Journal of Lutheran Mission

April 2016 | Vol. 3 | No. 1

The Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod

Witness Always

Journal of Lutheran
Mission
April 2016 | Vol. 3 | No. 1

Table of Contents

Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
Please direct queries to *journaloflutheranmission@lcms.org*.
This journal may also be found at *www.lcms.org/journaloflutheranmission*.
Find the *Journal of Lutheran Mission* on Facebook.

Editorial office:
1333 S. Kirkwood Road,
St. Louis, MO 63122-7294,
314-996-1202

Member: Associated Church Press Evangelical Press Association (ISSN 2334-1998)
A periodical of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's Offices of National and International Mission.

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

The Church cannot afford to skirt the work of apologetics.

Book Review and Commentary

Making the Case for Christianity: Responding to Modern Objections
Edited by Corey D. Maas and Adam Francisco (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014)

by Jacob Corzine

Service on the mission field that is a university campus places the real need for apologetics regularly — if not daily — in front of me. Most often I find myself making an apologetic for Christian beliefs to the very Christian students I'm called to serve, something that comes as no surprise to someone who was also once a Christian college student. Less often, but still not infrequently, I find myself attempting to equip Christian students to make an apologetic to inquiring friends. Only on a few rare occasions have I been, as a campus pastor, directly involved in debates, arguments or conversations with adamant or skeptical unbelievers.

Thus the perspective out of which I take a book like *Making the Case for Christianity: Responding to Modern Objections* in hand. I'm concerned with being aware of such "modern objections" and being prepared with responses, mostly for the friendly interlocutor who actually anticipates that a good response exists. He (or she) is seeking it either to satisfy personal concern or to more convincingly speak about the faith with another. Whether I like it or not, the students I serve are closer to the apologetics front line than I am myself.

Lutherans are not carrying out the apologetic task alone.

Making the Case, however, is written for me, the pastor. For the most part, its authors don't employ the engaging style of a Craig Parton (Parton's own contribution to the volume notwithstanding) or Gene Veith. While I don't doubt that the necessary combination of comprehension and interest exists among many Christian university students, I'm sure that some do not possess it, even though they are struggling the apologetic struggle. For them, those other books exist, but also for them, I bear the responsibility.

This is where *Making the Case* shows its value — in providing me with the material of quality responses to certain modern objections to Christianity that allow me to pass along responses with depth, responses that, because they are based on depth of understanding, can be better tailored to the individual or individual's specific objections.

The book contains seven essays by Lutheran authors versed in apologetics. Joshua Pagan presents and defends the Kalam Cosmological Argument, which makes the case for a first cause in the universe; he defends the position that first cause is a personal God. Mark Pierson's engagement of Bart Ehrmann on the reliability of the history as presented in the Gospels first casts doubt on Ehrmann's own assumptions about the study of history before summarizing the mass of evidence that undergirds the reliability of the New Testament texts. Craig Parton's assessment of Christ's resurrection is cast as a matter of proper assumptions, as he contends that legal investigation is more apt than the historical sort for addressing the resurrection, and then makes the case for a preponderance of eye-witnesses. A second, much more confrontational engagement with Islam (the Kalam Cosmological Argument was the first) is found in co-editor Adam Francisco's response to Muslim polemicist Louay Fatoohi. Fatoohi, and with him a millennium of Muslim assaults on the divinity of Christ, are pinned to the wall on their hasty rejection of the reliability of the biblical texts.

John Bombaro's essay on the *Scandal of Christian Particularity* turns to a different kind of objection than in the previous essays as it defends God's prerogative to save some and damn others by prioritizing righteousness over fairness in God's kingdom. Angus Menuge deals with the problem of evil in a way that shows not only the limitations of atheist objections but also draws attention back

to the cross of Christ as that which finally must stand front and center in the discussion. In the last essay, on *Christianity's Cultural Legacy*, co-editor Korey D. Maas turns the apologetic to the offensive, defending the moral contribution of Christianity to Western society but also neatly recognizing that the heart of the apologetic matter is actually defending the existence of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Finally, the skeptical reader would do well to begin with Adam Francisco's conclusion, a concise apologetic for the discipline of apologetics.

The individual essays are followed by bibliographies that are particularly valuable but also drive home a point: Lutherans are not carrying out the apologetic task alone. On the contrary, in this we are reliant on any number of other Christian writers. At the same time, this is what helps the book be unique, since it takes the good work of those writers and casts it in terms in which Lutherans learn to think, also poking it with the hard questions about the proper distinction between Law and Gospel and the pre-eminent place of the cross.

In one place I would hesitate with my praise for the book. Sometimes the objections being addressed are too quickly trivialized at the beginning of the essay. I would expect this to frustrate some readers with genuine concerns about the respective objections. Assessing the whole of the book, however, as someone fairly new but not entirely foreign to apologetics, I'm quite pleased. Already in the last few months, it's helped me to more competently speak to some modern objections to the Christian faith. I've heard a rumor that another volume is coming, and I hope this is true. We cannot afford to skirt the work of apologetics.

The Rev. Jacob Corzine is campus pastor at Lutheran Campus Ministry, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

Book Review and Commentary

We receive no particular explanation for suffering, but we do receive God's promise that He will be faithful to His loving pledge to sinners for Jesus' sake.

Mercy in Action: Essays on Mercy, Human Care and Disaster Response

Edited by Ross Edward Johnson, introduced by Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2015)

by Mark C. Mattes

This volume is a collection of twenty-nine essays or written resources compiled by Ross Edward Johnson, director of Disaster Response for the LCMS. These essays highlight a definitive characteristic of Matthew Harrison's presidency of the LCMS: *diakonia*, service or mercy. In a word, Harrison has placed an agenda before the LCMS that values not only witness (*martyria*) and worship (*leitourgia*) but also service to those in need, whether or not they confess Jesus as Lord (169). For Harrison, the Church is to be a "mercy place," which offers Christ's love and service to the "needy" (111). Given the fact that the last decade has seen an uptick in natural or human-caused disasters, this book, along with Harrison's highlighting of mercy, seems most pertinent. In addition to the Scriptures' appeal to Christians to be agents of mercy in the world, Harrison harkens back to Luther, who noted that since Christians are all "one cake" in Christ, then they must care for one another and that insensitivity to the plight of others is never justified (225). Likewise, as part of his reform of the Church, Luther advocated a "common chest" for the church to offer gifts and loans to those in need (305). If we are to be faithful to the Reformation, then we have an obligation to provide for those in need.

We receive no particular explanation for suffering, but we do receive God's promise that He will be faithful to His loving pledge to sinners for Jesus' sake.

A disaster is an event beyond the control of affected individuals that results in great harm, suffering, destruction and damage. Disasters damage a community's ability to sustain life without outside assistance (15). That Christians must respond to the needs of others is an outgrowth of the fact that their Lord, in His earthly ministry, was a healer of the sick, a feeder of the hungry and one who assisted the poor (20). For that reason, the LCMS has developed an "Lutheran Early Response Team" (LERT) that enters a disaster-struck area in order to help repair and rebuild (16), and to provide food, water, clothing and shelter. This book seeks to assist not only these workers but all church leaders who want to understand the basis for the way in which providing for neighbors in need is an outgrowth of God's prior service to the faithful in Word and Sacrament.

When "bad things happen to good people," some people demand an explanation from God. Some who request such explanations or theodicies assume that humans actually own or possess their own lives. But, in truth, even our own lives do not belong to us. Instead, they belong to God, who is not obliged to give explanations for His ways. In the midst of disaster, humans experience God as hidden or absconded, not seeing God's face but instead his "backside," as Luther put it. Hence, the contributors to this book claim a "theology of the cross" in contrast to a "theology of glory" as a solid platform from which to minister to those suffering. A theology of the cross does not futilely avoid pain by means of bargaining with God or developing theodicies, but instead like Jesus suffers pain when it invariably comes. In contrast to secularism, it is not the meaninglessness of fortune's wheel that we encounter in disasters, but instead we meet God, but precisely in a way that deflates our sense of control. Such destabilizing experiences call sinners not to theodicies but instead to repentance and faith, since sinners have nothing of their own to which to turn. We receive no particular explanation for suffering, but we do receive God's promise that He will be faithful to His loving pledge to sinners for Jesus' sake. Believers are promised resurrection and eternal life.

Ross Johnson notes that although repentance is humbling, its renewing power resides in that it moves sinners out of their self-centeredness and allows them to trust in

God's mercy granted in Christ. With pastoral sensitivity, Johnson notes that when something bad happens, that does not necessarily mean that one is being punished: We all participate in a world subject to death (34). Likewise, John Pless points out that repentance lets go of the pointless questions that we would use to hold on to life on our own terms, motivated by the quest to protect ourselves against the God of the Scriptures who kills and makes alive (48). Most importantly for those who suffer, Pless shares the promise given to Paul in Rom. 8:28: "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." We are not privy to God's wider plan but we are privy to a God who promises and empowers us to lead us through affliction to eternal life. In light of this Gospel promise, William Weedon recognizes that a Christian can "give thanks" at all times, even during intense suffering and tragedy since our lives are secure in God's loving arms.

Eschewing any modernistic "social gospel" that undermines the truth that salvation is from sin, death and the devil, Matthew Harrison points out that if a Christian sees injustice going on in the community, then one must act. As citizens we have social responsibilities for that community (38). Such action on behalf of those in need is an expression of social mercy. Diaconal love is "born of the incarnation and humiliation of Christ" (40). Extending this emphasis on faith active in love independently of left-wing ideology, Reed Lessing notes how such mercy was expressed by the prophet Amos, advocate for the poor. "The poor were not righteous because they had been denied their rights, but rather because Yahweh had reckoned their faith as righteousness … Amos did not advocate class warfare; the righteous poor will be vindicated by Yahweh and Yahweh alone. The prophet's oracles call for conversion, not revolution" (63). Hence, assisting the poor is not in any sense salvific but instead is the "material and economic poverty is an outrage that is not in accord with God's will" (67).

This book seeks to assist … all church leaders who want to understand the basis for the way in which providing for neighbors in need is an outgrowth of God's prior service to the faithful in Word and Sacrament.

The volume includes several relevant historical essays. A selection from Adolf von Harnack is offered not to endorse his Liberalism, but instead because he ably itemizes the many manifestations of welfare and social relief that early Christians offered one another, thereby embodying Christ's love, as they cared for the needy, the impoverished, the enslaved and the imprisoned. Essays from Martin Luther, Martin Chemnitz, Johann Gerhard, C. F. W. Walther, Theodore Julius Brohm and Wilhelm Loehe offer reflections on the pastor's role in leading congregations to serve as places of care and verify that diaconal service is genetically hardwired into a confessional Lutheran perspective. In light of Loehe's revitalization of the office of deaconess, Arthur Just notes that while a scriptural perspective reserves ordained pastoral ministry for men, the office of "deaconess" in the context of the congregation along with a pastor helps a congregation experience both a paternal and maternal approach to care (128). In addition to essays, the book offers several hymns which describe and advocate social mercy and the Lutheran Church in Australia's Statement on social mercy.

Not only does this book do exactly what it sets out to do, show that social mercy is natural outgrowth of gospel confessing ministry, but it also provides a potent alternative to the "justice" drum-beating of "mainline Protestant" churches who invariably take the stance of the political left. For the LCMS, caring for the needy need not be pitted against Gospel forgiveness. Both go hand in hand. In mainline Protestantism, all too often denominational structures are used to advocate for leftist political causes and a view of "justice" far more indebted to Marx than Amos. This current endeavor of social mercy by the LCMS is to be applauded and affirmed. Unlike "mainline" Protestantism, it honors the proper distinction between Law and Gospel and church and state. Christians are to do social mercy, not as an evangelistic ploy solely to get the needy into church, but simply because it is right. How any given congregation will discern how to be an agent of mercy in its community or wider society is in that congregation's hands. But that congregations should be agents of mercy in the world is not up for debate — at least in confessional Lutheranism.

Dr. Mark C. Mattes is associate professor of Religion and Philosophy, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa.

In a world of conflicting narratives, who is to say what is true?

Book Review and Commentary

Why Christian Faith Still Makes Sense: A Response to Contemporary Challenges

by C. Stephen Evans (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015)

by John T. Pless

The author, a professor of philosophy and humanities at Baylor University and a leading Kierkegaard scholar, has provided a short apologetic against the so-called New Atheism, which is thoughtful, engaging and accessible.

The first chapter introduces readers to the "four horsemen" of the New Atheists: Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett. His presentation of their unbelief is both balanced and nuanced. Yet Evans notes that there is little new in their arguments. They are not original. The Church has encountered such objections to belief in God before. Key aspects of the tenets of the unbelief championed by the New Atheists are examined and critiqued. Evans especially gives attention to their claim that religion is not only irrational but so ethically toxic as not to be tolerated.

> The chief task of apologetics is accurately identifying and dismantling these false gods that promise identity, meaning and security to their makers but finally leave them alone with their sin, empty of purpose in life and defenseless against death.

Karl Barth was well known in the twentieth century for his rejection of any form of natural theology, in contrast to Emil Brunner, Werner Elert and Hermann Sasse. Without replaying the totality of that debate, Evans acknowledges the value of natural theology in the apologetic task. Evans shows sympathy for the "Reformed epistemology" associated with Alvin Plantinga. Plantinga has developed a sophisticated account for human knowledge to support his arguments for belief in God. Yet Evans avers that "Reformed epistemology should not be the whole of our response to the New Atheism" (16). In contrast to Anthony Flew, Evans holds that some form of theism, not atheism, is the default position intellectually (21).

Chapter three takes up the "concept of a natural sign for God" (29). In countering the claim of the New Atheists that there is no evidence for reality of God, Evans says that there are indeed signs of God's existence, but like other signs, they may be ignored or misread. These natural signs point to a *sensus divinitatis* or an "intuitive theism." According to Evans there are five theistic natural signs: (1) the experience of cosmic wonder; (2) the experience of purposive order; (3) the sense of being morally accountable; (4) the sense of human dignity; and (5) the longing for transcendent joy. These signs are for Evans are widely accessible but also easily resistible.

Evans observes that "Evolutionary theory gives at least some empirical confirmation of Calvin's idea of the *sensus divinitatis*" (35). Evans seems to tip his hand toward an acceptance of theistic evolution, arguing that there are no reasons why a Creator who guided the evolutionary process could not have wired the development of this sense of the divine into human beings: "Far from showing that the order in nature is illusory, evolution actually shows that the order we experience on the surface of things, so to speak, depends on a still deeper, hidden order" (45). Thus "it is a mistake to think that evolutionary theory defeats the claim that the natural world contains purposive order" (45–46). This tilt toward theistic evolution should not detract from the overall value of Evans' discussion of purposive order in creation.

Evans recognizes that no natural theology can lead to saving faith in Christ. His goal is simply to demonstrate that there are good and plausible reasons for belief in

God over and against the claims of the New Atheists. The final section of the book deals with revelation and how we recognize God's self-revelation. Evans sets forth three criteria for divine revelation: (1) miracles; (2) paradox; and (3) existential power. In this section, Evans' critical indebtedness to Kierkegaard is most evident.

The chief task of apologetics is accurately identifying and dismantling these false gods that promise identity, meaning and security to their makers but finally leave them alone with their sin, empty of purpose in life and defenseless against death. A Lutheran apologetic will work from the First Commandment. The First Commandment will allow for no other gods; that's Law. But the Law is followed by the good news that Christ Jesus crucified and raised from the dead is the only God you need. His lordship is the Gospel. His life, death, resurrection, ascension and the promise of His coming again are the foundation that we confess and proclaim as "most certainly true."

The First Commandment will allow for no other gods; that's Law. But the Law is followed by the good news that Christ Jesus crucified and raised from the dead is the only God you need.

Luther's bold conclusion to his explanation of each article of the Apostles' Creed, "This is most certainly true," is hardly in vogue today. In a world of conflicting narratives, who is to say what is true? Truth is replaced by perspective. Renouncing "propositional theology," theologians who have embraced postmodernism call instead for "non-foundationalist" approaches to faith centered in narrative rather doctrinal assertions. Colin Gunton rightly observed "that the anti-foundationalist song is the voice of a siren. The allusion to fideism indicates the perennial weakness of non-foundationalist epistemologies. They may appear to be attempts to render their content immune from outside criticism and so become forms of intellectual sectarianism. In other words, they may appear to evade the challenges of the universal and objective and to run the risk of the rank subjectivism and into which their extreme representatives have fallen. Theologically speaking they evade the intellectual challenge involved in the use of the word God" (Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* [Cambridge University Press, 1993], 134). Gunton goes on to note that such approaches tend to create their own subjective foundations and hence become guilty of the foundationalism they so dread. Evans would seem to resonate with Gunton here and helpfully so.

Why the Christian Faith Still Makes Sense: A Response to Contemporary Challenges is a helpful contribution. I could envision this slim volume being used in a congregational book discussion group or especially in a campus ministry setting.

The Rev. John T. Pless is assistant professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions and director of Field Education at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Book Review and Commentary

Too many Christians today do not hear the hard accusation of the Law concerning sin, while at the same time they also do not hear the soothing comfort of the Gospel.

Handling the Word of Truth: Law and Gospel in the Church Today (Revised Edition) by John T. Pless (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015)

by Mark Loest

For more than ten years, this handy volume by John Pless has been guiding pastors and laity alike as they seek to master the art of distinguishing between the Law and the Gospel. The proper distinction between the two is essential to understanding the Bible. The Lutheran understanding sees this art coming from the Holy Spirit, who uses experience to teach it. Luther got it right, and this made all the difference with his reformation.

In the nineteenth century, C. F. W. Walther taught his students this art, and his evening lectures on this topic were published as *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*. Others have also taken up this important doctrine, including more recent theologians like Werner Elert, Gerhard Forde and Oswald Bayer. An abridgement of Walther's work was published as *God's No and God's Yes*.

Too many Christians today do not hear the hard accusation of the Law concerning sin, while at the same time they also do not hear the soothing comfort of the Gospel, which speaks the forgiveness of sins.

In 2004, Concordia first published *Handling the Word of Truth*. It was met with favorable with reviews. Unlike *God's Yes and God's No*, it is not an abridgement of the Walther's classic. Rather it is a short study that includes Walther's main points with short commentary and instruction. The newly revised edition (2015) came about, in part, because of the new translation of Walther's classic on Law and Gospel, *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible* (also by Concordia Publishing House).

First, Pless gives us a solid introduction to Walther's treatment of Law and Gospel. Here the original twenty-five theses are condensed to thirteen chapters. By using Scripture, Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, quotations from Walther and everyday examples, the reader is shown what it means to properly handle the Word of truth. It is very apparent that the author is drawing on his many years of pastoral work, first in the college setting, and since 2000, as a seminary professor.

I like the way he gives common examples of the misapplication Law and Gospel today (the popularity of posting the 10 Commandments in courtrooms and classrooms without explanation), discusses modern ideas of faith and of spirituality (they're not what people usually think they are) and shows how Walther contended with the same kinds of doctrinal problems that we contend with (he had revivalists like Charles Finney and the Lutheran Samuel S. Schmucker, while we have modern evangelistic movements, such as Campus Crusade or Promise Keepers). All of this and more makes this an extremely informative, and at the same time practical, book.

Each chapter includes several points for reflection and discussion. These will be found useful for personal study and devotion, for a Bible study or Sunday morning class and even in a more formal instructional settings.

At the end of each chapter there are endnotes and an appended sermon by Martin Luther, *The Distinction of Law and Gospel*, from Jan. 1, 1532 — both from the original edition. The book includes a Foreword by Mark Mattes and the author's Preface with a new preface for the revised edition. A useful epilogue has been added, along with a bibliography at the end for further reading and study.

John Pless has provided the Church with a wonderful explanation and defense for Law/Gospel distinction, especially by taking aim at modern theologians who more often than not mishandle these doctrines. Why do they mishandle them? The obvious answer from Pless' book

is that they don't have or follow Luther and Walther as their guides. They carelessly approach Scripture without the necessary skills that can only be acquired by the Holy Spirit's teaching. The result is that too many Christians today do not hear the hard accusation of the Law concerning sin, while at the same time they also do not hear the soothing comfort of the Gospel, which speaks the forgiveness of sins. Proficiency in this art will make for better pastors, preaching and listening, and for better hearers, as the Word is applied to people's lives.

The book is well written and fairly easy to read. Footnote 9 on page 23 incorrectly names essayist Christoph Barnbrock as Christian Barnbrock.

I remember many years ago being told by one of my theology professors at Concordia College to read, because of its importance, but also because it was relatively short, *God's No and God's Yes* once every year. I make that recommendation with Pless' book. Here is an example of something you would not have thought could have been improved upon, but is now even better.

The Rev. Mark Loest is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Frankentrost, Mich.

Book Review and Commentary

In addition to serving as a polemic against Rome and as a visual catechism, Reformation coins and medals served as a visual witness and confession of faith.

The Reformation Coin and Medal Collection of Concordia Historical Institute
by Daniel Harmelink (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016)

by *Journal of Lutheran Mission* Editors

At first blush, a book review about Reformation coins and medals in a mission journal seems a bit out of place. After all, shouldn't books about medals and coins be found in a journal about history, archeology or medals? Yet, in the front matter, Dr. Daniel Harmelink explains that Reformation coins and medals (the study of which is called "numismatics") are a confession of faith, a polemic, a catechism and a visual witness. In this sense, a review about Reformation numismatics fits this issue of the *Journal of Lutheran Mission* well,with its focus on teaching the faith. Reformation coins and medals teach the faith and provide a witness, that is, they serve the mission of the Church.

The purpose of the book is to make available the Concordia Historical Institute's (CHI) Reformation coin and medal collection, which has been in the making for over ninety years. Concordia Historical Institute (CHI) is one of the few North American institutions to hold a significant collection of museum-grade pieces from the Reformation era. For the past couple of decades, the collection of Concordia Historical Institutes' Reformation coins and medals has been kept in a vault, causing its significance and even its existence to be forgotten by students and experts alike in both North America and Europe. This book hopes to remedy the situation by bringing the entire 835-piece collection to the public through high definition photos. Detailed descriptions of each piece include information on weight, diameter, visual elements, legends, designer and mint. Scripture references and information about locations and persons are included.

The Reformation was about the confession of faith expressed through teaching and preaching. Yet the spoken and printed word was not the only way this confession of faith was expressed.

The Reformation was about the confession of faith expressed through teaching and preaching. Yet the spoken and printed word was not the only way this confession of faith was expressed. Dr. Harmelink writes:

> But most histories fail to mention one significant element of the Reformation that rivaled the power of the printing press: the potential of the medallist's press to inform and inspire. In 1983 Otto Schnell wrote that the Reformation had its spread with the advent of not one, but two new media: the moveable type of Gutenberg and the art of the German medal, which also saw its zenith in the decades following the posting of the 95 Theses. It is noteworthy that just as printed leaflets were reproduced by other printers, so early Reformation medals were copied by other medallists… The Reformation was confessed in gold and silver and bronze and circulated among the princes and the merchants and peasants … Along with these pamphlets coins and medals quickly began to also reflect the newly-discovered confession centered in Wittenberg.

In addition to serving as a polemic against Rome and as a visual catechism, the Reformation coins and medals served as a visual witness and confession of faith. Since some of the coins were legal tender, every time the coins were exchanged for goods or services, the message of the Reformation was passed on. Some people used the coins and medals as jewelry. Harmelink writes:

> The reason many of extant pieces have been pierced or a hanger soldered to its edge is because these pieces were not only legal tender or secret commemoratives to keep in a private place, but they were often modified into treasured jewelry and worn in public as a testament to one's belief and legacy. Elaborate

gold and silver mounts were crafted in order that the coin or medal, as a fine painting or print, might be properly framed and displayed around the neck, pinned on clothing or worn as a ring.

In this way, the Reformation coins and medals served as a visual witness to the Gospel. They are a confession of faith that bore witness to the Gospel; they were "mission" cast in bronze, silver and gold.

Reformation coins typically employ symbolism to bear witness to the Gospel. Scholars have identified nineteen typical or common symbols that represent or teach the Reformation. Some of these themes or symbols include, the divine eye/all-seeing eye/divine triangle, an angel or messenger of the Gospel, the Holy Scriptures, a fortress/castle, chalice, blood and water flowing from Christ's side, a tiara, a goose/swan, the Luther Rose and Martin Luther. Many of the symbols are easily understood by students of the Reformation. For instance, the tiara is a symbol of the papacy. The author writes, "The earliest piece in the collection using this symbol is from a 1617 medal from Worms depicting the Word of God as light from a candle resting upon an open Bible. The divine hand points to the flame. The Word of God, however, does not go unchallenged. A dragon/serpent with a broken tiara fights against the light of the Gospel and attempts to extinguish the flame." The date of this piece is not surprising as 1617 was the first centennial anniversary of the Reformation, the celebration of which marked the beginnings of the Thirty Years War.

To the uninitiated, the thought of Reformation coins and medals invokes the image of Martin Luther. Yet, the image of Martin Luther was not as common as one might expect in the first centuries after the Reformation. When images of Martin Luther initially appeared they depicted him as the messenger or bearer of the Gospel. By the 18th and 19th centuries, Luther became more of a figure to support various philosophies or political ambitions. Harmelink writes,

> Every major philosophy or regime has been forced to make use of Luther and the Reformation. From the forces that created the Prussian Union to the Third Reich, Luther was reinterpreted and recast as a disciple of the current movement. This can be most plainly seen in the presentation of Luther as nationalistic hero among the 1917 commemorative pieces. It is not by accident that the first coin struck by the Nazi regime was a 2 and 5 mark coin of Martin Luther. Later, the socialist government of East Germany turned Luther into a fellow revolutionary, right along side the warring Thomas Müntzer (ca. 1490–1525).

Yet glorification of any personality connected to the Reformation was never the initial goal for the Reformation era medallists." The 500th anniversary of the Reformation appears to be headed toward the first "ecumenical" Reformation, when Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholics celebrate together with Luther being recast as an ecumenical hero.

The Reformation Coin and Medal Collection of Concordia Historical Institute is a tour de force in the field of numismatics and the most comprehensive book written on the topic found in the English language. The photography is gorgeous, and the book is printed on high quality, museum-grade paper. The book is a must for libraries and for Reformation institutes. Yet, the book is not for specialists alone but also for those who want to understand more thoroughly the Reformation and the ways in which it was confessed. The book would adorn any coffee table well.