

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



Volume 71:3/4

July/October 2007

Table of Contents

The Metamorphosis of Confessional Lutheranism	
David P. Scaer.....	203
Confessional Lutheranism in an Ecumenical World	
Carl E. Braaten.....	219
Confessional Lutheranism in an Ecumenical World: A Missouri Synod Challenge	
Samuel H. Nafzger.....	233
Crossing Old Line Boundaries: Works of Lutheran Charity	
Matthew C. Harrison	251
<i>Sola Fide</i>: Luther and Calvin	
Phillip Cary	265
Luther, Lutheranism, and the Challenges of Islam	
Adam S. Francisco.....	283
"The Noblest Skill in the Christian Church": Luther's Sermons on the Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel	
Robert Kolb	301
The Argument over Women's Ordination in Lutheranism as a Paradigmatic Conflict of Dogma	
Armin Wenz	319

Contemporary Spirituality and the Emerging Church	
John T. Pless.....	347
Theological Observer	364
The Consecration of the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Siberia	
The Reception of the <i>Lutheran Service Book</i>	
“The God Squad”: Towards a Common Religion	
Book Reviews	374
Books Received	382
Indices for Volume 71	391

Crossing Old-Line Boundaries: The Works of Lutheran Charity

Matthew C. Harrison

I am going to argue that there are old-line boundaries and that we should cross them. Lutherans should be and are involved in works of charity, hence there are Lutheran works of charity. My friends, this is the very moment of moments to be alive and be a confessional Lutheran.

Before I make a case for that, I should be frank: the state of world Lutheranism is deplorable. The latest report of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has so many female clergy depicted that it looks like a CM Army special edition catalogue for women. The Church of Sweden jumped off the cliff this past year with respect to homosexuality, merely being consistent in following the consequences of the hermeneutics it embraced which long ago rejected specific mandates of the Lord regarding gender. In 2007, the Church of Norway followed. Any objective observer can see that the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is amassing its energies at the same cliff, apparently willing to risk all contact with, and cooperation with, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). The Lutheran Church of Australia has battled for twenty years over the ordination of women and is still at a fifty-fifty split. The very spirit of tolerance which the Great Elector, Frederick William (1620–1688), was already pushing a hundred years before the Prussian Union, at the time of Valentine Ernst Loescher (1673–1749), and which was codified in the Brandenburg/Prussian church (then the largest Lutheran church in the world in 1817), has become a spirit of intolerance for what the Lutheran Confessions actually mandate, and has come to dominate completely Lutheran seminaries, Lutheran faculties, and Lutheran judicatories worldwide. What Luther decisively rejected in the 1529 Marburg colloquy when he refused Zwingli's outstretched hand by saying, "You have a different spirit from us"¹—that is, fellowship with those who do not confess the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament received orally and without respect to the faith of the individual recipient—has

¹ In his letter to J. Probst at Bremen dated June 1, 1530, (no. 1577) Luther, quoting from memory, recounts that he said, *Vos habetis alium spiritum quam nos* (or, in German, *Du hast einen anderer Geist*). Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften]*, 65 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993), WABr 5:338.

Matthew C. Harrison is the Executive Director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, St. Louis, Missouri.

been accepted in the vast stretches of Lutheranism. One can read about it in *A Seminary in Crisis* by Paul Zimmerman, a new book on the Seminec crisis.² How shocking it is to read the 1973 statement of many students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, supportive of the faculty majority, which notes, among many other things, that strict insistence on the Lutheran doctrine on the body and the blood in the Sacrament should not prevent inter-communion with non-Lutherans and non-Lutheran churches.

Most recently, I saw that the Lutheran church in the Holy Land, the Lutheran Church of Lebanon, a church which has had a lot of LCMS contact over the years although not in communion with Missouri, adopted full communion with the Reformed. To quote Hermann Sasse from his days of intense involvement in the leadership of the Faith and Order Movement, "Our witness was too weak."³ In fact, we did not really give a witness at all. I am amused by the otherwise wonderful *Logia* series "Wittenberg and/or Constantinople." Just as the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople became a mosque and is now a museum, Wittenberg is all but dead to Luther's own confession and has been for two centuries. As Sasse quipped, "Wittenberg has the smell of an empty wine cask: something sweet was once there, but is no longer present."⁴

Wittenberg has fifty thousand residents; only eighteen thousand register as Christians. Only a small fraction of those go to church. The union swallowed up Wittenberg, closed its university, and finally outlawed the observance of the confession—particularly the Smalcald Articles and the Formula of Concord. In this little town, which was once the impetus for the gospel and all its articles to be proclaimed in a way that shook the world, which boasted dozens of book binderies, it is now virtually impossible to find a Book of Concord. The Luther Haus has a Roman Catholic director. Calvin's doctrine of the Sacrament has as much right at the church's altar as Luther's doctrine, and a preacher has as much right to teach the doctrine of the Heidelberg Catechism as that of Luther.

² Paul A. Zimmerman, *A Seminary in Crisis: The Inside Story of the Preus Fact Finding Committee* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

³ Hermann Sasse, *Luther and the Ecumenical Creeds*, audiotope of a convocation at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, February 11, 1965 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Media Services, 1965).

⁴ For Sasse's view on the Union, including Wittenberg, see "Union and Confession," in Hermann Sasse, *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters*, vol. 1, 1927-1939, trans. Matthew C. Harrison et al. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 265-305. See also "Mercy and the Church's Confession" in Matthew C. Harrison, *Christ Have Mercy: How to Put Your Faith in Action* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 151-169.

The nineteenth-century Lutheran revival, which gave birth to the LCMS and a revival of genuine Lutheranism around the world, never touched Wittenberg. In fact, the real sister church of the church body of which St. Mary's in Wittenberg is a part is not even the ELCA; it is actually the United Church of Christ here in the United States. That church is a result and a descendent of the American mission of the Prussian Union, namely, what became the Evangelical Synod of the West. What was sought by Zwingli, Bucer, Calvin, Elizabeth I of England, the Great Elector, his descendant Fredrick William III, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and forcefully and successfully by Karl Barth at Barmen during the *Kirchenkampf*, has been virtually completely achieved—namely, the “Calvinization” of Lutheranism. This Lutheranism is not a “church” but merely a theological school, a form of piety, perhaps, within one large Protestant communion. This is the great danger of the view that Lutheranism is a confessing movement within the broader church. I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. That church exists on this earth most clearly and certainly where the gospel and all its articles are preached purely and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution—Lutheranism—the true visible church of God on earth. Moreover, the church exists, thank God, wherever there is enough of the gospel and the sacraments to create faith. I recently heard the gospel beautifully spoken at my own grandmother's Roman Catholic funeral—a homily that spoke of the resurrection and the forgiveness of sins and grace throughout, and then was negated with the sacrifice of the mass.

Whatever else the LCMS is, it is certainly a church. The LCMS International Center is an adiaphoron. As executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, I am an adiaphoron. Our structures and specific form of constitution and a host of other things that the LCMS does are adiaphora. They can be done in any number of ways or not done at all. The LCMS, however, as a communion of Lutheran churches is church. Sasse warned the Lutheran world about the consequences of purporting to have Lutheran and Reformed make one confession as a church over against Hitler. He warned against the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) being formed as a part of the the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the broader Protestant union. Sixty years ago, He warned against the weak confessional commitments of the Lutheran World Federation, and he did so in the face of opposition already in the late 1940s from Concordia Seminary (St. Louis). Sixty years has proven him a prophet. It has recently been announced that the VELKD will cease to be an independent legal entity and exist as a department within EKD.

The LWF is a great purveyor of communion with the Reformed. All sorts of games are played in subjecting churches in the developing world and elsewhere to the de-confessionalized theology of the liberal North. Money for seminaries? Oh yes, but only if women constitute a large percentage of the student population. Scholarships? Yes, not for churches which do not ordain women, but for women wanting to be pastors studying in the North and the West, and all kinds of other issues. What is at stake? If, as Luther confessed, the Sacrament is the gospel, then the gospel is at stake. I challenge you to find one Lutheran theological faculty of an LWF church in Europe or America—aside from our faithful Latvian or Lithuanian partners—in which the view that there is salvation outside of Christ is not tolerated or even presupposed and dominant. Show me a faculty where the gospel is not regularly redefined in terms of political theology, theologies of liberation from oppression, not only for the poor but for women and now for homosexuals. Kurt Marquart was right in his drumbeat against historical criticism, upon which the union has always depended.⁵ In his drumbeat against historical criticism and against the union, Marquart rightly recognized the Prussian Union as the black hole, as he liked to say, around which the entire Lutheran world has been circling for two hundred years. Depressed yet? Do not be! You should not say, “My, the church isn’t what it used to be!” I have news for you: it never was. Do not be depressed; it has never really been any different. Out of this abyss of difficulty is coming unprecedented opportunity for confessional Lutherans.

We in Missouri have our internal struggles. They are serious and they are real. I would recommend, however, that you read a dose of Valentine Ernst Loescher’s *Timotheus Verinus*.⁶ Lutheranism has, from the beginning, struggled with the problem of authority and theological unity. Nor is it a problem unique to Lutheranism, for even the New Testament betrays the same struggles. Sasse and Elert have repeatedly and richly demonstrated

⁵ Kurt E. Marquart, “The Incompatibility between Historical-Critical Theology and the Lutheran Confessions,” in *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 313–333. See also Robert Preus’s essays, recently released by Concordia Publishing House, which are an absolute *tour de force* testimony of the incompatibility of historical criticism with confessing Lutheran dogma. His essays are collected in *Doctrine is Life: The Essays of Robert D. Preus on Scripture*, ed. Klemet I. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006). In particular, the recent history of the church has proved over and over again the connection between historical criticism and union.

⁶ Valentin Ernst Loescher, *The Complete Timotheus Verinus*, trans. James L. Langebartels and Robert J. Koester (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing, 1998).

that there was no golden age of unity in the first centuries of the church's life.⁷ There was no ancient undivided church, and there will be no future reunited church. Luther's life was beset with controversy within the churches of the Augsburg Confession. Brecht's magisterial volumes bear that out repeatedly.⁸ The period after Luther's death was a disaster until the Formula of Concord brought about agreement, but it did not last long. Helmstedt—the university founded to be a bastion of orthodoxy, even boasting as its first chancellor the strict and intense Lutheran Tilemann Hesshusius (1527–1588), who refused to sign the Formula of Concord for not condemning Philipp Melancthon by name—soon plunged the church into controversy at the instigation of that great Evangelical Catholic George Calixt (the Tom Oden of his day) over the so-called syncretistic controversy. This was at the very temporal epicenter of the age of Lutheran orthodoxy. Peruse Georg Dedeken's thesaurus⁹ or Emil Sehling's edition of the church orders¹⁰ and you find a Lutheran church beset with controversy, doctrinal disagreement, problems of church practice, and struggle over the limits of liturgical freedom. This was all prior to the advent of Pietism in the late seventeenth century.

On the anniversary of the Reformation in 1717, Loescher wrote the preface to volume one of his *Timotheus Verinus*. Loescher begins his chapter "On the General Characteristics of the Pietistic Evil" (*malum pietisticum* in Latin) by noting problems that "manifest themselves":

- a) In public movements which harm the church. . . .
- b) In dangerous, annoying, and arrogant individual exploits
- c) In frequent and lengthy controversies carried on in public writings.
- d) In the ever more obvious division into two or more factions.¹¹

Elsewhere, Loescher complains of the "contempt and disregard" for divine orders, for "perfectionism," or the idea that human actions can be sinless, which "finally ends in fanatical independence in everything," mysticism,

⁷ See Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979), and Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, trans. N. E. Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966).

⁸ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, trans. James L. Schaaf, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985–1993).

⁹ Georg Dedeken, *Thesauri consiliorum et decisionum volumen I–III*, 4 vols. (Jena: Hertels, 1671).

¹⁰ Emil Sehling, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1902–[n.d.]; Tübingen: Mohr, 1957–[n.d.]).

¹¹ Loescher, *The Complete Timotheus Verinus*, 9.

rigidism, excessive freedom which breeds fanaticism and enthusiasm, and the confusion of theological categories.¹² He complained about the disconnect between pulpit and seminary lecture hall and asserted that “what is maintained at the academic rostrum and does not agree with the pulpit must for that reason be proclaimed to be an error.”¹³ Among the other pietistic evils Loescher mentions is the devaluation of the office of the ministry.¹⁴

What is the point? The church has always been “*tectum [sub] cruce,*” hidden under the cross.¹⁵ In the midst of all this nonsense, which is even greater outside of Lutheranism, the Lord continued and continues to work in his word and sacrament for the salvation of souls. As he said, “Upon this rock I shall build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18).

Now, why is this *the* moment for confessional Lutheranism, particularly the Missouri Synod? The Missouri Synod is alive and kicking and in some ways stronger than ever. For all the weaknesses and failings of the Missouri Synod, for all her internal strife and nonsense, in spite of her near capitulation to the so-called inclusive Lutheranism and union in the 1960s and 1970s, she is still here. Warts and all to be sure, but she is still here. Moreover, she is confessing the Book of Concord *quia*. “Missouri is our last hope [*Missouri ist unsere letzte Hoffnung*],” Sasse wrote to a friend.¹⁶

Her seminaries are unparalleled in the world. Travel and you will find that out. Her institutions have unimaginable capacity for good, for furthering the gospel and the Lutheran confession. We also have unbelievable wealth. We may think of ourselves as a smaller church body, but consider this: if you visited three hundred LCMS congregations per year, which would be impossible, in twenty years you would still not be done visiting all the congregations of this blessed church body! We have a billion-dollar pension fund. We have a billion-dollar extension fund. We have a Concordia University system, which, whatever its weaknesses may

¹² Loescher, *The Complete Timotheus Verinus*, 12.

¹³ Loescher, *The Complete Timotheus Verinus*, 14.

¹⁴ Part One, Chapter 4 addresses “The Third Special Characteristic of the Pietistic Evil: The Invalidation of the Ministry.” Loescher, *The Complete Timotheus Verinus*, 93–112.

¹⁵ The phrase *tectum cruce* appears in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession VII–VIII, 18. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche: herausgegeben im Gedenkjahr der Augsbургischen Konfession 1930*, 10th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), 237.

¹⁶ Quoted in Matthew Harrison, “Hermann Sasse and EKID—1948: The Death of the Lutheran Church,” *Logia* 4, no. 4 (1995): 41.

be, arguably has the finest religion faculty overall that it has had in fifty years. We sustain a twenty-five-million-dollar-per-year world mission program. The past three years have sustained more than twenty million dollars per year in human care endeavors of LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Our social ministry institutions touched, this year, three million people with care. Concordia Publishing House is producing, in my view, the finest and most consistently excellent material in its entire history. The new Concordia Commentary Series is unparalleled in biblical and confessional fidelity. In the *Lutheran Service Book*, we have just produced what is arguably the best new hymnal and worship books in the history of the English-speaking Lutheran world. We have access to the generous funding of the billion-dollar Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation, which is as orthodox as it is wealthy. Lutheran Heritage Foundation is producing catechisms and other orthodox material in so many languages that I have lost count. Many, many other strengths could be mentioned.

Missouri is alive and kicking. In my view, this is a great moment to be in the Missouri Synod. All this comes at a perfect moment, when the world has become a superhighway for travel and information. A few years ago, while in Adelaide, South Australia, I met some Singapore pastors. As I was chatting with them, I could see that one young man among them was an intense, confessional Lutheran. I said, "Where did you get this?" He said, "You know *Logia* online?"

The fall of the Soviet Union has brought unprecedented opportunities in Eastern European contacts. Latvia and Lithuania are their own extraordinary stories of contact with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In addition, there has been the rise of Siberian Lutheranism and fellowship with the Ingrian church. This has been, in many respects, the decade of Missouri.

What about African Lutheranism? I talked to a bishop at a Church World Service meeting in Montreux, Switzerland, some years ago, and told him about the Missouri Synod. He said, "If you would have been here ten or fifteen years ago, all of Africa would have been yours." Now, *he* said that. I would not talk in such colonial terms. The fact is that we have tremendous new opportunities and partners in Africa. In East Africa there is the Kenyan Church, with which we are now in fellowship, Uganda, and the Sudan. How one builds a genuine Lutheran church and human care activities under the challenges faced in the Sudan is a miracle but it has been done. There is also Ethiopia. We even have contacts in Tanzania, and many, many other places, including Madagascar. In Western Africa there

are the churches in Liberia, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire. Our South African seminary is taking students from all over the continent and is crying out for assistance to make room for many more who want to come. The doors are open for Missouri.

What about Asia? As a result of our own staff member Darin Storkson's work for LCMS World Relief, we have had, for the first time, personal contact with all eleven LWF members in Indonesia. The largest is the Batak Church. That church is half again as large as the Missouri Synod, and many in that church are crying out for a greater definition of Lutheranism. It is challenging. We can learn a great deal from the Batak Church about standing tall in challenging circumstances and facing a government that is not always favorable. Despite this, our brothers in the faith stand tall for the sake of Christ and his gospel. They want Lutheranism. They want Luther's two kingdoms doctrine; they need it in their context. They want the Lutheran liturgy. They want Lutheran doctrine and heritage. What this relationship will be with the Batak Church will be determined by them. These are two partners, the Missouri Synod and the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP), whom nobody would have ever expected to interact, and here we are talking and sharing resources.

In South and Central America the doors are open. There are possibilities in the Dominican Republic and Guatemala. We now have, with LCMS World Mission, deaconess training beginning in Panama, which will begin a worldwide deaconess effort. There is also a presence in Nicaragua and Venezuela. We have partner churches that are in the LWF. The Missouri Synod should not join the LWF, but it is great to have friends there who bear witness.

With the SELK (the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany), we have now purchased property in Wittenberg which is but twenty yards from the front doors of St. Mary's Church, the church where Luther preached the Reformation to life. We hope this tool, under the direction of the Reverend Wilhelm Torgerson, will become a tool also for worldwide Lutheranism and a rallying point for the Lutheran faith.

Now is Missouri's moment. We ought to have contacts with every Lutheran church in the world, particularly in the developing world. We ought to have redoubled contacts with every Lutheran church in the world which does not ordain women. There has been a revolution at LCMS World Relief and Human Care—pushing the boundaries—and this has been a change for the sake of the gospel and the confession.

Let me tell you how international Lutheran relief has worked. The Missouri Synod has had a long and positive relationship with Lutheran World Relief (LWR), Baltimore. Over the years we have probably given tens of millions of dollars to that entity. The board make up is two-thirds ELCA people and one-third LCMS. Dollars for LWR core operations come from our shop, LCMS World Relief—from the donors of LCMS World Relief. When a disaster strikes or when there are development needs around the world, LWR, which is a fine development and relief agency, goes to the circumstance and finds local partners that are the local non-governmental organizations. Those organizations may be Lutheran but are often not Lutheran. They may be faith-based in some sense or they may be secular. They may be a coalition of other partners or they may be a part of a large ecumenical group such as Action by Churches Together (ACT). What does not generally happen is relief directed to, or capacity built for, specific Lutheran partners, that is, for Lutheran congregations, Lutheran judicatories, Lutheran churches on the ground in the circumstance. In the past, we would have just sent our money to Baltimore when a tsunami struck, and that money would have gone to the region to be doled out, and responsibly so, to a number of carefully chosen non-governmental organizations distributing relief and aid. It is effective and good work, but it is not connected with the gospel and it does not build the capacity of Lutherans or the Lutheran church.¹⁷

We resolved, in this last disaster, to start spending money in a way that increased the capacity of Lutherans, and by doing so—which is difficult work—to build the capacity both to care for people in need and to bear witness to Christ in the process, as well as to advance the cause of the Lutheran church in good and positive ways. That has been a huge sea change. A similar sea change took place with respect to Hurricane Katrina. In the past, we would have sent money to Chicago, to the ELCA, to be administered by Lutheran Disaster Response (a cooperative venture between Missouri and the ELCA administered by ELCA personnel), which would have been doled out in large measure through the social ministry agencies. These agencies have done a fantastic job of reaching the broader community, but those dollars would not have gone to LCMS

¹⁷ Since this paper was delivered in January 2007, the Reverend John Nunes, an LCMS clergyman, was elected president of Lutheran World Relief, Baltimore. I am delighted to note that already in the interim before his election LWR staff opened a discussion about doing business in a way which would pay more attention to building Lutheran capacity and particularly that of LCMS partners. We are now moving forward with a malaria initiative that is extremely promising in this regard. It is truly a new day.

congregations, the LCMS district, or specifically LCMS people who needed help. Some people have criticized this and said, "Well, by doing this you are just serving your own." The fact is, when our own are hit, they say, "Help us bind up our wounds! Now send more so we can help all these other people around us." As they do so, they do it in the name of Christ and his blessed gospel. That has been a radical sea change, and the change has caused some criticism. I have no doubt, however, that it was the right thing to do. That has been an old-line boundary which we have crossed.

While on the road to Marsabit, in northern Kenya, this past summer, our vehicle had four flat tires. After we finally arrived, we found all these children affected by AIDS, as is the case in many cities in Africa. They are AIDS orphans; their parents are dead. By nature, Kenyans are very humble people. They respect the elderly. They have a calm, very low-key demeanor. People do not raise their voices. These children, however, acted in the opposite fashion, doing all kinds of antics and horsing around, trying to get attention. Some of them were addicts. Why did they do it? It was because of the most fundamental need of all of humanity, that is, to be accounted and recognized as somebody. These were young people whom their community had completely regarded as nonhumans. For all intents and purposes, they did not exist. Last year we helped build an orphanage there. After a twelve-year-old boy gave me a tour of the place, he spoke to me the most profound words I ever heard. I asked, "What do you think?" He said, "I thank God and Jesus Christ that somebody has regarded us as human beings."

My friends, the doctrine of justification is the answer to life's persistent questions. The doctrine of justification by grace through faith for Christ's sake has something to say about being human. The doctrine of justification is the heart and soul, the *sine qua non*, of Lutheranism and not only of Lutheranism but the *sine qua non* of Christianity. It is pure gift and bearing witness to it, *sola gratia, sola fide, solus Christus*, is far and away our chief ecumenical task. The task of the Lutheran church is to be Lutheran. In his locus on justification, Johann Gerhard wrote, "The Bible is to be read as though every letter were written with the ink of the blood of Christ [*Biblia ita legenda esse, ac si Sanquine Christi per totum essent scripta*]." ¹⁸ I tell you that ink from the blood of Christ dripped off Melanchthon's pen when he wrote these words,

¹⁸ Johann Gerhard, *Loci theologici*, ed. Ed. Preuss, 9 vols. (Berolini: Gust. Schlawitz, 1863-1885), 1:447.

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and forgiveness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21–26 and 4:5. (CA IV, 1–3)¹⁹

As Luther stated in the Smalcald Articles: “Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. . . . On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world” (SA II, 1, 5).²⁰ According to Article IV of the Augsburg Confession, this faith is held, reckoned, and imputed (*halten und zurechnen* in the German; *imputat* in the Latin) for righteousness. We are justified *coram Deo* not by our own powers or merits. We are justified *propter Christum per fidem*.²¹

Can this dogma have any meaning today? Oswald Bayer writes something terribly profound—and it is profound for works of Lutheran charity. The doctrine of justification is in fact the center of all Lutheran works of charity because the doctrine of justification says something about being human. It says something about the fundamental need to be recognized—to be accounted as a person. Bayer wrote:

There is no escaping the questions and evaluations of others. If one accepts and welcomes the other or not, if one greets the other or not, if one acknowledges the other—either through praise or reproach, affirmation or negation—or if one does not acknowledge the other and regards the other as worthless, a decision is made concerning our being or non-being. Only a being that is recognized and acknowledged is a being that is alive. If no one were to call and greet me by name, if no one were ready to speak to me and look at me, then I would be socially nonexistent. I would even be physically nonexistent, I would have no life at all, if my parents had not acknowledged me and respected my life even before my birth. I would no longer have any life if after my birth my parents had not smiled at me and talked to me, thus opening a space for community, accepting and acknowledging me. An unwanted child is aware of this rejection. The denial of unconditional and anticipated

¹⁹ Theodore G. Tappert et al., trans. and ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 30.

²⁰ Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 292.

²¹ *Bekennnisschriften*, 56.

recognition, the denial of love, shows how necessary recognition is. Its denial is a painful and especially impressive indication of its necessity, its necessity for life.²²

Bayer goes on to argue that all reality is involved with the justification debate. I would hold that this doctrine of justification causes us to recognize all as being worthy of Christ's blood and righteousness, for Christ's sake, and then also worthy of our care.

In our circles, for some reason, in the last forty or fifty years especially, we have allowed the government to take over care for the poor and needy. As the welfare state has arisen, we have simply said that the responsibility for care for the needy is not really a Lutheran task—that the Lutheran task is, finally, simply to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. Well, that is certainly our fundamental, *sine qua non* task. Nevertheless, the New Testament, the Lutheran Confessions, and our church fathers bear witness to the responsibility of the church to be involved in Lutheran works of charity. When you go to somebody and proclaim the gospel, if you turn away from that person's need—the most fundamental need—by refusing to acknowledge that person as a valuable human being, you in a way render the gospel impotent.

Christ combined speaking and acts of mercy throughout his earthly ministry, as seen in the Gospels. The early church combined speaking the gospel with acts of mercy throughout. If you have any doubt, take a look at Paul's collection for Jerusalem. The entire sub-theme of the book of Acts is the fact that Paul saw a tremendous need in Jerusalem and spent ten to fifteen years of his life organizing a collection for the poor. All the stewardship passages of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9—for example, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7), "He who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly" (2 Cor 9:6), and "The gift is not acceptable according to what one has but according to what one does not have" (2 Cor 8:12)—have to do with Paul collecting dollars for the church in Jerusalem. Paul did this as an expression of *koinonia*, fellowship.

In the Missouri Synod, we have tended to define "fellowship" as agreement in dogma, period. For Luther, it was much more dynamic. It was certainly dogma, as it was for the New Testament. In fact, Paul even calls the collection a *koinonia* and a *leitourgia* and a *diakonia* in 2

²² Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 1–2.

Corinthians. In *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods* (1519), Luther wrote,

The immeasurable grace and mercy of God are given us in this sacrament to the end that we might put from us all misery and tribulation [*anfechtung*] and lay it upon the community [of saints], and especially on Christ. . . . When you have partaken of this sacrament, therefore, or desire to partake of it, you must in turn share the misfortunes of the fellowship, as has been said.²³

Fellowship for the New Testament is not merely unity in dogma and teaching, though such unity is certainly part of fellowship. As the Smalcald Articles state, it is unity in faith, doctrine, Sacraments, and *opera caritatis*—works of love (SA II, IV, 9). Works of love are an indication of *koinonia*. Our fathers taught this regularly.

There are, in fact, old boundaries that need to be crossed. This is a challenging moment for Lutheranism. It is, however, a moment of unprecedented opportunity. Let us cross the boundaries and let us act with charity, speaking the gospel clearly, being Lutherans, and loving people in need.

²³ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, American Edition*, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986), 35:54.