doors in the work with these kinds of people here in the United States as well. Do not try to lock these doors again, just because life in the congregation could be a bit less cozy afterwards. *Gemütlichkeit* is certainly a German word—but it is not a Lutheran word. And if you work with Christian refugees who had to leave their countries because of their faith, you can learn how to live in a society that is increasingly becoming anti-Christian in Europe and in the United States as well. Here in Germany our congregation has gotten the reputation of being a refugee church during the last years, not despite our theology, but because of our clear theological stance. Nobody is so deranged to suffer persecution for the values of liberal theology. I encourage you and your congregations to open your eyes

and open hearts to the blessings in places where you would not usually notice them. Never forget: the church is built by Christ, not by our personal preferences.

You are not the future of the church, my dear future deaconesses and pastors. But you are a great blessing and a great gift to the church—that's for sure. Christ does not want to build his church without you, even though he might have to build his church in spite of you from time to time. But he wants to use your mouths, your hands, your arms and legs, your ears to reach people who so urgently need the gospel and to encourage those whom he has already led into his flock. He does not want to preserve and build his church without your ministry, without your skills and gifts. And he knows how to use you. Maybe it will just be your task to sow the seed, without seeing much fruit. Success is not a mark of the church, let alone that we are saved by success or church growth figures. In any case Christ will let you know in one way or the other that you are not the future of the church. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12:9) That's how Christ builds his church. That's how he builds his church with you as well. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Dr. Gottfried Martens

A Tribute to Donna Preus

The faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary notes with sadness the passing of Donna Preus on Thursday, May 11, 2017. She was the widow of the late Robert D. Preus (1924–1995), who, before serving as president of Concordia Theological Seminary (1974–1992), was a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1957–1974) and served as its chief operating officer during that seminary's critical period in the spring of 1974. Donna Preus is survived by nine children, among whom sons Daniel, Rolf, and Peter are graduates of Concordia Theological Seminary and serve as pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Two daughters, Katie Briel and Solveig Fiene, are married to LCMS pastors who are also graduates of our seminary. She was preceded in death in 2014 by her second son, Klemet Preus, a prolific writer who also was a graduate of our seminary and an LCMS pastor. Several of her grandsons are also graduates of our seminary and serve LCMS congregations. Donna remained at the side of her husband during the synod's critical years of the 1970s and supported him as seminary president in Fort Wayne. She was known for her faith in Christ and devotion to the Lutheran faith that was classically defined by her late husband. She was generous and hospitable to the seminary community during her husband's tenure as president. Her funeral service took place at St. John's Lutheran

Church in Corcoran, Minnesota, on Monday, May 15, 2017, with the Reverend Steven Briel officiating. Burial was in the adjacent church cemetery alongside her husband. Well known and admired throughout the LCMS for her steadfast loyalty to our Lutheran confession, Donna has left behind a lasting legacy that will not soon be forgotten. David P. Scaer represented President Lawrence R. Rast Jr. and Concordia Theological Seminary at her funeral. The words that follow were shared that day with her family and friends. —The Editors

In defining the theology of the Missouri Synod in the last half of the twentieth century, as no one else did, Robert Preus left an indelible imprint on the character of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, as the center of confessional theology. In performing this task from the time he started teaching at the St. Louis seminary in 1957, Donna was by his side to share his successes and sorrows. From time to time, Robert would propose a toast to the Holy Trinity, and so it would not be improper to draw an analogy from that: the doctrine in which the three divine persons are in perpetual conversation with each other. Robert and Donna were in constant conversation with each other, especially in the fourteen-hour drive from Fort Wayne to Gunflint. That conversation was theological, and she was his match. Like the Trinity, one person is no more or less than the others. If I close my eyes, I can still hear her interrupting him and saying, “Now, Robert . . .”

Hannah gave one son Samuel as a prophet, Donna gave four sons and, by adoption, two sons-in-law to preach justification by grace alone through faith in Christ. Hannah’s grandsons, the sons of Samuel, did not turn out that well. Donna’s did, and so Scripture is fulfilled (Det. 5:9–10). Donna came from ordinary circumstances and went on to live an extraordinary life. Everyone knew who she was, but at the center of the storms, she suffered in the successes and tragedies that befell Robert. It was like the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus in constant alteration, but in all things, she was the paragon of grace. Synodical barriers were never an obstacle to those she entertained. She set the standard for a seminary president’s wife. Two months after Robert died, Donna returned to Fort Wayne for the 1996 confessional symposium. As Donna waited in the Appleseed Room in the Coliseum, she was elegantly dressed and greeted with ultimate grace those who had not returned in kind what they received from her and Robert. Here, it was as if the Lord’s Prayer was coming to life: that we should forgive those who trespass against us. Symposium banquets are not for the weak of heart. Before it began, she took me aside and said, “Dave, go at it. That’s the way Robert would want it.”

That’s Concordia Theological Seminary—confessional theology sprinkled with real life and humor—and that’s the legacy of Robert and Donna. Donna survived Robert by almost twenty-two years. Robert used to say that when he got

to heaven, he wanted to talk with and about God. Now she has joined the conversation. Much of the earthly side of this discussion took place on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Our consolation is that we listened to it and, from time to time, took part in it. There is not too much more to be said.

David P. Scaer

Culture: Friend or Foe?¹

For a time it had become—and still is—chic to war from the pulpit about the encroachment of culture into church life. Let me give you two cases. In a faculty lecture series a professor from Luther Seminary (St. Paul, MN) recently spoke of the dangers of culture intruding into the church. In the question period following the presentation, I called attention to the quota system based on race and gender used in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) since its founding in 1988 in choosing church officers, and that church's more recent decisions to ordain women and homosexual clergy and to allow for same-sex marriages. This is cultural intrusion in spades. Quota standards in the ELCA reflect percentages in the general population at the time of its founding and not actual membership of the church. Since its founding, there have been shifts in the general population and in that church's membership. Minority status is not a permanent condition. Proposals to enlist minority groups into its membership have yet to succeed. In line with the majority culture, the ELCA health insurance plans pay for abortions. Apart from its congregations conducting Sunday morning worship services, the ELCA is hardly distinguishable from the predominant American culture, but the same thing could be said of the United Church of Christ and other mainline denominations. If American culture is in moral decline—a favorite topic for conservative pundits—so is mainline Protestantism. Catholicism is also a leaking ship. By far the most recognizable critic was the late erstwhile LCMS and ELCA pastor and then Roman Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus. It would be hard to find someone as counter-cultural as he was.

Now to the second case of assumed cultural sensitivity. One preacher—and he is not alone—could hardly preach a sermon without warning of the intrusion of culture as the enemy of Christian life. In fact the word “culture” popped up in most sermons. He continues to serve the church faithfully, but like other clergymen he

¹ “Culture: Friend or Foe?” was the theme of The 38th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions held on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana from January 21 through January 23, 2015. Following is the introduction to the symposium.

has given himself to playing golf, enjoying the finer restaurants, and obtaining tickets to prominent collegiate sporting events. Keeping up with the Joneses is as much a cultural pursuit as cultural changes in mainline Protestantism.

Like time, culture is more easily described than defined. Each period of time has its own culture and each culture is limited by place and time. No culture lasts forever. If you haven't noticed—and you have—our children live in a different universe than we do. If we attempt to preserve a particular period with its culture, we soon discover that it slips away like sand through our hands. Culture is like time in being in constant flux, and it separates one generation from another and one people from another. Particular times can be identified with its prominent persons. The Age of Aquarius is not the Age of Queen Victoria, and fervent nostalgia will not revive the past. For the LCMS, the Preus era is now gone and it is recalled with mixed emotions. In Pauline terms, culture is the atmosphere in which we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28) and, expanding the Pauline metaphor further, culture is divine-like and in our lives it can replace God. Luther came close to saying this in his explanation of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism. Culture provides the raw materials out of which we create our egos. The church has its own culture but it can thrive in one culture more easily than in another. All cultures are not equal, especially so far as the church is concerned. A culture permeated with feminism provides an environment in which a church is more likely to begin ordaining and continuing to ordain women. With the loss of the distinction between men and women, homosexual clergy and marriage were inevitable. Abortion allows for thinking that all lives might be expendable.

Since the 1960s one cultural shoe in the West has fallen after another. These Herculean changes for those of us who have memories of the 1950s were eggs laid in the Enlightenment, hatched in the French revolution, and have long since taken to wing. God, moral restraints, and all things ecclesiastic have in some circles become cultural relics. Sands carried by cultural winds seep through the church's unsealed door frames, but in some cases churches have opened the gates and sung Hosannas of welcome to the Trojan horses. The rainbow, the symbol of God's promise not to destroy the world with water, is now a sign of welcome to all ideologies. Once inside the fortress, the Greeks tear down the walls and so a culture once calling itself Christian is indistinguishable from the culture that surrounds it.

Nostalgia as the Search for a More (Nearly) Perfect Culture

Nostalgia is the desire for a past time whether or not we have personally experienced it. Fort Wayne's late September Johnny Appleseed Festival sees ever larger crowds as do Civil and Revolutionary War reenactments with participants dressed

in period clothing. Call it “manufactured tradition.”² Local radio station 101.7 offers classical music and “classical” refers not to eighteenth century baroque but tunes of the 1960s and 1970s. High school class reunions take us back to an earlier culture, but none of us look as good as we once thought we did. Here on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, we sponsor the annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions, suggesting that if we could revive the sixteenth century, life would better. Unstated is that theirs was the better world. *Ad fontes* says it all, but the journey into the past is not without its pitfalls. Biennial symposia on the classics at our seminary bring alive the treasures of ancient Greece and Rome. Not everything was all that rosy. Post-Reformation Lutheranism could not resist the advances of eighteenth century rationalism. Left unmentioned is that Paul had little use for the wisdom of that world (1 Cor 1:20) and its way of life.

Running Away from Culture

Three centuries passed and some took to heart Paul’s caution that the world had little to offer, finding solitude in desert caves. Monasteries provided refuge for the more social-minded who, in joining together, created another culture. But like all cultures, it carried within it the seeds of its own deterioration, climaxing with the closing of monasteries in the Reformation lands. Pietists discovered in their Sunday afternoon prayer meetings a religious culture superior to the established church’s morning services. Moravians went one step further in establishing the *Herrenhut*, a community immune to the imperfections of surrounding culture. So Lutherans escaping a culture permeated by rationalism departed Saxony for Perry County to reconstitute the world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with its confessions and theologians. Within months of laying down the cornerstone of their Zion on the Mississippi, the settlers learned their leader had succumbed to behaviors associated with the world. Facing dissolution on the banks of the Mississippi, they were convinced by C.F.W. Walther that a congregational form of government was the way Luther thought the New Testament defined church organization. What resulted had an uncanny resemblance to what Puritans had put together in New England two centuries earlier, and so German immigrants were on the road to Americanization. Whatever that is, it is at least a culture. Introduction of the English language brought Lutherans closer to the Protestant mainstream and LCMS acculturation was crowned when its congregations found a place in their sanctuaries for the national flag. Any suggestion of removing Old Glory would now be considered sacrilege.

² Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press, 1983).

Culture as the Monkey on the Back

The word “culture” can be twisted in several directions. A person with manners, education, and clipped accent is considered and considers himself cultured, but each person carries around on his back the culture in which he was raised. We may attempt to adopt another culture than the one in which we were brought up, but inevitably the facade crumbles and who and what we are comes to the surface. You can take the boy out of the country, but you cannot take the country out of the boy. A seminary student brought up on the farm feels abandoned in being assigned to an urban congregation—and his wife more so. The reverse is also true. Culture provides our comfort zone in which we live and move and have our being. Marriage counselors ply their profession in getting each spouse to come to terms with the culture of the other. Laity leaving one congregation for another have to come terms with another culture—so does the pastor in accepting a new assignment. Statistics exist showing that the way in which one’s congregation worships is more determinative in what its members believe than denominational membership. For those pulling up their roots and moving, each congregation is at first terra incognita. Never-to-be-resolved controversies over hymns and liturgy are as much about culture as it is about theology. Those who left the synod in the 1970s for reasons of conscience had to adapt to the culture of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), but some acted like the Missourians they really were in insisting in having things their own way. This did not fit into the culture of the newly formed synod that was an assimilation of cultures, and the former Missourians were regarded and regarded themselves as aliens. Those who have climbed over the fences in search of greener pastures predestined themselves to spend their lives with one eye on the rearview mirror looking at pastures that looked greener than the ones for which they left. This is especially so of the clergy, who cannot as easily as the laity pull up stakes and replant themselves in fields they left behind. A few prodigals, however, have shifted into reverse and returned to the welcoming arms of the mother synod. Going from one to church to another and back to where they came was as much a matter of culture as theology. Culture makes us what we are and how we think, and we can never escape it. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher created a theology out of culture. Only when we step out of one culture into another do we recognize cultural distinctions. To borrow philosophical and dogmatical terms, only in confronting the antithesis, do we recognize and appreciate the thesis.

Israel as Failed Cultural Experiment

In terms of the New Testament the church is the household of God (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17) and ideally its culture should be distinct from its external

environment. Of course it isn't. Accounts of how God's people succumbed to culture is what the Old Testament is all about. In looking back at the burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife had second thoughts about the world she was leaving behind. Prohibitions against Israel intermarrying outside the tribe assumed that alien cultures were destructive of the faith God gave Abraham. After her eldest son Esau married a Hittite and exacerbated the cultural adulteration by taking a Canaanite as a second wife, Rebecca sent her younger son Jacob to marry one of her brother's daughters to insure cultural consanguinity. Jacob sealed the connection by marrying not one but two of his cousins and then nailed things down by marrying their maids. Unbeknownst to Jacob, the lovely Rachel had taken the household gods with her and, with them, had made an attempt to preserve the familial culture (Gen 31:34).

In spite of sibling rivalries, cultural unity is more easily preserved when it is "all in the family." Family as community shares common customs and discourse. Those on the outside never get the jokes, sort of like first year-seminary students in the fall term. Etymologically the word "culture" has to do with both religion and the cultivation of the earth. Putting two and two together, culture dealing with the things of the world has the power to draw us away from worship of the true God. Mother earth is God's goddess rival. Environmental concerns have religious undertones: the earth is autonomous, and so we are back to the eighteenth century Deism.

In the increasing cultural kaleidoscope in which our pastors work, immunity to cultural changes is no longer possible, no more now than it was in biblical times. (For example, Fort Wayne, whose German Lutheran roots go back almost two centuries, has the largest Burmese population in the United States.) Cultural infection is not only possible but probable at every level of church life. The challenge in preaching is speaking a word of God that is immediately accessible to the hearer to lay bare his situation without absorbing the world, in which he lives, into the message. This is more easily said than done, but it is a task that cannot be avoided. Another option is adjusting the culture to fit the beliefs of the church. This is easier said than done, but has been done at least partially and never permanently. Constantine did it 1,700 years ago as did Luther five hundred years ago. Calvinism and Arminianism have theological premises which are adverse to Lutheranism, but they provided the religious climate in which the LCMS was planted and thrived. One particular culture does not last forever. Primitive cultures on both sides of the Atlantic that sacrificed their prized youth were readjusted. Cultures can be adjusted—yes, corrected. German National Socialism that sent Jews to the gas chambers belongs to history, but that culture was changed. A culture that allows for

abortion and same-sex marriage is also capable of readjustment. Here the church as church, and not just Christian as Christian, has a task.

David P. Scaer

A Living Breathing Instrument and Its CPR

I did my vicarage at Trinity Lutheran in Norman, Oklahoma under the supervision of the great Pastor David Nehrenz. Some thirty years later, Nehrenz remains Trinity's pastor, and has a great story to tell.

You are sure to recall the tragic Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. McVeigh's madness took 168 lives, and injured hundreds more. The bomb's tremors reached a nearby Methodist church, damaging its pipe organ, the oldest in the state. Another great instrument seemed destined for the dumpster. But in stepped the American Organ Institute at the University of Oklahoma, an industrious graduate student named Evan, and the great folks at Trinity Lutheran. The pipe organ, as Pastor Nehrenz notes, is a living, breathing instrument, and now that organ has been brought back to new life, and a new home after having been relocated to Trinity. It is a true organ donation. Think *Toy Story*. Every organ loves to be played, and to have people who sing hymns along with it.

While an explosion nearly took the life of this instrument, many other pipe organs have been lost to our cultural implosion, and to our church's deflated confidence and loss of identity. It would seem that the king of instruments has been dethroned by poorly played guitars, drum kits, and cheesy keyboards. And with it, our churches have been flooded with songs not good enough musically to compete on the pop charts, not good enough lyrically to be remembered after lunch, not worth singing with our grandchildren, and offering so very little on our deathbed.

Ah, but this organ has been restored, revived. Would that the ideas of the American Organ Institute spread like wildfire, and, with that, a love for true hymns, the great music of the church. No, this is not simply about taste, but the recognition that while we bemoan the things of this world, our very own churches have modeled themselves on that world. Instead of changing the world, we are ever more conforming to it. The less our churches look like churches, the less they *are* like churches. The less they sing the hymns of the church, the less they carry on the memory of the church. Replace the altar with a stage, and the Lord's Supper gets tossed out too. Do this in remembrance of nothing much at all.

What do I want in a church? I want a church that is proud to be church. Not afraid of its shadow, it is a church that embraces its past, which is also its future. Trinity Norman, Evan, and the great folks at OU have done something wonderful.

Three cheers for Pastor Nehrenz. May the same pipe organ that received CPR accompany Christ's life-giving Spirit for many years to come. Through this church, the song goes on.

Peter J. Scaer