

LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

EPIPHANY 2000

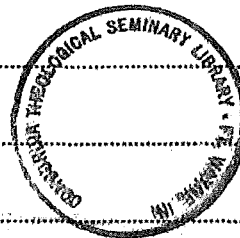
VOLUME IX, NUMBER 1

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

MAR 07 2000

<i>Christology and Feminism</i> David P. Scaer	3
<i>The Ordination of Women and Feminist Theology</i> Armin-Ernst Buchrucker	9
<i>Women and the Ministry</i> Ulla Hindbeck	21
<i>Ritual Behavior and Celebration in the Liturgy</i> Heidi D. Mueller	23
<i>The Place of the Luther Academy in Today's World</i> Daniel Preus	27
<i>The Transfiguration of Our Lord</i> Kurt Reinhardt	35
<i>A Historical Perspective of Walther's Position on Church, Ministry, and Polity</i> John C. Wohlrahe Jr.	37



REVIEWS 45

REVIEW ESSAY: <i>Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther</i> . Edited by Braaten and Jenson
Review by Andriy Honcharuk.
<i>The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals</i> . Gene Edward Veith
<i>Let All the People Praise You: A Songbook</i>
<i>Natural Church Development</i> . Christian A. Schwarz
<i>A Passion for God's Reign: Theology, Christian Learning, and the Christian Self</i> . Moltmann, Wolterstorff, Charry
<i>The Porvoo Statement and Declaration in Confessional Lutheran Perspective</i>
<i>The Formula of Agreement in Confessional Lutheran Perspective</i>
<i>The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification</i>
<i>Justification and Rome</i> . Robert Preus
<i>An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ</i> . Johann Gerhard
BRIEFLY NOTED

LOGIA FORUM 57

Begin the Beguines • Feminist Theology • Piety and Equity • Where Technology Meets Theology
 The New Book of Concord • Bull of Indiction • Priestesses in the Church?
 Ersatz Hymns • Unavoidable Obligations • Three Miracles

ALSO THIS ISSUE

<i>Hymn on Marriage</i> by Chad L. Bird.....	7
<i>A Call for Manuscripts</i>	8
<i>Inklings</i> by Jim Wilson	26
<i>Hymn on Confession & Absolution</i> by Chad L. Bird	36

The Place of the Luther Academy in Today's World

DANIEL PREUS



IN 1867 MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER Herman Amberg Preus delivered a series of seven lectures in Kristiania (now Oslo), Norway, later printed in Gisle Johnson's *Luthersk Kirketidende*, to describe the conditions of the Norwegian Lutheran immigrants in America. At the time Herman Amberg Preus was the pastor of a Norwegian Lutheran church in Spring Prairie, Wisconsin, and the president of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (*Den norsk-evangelisk-lutherske Kirke i Amerika*), commonly known simply as the Norwegian Synod. In his lectures he attempted to show the living conditions of Norwegian immigrants, the religious context of America in which the Norwegian Lutheran churches had been planted, the confessional fidelity or the lack of it evident among the members of other Lutheran Scandinavian church bodies with which the Norwegians felt some kinship—and whatever else he thought might encourage the Lutherans in Norway to send desperately needed Lutheran pastors to America.

In spite of the fact that many in the Church of Norway considered the Norwegian Lutherans in America to be somewhat narrow-minded and argumentative, Preus did not hesitate to describe the doctrinal problems and controversies relevant to the American situation. In his sixth lecture he spoke about the lack of doctrinal unity in the Augustana Synod:

Our conferences with them have shown us that they are not united in even basic doctrines, but that their apparent unity is based in part on pure ignorance and in part on indifference, which allows them to keep silent while their brethren in the synod preach quite contradictory, false doctrine.¹

In this same lecture Preus spoke of the careless and un-Lutheran practice common in the Augustana Synod. For example, the Augustana Synod

has allowed its pastors to use the Reformed formula for the Lord's Supper and the conditional form of absolution It has allowed Methodist pastors to be teachers in its Sunday schools and a Congregationalist pastor to preach at the dedication of one of its churches. It has allowed prayer meetings

and "revivals" to be conducted Methodist-fashion in its congregations.²

After numerous other references to the unorthodox practice rampant in the Augustana Synod, Preus pointed to what he considered one of the most serious problems of all.

The synod and its pastoral conferences have not only refused forceful invitations on our part to meet jointly with us, but they have even declined to discuss disputed doctrinal points with those among their own pastors who are troubled in conscience and have therefore requested that they do so.

In my opinion all this sufficiently demonstrates the indifference reigning in this synod, how it is all for extending itself and winning respect, how it therefore seeks to avoid strife and controversy and prefers to allow errors and abuses and departures from both the doctrine of the church and good Lutheran ecclesiastical order. There has entered in here a genuinely American speculative spirit, a spirit that does not ask whether something is right, but whether it is clever or "expedient." Thus, in this synod, the Lutheran confession is in reality a display sign to decoy the naïve, since both its doctrine and its practice manifestly controvert this confession and God's Word.

That this spirit of indifference also holds sway in congregational life speaks for itself. It naturally happens that there is a reciprocal effect between congregations and the synod.³

Herman Amberg Preus, along with Ulrik Koren and others in the Norwegian Synod, were struggling hard to establish an immigrant church in America that would be truly Lutheran. At precisely the same time C. F. W. Walther, F. C. D. Wyneken, and many others in the Missouri Synod were engaged in the same battle. It was a time of tremendous religious turmoil and confusion in America as our country experienced what was known as the Second Great Awakening. Nathan Hatch describes the chaotic condition of American religion in the mid-1800s.

The first third of the nineteenth century experienced a period of religious ferment, chaos, and originality unmatched in American history. Few traditional claims to religious authority could weather such a relentless beating. There were competing claims of old denominations and a host of new ones. Wandering prophets appeared dramatically, and supremely

DANIEL PREUS is director of the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis, Missouri, President of the Luther Academy, and a contributing editor for *LOGIA*. This address was delivered to the second annual meeting of the North European Luther Academy in Helsinki, Finland.

heterodox religious movements gained followings. People veered from one church to another The flexibility and innovation of religious organizations made it possible for an American to find an amenable group no matter what his or her preference in belief, practice or institutional structure. Churches ranged from egalitarian to autocratic and included all degrees of organizational complexity One could opt for traditional piety or join a perfectionist sect. Religious options in the early republic seemed unlimited; One could worship on Saturday, practice foot washing, ordain women, advocate pacifism, prohibit alcohol, or toy with spiritualism, phrenology, or health reform.⁴

This was the time of phenomenal growth among the Methodists at the expense of the mainline Protestant denominations, particularly the Presbyterians; this was the time of camp meetings and revivals; this was the time of growth and consolidation for the American-born cults. Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon* appeared in 1830; in 1847, the very year the Missouri Synod was founded, the Mormons arrived in Utah, where they would settle. Seventh-Day Adventism can trace its beginnings to the preaching of William Miller around 1831; Mary Baker Eddy's *Christian Science* appeared on the religious horizon a few decades later, around 1870. The Jehovah's Witnesses, founded by Charles Taze Russell, came into being about four years later.

Our identity as Lutherans is more precarious today than it has ever been before.

It was an extremely turbulent time in the history of American religious life. And it was during this time that immigrant Norwegians and immigrant Germans were attempting to define how they could be truly Lutheran in America. Although both the Norwegians of the Norwegian Synod and the Germans of the Missouri Synod were isolated by language to some degree from the practices and teachings prevalent in a society intoxicated with the concept of freedom, they could not escape completely from the religious chaos around them. (There are a lot of Methodists and Mormons in America today with Norwegian or Swedish or Danish or German names.) But they did not admit that it was necessary to compromise, to give in to the spirit of the day. Instead, by God's grace, they established truly Lutheran churches on American soil. This was no small task, since even the older, more established Lutheran bodies in America had been influenced heavily by rationalism and by Methodistic, revivalistic measures meant to attract the masses. When the Saxons arrived in Perry County, when the Prussians arrived in New York and later in Wisconsin, when the Norwegians arrived in Wisconsin, "the older synodical [Lutheran] bodies of the East reflected the religious and social practices of other American Protestants of the time. The practice of revivalism

and protracted meetings was carried over from earlier years and intensified."⁵ In other words, the Lutherans in the East were losing their Lutheran character in their worship, in their practice, and in their doctrine. New confessional Lutheran church bodies were being founded in the Midwest of the United States, however, whose members were struggling seriously with the question, What does it mean to be Lutheran?

If this was an important question for Herman Amberg Preus and for C. F. W. Walther, surely it must be an important question for us today. If Preus and Walther and the other American, confessional Lutherans of the mid-nineteenth century were convinced they needed to contend for the truth in the face of ignorance and of doctrinal indifference, surely we face an even greater need today. It seems to me, at least, that our identity as Lutherans is more precarious today than it has ever been before.

What is the place of the Luther Academy in today's world? This is the question you asked me to address. I would like to suggest that it is the primary task of the Luther Academy in today's world and until our Lord returns continually to pose the question, What does it mean to be Lutheran? This question must be asked over and over again in America, in Europe, and all over the world. Today my words to you will deal primarily with the subject of Lutheran identity. I will do so by describing what I see as a serious identity crisis on the part of Lutherans in America and all over the world. I think the importance of the American Luther Academy in America and elsewhere will become all the more apparent. It will also become more apparent how important it is to continue asking the question, What does it mean to be Lutheran? and, having answered that question, to live out our answer in our respective churches.

What does it mean to be Lutheran? In 1873, C. F. W. Walther, the first president of the Missouri Synod, delivered a lecture at the Western District Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod entitled *The Doctrine of the Lutheran Church Alone Gives All Glory to God, an Irrefutable Proof that Its Doctrine Alone Is True*.⁶ His presentation provided a number of theses supporting the theme of the essay. For the next thirteen conventions of the Western District Walther continued his treatment of the same theme until just a few months before his death. Of course, Walther was not saying that there was no truth in other Christian churches, nor was he saying, God forbid, that only Lutherans could possess truth and be saved. But he was saying that the teachings of the Lutheran Church are true, that whenever the teachings of other church bodies conflict with those of the Lutheran Church, their teachings are false.

In 1866 Walther delivered an address to the Convention of the Missouri Synod with the title *The Evangelical Lutheran Church: The True Visible Church of God upon Earth*. With this presentation Walther certainly did not wish to teach that all Christians are members of the Lutheran Church or that every member of the Lutheran Church is a Christian. Such nonsense never would have occurred to him. But he did mean to teach that the church has marks⁷ by which it can be known and identified as the true church of Christ; these marks are the pure teaching of the gospel and the sacraments.

This, of course, is the position of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession.⁸ Faith cannot be seen, but the church is in a sense visible by virtue of its marks. Walther also clearly meant to teach, in common with Luther and in opposition to Erasmus,⁹ that God's word of the gospel is clear, that it is not ambiguous, that doctrinal

assertions can be made with the confidence that they are correct, that truth can be known and one can know that one has it. When it comes to doctrine, the line between truth and error is not vague or gray. Therefore when we make confession of the faith in our creeds and symbols, we do so not with some nebulous hope that what we say may contain a kernel of truth. Rather we confess in the same spirit as the signers of the Formula of Concord who wrote concerning the confession they had made, "[This] is our teaching, belief, and confession in which by God's grace we shall appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and for which we shall give an account."¹⁰

How contrary this spirit is to today's postmodern, relativistic, "ecumenical" spirit! "We have come a long way! We no longer insist that those who disagree with us are incorrect. We simply possess different faith traditions. We are enlightened! Yes, enlightened in spite of the fact that we no longer know our own doctrine. We do not know what the differences were that once divided our church bodies, but we *do* know that they are not divisive of fellowship." This is the spirit that appears to reign among many American Lutherans today. It is precisely the same spirit that Herman Amberg Preus described as widespread in the Augustana Synod in 1867 when he declared that "their apparent unity is based in part on pure ignorance and in part on indifference." How ironic that after a number of mergers of American church bodies, the Norwegian Synod, which he helped to found, and the Augustana Synod, which he so strongly criticized for its doctrinal errors and indifference, were ultimately absorbed into the same large American Lutheran church known today as the ELCA—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.¹¹

The concerns expressed by Herman Amberg Preus in regard to doctrinal indifference and unionism are hardly to be found in the ELCA today. In fact, the situation in the ELCA has become so serious that the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne at one point brought an overture, that is a request for action, to the Missouri Synod's Convention asking the delegates, in view of the doctrinal errors common in the ELCA and the fellowship practiced with others who teach false doctrine, to declare

That, apart from local protests amounting to a genuine "state of confession," the LCMS cannot regard or treat the pulpits and altars of the ELCA as confessionally Lutheran, in the sense of the Book of Concord, but must recognize them as heterodox, union pulpits and altars.¹²

The Convention did not adopt this overture. Instead, while recognizing the differences existing between the two church bodies, the Missouri Synod delegates adopted a resolution much milder in tone, one which did not call into question the Lutheran identity of the ELCA.¹³

In 1995 a congregation of the Missouri Synod submitted an overture to the convention stating that if the ELCA were to declare fellowship with certain Reformed church bodies in America, she would thereby "cease to be Lutheran in any meaningful, confessional sense."¹⁴ Once again, however, the convention of the Missouri Synod, though expressing grave concern about developments in the ELCA declined to call into question the Lutheran identity of the ELCA.¹⁵

In 1998 the relationship between the Missouri Synod and the ELCA became even more strained when the ELCA did declare pulpit and altar fellowship with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. Her obvious intention to sign the Joint Declaration on Justification added fuel to the fire. A number of overtures were submitted to the 1998 Missouri Synod convention that stated that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America had sacrificed her

Since we no longer know how to define what Lutheranism is, we are incapable of determining whether a church body is genuinely Lutheran or not.

Lutheran character. The ELCA has "further confused the understanding of what it means to be a Lutheran Church body in this country," said an overture from one of our pastoral conferences. "[T]he LCMS cannot regard or treat the pulpits and the altars of the ELCA as confessionally Lutheran in the sense of the Book of Concord, but must recognize them as heterodox, union pulpits and altars," said an overture from one of our congregations. Another overture from a pastoral conference: "Resolved, that we acknowledge that the ELCA has abandoned Lutheran doctrine and forfeited the name Lutheran to become a union church." Three congregations signed an overture which, "Resolved, that the LCMS declare in convention and in its publications that it no longer recognizes the ELCA as a Lutheran Church body." Another overture suggested that the Missouri Synod, "withdraw recognition of the ELCA as a legitimate Lutheran church." Finally, Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne once again requested that the Missouri Synod address the issue of the ELCA's departure from Lutheran doctrine and practice and called into question "the Lutheran character of the ELCA."¹⁶ The Synodical Convention passed what I consider a very good resolution, which expressed "deep regret and profound disagreement with these actions taken by the ELCA."¹⁷ Nevertheless, the convention continued its established pattern of avoiding the issue of Lutheran identity which had been raised in so many of the overtures to the convention. Apparently we are willing to condemn specific teachings and practices of another church body, but unwilling to define in a clear and direct way what it means to be Lutheran.

Am I making too much of this reluctance of the Missouri Synod to identify the ELCA as un-Lutheran? I don't think so. No fewer than six overtures in 1998 alone addressed the issue of Lutheran identity, but the resolution adopted by the convention did not. We were willing to say that the teachings of the ELCA were wrong, but for years we have backed away from saying to those who in their doctrine and practice are not Lutheran, "You are not Lutheran."

Why? Is it possible that we no longer know what it means to be Lutheran? I do not mean to say that nobody in our churches knows what it means. But is it possible that the vast majority of Lutherans

in all of our Lutheran churches have such a fuzzy notion of what it means to be specifically Lutheran, that whenever the issue of Lutheran identity rises, we hit a brick wall? We simply don't know how to deal with it. Since we no longer know how to define what Lutheranism is, we are incapable of determining whether a church body is genuinely Lutheran or not.

This unwillingness reveals another great irony; at least, I sense such an irony. At the same time that we are reluctant to call into question the Lutheran character of another church body, it is undeniable that American Lutherans—and this includes the Missouri Synod—seem embarrassed about their Lutheranism. They have swallowed at least a part of the ecumenical menu and now want to be known no longer as Lutherans but simply as Christians. The term “Lutheran” embarrasses them and the term “Missouri Synod” is best avoided.

One of the most important issues today confronting the Missouri Synod and all American Lutherans is the doctrine of fellowship.

Certainly we wish to be Christians and to be known as Christians, but not at the expense of our Lutheran confession. If Walther is correct—and I believe he is—then to the degree that we forsake our Lutheran doctrine, to the same degree we forsake Christianity. In 1844 Walther wrote an article entitled *Concerning the name “Lutheran,”* in which he insisted that, in the context of the American religious situation, the name absolutely needed to be retained if Lutherans are to make a clear and orthodox confession. In this article Walther stated,

we can only confess the faith which is in our hearts purely and completely with the name Lutheran. If we would get rid of the name Lutheran the highest suspicion would be aroused that either we are ashamed of the old Lutheran doctrine, or that we no longer consider it to be the only true doctrine agreeing with God's clear Word and that a new false doctrine is in our hearts. As dear, therefore, as the truth is to us, as dear as God's honor and salvation of our souls is to us, so little can we, especially in the time of widespread error, give up the name Lutheran. By this name we separate ourselves from all the unorthodox of all times and publicly confess the right faith of all time . . .

And so all orthodox Lutherans of all times have thus thought and thereby operated. As one example, the Margrave of Brandenburg, at the time of the Reformation, when he was called a Lutheran in order to shame him, explained: “I am not baptized unto Dr. Luther; he is not my God and Savior. I do not believe in him and will not be saved through him. Therefore in this sense I am not Lutheran. When I am asked, however, whether I confess with heart and mouth the doctrine

which God has again given to me through his instrument Dr. Luther, then I do not hesitate nor am I timid to call myself Lutheran. And in this sense I am and may I remain a Lutheran all my life.¹⁸

In the Missouri Synod we have an increasing number of congregations involved in what we call the “Church Growth Movement” that no longer wish to retain the word “Lutheran” in their name. It is difficult to believe that their embarrassment about the name does not include embarrassment in regard to Lutheran doctrine as Walther insisted is normally the case. This was surely the belief of the eleven congregations and circuits that submitted overtures to the 1998 Convention of the Missouri Synod insisting that congregations of the synod use the word “Lutheran” in their name.¹⁹

At least in America a large number of Lutherans seem to be suffering a major identity crisis. In the ELCA today the vast majority of the people and a larger majority of their leaders have lost the sense of their identity as Lutherans, or at least have a definition of the word “Lutheran” that is vastly different from that of their spiritual forefathers. Consider for a moment the decision of the ELCA to declare fellowship with three Reformed church bodies in America. I spoke briefly about this issue also last year, but it is of such great significance for our understanding of what it meant to be Lutheran and what it means to be a confessional church that I would like to deal with the issue again this year in more detail.

Of course, we know that the Reformed deny that in the Lord's Supper the bread is the body of Christ and the wine is his blood. This denial for Martin Luther was not simply a matter of differing exegesis or interpretation. The gospel itself was at stake. Already in 1520 he wrote in regard to the Lord's Supper,

What is the whole gospel but an explanation of this testament? Christ has gathered up the whole gospel in a short summary with the words of the testament or sacrament. For the gospel is nothing but a proclamation of God's grace and of the forgiveness of all sins, granted us through the sufferings of Christ, as St. Paul proves in Romans 10 and as Christ says in Luke 24[:46–47]. And this same thing, as we have seen, is contained in the words of this testament.²⁰

Therefore, for Luther, whoever tampers with the words of the Sacrament tampers with God's means of saving sinners and is worthy of the name “blasphemer” or “idolater.” This view of Luther is no longer appreciated by the members of the ELCA. Hermann Sasse is quite correct when he observes that

for Luther the denial of the Real Presence was heresy destructive to the church—closely related to the great heresies that threatened the existence of the church throughout the centuries . . . The incarnation, the true divinity and true humanity in the one Person of the God-man, the virgin birth of Christ, his bodily resurrection, his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, his advent in glory, our own resurrection: All these are linked to the Real Presence of his true body and blood in such a way that the denial of this Presence is either the cause or the consequence of the denial of the other articles.²¹

When I had the opportunity last year of addressing the first meeting of the North European Luther Academy in Göteborg, I indicated then that I believed that one of the most important issues today confronting the Missouri Synod and all American Lutherans was the doctrine of fellowship. My father, Robert Preus, used to tell me that whenever a church body began to slide away from historic Lutheranism and Christianity, the first thing to go was always the doctrine of fellowship. It is not difficult to understand why he would say this. Consider for a few moments what is actually happening when the members of Lutheran and Reformed church bodies commune together. In such cases they do not even agree on what they are doing, much less on what they believe. The Reformed deny that the bread is Jesus' body, that the wine is Jesus' blood. They deny that the Sacrament bestows the forgiveness of sins and life and salvation. Why do they attend the Lord's Supper? Simply because the Lord has said, "This *do* in remembrance of me." They come in obedience to his command. They view the Lord's Supper simply as "a memorial meal in commemoration of the death of Christ" which in and of itself bestows no grace. The essence of the sacrament therefore, in their view, is the act of worship in which they engage in remembering Jesus in obedience to his command. In other words, they view the sacrament as law rather than gospel. This is true also, of course, of their view of baptism.

Regardless of the piety with which their "memorial meal" is celebrated, it remains true that if one regards the sacrament primarily as something pious Christians *do* in obedience to Jesus, one sees the sacrament as law. In their teaching on the Lord's Supper, therefore, the Reformed have deprived the church of *everything* our Lord Jesus placed into His precious Testament—grace, absolution, forgiveness, life, and salvation. They have bequeathed to the church instead the hollow shell of pious human obedience—this because they see the sacrament as law, not as gospel.

Obviously, their theft of our inheritance in the Lord's Supper is a result of their denial of the real presence. Luther asks in his Small Catechism, "What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?" And you know his answer well. "That is shown us by these words, 'given and shed for you for the remission of sins'; namely that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation." How can Jesus give us his body and his blood without giving us that which his body and blood purchased for us? Thus, when we participate in the Lord's Supper, we participate in the death and resurrection of Christ, and everything his death and resurrection achieved for us becomes ours.

Can such a confession be made by those who deny the real presence? If the real presence of Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper is denied, all of the benefits which the Lord's Supper brings to us are denied to us. If the real presence is denied, the Lord's Supper ceases to be a celebration of the salvation that God gives to his church and becomes simply a corporate act of obedience. The Lord's Supper is then no longer a distinctively *Christian* sacrament.

Is the sacrament law or gospel? For those who do not even agree on the answer to this question, common participation in the sacrament is inconceivable. The very foundation of Christianity, the doctrine of justification, is involved. For Lutherans to permit Reformed to Lutheran altars is to show contempt (whether knowingly or not) for the doctrine of justification by grace, because such "Lutherans"

are saying, are they not, that Sinai and Calvary are essentially the same. At least, they are saying it makes no difference whether one sees participation in the Lord's Supper as an act of obedience to the law or as a believing reception of the grace of God and participation in the atoning death of Jesus. To take such a position is an incredible mockery of Christ, whose last will and testament the Lord's Supper is. Doesn't one through such an action say, "Lord Jesus, it makes little difference to us what the meaning of your testament is. Law and gospel, Sinai and Calvary are not far apart when we come together at this altar."

Whenever a church body began to slide away from historic Lutheranism and Christianity, the first thing to go was always the doctrine of fellowship.

But this kind of attitude that sacrifices the gospel on the altar of a false ecumenism jeopardizes the survival of Christianity itself. Hermann Sasse saw this clearly and expresses himself on the subject far more eloquently than I can do. Sasse had lived and been trained and ordained in the Prussian Union Church and was well acquainted with the destruction caused by a false union of two opposing confessions as had happened in the German territorial churches via the Prussian Union. In an essay entitled *Union and Confession* Sasse refers to what he calls the "pious lie."

Lies have been told in the church because of cowardice and weakness, vanity and avarice. But beyond all these there is in the church one particularly sweet piece of fruit on the broad canopy of the tree of lies. This is the pious lie. It is the hypocrisy by which a man lies to others and the intellectual self-deception by which he lies to himself. . . . The most fearful thing about the pious lie is that it will lie not only to men, but also to God in prayer, in confession, in the Holy Supper, in the sermon, and in theology.²²

According to Sasse, the pious lie that devastated Lutheranism in Germany was a lie which for the sake of ecumenical ends permitted opposing confessions (in the form of the Lutheran and the Reformed—particularly in regard to the Lord's Supper) to stand side by side with equal validity within the same church. And what is the result when a church officially adopts the "pious lie"?

This lie makes the return to the truth as good as impossible. A church can fall into terrible dogmatic error, it can open gate and door to heresy, by tolerating it and doing nothing about it. With the help of the Holy Spirit, such a church can later repent, return to the pure Word of God, and take up the fight against false doctrine commanded by this Word. But if it has solemnly acknowledged the right of heresy in its midst, then heresy itself has become an organic component of the church concerned. It can then no longer fight against heresy, and a

burning struggle against false doctrine in its midst would be an entirely illegal fight of one wing of this church against another One of the most important functions of the church, the elimination of error, which is the function essential to the very life of the church, has in this case ceased.²³

Sasse laments the inability of the Prussian Union church to identify and fight doctrinal error, and he makes it clear where such lack of attention to error will finally lead.

That false doctrine must be fought, and that there could be no church fellowship where there was no unity on the basic understanding of the Gospel—that was indeed an understanding which had been learned from Luther, and which neither the Old Lutheran Church nor the Evangelical Lutheran Church of later times could have given up. Whoever does give it up—as the Enlightenment and Pietism did—abandons the Reformation.²⁴

Has the ecumenistic, relativistic spirit of our postmodern time been so pervasive in its influence on Lutheranism that the Reformation itself is being lost in Lutheran churches? Unfortunately, yes. Churches that historically have been Lutheran are Lutheran no longer, except in name. In 1875 the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America, in an attempt to define Lutheran fellowship practices undermined by more liberal American Lutherans, passed what became known as the Galesburg Rule. It read as follows:

1. The rule which accords with the Word of God and with the confessions of our Church, is: Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only; Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only. 2. The exceptions to the rule belong to the sphere of privilege and not of right. 3. The determination of the exceptions is to be made in consonance with these principles by the conscientious judgment of pastors, as the cases arise.²⁵

The Galesburg Rule, which seemed a fairly irenic attempt to adhere to Lutheran fellowship practices, is now officially rejected by the ELCA and unofficially by many in the Missouri Synod. We clearly have an identity crisis among American Lutherans today. Hermann Sasse wrote regarding the Prussian Union of 1817,

The church which came into existence on 31 October in Potsdam was no longer the Old Lutheran Church of Brandenburg-Prussia of the time of Paul Gerhardt. Nor was it any longer the Reformed Church of the great elector. In reality, it was a new church, the Prussian territorial Church so long desired, the soul of the Prussian state which was rising in greatness and coming into global political significance.²⁶

In 1998 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America established a new relationship with certain Reformed churches in North America. She was not forced to do so, as had been the case in Prussia. Rather, she embraced the ideology of the Prussian Union willingly, with open arms. Having done so, does she even know she

is no longer the church she once was? She is no longer the church of the Lutheran Reformation. She has abandoned the Reformation.

I am distressed by the fact that the Missouri Synod is apparently unwilling to say this. But then, we are having our own identity crisis. It is only fair and right to point this out. I have been saying quite a bit about recent actions in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This is not due to any sense of superiority or anger or dislike. Most of Herman Amberg Preus's descendants and my relatives are members of the ELCA. But it is necessary to talk about the situation in the ELCA because this church body represents over five million Lutherans in a country that historically has had a strong confessional Lutheran emphasis. And what has happened in this large Lutheran church body is truly a tragedy. We must not avoid speaking the truth on this matter.

Churches that historically have been Lutheran are Lutheran no longer, except in name.

At the same time, it is by no means certain how things will turn out in the Missouri Synod. And now I speak not so much as the president of Luther Academy but as a member of that church body. We have not declared fellowship with any heterodox church bodies. On the other hand, we have many pastors who routinely give the Lord's Supper to those of heterodox church bodies, and they are not disciplined in any way. Pastors conduct joint worship services with pastors of other heterodox church bodies and nothing happens.

We are definitely experiencing an identity crisis in the area of worship. For the sake of what is called "church growth," many of our churches are opting for a worship experience that is anything but Lutheran. Our rich Lutheran hymns are being replaced by Baptist or charismatic songs or by theologically empty ditties. Pastors preach in suits, the historic creeds are replaced or rewritten, sermons have in many cases given place to inspirational speeches, and the confession and absolution are often omitted. Some congregations have literally abandoned the liturgy completely, and the time together on Sunday morning which we once called worship would now more accurately be described as entertainment. On the other side are pastors who view ordination as sacramental and for whom Rome and Constantinople definitely hold an attraction.

You may know that women's ordination has become a hot issue in the Lutheran Church of Australia and that it is of burning concern in the *Selbständige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche* in Germany. But you should not imagine that it is a completely dead issue in the Missouri Synod. There are many who think that it is only a matter of time before women's ordination is approved also by Missouri. Thus, in pointing out the deplorable theological conditions in the ELCA, I do not intend in any way to depict the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a church body without major difficulties. We are in the church militant.

We do have some bright spots in our church body, however. For the most part our seminaries have faithful, orthodox professors and

are producing pastors who are well trained theologically and who wish to be Lutheran. Among many in our churches there is a growing appreciation for the historic liturgies of the church. We have many groups of pastors and laymen around the country, groups similar to *Bibel og Bekennelse* in Norway, who gather regularly to address the theological issues of the day from a confessional, Lutheran perspective. At the same time, I don't think there is any denying that Missouri is also going through an identity crisis of her own, and nobody really knows what the Missouri Synod will be like twenty years from now.

So what is the place of the Luther Academy in the Lutheran world today? I believe I speak for all the officers of the Luther Academy when I say that we do not believe that the salvation of Lutheranism can be tied to any denomination, to any single church body or group of church bodies. But we do believe that the salvation of Lutheran orthodox teaching can be tied to a confession, and specifically to that confession that is contained in the symbolical writings of the Lutheran Church, the Book of Concord.

The Luther Academy, therefore, is not a church, nor a part of a church; it is affiliated with no denomination and it will affiliate with no church body. It wishes to remain free from the entanglements of denominational politics and bureaucratic procedures. As much as possible, in a sense from outside, we hope to provide an objective critique of what is going on in the world of Lutheranism today and to re-present historic Lutheran theology in ways that address the issues challenging the church today. Since we are committed to the classic, confessional, and orthodox Lutheran theology, we are better received by the members of some church bodies than we are by others. When we conduct conferences, for example, a very large percentage of those who attend come from the Missouri Synod. Members of the Wisconsin Synod and of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod also attend. We do not get a good attendance from members of the ELCA, although there are some who come to our conferences, and we hope to do a better job of reaching these people as well. We invite speakers from different American Lutheran church bodies, including the ELCA and sometimes from overseas, so that as much as possible, within the framework of our mission, we do not become simply an arm of any particular church body, but truly represent all Lutherans.

Thus, of our three officers, two are Missouri Synod and one is ELS—Evangelical Lutheran Synod²⁷. Yet even though as much as possible we wish to reach all Lutherans, we are nevertheless committed to a specific confession and see no need to offer a forum to those whose speech would be destructive of that confession.

What is the place of the Luther Academy in today's world? We hope that we can act as a reliable compass to point people to that which is truly Lutheran and therefore truly evangelical and truly Christian. We believe that the primary battles we must fight as members of the church militant are doctrinal. And we believe that precisely because these battles are doctrinal they are extremely important to the life and existence of the church. We attempt to focus on doctrine because we believe that such an approach demonstrates true love for Christ's church. Dr. Charles Arand, a professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, recently expressed this truth well in a short article entitled "Doctrine as Pastoral Care." He says:

Doctrine has come to be perceived as irrelevant and impractical. Perhaps that is partly our own fault, namely, the fault of those who cherish doctrine, teach doctrine, and devote their lives to studying doctrine. Perhaps we have treated it in too purely of an academic manner, with the result that people have lost sight of the very reason that the church has doctrine in the first place.

In the end, we are facing the danger of losing the important role that doctrine has always played within the Christian church, and with that we are in danger of losing the heart and soul of Christianity. What we desperately need is to rediscover the reasons why the church formulated doctrine in the first place, how the church always regarded doctrine, and the use to which doctrine was put. Doctrine is not abstract theory to be contrasted with practical skills and how-to steps for daily living. If anything, the Reformers (and the church fathers before them) viewed doctrine as pastoral care. This is what made the study of doctrine so important. This is why they were willing to engage (however reluctantly) in doctrinal debates. Doctrine was a matter of life and death. This is what made doctrinal debates so heated. The church believed that false doctrine could actually harm a person. In other words, doctrine had consequences for the well-being of people. It had an impact on their spiritual health.²⁸

The purpose of the Luther Academy is primarily doctrinal. It is to be a Lutheran voice in the midst of a multitude of voices crying out a multitude of messages, many of them false and dangerous. We do not have the ability to stifle the other messages, but we do have the ability, by God's grace, to declare the pure doctrine to a dying world in desperate need for the truth. As we proclaim this message, we believe it must be with a voice that is unashamed to call itself Lutheran. We believe that Lutheran is Christian, that Lutheran is evangelical, that Lutheran is ecumenical in the true sense for the Holy Spirit alone brings true unity to the church by means of the pure word and sacraments. We agree with Charles Porterfield Krauth, who authored the Galesburg Rule, and who said,

No particular church has, on its own showing, a right to existence, except as it believes itself to be the most perfect form of Christianity No church has a right to a part which does not claim that to it should belong the whole. That communion confesses itself a sect which aims at no more than abiding as one of a number of equally legitimated bodies That which claims to be Catholic *de facto* claims to be Universal *de jure*.²⁹

Does not a *quia* subscription to the Lutheran Confessions (which is the only meaningful subscription to the Lutheran Confessions) require us to agree with Krauth? Without apology, the Luther Academy will seek to place the Lutheran confession before the world with the conviction that in so doing it presents God's pure truth, which alone can save and grant eternal life through Jesus Christ. This we are doing in all of our publications, including our Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics series. This we are doing in our two lecture series, the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions each spring and the Pieper Lectures each fall.

I have spent my time making a case for the importance of the Luther Academy particularly for the welfare of Lutheranism in the United States. Can one make the same case for Scandinavia, Germany, the whole of Europe and the rest of the world? To answer this question, one need only consider the actions of the Lutheran World Federation in adopting the *Joint Declaration on Justification*. In the dishonest and treasonous act of adopting this declaration, the Reformation itself has been abandoned, and the flock of Christ is viciously attacked by those who bear the name Lutheran. Never mind that the Roman church since the time of

***In the enforcement of the
Prussian Union, it was the
Lutherans who lost everything.***

the Reformation has not changed its position on Purgatory, the sacrifice of the mass, the merits of the saints, works of supererogation; never mind that the dogma of the infallibility of the pope, adopted long after the Reformation, stands as strongly as ever, and that the veneration of Mary is more vigorously promoted by this pope, who believes she is co-redemptrix, than by any other in recent memory; never mind that the present pope is offering new indulgences to the faithful; never mind that the Roman church still views grace as an infused quality that gives the Christian the ability to please God with his works rather than as God's gracious disposition of favor toward the completely undeserving sinner; never mind that none of the blasphemous anathemas of Trent has been retracted. These doctrinal matters are all ignored and sacrificed once again on the altar of ecumenical fervor and the "pious lie." Hermann Sasse correctly pointed out that in the enforcement of the Prussian Union, it was the Lutherans who lost everything. In the adoption of the *Joint Declaration on Justification* it is once again the Lutherans who lose everything. For when truth meets falsehood in compromise, only truth can be the loser.

Is there a place for the Luther Academy in today's world? A Luther Academy will always have a place as long as the church militant exists, as long as the parousia has not yet arrived. But especially today, when all over the world Lutherans appear to be having an identity crisis, when it appears that the precious truths of the Lutheran Confessions are about to be swallowed up in numerous compromises, the Luther Academy can serve a healthy and holy and necessary purpose. We can do this by continually asking the question, What does it mean to be Lutheran? For the answer we will always go of course to "the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm [*die Einige Regel und Richtschnur*] according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged" (FC SD, Rule and Norm, 3; cf. FC Ep, Rule and Norm, 7). And we will go to the Lutheran Confessions, which are a true and correct exposition of those Scriptures.

The ignorance of Christian doctrine and the indifference that Herman Amberg Preus so lamented will unfortunately be with us until Jesus returns. But our God has given us his gracious Word, which has the power to give wisdom to the ignorant and faith to the indifferent. I pray that he will use the Luther Academy to that end. **LOGIA**

NOTES

1. Todd W. Nichol, ed., *Vivacious Daughter: Seven Lectures on the religious situation among Norwegians in America* by Herman Amberg Preus (Northfield, MN: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1990), 152.
2. *Ibid.*, 152.
3. *Ibid.*, 153.
4. Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 22.
5. Abdel Ross Wentz, *A Brief History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955), 151.
6. *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Convention Essays*, trans. Aug. R. Suelflow (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 11.
7. The English word translated "marks" is *notae* in Latin and *Zeichen* in German.
8. Ap VII/VIII, 20; *Triglotta*, 232-233.
9. See Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1957), or AE, 33.
10. FC SD XII, 40; Tappert, 636.
11. A small group of Norwegians who were members of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America disapproved for doctrinal reasons the merger of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with two other Scandinavian church bodies in 1917. These doctrinally more conservative Norwegians formed the Norwegian Synod of the American Lutheran Church in 1918. Today this church body is known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and is in fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.
12. *Reports and Overtures of the 57th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, 178-179.
13. *Ibid.*, 115.
14. *Reports and Overtures of the 59th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, 156-157.
15. *Convention Proceedings of the 59th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, 125-126.
16. *Reports and Overtures of the 60th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, 165-169.
17. *Convention Proceedings of the 60th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, 116-117.
18. C. F. W. Walther, *Concerning the Name "Lutheran,"* trans. Mark Nispel (St. Clair Shores, MI: Redeemer Press), 19.
19. *Convention Workbook of the 60th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, 187-191.
20. AE, 35: 106.
21. Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body* (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), 153.
22. Hermann Sasse, *Christ and His Church: Essays by Hermann Sasse*, vol. 1, *Union and Confession* (St. Louis: Office of the President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1997): 1-2.
23. *Ibid.*, 4-5.
24. *Ibid.*, 50-51.
25. Abdel Ross Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 234.
26. Sasse, *Union and Confession*, 13.
27. See note 11.
28. Charles Arand, "Doctrine as Pastoral Care," *Concordia Journal* 25 (July, 1999): 235.
29. Charles Porterfield Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology as Represented in the Augsburg Confession, and in the History and Literature of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1871), xiv-xv.