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# The Suffering Church: A Study of Luther's *Theologia Crucis*

Robert A. Kelly

## Introduction

In 1929 and again in an addendum of 1954 Walther von Loewenich concluded his study of Luther's *theologia crucis* with a statement of the need to investigate the influence of the theology of the cross on the various individual doctrines as Luther taught them.<sup>1</sup> If, as von Loewenich contends (and as is now generally accepted), the theology of the cross is an epistemological and structural principle of Luther's total theology, the mark of the cross should be on each part of the whole. Unless the influence of *theologia crucis* on a particular *locus* is understood, then Luther's thinking is not understood.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this study is to extend the discussion of Luther's theology of the cross toward its relationship with the distinction of two kingdoms. This task has already been begun from the political side by Pierre Böhler in his response to Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*.<sup>3</sup> Here we wish to focus on the ecclesiastical side, specifically Luther's thinking on the suffering and persecution of the church. The historical context for any statements which Luther made on this subject are twofold; on the one hand, the opposition to the Saxons by papal and imperial forces and, on the other hand, the rise of more radical figures and groups within the evangelical movement. The opponents of the Reformation claimed that the power of Rome and the weakness and divisions among the evangelicals proved that the Saxon church could not be a true church. In Luther's response to these claims and in his pastoral care of the church at Wittenberg we can see some of the structures of Luther's theological system exposed for examination.

This study is motivated by two concerns. First, Böhler has stated in his introduction: "...*Es darf ruhig gesagt werden, dass das zentrale Interesse des Kreuzes, und deshalb auch des christlichen Glaubens im ganzen, das persönliche Heil des Einzelnen ist.*"<sup>4</sup> Is Böhler correct that the *theologia crucis* is strongly focused on the salvation of the individual? It is the working hypothesis of this paper that there is also a corporate aspect to the cross, and this aspect can be seen in Luther's thinking on the suffering of the church. There are also those who would see Luther's statements on suffering and persecution to be purely contextual.<sup>5</sup> It is the working hypothesis here that, while historical context must always be considered, Luther's thoughts on the suffering church can be seen as an important

outgrowth from, and logical necessity of, both the theology of the cross and the distinction of two kingdoms.

### Background: Luther's Doctrine of the Church

Luther's doctrine of the church was one of his important tools in the battle with pope and hierarchy on the one side and with Karlstadt, Müntzer, and other radicals on the other side. Against both sides he defined the church as the holy Christian people—the crowd, community, or assembly of those who have received the gift of faith in Jesus Christ. He did not like the work *Kirche*, which seemed to him overly institutional and caused the common people to think of buildings,<sup>6</sup> but preferred the words *sammlung* and *gemeine* because of their emphasis on the *communio sanctorum*.<sup>7</sup>

This definition of the church leads Luther immediately to the conclusion that no institutional form of the church can claim to be the true church. The true church (that which the creed calls “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic”) is something internal, an assembly of faith, not a collection of bodies. He made this point forcefully in *On the Papacy in Rome* of 1520. Here he equates the error of the Romanists with those who expected the Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom. The true church cannot have a temporal regent who rules in Christ's place. Christ alone rules the true church; when this church grows, it grows purely because of the action of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

The institutional church is called “institutional”—Luther used the word “external”—because its various offices and structures are human institutions. Certainly God desires that there be leadership, order, and structure in the world, but, maintained Luther, the Roman church cannot claim divine institution of its various hierarchies and bureaucracies. Earthly officers can never be heads or regents, but only messengers for Christ, the actual head.<sup>9</sup> In the true church, Christ rules directly in the hearts of His faithful people.

From this assertion follows the description of the true church as “hidden.” By calling the church hidden, Luther means to say that the church cannot be discovered or observed by natural reason. The true church is hidden under the sign of its opposite:<sup>10</sup> weakness, suffering, persecution, schism, and heresy. Because of this many take offense and decide that the church does not exist. This concealing of the church is the work both of the devil, who wants the Gospel to be suppressed, and God, who wants to come to people only in faith.<sup>11</sup>

The true church is not seen by reason because it is proclaimed by the Gospel. Christ has promised that His church will exist on earth until the Day of Judgment and that the Holy Spirit will abide with

it for all time.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the existence of the church within the world is not a matter for empirical investigation; it is an article of faith. The presence of the church in a particular historical situation can only be “seen” by faith in Christ and His promises. What the world cannot see, the Christian, enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, knows to exist. What can be determined by reason does not involve faith; where the Christian relies on God’s Word alone, there faith exists.

There are various signs by which the Christian can, in faith, detect the presence of the hidden church. In “On the Councils and the Church” Luther mentions seven of these. The first and most important is the preaching of the Word of God, the Gospel. The second is baptism, taught, believed, and administered according to Christ’s command. The sacrament of the altar is third—again administered, believed, and received according to Christ’s institution. Fourth is the office of the keys administered publicly so that sin is confessed and forgiven. The fifth sign is the consecration and call of people to the public offices of the Word, sacraments, and keys. Public prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to God in worship is the sixth sign.<sup>13</sup>

The seventh sign is the focus of this study. Luther says that the seventh sign by which the hidden church can be recognized in faith is the possession of the sacred cross. Initially this point is a satire of the custom of requiring the possession of a relic before a church can be consecrated. According to Luther, the true church is not made holy by a sliver of wood, but by actual participation in the cross of Christ. In the Galatians commentary of 1535 he defines the cross of Christ as “the afflictions of all the faithful” or as “the afflictions which the church suffers on Christ’s account”<sup>14</sup> and the stumbling block of the cross which follows the preaching of the Word as “ignominious and merciless persecution.”<sup>15</sup>

### The Seventh Sign: The Possession of the True Cross

In “On the Councils” Luther says that possessing the cross means that Christians suffer “every misfortune and persecution,” both agonies of conscience and actual persecution. The reason for the suffering must be purely because Christians want to preach only Christ and adhere to God’s Word. The holy Christian people “must be pious, quiet, obedient, and prepared to serve the government and everybody with life and goods, doing no one any harm.” According to Luther, the persecution directed against the church will be particularly bitter and the Christian people will be numbered among the dregs of society. Those who persecute and kill them will think that they thereby

serve God, and earthly compassion will be denied them. Such suffering is an identifying mark of the presence of the communion of saints: "Wherever you see or hear this, you may know that the holy Christian church is there."<sup>16</sup>

Luther has a low view of institutional success. This view is expressed already in the *Dictata super Psalterium*. In the scholia to Psalm 69 (68 in the Vulgate) Luther talks about the dangers of a spiritual sleepiness which is brought about by the prosperity of the church. Adversity is a stimulus, but prosperity produces smugness and the church fails to keep watch with the proper vigor. Prosperity and security are the greatest dangers to the church. Luther especially points to the great danger the church faced in his day in its wealth, power, and lack of persecution. The church's security is the devil's trap and it leads priests, bishops, and pope to act like foolish heirs who only waste their inheritance without adding to it. Not only do they waste the merits of Christ and the martyrs, they also think that the remission of sins will come only through their own merit. Luther's fear is that the lot of all prodigal heirs will soon befall the church.<sup>17</sup>

The fear of prosperity and its dangers evidenced here grew into outright condemnation and solemn warning in later years. In the commentary on the Magnificat in 1521 Luther points out that those who are prosperous often will not stand up in defense of the Gospel because they are afraid to lose wealth and property. Such an attitude Luther condemns as outright idolatry.<sup>18</sup> In the church postil of 1522 on the gospel lesson for Epiphany, Luther criticizes the clergy for their prosperity and accuses them of betraying the cross of Christ. The priests have turned real suffering into jewelry: "They have set [the cross] in silver, making it easy to bear without hurting." To their eternal dismay, such a cross cannot ever become a part of their hearts and lives.<sup>19</sup>

This line of thinking continues in the commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. Luther calls the idea that wealth and success are a sign of God's favor an idol and an obstacle to the true faith.<sup>20</sup> The Sermon is, in fact, directed against just this heresy.<sup>21</sup> Jesus' disciples imagined that He would set up a temporal empire and make them its lords—"Thus flesh and blood has always expected to find its own dominion, honor, and advantage in the Gospel..."—but Jesus sought to teach them how greatly different His kingdom was from their false image of it.<sup>22</sup> It is sad, but true, says Luther, that even so many years after Christ people still seek their own success and the devil's false but showy signs attract a greater following than the cross of Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Luther also found support for his suspicion of success and prosperity in Paul's letter to the Galatians, and the Galatians commentary of 1535 shows this thought at several points. In discussing verse eleven of

chapter five Luther approvingly quotes Bernard's statement that the church is best off when it is being persecuted and worst off when it is enjoying external success. Luther goes so far as to say that, when persecution and the cross are not apparent, "this is a sure sign that the pure teaching of the Word has been taken away."<sup>24</sup> If the pure Word is gone, then the key sign of the presence of the true church is missing. Luther's prayer for the church is that it would never be prosperous and outwardly successful, for that would surely mean that the message being preached was a message of salvation by works.<sup>25</sup>

Again in commenting on Galatians 5:13 Luther worries that peace and prosperity for the church would mean the loss of the Gospel. Those who are smug in their success become useless to Christ's kingdom and soon turn away from the service of the cross to some easier way of life.<sup>26</sup> Galatians 6:14 inspires Luther to observe that the glory of power and riches is not the true glory of the church; rather, like Paul, the church glories in the cross of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

At table, as well as in the pulpit and lecture hall, Luther expressed his fears about the dangers of prosperity. His assessment of church history was that the beginning of the corruption of the church came when the persecutions ended and the wealth, power and prestige began. Luther compared the trials of the church to the three temptations of Christ: first the church was tried by persecution, second by heresies, and third by wealth and power.<sup>28</sup> It was the last that proved the most damaging to the integrity of the church.

In sharp contrast to Luther's negative view of ecclesiastical prosperity is his positive assessment of suffering and persecution in the life of the church. The primary reason that suffering is to be accepted as a good rather than avoided as an evil is that Christ Himself suffered.<sup>29</sup> Christ bestows His suffering on His followers<sup>30</sup> so that they may wear His yoke and share His burden. Because of this point the church's suffering is a gift of grace and is pleasing to God.<sup>31</sup> As Christ suffered, so did our ancestors in the faith; contemporary Christians can expect nothing less than their Lord and their fathers and mothers received.<sup>32</sup> The connection of Christ and suffering is so strong that Luther can say that the person who avoids persecution chooses thereby to surrender Christ.<sup>33</sup>

At one time or another Luther said that Christians may suffer,<sup>34</sup> that Christians will suffer,<sup>35</sup> and that Christians must suffer.<sup>36</sup> The saints have no substance in this world<sup>37</sup> and they are despised by those who do have.<sup>38</sup> In spite of the fact that Christians serve others unselfishly, they are persecuted.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Christians are persecuted as if they are the vilest of criminals; their enemies imagine that they perform a great service to God by ridding the earth of such scum.<sup>40</sup> This suffering and weakness by which the world treats Christians as

“the most despicable of men” is the source of the church’s glory.<sup>41</sup>

Why is the church the focus of such hate and violence? Why can Christians glory in such suffering? The answer to both of these questions is the same: the Gospel. The church suffers persecution because it preaches the Word of God and doggedly insists on the Gospel alone and Christ alone.<sup>42</sup> The relationship of the world and God is such that God’s Word must be attacked.<sup>43</sup> Our own flesh, the world, and the devil all insist that the Gospel be silenced and use every weapon available to oppose those who insist on proclaiming Christ alone.<sup>44</sup> Here Luther makes an important distinction. Persecution of the church must only be because of the preaching of the Word, not because Christians are involved in behavior of questionable ethics. In addition, it is not mere suffering, but suffering for the sake of Christ and His Gospel which is the church’s treasure.<sup>45</sup> The connection of persecution with the pure Gospel is so strong for Luther that he can say that the presence of persecution is a sign of the presence of the Gospel and the absence of persecution is a sign of the absence of the Gospel. Knowing this fact, the true church expects its witness to bring suffering, yet refuses to abandon the Gospel, no matter what the cost.<sup>46</sup>

Along with linking the church with its Lord Christ and the Gospel, suffering and persecution bring other blessings as well. Luther calls suffering a “holy possession” which the Spirit uses to sanctify and bless the people of Christ.<sup>47</sup> A church that suffers has the blessing of assurance; it knows that it is part of the true church because it experiences the same suffering as the ancient saints.<sup>48</sup> The church flourishes, grows, and is healthy when it is persecuted,<sup>49</sup> even though the outward signs of success are lacking. The Gospel itself, rather than institutional (human) achievement, is emphasized and demonstrated through suffering.<sup>50</sup> Luther can even say that suffering is one of the “elements that go to make a Christian perfect.”<sup>51</sup> The connection is so strong that he says that a person who has not suffered persecution for the sake of the Gospel is not yet fully a Christian, at least not yet a proven and tested Christian.<sup>52</sup>

### The Connection of the Cross and the Two Kingdoms

If the summary above is what Luther says about suffering as a mark of the true church, what can we learn about the relationship between the *theologia crucis* and the distinction of two kingdoms? In order to answer that question, this section will look at the suffering of the church first from the perspective of the theology of the cross and then

from the perspective of the two kingdoms. Viewing the phenomenon of the suffering and persecution of the church from both perspectives should show at least one aspect of the interaction between these two important themes in Luther's theology.

One of the basic principles of Luther's theology of the cross is that Christians must take the Gospel and other promises of God by faith, not by sight—that is, empirical experience.<sup>53</sup> This is no less true of promises regarding the church than it is of any article of faith. The creed's statement, "I believe in the holy Christian church," and the promise that the church shall stand until the end of time are not confirmed by external appearances. Instead, just as Christ's victory over sin, death, and the devil is hidden under the external appearance of defeat, so the glory of the church is hidden under the sign of its opposite.<sup>54</sup> The external appearance of the church is offense.<sup>55</sup> Christ triumphed through suffering, and so, too, "the gospel cannot come to the fore except through and in suffering and the cross."<sup>56</sup>

One reason that this case is true is that it must be made obvious that the power behind the church and the Gospel is God's alone. Christians must be taught not to trust in their own achievements but to put their faith only in Christ. In the same way, the world must see the church brought low so that no one can imagine that the final victory of the Gospel is the result of human power. God's work is best done in the midst of poverty and lowliness, not in pomp and power.<sup>57</sup>

The more important and basic reason for the suffering of the church is that it is the church of Jesus Christ, the same Jesus who died on the cross. Just as the cross determined the work of Christ, so it determines the mission of the church. This was a constant refrain throughout Luther's career, and it will be helpful to look at some examples here. In the *Dictata super Psalterium* Luther's *scholia* on verse eight of Psalm 91 (90 in the Vulgate) provide an early look at his views on the hiddenness of the church. The church is offensive to the wise and counted with criminals. This is the lot of the church because this was the lot of Christ, the Head of the Church.<sup>58</sup> In the Romans lectures Luther says in a gloss to Romans 8:17 that, for a Christian, *compati* means " 'suffering together' with Christ, that is, suffering the same things that Christ suffered."<sup>59</sup>

In the "Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering" of 1530 Luther explores the thought of Colossians 1:24. By his interpretation, not only Paul, but every Christian suffers so that Christ's suffering may be made complete. The suffering of the believer is even said to complete Jesus' *ganzte Christenheit*.<sup>60</sup> Here it is not only a case of Christ's suffering flowing out into the church; the church's suffering flows back into the suffering of Christ.<sup>61</sup> In the commentary on the Sermon on the Mount (printed in 1532) Luther reminds the Evangelical



community that they are not the first to suffer persecution. Jesus was the first to suffer and the saints of old followed in His steps. Now contemporary saints face the same suffering as Christ faced.<sup>62</sup>

The Galatians commentary also reminds its readers that they are not alone in suffering. They receive the cross of persecution because of the cross of Christ. As Christians suffer they share in the cross of Christ.<sup>63</sup> At table in 1538 Luther and his companions talked about how "Jerome Schurff and the philosophers" viewed the church. Luther said that they were scandalized by the appearance of the church because they forgot that the church must appear to the world just as Christ appeared to the world: "hacked to pieces, marked with scratches, despised, crucified, mocked."<sup>64</sup>

The result of the church's identification with Christ is that the saints are despised<sup>65</sup> and the world takes offense at the church.<sup>66</sup> The church should not, however, perceive this phenomenon as negative. In God's sight the fact that the church exhibits the cross is a positive good. The removal of the stumbling block of the cross would be "an absurdity and a disgrace..."<sup>67</sup> The church can also rest assured that its Lord and Head views His members quite differently than the world view them. The world may see Christians as "miserable and abominable," but Christ calls them blessed and He commands rejoicing. In Christ the church participates in a different value system. The world glories in "power, wealth, peace, honor, wisdom, and righteousness." The church, on the other hand, glories in "affliction, shame, persecution, death, etc."<sup>68</sup>

When looking at the phenomenon of the suffering and persecution of the church from the perspective of the *theologia crucis*, the cause is God. It is God who has "appointed that we should not only believe in the crucified Christ, but also be crucified with him..."<sup>69</sup> It is God who allows the godly to become powerless and suffer.<sup>70</sup> It is God who imposes death on the church and lays the cross of Christ upon it.<sup>71</sup> It is God who covers Christ's holy people with "slander, bitter hatred, persecution, and blasphemy" from its enemies and "contempt and ingratitude" from its so-called followers.<sup>72</sup> From the perspective of the theology of the cross, God wants the church to suffer so that the people of Christ can be identified as Christ's and God causes persecution to come as a gift of His grace so that His Word is revealed according to the paradigm of the cross.

Looking at the phenomenon of the persecution and suffering of Christ's people from the perspective of the distinction of two kingdoms gives a very different picture.<sup>73</sup> From this perspective the cause of the church's suffering is Satan, the world, and all those forces that oppose the Gospel. When the Kingdom of Christ enters the kingdom of the world, it exposes the inherent contradictions in the creature's claim to lordship, and so Satan fights against the Gospel with all his

might. Since the true church is the body Christ has created to preach the Gospel and destroy the power of Satan, sin, death, and the law, the church takes the brunt of his opposition.

Attribution of the cause of the church's suffering to the person of the devil is common throughout Luther's writings. For example, the Letter to the Princes of Saxony (1524) reminds the elector that Satan opposes the Gospel first with fist and force and then, if more direct methods are unsuccessful, with sectarians and false spirits.<sup>74</sup> In the Galatians commentary Luther says that there is nothing that worries the devil more than the preaching of the Gospel, for the Gospel exposes his true wickedness. Therefore the devil raises havoc and "the stumbling block of the cross inevitably follows."<sup>75</sup>

The work where this thought seems most common is the commentary on the Sermon on the Mount,<sup>76</sup> which is well known for its reliance on the distinction of two kingdoms to interpret Matthew 5-7. In that treatise the devil is seen as the source of persecution, strife, factions, and sects.<sup>77</sup> The devil uses every device at his disposal<sup>78</sup> because he cannot allow the church to be gathered unopposed.<sup>79</sup> Why does the devil spend so much time and energy to cause the church to suffer? According to these passages, his supposed lordship is at stake. The triumph of the Gospel means the destruction of Satan's kingdom and the final end of his rebellion against God, and so the devil does all that he can to inflict pain and suffering on the church and prevent the spread of the Gospel. The presence of Satan's opposition is a sure sign of the presence of the pure Gospel; the absence of suffering and persecution indicates that the devil is not very threatened by the content of the preaching.<sup>80</sup>

Luther can also, from the perspective of the distinction of two kingdoms, talk about "the world" or "the ungodly" as the source of persecution. In the case of the ungodly it is not just that they do not receive the message, but that they actively resist and persecute the messengers.<sup>81</sup> The world wants to justify itself by its own achievements, and so it hates those who preach the Gospel and cling to Christ alone. Since the people of Christ so completely contradict the world's values (and its lord, the devil) in their preaching of the Gospel, the world cannot tolerate the true church and rages against it. Therefore, Christians should not fear suffering and persecution from the world, but see therein a sign of the Gospel's presence and power. On the other hand, Christians should fear peace and success in the world, for the world's favor only comes when the threatening Gospel is silenced and the message of works preached.<sup>82</sup>

The fact that those of the world who carry out the persecution of and inflict suffering on Christ's people are the agents of the devil does not mean that they are obviously and outwardly wicked people. Some

are, but most are often the most outwardly pious, upright, and religious people. They are full of holy zeal to protect God and morality from assault.<sup>83</sup> The world regards Christians as dangerous heretics and disturbers of public peace, and so the assumption is that any damage inflicted on the hidden, true church is actually just punishment for crimes against religion and society. The persecutors believe that, by destroying the Gospel, they serve God and the public good.<sup>84</sup>

The kingdom of Satan is always at war with the kingdom of Christ, and so the gospel and the church can always expect to be the door-mats of those in control.<sup>85</sup> This persecution serves an important purpose. The suffering of the church enables the people of Christ to “recognize the Word of God for what it is.”<sup>86</sup> The church expects opposition,<sup>87</sup> recognizing that persecution of the gospel is one clear way to distinguish the true Word from all messages that claim to be God’s Word but are not. “[T]he Word of God must be under arms and fight.”<sup>88</sup> Again we come to Luther’s conclusion that “it is a sure sign that what is being preached is not the Gospel if the preaching goes on without its peace being disturbed.”<sup>89</sup>

This last quotation is part of a paragraph where Luther views the suffering of the church from both the perspective of the theology of the cross and the perspective of the distinction of two kingdoms. The opposition between Gospel and world is pointed out; then Luther says:

Thus God wears the mask of the devil, and the devil wears the mask of God; God wants to be recognized under the mask of the devil and He wants the devil to be condemned under the mask of God.<sup>90</sup>

The two perspectives in juxtaposition are also seen in Luther’s epistle to the Bohemians, “Concerning the Ministry,” of 1523. In his final exhortation, Luther reminds the Bohemians that a cross always accompanies true reform of the church. The devil opposes the Gospel and, as god of this world, stirs up the unbelieving powers and princes to force Christians to be silent. Reform cannot be accompanied with peace and tranquility. Luther then goes on to say:

Christ in fact sends this fire on earth and arouses this terrible Behemoth, not because He is harsh, but in order to teach us that any success we have is not the result of our infirmity but of His power, lest we boast or exalt ourselves above the grace of God.

He encourages the Bohemians to go on with reform when they see resistance from powers and princes, since persecution from the world is a sign that the Word of God is being proclaimed. Acceptance from the world shows that the undertaking is of the world, not of God.<sup>91</sup>

Luther makes a similar statement in the Coburg sermon on suffering. As the third main point of the sermon he sets out to show why

God sends suffering to his people. There are three reasons. The first is that God wants Christians to be conformed to the image of Christ, so that they suffer as He suffered here on earth and are glorified as He is glorified in heaven. God accomplishes this conformity through suffering which He sends by means of the devil and the world. The second reason for suffering is that the devil cannot stand the Word of God because it reveals him as he really is, and so he attacks the church. In this battle Christians learn that the church and the Word are stronger than the devil. The third reason is to provide discipline, which Christians need to keep from becoming "sleepy and secure" and misusing the Gospel.<sup>92</sup>

In all three of these examples the *theologia crucis* perspective and the two-kingdoms perspective stand side by side. It would seem that the theology of the cross must take some precedence, for in all cases the cause of the church's suffering is traced back ultimately to God. Either God initiates the persecution or He allows it so that His power may be made known according to the paradigm of the cross.

### Conclusion

This study began with two working hypotheses. The first that Luther's theology of the cross contains some concern for corporate community and the world. It would seem that this hypothesis has been adequately demonstrated. In thinking about the persecution of the people of God, the church, Luther is self-consciously working within the framework of the *theologia crucis*. This would indicate that the cross is not merely the sign of the individual believer, but also the sign of the community of believers. In several places Luther clearly links the theology of the cross with the distinction of two kingdoms to interpret the church's suffering. Since this distinction is Luther's tool for discussing the relationship of church and world, this again would lead the *theologia crucis* beyond purely individual issues. The cross provides the paradigm not just for the role of the Christian, but also for the role of the church in the world.

The second concern was the relation of Luther's thought on suffering to the historical context on the one side and to the innate structure of Luther's thought on the other. Of course, the historical context necessitated greater pastoral concern for the issue of suffering and sharpened Luther's expression of his thinking on persecution, but the evidence gathered for this study indicates that pressure from Rome and other opponents was not the primary factor in motivating Luther's

views that the true church suffers by necessity. Already in the earliest pre-1517 lectures, when there was no question of persecution of the evangelical movement, Luther expresses negative views of ecclesiastical prosperity. More importantly, Luther's thought on persecution occurs at the natural intersection of two of his most basic principles. Whether the Saxon church had been persecuted or not (and one can easily question the extent of persecution), it seems that either the theology of the cross or the distinction of two kingdoms would have eventually led Luther to teach that the true church suffers. That Luther held to both of these perspectives made the seventh mark of the church inevitable.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Walter von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, trans. H. J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), pp. 167 and 223.
2. For discussion of aspects of Luther's theology of the cross see Paul Althaus, "Die Bedeutung des Kreuzes im Denken Luthers," *Vierteljahrsschrift der Luthergesellschaft* (1926), pp. 97-107; Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 25-34 and 291; K. Bauer, "Die Heidelberger Disputation Luthers," *Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte* 21 (1901), pp. 233-268; Heinrich Bornkamm, "Die theologischen Thesen Luthers bei der Heidelberger Disputation 1518 and seine Theologia Crucis," in *Luther, Gestalt und Wirkungen* (Schriften des Vereins fuer Reformationgeschichte, Nr. 188: 1975), pp. 130-146; Gerhard Ebeling, "Fides Occidit Rationem. Ein Aspekt des Theologia Crucis in Luthers Auslegung von Gal. 3,6," in *Theologia Crucis—Signum Crucis. Festschrift fuer E. Dinkler*, ed. Carl Andersen and Gunther Klein (Tuebingen: H. C. B. Mohr, 1979), pp. 97-135; Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R. G. Shultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 25-34; Gerhard O. Forde, *Where God Meets Man: Luther's Down-to-Earth Approach to the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), pp. 32-44; Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness: Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) pp. 117-123; Heino O. Kadai, "Luther's Theology of the Cross," in *Accents in Luther's Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), pp. 230-272; M. Lienhard, "Christologie et Humilite dans la Theologia Crucis du Commentaire de l'Epitre aux Romains de Luther," *Revue d'Historie et de Philosophie Religieuses* 42 (1962), pp. 304-315; O. Modalsi, "Die Heidelberger Disputation im Lichte der Evangelischen Neuentdeckung Luthers," *Lutherjahrbuch* 47 (1980), pp. 33-39; Regin Prenter, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); Klaus Schwarzwallner, Klaus Schwarzwallner, *Theologia Crucis. Luthers Lehre von der Praedestination nach De Servo Arbitrio, 1525* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag,

- 1970); Joseph Vercuyse, "Luther's Theology of the Cross at the Time of the Heidelberg Disputation," *Gregorianum* 57 (1976), pp. 523-548; and Philip S. Watson, *Let God Be God! An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 102-137.
3. Pierre Bühler, *Kreuz und Eschatologie: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der politischen Theologie, im Anschluss an Luthers Theologia Crucis* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981). This book was originally a dissertation supervised by Gerhard Ebeling.
  4. Bühler, p. 1.
  5. Discussion of the extent to which Luther's teaching on the church was historically conditioned goes back at least to the debate between Hartmann Grisar and Karl Holl. For a summary of the discussion and bibliography see Scott H. Hendrix, *Ecclesia in Via: Ecclesiological Developments in the Medieval Psalms Exegesis and the Dictata super Psalterium (1513-1515) of Martin Luther* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), pp. 143-154. The current study is prompted by a charge similar to Grisar's raised by some who would argue that the *theologia crucis* is an artifact of the past without any value for contemporary theology or church.
  6. AE 41, 144; WA 50, 625.
  7. For Luther's definition of the church, see AE 39, 65; WA 6, 292-293; Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article XII; and AE 41, 144; WA 50, 625.
  8. AE 39, 68-73; WA 6, 295-299.
  9. AE 39, 73-74; WA 6, 299-300.
  10. Cf. Althaus, *Theology*, p. 291: "Here Luther's theology of the cross once again makes itself felt. As God meets us 'hidden in the sufferings' of Christ, so the church is also 'veiled in the flesh' and hidden under its opposite."
  11. AE 35, 409-411; WA DB 7, 418 and 420, 419 and 421.
  12. AE 24, 124-126; WA 45, 574-576.
  13. AE 41, 148-164; WA 50, 628-641.
  14. AE 27, 134; WA 40 II, 171.
  15. AE 27, 43; WA 40 II, 53-54.
  16. AE 41, 164-165; WA 50, 651-652.
  17. AE 10, 360-362; WA 3, 423-425.
  18. AE 21, 347; WA 7, 593.
  19. AE 52, 233-234; WA 10, I, 1, 660.
  20. AE 21, 11-12; WA 32, 305-307.
  21. AE 21, 17; WA 32, 311.
  22. AE 21, 107; WA 32, 388-389.
  23. AE 21, 280; WA 32, 532.
  24. AE 27, 43; WA 40 II, 53-54.
  25. AE 27, 45; WA 40 II, 55-56.
  26. AE 27, 49; WA 40 II, 61.
  27. AE 27, 135; WA 40, II, 172-173.
  28. TR #471: AE 54, 78; WA TR 1, 205.
  29. AE 21, 45; WA 32, 335.
  30. AE 51, 199; WA 32, 30.
  31. AE 51, 392; WA 51, 194.
  32. AE 21, 52-53; WA 32, 341-342. AE 21, 241-243; WA 32, 499-501.

33. AE 21, 45; WA 32, 335.
34. AE 13, 6; WA 8, 8.
35. AE 25, 77; WA 56, 85-86.
36. AE 51, 199; WA 32, 29.
37. WA 3, 410.
38. AE 11, 484; WA 4, 355.
39. AE 21, 45; WA 32, 335.
40. AE 21, 49; WA 32, 338.
41. AE 27, 133; WA 40 II, 170.
42. AE 21, 123; WA 32, 401. AE 27, 44; WA 40, II, 55. AE 27, 135; WA 40 II, 172.
43. AE 40, 57; WA 15, 218.
44. AE 21, 230; WA 32, 489-490.
45. AE 21, 46-47; WA 32, 336-337.
46. AE 27, 180; WA 2, 464. AE 21, 50; WA 32, 339. AE 27, 44; WA 40 II, 54-55.
47. AE 41, 165; WA 50, 642.
48. AE 41, 197; WA 51, 484.
49. AE 27, 42-43; WA 40 II, 53.
50. AE 51, 207; WA 32, 38.
51. AE 21, 53; WA 32, 342.
52. AE 21, 248; WA 32, 505.
53. This statement is made throughout Luther's teaching, preaching, and writing. One example in a context referring to the suffering of the church is AE 21, 44; WA 32, 334.
54. AE 11, 227-228; WA 4, 77-78. See also AE 27, 133-134; WA 40 II, 170-171.
55. AE 54, 291; WA TR 3, 694 (#3900).
56. AE 51, 207; WA 32, 38. See note 50 above.
57. AE 21, 347-348; WA 7, 593-594.
58. AE 11, 226-227; WA 4, 77.
59. AE 25, 72; WA 56, 79. See also AE 25, 86-87; WA 56, 97.
60. AE 51, 198; WA 32, 29.
61. A similar thought is expressed in the commentary on Galatians 6:14. AE 27, 134; WA II, 171-172.
62. AE 21, 45; WA 32, 335.
63. AE 27, 134-135; WA 40 II, 171-172.
64. AE 54; WA TR 3, 553 (#3709).
65. AE 11, 484; WA 4, 355. See note 38 above.
66. AE 11, 226; WA 4, 77. See note 58 above.
67. AE 27, 42; WA 40 II, 53.
68. AE 27, 133-134; WA 40 II, 170-171.
69. AE 51, 198; WA 32, 29.
70. AE 21, 340; WA 7, 586.
71. AE 21, 301; WA 7, 548.
72. AE 27, 102; WA 40 II, 131.
73. We are here using the taxonomy of the distinction of two kingdoms as outlined, for example, by Gerhard Ebeling in "The Necessity of the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," in *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 386-406. The assumption is that, at least in Luther, the distinction of two

kingdoms is used to describe two sets of relationships. One of these is the relationship of the Kingdom of Christ to the kingdom of this world (*regnum Christi* and *regnum mundi*); the other is the relationship between the spiritual and political orders of human society. In the former case the distinction describes a relationship of disagreement for the sake of the Gospel, in the latter a relationship of agreement for the sake of the Gospel (and, therefore, for human welfare). For additional bibliography on the distinction see Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972); Ulrich Duchrow, *Christenheit und Weltverantwortung: Traditions-geschichte und systematische Struktur der Zweireichelehre* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1970); Heinz-Horst Schrey, ed., *Reich Gottes und Welt: Die Lehre Luthers von den zwei Reichen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), and Gunther Wolf, ed., *Luther und die Obrigkeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972.)

74. AE 40, 49; WA 15, 210.  
 75. AE 27, 44-45; WA 40 II, 55.  
 76. Recognizing the problems with this source (cf. AE 21, xx-xxi), its use would still seem to be proper here. The thrust of the quotations below is supported as being representative of Luther's thoughts by the quotations above. It would seem that the use of this material is made almost necessary by the fact that Matthew 5-7 is one of the primary biblical *loci* motivating Luther's view that the distinction of two kingdoms is a necessary tool for exegesis.  
 77. AE 21, 51; WA 32, 340-341. AE 21, 212; WA 32, 474-475.  
 78. AE 21, 248; WA 32, 505.  
 79. AE 21, 263; WA 32, 517.  
 80. AE 21, 52; WA 32, 341.  
 81. AE 25, 29; WA 56, 35.  
 82. AE 21, 230; WA 32, 489-490. AE 27, 46-47; WA 40 II, 58. Luther's thought on "the world" cannot be reduced to any simplistic formula. In the current context, it should be remembered that the world includes not just that which can easily be identified as evil, but also the good faculties such as wisdom and righteousness. See his 1535 commentary on Galatians 1:4 (AE 26, 32-42; WA 40 I, 82-97) with amplification from the 1519 commentary on the same verse (AE 27, 173-174; WA 2, 458-459).  
 83. AE 25, 29; WA 56, 35.  
 84. AE 27, 44; WA 40 II, 54.  
 85. AE 21, 224-225; WA 32, 485.  
 86. AE 40, 49; WA 15, 210.  
 87. AE 21, 249; WA 32, 506.  
 88. AE 40, 57; WA 15, 218.  
 89. AE 27, 43; WA 40 II, 54. See note 90 below.  
 90. AE 27, 43; WA 40 II, 53-54.  
 91. AE 40, 42-43; WA 12, 195-196.  
 92. AE 51, 206-207; WA 32, 36-38.

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