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Table of Contents

The Ninety-Five Theses and Why They Are Still Important Cameron A. MacKenzie	195
In Search of Celebrating the Reformation Rightly: Luther's <i>Lectures on Galatians</i> as the Banner of the Reformation Naomichi Masaki	213
<i>Pfarramt</i>, Geography, and the Order of the Church: A Formal Opinion from Wittenberg Mark D. Nispel	239
Luther's Use of Apologetics Adam S. Francisco	249
Antichrist in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions: The Relevance of Reformation Exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 for the Church Today Charles A. Gieschen	263
Will the Real Martin Luther Stand Up? David P. Scaer	281
The Story of Salvation, the Genesis of a New Creation, and a Bold Proclamation: Luther Lessons for the Present Crisis Peter J. Scaer	299

Restoring the Great Litany in the Lutheran Church	
Benjamin T.G. Mayes	321
Research Notes	331
Demon Possession and Exorcism in Lutheran Orthodoxy	
Theological Observer	337
2017 Commencement Speech	
A Tribute to Donna Preus	
Culture: Friend or Foe?	
A Living Breathing Instrument and Its CPR	
Book Reviews	351
Books Received	377
Indices to Volume 81 (2017)	381

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

Research Notes

Demon Possession and Exorcism in Lutheran Orthodoxy

Over the past twenty years, the undersigned has made note of various statements on demonic possession and exorcism from the pastoral writings of Lutheran Orthodoxy. The translations are presented here as a resource for contemporary reflection on the proper diagnosis and pastoral care for suspected cases of bodily possession by demonic powers. Learning from classic Lutheran pastoral theology from before the Enlightenment is of great value for those Christians who believe that what the Scriptures describe (Mark 1:34) could still happen today.¹

Definition

Johann Ludwig Hartmann (1640–1680):

In general, satanic possession is nothing other than an action of the devil by which, with God's permission, men are urged to sin and he occupies their bodies in order that they might lose eternal salvation. Thus bodily possession is an action by which the devil, with divine permission, possesses both pious and impious men in such a way that he inhabits their bodies not only according to activity, but also according to essence, and torments them, either for the punishment or for the discipline and testing of men, and for the glory of divine justice, mercy, power, and wisdom.²

There are two kinds of demon possession. The first kind of demon possession is spiritual possession. All non-Christians are spiritually possessed by the devil. The devil has taken their souls captive and will take them to hell if they die while not believing in Christ. As Scripture says, we “were by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:3).³ But the devil does not control their bodies, necessarily, though he tries. Non-

¹ Among recent Lutheran books dealing with this topic, see Robert H. Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare: True Accounts from the Lutheran Church of Madagascar* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013); Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Pastoral Care Companion* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 354–362.

² Johann Ludwig Hartmann, *Pastorale Evangelicum, seu Instructio Plenior Ministrorum Verbi, Libris Quatuor, Pastoris Personam, Vitam, Spartam, & Fortunam sistens* (Norimbergae: Endter, 1722), 1160–1161.

³ Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Christians can decide what they want to do; they lead normal lives. The Church's traditional exorcism at Baptism addresses this spiritual possession.⁴

The other kind of demon possession is physical possession. There are symptoms of this. According to Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617–1688), these include: knowledge of foreign languages that one has never learned; supernatural knowledge of secrets, far-off events, and the future; superhuman strength; ability to make accurate animal noises without having the necessary organs for this; vulgar speech; screaming; blasphemy; and convulsions.⁵ The Lutheran Orthodox pastoral theologians emphasize that one should not mistake demon possession for a natural disease.⁶ Not only can non-Christians be physically possessed, believers can be possessed in this way, too. Being possessed in this way does not, however, mean that a Christian ceases to be a believer and among the number of the saved.⁷

Treatment

Friedrich Balduin (1575–1627):

What is to be done with the possessed? And can the devil be cast out by using a certain method?

1. Let experienced physicians be consulted as to whether [there is a medical explanation.]
2. When a true possession is recognized, let the poor one be committed to the care of a minister of the church who teaches sound doctrine, is of a blameless life, does nothing for the sake of filthy lucre, but does everything from the soul.
3. Let him diligently inquire what kind of life the possessed one led up to this point and lead him through the law to the recognition of his sins. If he was previously pious, let him console him with the fact that even God sometimes leaves His people in the power of the devil for certain causes, which the histories of Job and Paul testify.
4. After this admonition or consolation has taken place, let also the works of a natural physician be used, who will cleanse him from malicious humors with the appropriate medicines. For, it has been ascertained that possessed

⁴ See, for example, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, ed. David W. Loy, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 159–161.

⁵ See Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 344.

⁶ See Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 343–347.

⁷ See Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 344.

people frequently suffer from a double disease, namely of body—from a melancholy humor—and of soul—for example, insanity, grief, weariness of life, desperation.

5. It is not necessary to bring him into the temple [church] in the sight of the people, as the custom is for many. Let the confession of the Christian faith be once required of him; let him be taught concerning the works of the devil destroyed by Christ; let him be sent back faithfully to this destroyer of Satan, Jesus Christ; let an exhortation be set up to faith in Christ, to prayers, to penitence.

6. Let ardent prayers be poured forth to God, not only by the ministers of the church, but also by the whole church. Let these prayers be conditioned, if the liberation should happen for God's glory and the salvation of the possessed person, for this is an evil of the body.

7. With the prayers, let fasting be joined; see Matt 17:21.

8. And alms by friends of the possessed person [should be given to the poor], Tobit 12:8–9.⁸

In summary, all things happen by prayers and the word.

If the [desired] effect does not immediately follow, remember that not even the adjurations of exorcists are always efficacious. And this benefit of going out [of the devil] is bodily; therefore, in prayers of this kind, the will of God must always be included. Thus He hears them not according to our will but for our help [according to what's best for us]. But the fact that our prayers for the possessed are not heard immediately and as we ask is due, among other things, to the unbelief of the possessed ones, who do not approach with certain faith, asking liberation from God. Therefore Christ said to the parent of a certain

⁸ “Prayer is good with fasting and alms and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold: For alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin. Those that exercise alms and righteousness shall be filled with life” (Tobit 12:8–9, KJV). Balduin's meaning is that alms should be given to the poor by the friends of the possessed person, and this almsgiving should be joined with prayer. As a fruit of faith, there are certain divine promises connected with almsgiving. Cf. Ap IV (III) 157: “Alms also are the exercises of faith, which receives the remission of sins and overcomes death, while it exercises itself more and more, and in these exercises receives strength. We grant also this, that alms merit many favors from God [but they cannot overcome death, hell, the devil, sins, and give the conscience peace (for this must occur alone through faith in Christ)], mitigate punishments, and that they merit our defense in the dangers of sins and of death, as we have said a little before concerning the entire repentance” (W.H.T. Dau and F. Bente, eds., *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921], 199). On the use of the apocryphal books in early Lutheranism, see Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed., *The Apocrypha: The Lutheran Edition with Notes* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), xxi–xxiii.

demon-possessed one, “If you can believe the liberation of your son, it will happen.”⁹

The following is an anecdote on how Luther handled exorcism. This has not been located in Luther’s Works, so it should be regarded as an example of what Lutherans after Luther considered the right way to handle this situation. Whether Luther himself did or said this has not yet been proved.

[Jodocus] Höcker (d. 1566):¹⁰

Once, during the life of Dr. Martin Luther, a young woman was brought to Wittenberg who was born in the land of Meissen, who was often vexed and tormented by the devil. And a letter was written to blessed Dr. Martin that he should save and rescue this young woman, who was eighteen years old, from the evil spirit. When this virgin was brought to Dr. Martin, he asked her at that time whether she could say her faith [the creed]. She answered, “Yes.” Then the blessed Dr. Martin commanded her to say it. As she now began and came to the article [of the creed] and these words, “And I believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord,” she could no longer speak, but the evil spirit began to convulse and torment her. Then Dr. Luther spoke, “I know you well, you devil. You would really like it if someone would set up a big ceremony with you and celebrate you greatly. You will find none of that with me.” Then he commanded that she be brought to his sermon in the church on the next day and afterwards be brought into the sacristy, and he told the other servants of the church to come into the sacristy too.

The virgin was obedient and came to the sermon of the doctor, but afterwards, when they wanted to bring her into the sacristy, she fell down and struck and convulsed around, so that several students had to carry her into the sacristy and lay her at the feet of blessed Dr. Martin, and they locked the door to the sacristy, and all the servants of the church with several students stayed therein.

Then Dr. Martin began and made this short admonition to the servants of the Church, which should be well observed by all preachers of the divine word who find themselves in the same situation, and they should do nothing different.

1. He began and spoke: “Now and at our time, people should not drive out devils as it was done at the time of the apostles and shortly thereafter, when it was necessary to do miracles and signs for the sake of the gospel, to confirm it

⁹ Quoted in Ludovicus Dunte, *Decisiones Mille et Sex Casuum Conscientiae* (Ratzebur auffm Dohm, 1664), 100–101.

¹⁰ The identity of this author is a conjecture. Another possibility is Jonas Hoecker (1581–1617), theologian in Württemberg.

as a new doctrine, which now and at our time is not necessary, since the gospel is not a new doctrine but has been sufficiently confirmed. And if anyone wants to drive them out as was done at that time, he tempts God,” he said.

2. “One should also not drive out the devils with conjurations, by commanding, like some in the papacy and even some of our own people do, but one should drive them out with prayers and contempt. For the devil is a proud spirit who cannot stand prayer and despising but desires a ceremony. Therefore, no one should make a ceremony with him but should despise him as much as possible.”

3. Dr. Luther spoke further: “One should drive out the devil with and through prayer in such a way that one prescribes for the Lord Christ no rule, no means and manner, no time or place when and how he should drive out the devils, for that would be tempting God. But we persist in prayer so long, knock and rap [at the door] so long, until God hears our prayer, as He Himself says, Matt 7, ‘Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you.’ But Uzziah, he tempts God by setting and prescribing the time for Him, in which He should help him, Judith 7. Therefore he is rightly rebuked by Judith, Judith 8.”

4. Dr. Luther laid his right hand on the head of the virgin, just like one lays hands on those who are being ordained and consecrated to the preaching office. And he commanded the servants of the gospel to do the same, and commanded further that they speak after him: First, the Apostles’ Creed. Next, the Our Father. Third, Dr. Luther spoke these words, John 14. “Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, that will He give to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” After these words, the blessed doctor called on God mightily and prayed that He would rescue and save the poor young woman from the evil spirit that was in her for the sake of Christ and of His holy name, that thereby He would be praised, honored, and glorified. After this prayer and admonition, he stepped away from the girl and shoved her with his foot, and mocked Satan, saying, “You proud devil, you would gladly see me set up a ceremony with you, but you will not experience that. I won’t do it. Do what you want, I will not give up.”

After this procedure, they took the young woman the next day back to Meissen from Wittenberg. And afterwards they wrote and reported several times to Dr. Luther and others that the evil spirit after this no longer tormented and convulsed the girl as previously.¹¹

¹¹ Cited in Dunte, *Decisiones Mille et Sex Casuum Conscientiae*, 100–103.

One may notice here that this example is quite similar to the exorcism, ceremonies, and words used at Baptism in Luther's Baptismal Booklet: imposition of hands, Our Father, Creed, prayers.¹²

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¹² Martin Luther, *Order of Baptism, Newly Revised* (1526), vol. 53, pp. 107–109, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986).