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CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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# Theological Observer

## Rewriting the Bible in Non-Sexist Language

Elimination of certain portions of the Bible and exclusive concentration on other portions have identified false teachers in the church since the very beginning. Early Christian Gnostics seem to have been strangely attracted to the Pauline concept of liberty and were perverting it into libertinism (2 Peter 3:16, 17). The Ebionites, a legalistic Jewish-Christian sect, saw the Epistle of James as the key opening all truth and felt uncomfortable with St. Paul's Epistles. Marcion eliminated the Old Testament, all the Gospels except Luke, minus the first two chapters, and all the non-Pauline Epistles.

Bolder has been the actual rewriting of the Bible. Thomas Jefferson, a child of Rationalism and the Age of Enlightenment, left the legacy of a Bible from which the supernatural had been extracted. The Jehovah Witnesses have rewritten the Bible with their *New World Translation*. The Coalition on Women and Religion has now produced a non-sexist Scripture entitled *The Word For Us*. Included in what is described as a restatement "in inclusive language" are the Gospels of John and Mark and the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. For additional study the coalition has published a commentary on those Biblical passages dealing with women entitled *The Woman's Bible*. Perhaps the ultimate advertising pitch is for the *Study Guide to the Women's Bible*: "You can be a *Thea-logian!*" (emphasis supplied by the coalition). "Thea-logian" literally means an authority on the "Goddess." The boundary between Christianity and paganism has been crossed. Christianity has marched backwards.

Peter Brunner in the 1950's predicted correctly that the ordination of women pastors would eventually mean that God would be thought of in feminine terms. Such phrases as "Our Mother who are in heaven" and "God, She" were at first thought to be jokes in extremely poor taste. This type of language is now considered as acceptable and necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of God by radical feminist groups. More frightening, it is becoming more commonplace among all denominations, including Lutherans. Lutherans have not yet reached the point of publishing a non-sexist Bible or non-sexist confessions — that would really be another type of confessionalism — but they have attempted to eliminate sexist language in the hymns and liturgy. This was a concern of the preparers of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

The number of women students at seminaries and women pastors in churches of the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches continue to grow. At its July 1979 convention The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod informed the American Lutheran Church that the ordination of the women pastors continues to weaken fellowship between the two churches. The Missouri Synod knows that it cannot continue to restate its opposition to the women pastors and at the same time maintain fellowship with the American Lutheran Church where the practice is condoned and fostered. No serious observer of church affairs really believes that the American Lutheran Church could rescind its approval. In that church and the Lutheran Church in America women pastors are a significant part of the body politic. The American Lutheran Church, moreover, would not wish to threaten its fellowship with the Lutheran Church in America and its growing ecumenical ties with those Protestant denominations where the practice is beyond theological dispute.

The seriousness of women's ordination lies not only in that it contradicts a clear Biblical prohibition, but also in that it directly affects the concept that

people have of God. The views of the Coalition on Women and Religion would have been novel and amusing twenty or thirty years ago, but they are now accepted by many Christians, including a growing and vocal group of priests and nuns in the tradition-bound Roman Catholic Church.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in its convention resolutions has been consistently opposed to the practice of women pastors. No other church, Protestant or Catholic, has been as courageous and consistent. A greater problem may exist at the congregational level as people experience women pastors in neighborhood churches, including Lutheran churches. In charismatic prayer and Bible groups, popular among some Lutherans, women are likewise assuming a leadership role in conducting the meetings and leading in prayer. Matters are little helped by the public attention given to Jean Carter Stapleton, President Carter's sister, who is billed as an evangelist and attracts large audiences to hear her preaching. In an atmosphere in which women preachers are accepted as a fact, it is more difficult for a denomination and a congregation to regard the practice as anti-Scriptural. The public resolve of the Missouri Synod takes on greater confessional proportions in such a situation.

The Missouri Synod position is weakened when its members practice fellowship with those Lutherans who endorse and encourage women pastors, without calling their attention to the offensive practice. It would be ironic if, as the synodical conventions became more firm in Biblical opposition to the ordination of women pastors, the laity would become so uninformed that in the not so distant future a woman pastor would indeed be introduced. It is now possible that a Missouri Synod pastor could find himself, unwittingly perhaps, participating with a women pastor of another Lutheran synod in a church service. In some cases it may have already happened. A Missouri Synod congregation several years ago did have a woman vicar. The matter was handled and it has not happened again. A vicar is not simply another member of the congregation helping the pastor, but one who has been preliminarily judged, through a synodical procedure, acceptable for the pastoral ministry, with the understanding that other conditions in his education be completed satisfactorily before ordination.

Materials, some serious and others light-hearted, on feminist views of religion can be obtained by writing to the Coalition on Women and Religion, 4759 Fifteenth Avenue, N.E., Seattle, Washington, 98105. Pastors should examine the material for themselves. The Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. printed a booklet supporting the ordination of women. It was received as definitive by the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America. Continued alertness is required if the Missouri Synod is to maintain its publicly stated position. It may be time for the Board of Parish Education to provide the necessary materials.

David P. Scaer

### The Lutheran Confessions: Stepping Stones Between the Bible and Current Church Problems

Anniversaries are always an opportunity to evaluate the past and make plans for the future. The various documents that comprise our Lutheran Confessions are very rarely read or studied by our people. Their association with the Confessions is limited to the three ancient creeds — the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian — and Luther's Small Catechism. Most people, indeed, think of

these documents less as creeds than as liturgical devices in the church worship service or as educational tools. Many a man in the pew, if asked about the creeds or the catechism, would probably respond that the Apostles Creed indicates an ordinary church service; the Nicene Creed signifies that Holy Communion will be celebrated and that the service will be about ten or fifteen minutes longer; and the Athanasian Creed means that the congregation will be stumbling through the difficult words and again the church service will be longer. The Small Catechism is regarded as a book that must be studied and learned for confirmation. The four-hundredth anniversary of the Book of Concord in 1980 is providing Lutherans an opportunity to reevaluate what it means to be really Lutheran.

This anniversary is especially meaningful to Missouri Synod Lutherans, because many of its institutions perpetuate the word *concordia*, the Latin designation for the Book of Concord. All of our synodical education institutions with the exception of two are designated Concordia as are our publishing house and many of our high schools and congregations. One side benefit of noting the anniversary of the Book of Concord is that we have an opportunity to determine what the word *concordia* means. A favorite topic at opening church services at our educational institutions is an exegesis of the Latin word *concordia*, which means "harmony" in English. The preacher then goes on to urge that harmony should be the mark and the theme of the coming academic year. It is doubtful whether sermons exhorting to harmony ever achieve their goals. And it is undoubtedly wrong to imagine that the name of any of our church institutions was bestowed to foster the exercise of humanistic harmony. The church calls its book of confessions the *concordia* because of its insistence on agreement and harmony in doctrine. With the title of *concordia* we expect our church institutions to adhere the doctrine set forth in the Book of Concord.

This centennial year will give us a special opportunity to review for our people the content of this Book of Concord. Our church, the Missouri Synod, along with other Lutheran synods, are flooding the market with materials to celebrate the book's four-hundredth anniversary. The Evangelical Lutheran Synod has produced a manual for congregational study. Fortress Press of the Lutheran Church in America has published an anthology of scholarly essays. At least five books on the Book of Concord derive from staff members here at Concordia Theological Seminary. The celebration of the *concordia* may reach liturgical proportions. One could make a case for the divine necessity of liturgy. Liturgy is basically a succession of memorial celebrations in the church year. This concept was the grain and fibre of the Old Testament rite, and early Christians did not wait long before they began annual and weekly celebrations of the Lord's Resurrection. Likewise, it is especially in those years ending with "30" that we Lutherans commemorate the production of the Augsburg Confession and in those ending with "80," the Formula of Concord. As long as a church uses the name of "Lutheran" and "Concordia," there is almost a liturgical necessity to note these anniversaries.

Past centennials of the Augsburg Confession and the Book of Concord have not always been totally felicitous occasions. The year 1580, the fiftieth anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, was, indeed, a happy one for Lutherans. Controversies between the Lutherans following Luther's death had been resolved. Later celebrations however, of the Augsburg Confession in particular have often been considered clarion calls to step boldly into the future. Thus 1830, the year in which the Augsburg Confession reached its three-hundredth birthday and the Book of Concord reached the quarter of a millenium mark, saw the destruction of Lutheranism in Germany through the merger of Lutheran and Reformed

churches into the Prussian Union. Confessional anniversary celebrations in the United States in our century have frequently been the occasion for mergers and unions between several corporate Lutheran bodies.

On that account we must be careful to state that our position is that the Lutheran Confessions are a stepping stone between the Bible and current church problems and not a stepping stone to what we might consider newer and better horizons. The Lutheran Church as a confessional church is not moving through history from one step to another; but with each step forward we take a step backward to the original historical confessional principle. Our confessional life is less like a ladder than like a dance. On a ladder we are moving higher and higher with each rung. In a dance we are moving all over the dance floor and are never confined to one place on the floor, but there are as many forward steps as there are backward steps. As in a dance we cover the same places on the dance floor several times, so in confessional theology we will also cover the same areas of discussion. Thus, the problems that faced Athanasius in the controversy about Arius's theology were resurrected in the Age of Rationalism and are certainly with us today. Nestorianism, a fifth-century heresy, showed itself in the Reformed theology of the sixteenth century and has reappeared in the methodology that modern exegetes have used to divide the person of our Lord into the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith.

The church has in her confessions an arsenal of defensive weapons to handle new situations. It is one thing, however, to have the necessary equipment, and it is an entirely different matter to have the ability to use it effectively and efficiently. Our claim to being confessional will depend on using confessional weapons to handle new difficulties. There are at least two ways in which we lose our right to be recognized as confessional. When we use confessional weapons to fight battles that have already been fought, we are not being confessional. There is the story of a man who is a military buff. His home is given over to the reconstruction of military battles from former centuries. His craftsmanship is without flaw. The troops are moved around the battlefield in victory and defeat. But his reconstruction of former wars and battles is only a visualization of the past. Our confessional commitment cannot mean that we mount our steeds and charge headlong into the past. This type of confessionalism is as confining and useless as the basic two-step is in dancing. A second approach which is equally anathema to confessionalism is, even when there is the willingness to face the new situation, to put aside the old weapons to adopt new weapons created from the situation itself. This attitude has some respect for the past, but is so self-confident that it believes that every situation in the life of the church can be resolved by implements provided by the situation itself. A clear example of this view is situational ethics, which taught that every situation provided the answers to its own ethical dilemmas. The current theologies of history and hope also suffer from this attitude. The present situation is capable of setting forth its own theological answers.

Confessional theology reaches its ultimate goal when it draws upon the revealed truths of the past to answer dilemmas of the present. Answering past questions with past answers is historicism. Answering present questions with truths allegedly derived from the present situation is nothing but contemporary spontaneity. To keep one hand on the past and the other hand on the present situation, which is the true confessional stance, it is first necessary to understand the theological basis of the confession itself. Then we will be able to apply the confession to the contemporary situation.

David P. Scaer

## Roman Catholic Communion Practices

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in its congregations is perhaps the only major Protestant denomination with a regulated communion policy. According to this practice only members of Missouri Synod congregations or congregations of sister-churches in fellowship with the Synod may receive the Lord's Supper in the denomination's churches. These sister-churches are agreed in this practice. Actual practice among Missouri Synod congregations may not be uniform and may not conform to the stated policy, but this does not contradict the fact that the Synod has a policy which is as old as the Synod itself. The Synod's policy may have to be reaffirmed, but it does not have to be formulated. Among most Protestant churches the responsibility for determining who may attend the Lord's Supper has shifted from the clergy to the individual. Though this practice is widespread, it comes not from the ancient or the Reformation church, but directly from the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher who made the individual's pious self-consciousness the guide and norm for the truth.

Until recent times the Roman Catholic Church operated with a communion policy which, like that of the Missouri Synod, has its roots in the New Testament and the ancient church. There are now clear indications that Roman Catholic communion policies are being adjusted in the direction of open communion, a typical modern Protestant custom. On a practical level this means that Lutherans attending Roman Catholic ceremonies and rites may possibly be asked by the officiating priest to participate in Holy Communion. Roman Catholics may expect a similar privilege from Lutheran pastors. In certain areas a type of intercommunion between Roman Catholics and Lutherans may already be understood as proper. Lutheran pastors will certainly recognize here a problem in pastoral theology and a responsibility to alert their parishioners to the change in Roman Catholic policy.

Norman R. Bauer, a canon lawyer, in an article "Intercommunion: Possibilities and Practicalities," presents the reasons offered for the change in practice in some dioceses and supports them. The older canon law was clear in forbidding the sacraments to heretics and errorists, even if they were acting in good faith. In danger of death a non-member might be given the sacraments of penance and extreme unction, but not the Eucharist. With Vatican II (1967) there was a change. Danger of death and urgent need, defined as imprisonment and persecution, were set forth as conditions for sacramental sharing with non-Roman Catholics. The one requesting the sacrament should have no access to a minister of his or her community, should request it spontaneously, and should declare a faith in the sacraments in harmony with that of the Roman Catholic Church. The instruction of June 1, 1972, broadened the 1967 principles somewhat, but each case was to be decided individually. Wholesale open communion was not intended, but in certain cases may have been the result. The conditions governing the cases were: (1) faith in the sacrament in conformity with the Roman Catholic Church; (2) a spiritual need for the eucharistic sustenance; (3) inability to obtain the sacrament from one's own minister over a longer period of time; (4) a request for the sacrament on one's own accord. The 1972 guidelines have spawned such questions as these: What is a serious spiritual need? Can the period of time be given a moral interpretation instead of a chronological one? Can the bishop delegate the decision in particular cases to a priest? Can Roman Catholics receive the sacrament in a non-Roman Catholic worship service?

Here are some concrete cases of how the new principles are now being put into practice in some dioceses. Bishop Hammes of Superior, Wisconsin, has permitted distribution of the Eucharist to non-Roman Christians in hospitals and

rest-homes, those attending the funeral of a relative in a Roman Church, those marrying a Roman Catholic during a nuptial mass, and the parents of a child being baptized, confirmed, or receiving his first communion as a Roman Catholic. Archbishop Peter L. Gerety of Newark states that the non-Catholic is in the best position to determine whether he or she has a deep spiritual need for the Eucharist. He also permits his diocesan priests to determine whether the guidelines have been met in individual cases. Such a policy amounts to what we would understand as a combination of open communion and selective fellowship, since the individual priest can enforce the older policy if he wishes. Bishop Elchinger of the Diocese of Strasburg, France, permits non-Roman Catholic spouses to receive the Eucharist and for the deepening of faith permits the Roman Catholic partner to participate in the communion services of the church of the Protestant partner. (Strasburg Protestants are chiefly Lutherans.) The Roman Catholic Church diocesan structure permits diversified practices. While some areas do not deviate from the older practices, other areas are practicing the newer principles which conform to the general Protestant custom of open communion.

In the face of wider acceptance of open communion not only among Protestants, but now also among Roman Catholics, Lutheran pastors will have no choice but to reenforce the Biblical, catholic, and Lutheran principle. Herman Sasse's *This Is My Body*, now republished by the Lutheran Church of Australia and available at a horrendously inflated price (especially for a reprint), clearly sets forth Luther's attitude in his refusal at Marburg to celebrate communion with Zwingli and the Swiss. Werner Elert's much overlooked *Eucharist and Church Fellowship* puts to death the lively myth that closed communion is some peculiarly devised Missouri Synod doctrine. The matter of closed communion will be regarded as a legalistic club only where the pastor's instruction in this area needs further elaboration. The growing laxness in Roman Catholic communion practices only indicates that no church doctrine or practice is, without constant reenforcement, absolutely secure and certain for all time. Lutherans can appreciate that Roman Catholic theology is working with an expanded concept of the church which recognizes Christians in non-Roman communities. Innovative communion practices indicate that the Roman Catholic Church has succumbed, by an improper digestion of this concept, to strictly modern Protestant ideas and practices. Maintenance of strictly Lutheran practices will be made more difficult but no less necessary.

David P. Scaer

### C. S. Lewis on Women Priests

World Christendom seems set on its fateful and doomed march to ordain women as pastors, preachers, ministers, and priests. The 1978 summer worldwide conference of Anglican and Episcopal bishops at the Lambeth Palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury (England) may not have urged the ordination of women priests, but they issued a writ of toleration. The movement to ordain women priests in the Roman Catholic Church has continued to gain strength. One of the first official acts of the newly organized Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, a splinter group from the Missouri Synod, was to permit the ordination of women pastors. Recently the Reformed Church in America has taken this step. In spite of strong papal disapproval, the movement to ordain women priests in the Roman Catholic Church is gaining ground. According to

opinion polls, a growing number of Catholics are finding women priests acceptable. Though the Missouri Synod has stood resolutely against the practice as being contrary to both the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, no Synod member dare be lulled into a complacency which believes that the problem has gone away. The actions of one denominational family affects the theological environments of the others.

The late Anglican lay theologian, C. S. Lewis, may be reckoned as one of the most influential English-speaking religious writers of the twentieth century; but his views especially on the relationship of the male and female and how this relationship pertains to the ordination of women clergy does not seem to have made many converts, even among his fellow Anglicans. The name of C. S. Lewis is revered, but his views have not always penetrated the theological thinking of his admirers.

One wishes that an evaluation of Lewis's views appearing in the February 1978 issue of the *Cresset* (XLI, 4), a publication of Valparaiso University, could have had wider circulation. In that issue W. Andrew Hoffecker and John Timmerman of Grove City College (Pennsylvania) analyze in depth Lewis's opposition to women clergy. The writers discount any male chauvinism in Lewis's personal life. For years he performed the most menial chores for Mrs. Moore, who was the mother of a deceased friend to whom he had given a promise for her care. Lewis recognized that women are no less capable of piety, zeal, learning or other qualities recognizable as necessary for the pastoral office. There has been no lack of reverence for women in the church. In the Middle Ages the Virgin Mary came as close to deification as any human being, but there was no suggestion that women could become priests.

According to Hoffecker and Timmerman, Lewis's opposition to women pastors found its starting point in his understanding of the Episcopal liturgy and the place of the priest (minister) in the liturgy. At times the officiating clergyman represents God to the people and at other times he represents the people to God, a concept easily understood by Lutherans. Lewis held that, since the woman possesses the same God-like qualities as does the man, she may represent the people to God, but that a woman cannot represent God to the people. Lewis would find it impossible to substitute "Our Mother who are in heaven" for "Our Father." He asks such questions as these: Why was not Mary the Christ instead of her son? Could Christ be the bride and the church the bridegroom? The answer is emphatically "NO!" A woman representing God would for Lewis change the nature of Christianity. Another basic argument is taken over from studies in comparative religions. Religions with female deities are fundamentally different than those with male. Those with goddesses and accompanying priestesses replace religion with "magic, manipulation of the impersonal, mysterious powers, and sacred prostitution" (p. 18).

Though Lewis would not contend that God is male, he does hold that God has taught us to refer to Him in the male gender and that male and female are not merely interchangeable neuters. Those who accept the ordination of women also fail to see "the full implications of the distinctiveness of the two sexes" (p. 18). The male-female relationship symbolizes the hidden things of God according to his understanding of the Genesis passage, "God created man in His own image . . . male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). The sexual roles are divinely determined, and even where males do not sufficiently carry out their roles in representing God, no right to make a substitution exists. Lewis's analysis of the role of the sexes with its stress on the natural structure in the question of the ordination of women is not entirely new in Lutheran circles, even though most of



the argumentation against the practice has come from Pauline prohibitions.

The two Grove City professors, in their analysis of Lewis's position on human sexuality, go beyond his purely theological writings and delve into two of his novels *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*. According to Hoffecker and Timmerman, Lewis "immediately apprehended with mythical insight why in almost all languages certain inanimate objects are masculine while others are feminine" (p. 19). The sexual designation of inanimate objects is not a result of an anthropological projection of the male and female relationship, but derives from characteristics of the things themselves. Seas are seen as feminine and mountains as masculine. "The seas and females are simply two things in the natural world that have feminine gender and mountains and males are two things of the creation that participate in and present an ontological polarity that separates all things" (p. 19). In other words, there is a masculine-feminine polarity in which all things participate.

Lewis does not argue that God is a male and that all people in the church are female, but he does assert that God in His relationship to the church is masculine and that the church is feminine. "Therefore one who 'represents' God to man as a priest ought to be one who most adequately represents or participates in that masculine nature which God alone is ontologically" (p. 19). Female pastors representing God "ignore the real distinctiveness that makes male and female unique despite their obvious similarities" (p. 19).

Professors Hoffecker and Timmerman criticize Lewis in that, in recognizing a cosmic distinction between the masculine and feminine, he fails to identify the distinctive characteristics of each. He is also scored for proceeding from a liturgical model without providing an equally strong Biblical basis. In the defense of Lewis, it can be said that he may have rightfully seen a continuity between the Biblical revelation and the ancient liturgies of the church. If he did, he would be in the fine company of the late Herman Sasse, who occupies a position in the stream of Lutheranism similar to the one held by Lewis in Anglicanism.

The *Cresset* in publishing the essay of Hoffecker and Timmerman on C. S. Lewis's concept of male and female may have opened a new frontier in theology in which very little substantive work has been done. Lutherans will have little difficulty in fitting into Lewis's liturgical posture. In certain parts of the liturgy, e.g., the absolution, the pastor is clearly Christ's representative and not the church's. Lutherans will have little difficulty in feeling right at home in the masculine-feminine imagery of the bridegroom and bride which describes Christ's relationship to the church. This can be traced from God's relationship to Israel in the Old Testament down to Christ's relationship to the church in the Synoptic Gospels, the writings of St. Paul, and the Book of Revelation. While the church has clear prohibitions against women clergymen, a largely satisfactory rationale for these negations has been provided by Lewis. A mere prohibition without an explanation relating it to the totality of revelation soon becomes legalism.

Lewis has trod in the area of a mystery which has not as yet been much explored. A number of fruitful avenues of research await investigation. The theory, for example, that inanimate objects are universally regarded as masculine and feminine needs further exploration. Both Biblical Hebrew and Greek make use of the masculine and feminine genders in describing inanimate objects. Do the Biblical languages coincide with the majority of languages in identifying the gender of inanimate objects? Lewis did not identify those characteristics which create the masculine and feminine distinctions.

Lewis's central principle that there is a polarity in which some things are mas-

culine and others are feminine is both frightening and appealing. It frightens because it might be considered a form of sexual Manicheism or theological Platonism. It appeals because the sexual polarity is fundamental to the Genesis creation account. The command for the animal and vegetable kingdoms to reproduce reflects this polarity. The relationship between the male and the female not only exists by a divine verbal fiat but is a mystery ingrained into the fibre of the cosmos. Lewis's concept of assigning predetermined sexual roles to objects would not be incompatible with what Lutheran theology has called the natural orders. Lewis, however, includes God in this scheme, not in His solitary existence, but in His relationship to the human race.

Lewis's assigning God to the masculine sphere tests out in Trinitarian theology. The first two persons are identified as Father and Son and not mother and daughter. The common names for the Spirit are in the Old Testament *ruach*, a feminine noun, and in the New Testament *pneuma*, a neuter noun; but the pronouns used for the Spirit are *he* and *it*, but not *she*. Thus grammatically the Spirit shares in the realm of the masculine and not the feminine.

The thesis of Lewis that the woman can represent mankind to God, even though he recognizes the reverse as strictly prohibited, must be scrutinized. If Lewis were right in holding that a woman can represent mankind to God, then she could have a more prominent part in the liturgy. According to Lewis, the woman's ability to represent both male and female to God finds its basis in her being God-like. According to both Genesis and Paul, however, she possesses her God-like qualities through the instrumentality of the male. Paul points out that, though the male is dependent on the female for his birth, the male-female order is nevertheless not changed (1 Cor. 11:3, 12).

The drive in certain parts of society to a unisexual mentality in which masculine and feminine characteristics lose their uniqueness lies perhaps more than anything else at basis of the desire to ordain women priests. The entire sexual revolution in the late twentieth century and its resulting problems may have their roots in the failure first to recognize and appreciate masculine and feminine distinctiveness as part of God's cosmic plan. The problem of women pastors cannot be handled in isolation, but must be viewed in conjunction with the other sexual misunderstandings of which it is both a part and a result. Only citing the simple prohibition against the women pastors, without viewing the wider horizon of which the prohibition is a part, leaves unsolved the real and basic problem of understanding the divinely established relationship of male and female.

In concluding their *Cresset* article Hoffecker and Timmerman are overly restrained in commenting that "Lewis has presented a lucid and provocative view of male and female" (p. 21). Lewis may, in fact, have opened up a Biblical perspective that has remained as yet for the most part untouched. In Ephesians 5:21-33 Paul dives deep into the depth of the mysterious relationships between husband and wife and Christ and His church. With the imagery of the male and female, he explains the even greater mysteries of the atonement and Baptism. In concluding his presentation on marriage he quotes Genesis 1:26, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one." He adds then immediately the words. "This is a great mystery." In both marriage and Christ's union with the church, the mystery of the masculine-feminine imagery is maintained. God or Christ may be compared to the bridegroom because both belong to the masculine sphere. The church and the bride belong to the feminine sphere. A woman serving as God's representa-

tive to His church destroys this inherent creative polarity. Peter Brunner, a German Lutheran theologian, stated that ordaining women would be an offense to the nature of God Himself. The late C. S. Lewis, an Anglican, has dug even deeper in the same vein.

David P. Scaer

### Augsburg Confession VII: An Unnecessary Controversy

“For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine word” (32:2).<sup>1</sup> The interpretation of this passage of the Augsburg Confession, Article VII, has been a source of contention among Lutherans in the present as well as in the past. The controversy has centered around the question as to what extent Augustana VII applies to church fellowship. Some maintain that the term “Gospel” in Article VII must be taken in the wide sense to include “doctrine and . . . all its articles,” as the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article X puts it. The Gospel in this sense is more than forgiveness of sins. Others insist that “Gospel” must be taken in the narrow sense of forgiveness through faith in Christ.<sup>2</sup> Taken to the extreme this view completely repudiates the Confessions’ concern for truth and purity of doctrine. In 1971 the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Germany agreed on a statement which has become a basis for full church fellowship. This statement is popularly known as the Leuenberg Concord. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession was a principle source of inspiration for this agreement concerning church fellowship.<sup>3</sup> Who is right? Which view is the correct interpretation of Article VII? Does Article VII establish a high standard for fellowship or one that is minimal? I think neither, for the wrong question is being asked. Article VII sets no standard, high or low, for church fellowship because it was never intended to serve as a basis for such an enterprise but instead to describe what the church is and how the church is created and preserved.

A careful examination of Article VII demonstrates that church fellowship is not under consideration but the church as the *Una Sancta*. The opening sentence determines the subject matter for the entire article: “It is also taught among us the one holy Christian church will be and remain forever” (32:1). The next sentence makes it clear that the *Una Sancta* is being discussed by explaining what the church is: “the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel” (32:2). If “the Gospel . . . in its purity” is taken in the broad sense of doctrine and all its articles as in Formula X, then only a handful of Lutherans are the one holy Christian church. This is the very conclusion which Article VII was designed to refute because of Rome’s view of the church as an outward association with the Pope being its head. Article VII quotes Ephesians 4:4, 5 in order to prove that there is only one holy Christian church, i.e., *all* believers (32:1). The Gospel “in its purity” and the holy sacraments “administered according to the Gospel” are mentioned as the means which create and preserve the *Una Sancta*. In other words, human rites do not justify and they are not means of grace. Article XV, “Church Usages,” and Article XXVI, “Distinction of Foods,” reiterate Article VII’s claim that human rites cannot create or preserve the *Una Sancta*. It is in this context that it is said, “It is not necessary for the true unity of

the Christian church [the *Una Sancta*] that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places" (32:3).

If one is not fully convinced by the above discussion of Article VII that church fellowship is not its concern, the Apology demonstrates this beyond any doubt. The Apology was written to defend the views of the Augsburg Confession, and it explains the intended meaning of Article VII. As with the Augsburg Confession, Article VII of the Apology is clearly concerned with the *Una Sancta* and not church fellowship. In the first sentence the Apology describes the church as "the assembly of saints" (168:1). The Apology also states that the Gospel and the sacraments not only are the means which create and preserve the church but that they also are marks of the church, i.e., where they are present one can be certain that the church is present (169:5). The church properly speaking excludes the wicked, and it is not merely an external association (169:5, 8; 170:13). Instead, the church properly speaking includes only those "men scattered throughout the world who agree on the Gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether they have the same human traditions or not" (170:10). Again, the church consists of all who are "reborn of the Holy Spirit" (170:14) and have the righteousness which comes through faith in the Gospel (170:15, 16). Clearly, the *Una Sancta* is being spoken about, i.e., all believers "the Church in the proper sense is the assembly of saints who truly believe the Gospel of Christ and who have the Holy Spirit" (173:28). Only a few of the references concerning the church have been quoted. It is in this context that the reference to true unity must be understood.

Fortunately, the Apology specifically explains what is meant by "true unity" in Augustana VII: "We are talking about true spiritual unity, *without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God*. For *this* unity, we say, a similarity of human rites, whether universal or particular, is not necessary" (174:31) (emphasis added). At this point it is extremely important to note in what connection rites and ceremonies are being discussed. In the Apology they are not mentioned in connection with church fellowship but in connection with the *Una Sancta*. Rites and ceremonies are not discussed as adiaphora but as things which do not merit justification or serve as means of grace: "Some have thought human traditions are devotions necessary for meriting justification" (174:32). Such a view is condemned because "the uninitiated have concluded that there can be no righteousness of the heart before God without these observances" (174:33). If the discussion of church rites and ceremonies in Augustana VII and the Apology was concerned only about adiaphora there would have been no problem for the reformers: "we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men, although we like it when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquility" (174:33). However, this is not the issue. The issue is whether such rites effect or affect the *Una Sancta*: "Now, we are not discussing whether it is profitable to observe them for the sake of tranquility or bodily profit. Another issue is involved. The question is whether the observance of human traditions is an act of worship *necessary for righteousness before God*" (175:34) (emphasis added). The Apology answers: "It is evident that human traditions do not quicken the heart, are not works of the Holy Spirit (like love of neighbor, chastity, etc.) and *are not means by which God moves the heart to believe (like the divinely instituted word and sacraments)*" (175:36) (emphasis added). The Apology, then, declares that the intention of Augustana VII is to describe what the church is, i.e., the *Una Sancta*, how it comes into existence, and how it is preserved, i.e., by the Gospel and the sacraments. This is the true spiritual unity that exists among all believers in Christ. Human rites and ceremonies do not contribute towards this spiritual unity and, therefore, it is not *necessary* that they should be ob-

served uniformly in all places.

Since the Apology so clearly explains the meaning and intent of Augustana VII it is wrong to use Formula X to prove that Augustana VII is concerned with external fellowship between churches. The passage that is frequently used as a parallel of Augustana VII is the following: "In line with the above, churches will not condemn each other because of a difference in ceremonies . . . as long as they are otherwise agreed in doctrine and in all its articles and are also agreed concerning the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known axiom, 'Disagreement in fasting should not destroy agreement in faith'" (616:31). The concern of Formula X is not the *Una Sancta* but church fellowship, whether to use rites and ceremonies of another denomination when there has been no previous agreement in doctrine and all its articles. The issue of Article X is what to do when adiaphora become a matter of confessing the truth (493:6; 613:14): "Hence yielding or conforming in external things, *where Christian agreement in doctrine has not previously been achieved*, will support the idolaters in their idolatry, and on the other hand, it will sadden and scandalize true believers and weaken them in their faith" (613:16; cf. 611:2, 3, 5; 612:10; 613:16) (emphasis added). Although rites and ceremonies are discussed in Augustana VII and Formula X, they are discussed in different historical settings and different contexts. In the Augsburg Confession and the Apology the burning question is "Are certain church rites necessary to justification and are they means of grace?" In Formula X the question is this: "In times of persecution, when a confession is called for, and when the enemies of the Gospel have not come to an agreement with us in doctrine, may we with an inviolate conscience yield to their pressures and demands, reintroduce some ceremonies that have fallen into disuse and that in themselves are indifferent things and are neither commanded nor forbidden by God, and thus come to an understanding with them in such ceremonies and indifferent things? One party said Yes to this, the other party said No" (492:2).

Article VII of the Augsburg Confession should not be used at all in matters pertaining to external church fellowship or visible unity. The spiritual unity of the *Una Sancta* is the concern of Augustana VII. Formula X should not usurp the function of the Apology to explain Augustana VII. Formula X is dealing with a different issue than Augustana VII. Fifty years separate the two documents, and the historical and doctrinal elements are not the same. The Augsburg Confession was directed toward the Romanists while the Formula, although still concerned with the abuses of the papists, is, in the main, a document which settled doctrinal differences among Lutherans. Thus, Lutherans who use Augustana VII to support a minimal standard for church fellowship are wrong to do so. Article VII cannot be used to justify watering down confessional positions on doctrine or to condone loose fellowship practices. The Lutheran Confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession, require doctrinal unanimity for the exercise of fellowship, but Article VII does not belong in this discussion.<sup>4</sup>

#### Footnotes

1. All quotations from the Book of Concord are cited according to page and section number in Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959).
2. Roger W. Nostboken, "The Augsburg Confession and Lutheran Unity", *Consensus*, vol. V, No. III (July, 1979), 3-14.
3. *Ibid*, p. 8.
4. Editor's Note: This was also the position of our late colleague, Dr. Harry Huth.

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