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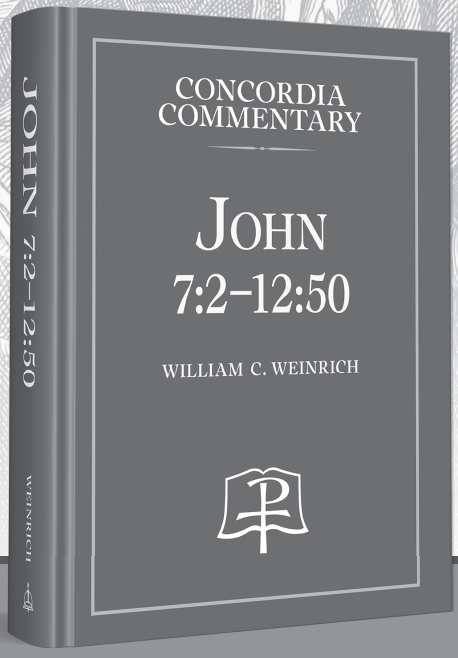
"In this masterly commentary, Weinrich astonishes the reader by the range and depth of his scholarship. It reaches back to the whole Old Testament as God's prophetic Word, across the New Testament in its testimony to the crucified Lord Jesus, and forward to doctrinal reception of John's Gospel by the church. Its breadth is matched by the depth of its careful literary analysis, balanced theological reflection, and winsome liturgical sensitivity."



—Dr. John W. Kleinig, Emeritus Lecturer in Biblical Studies, Australian Lutheran College, the University of Divinity, Adelaide, South Australia

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Paul's Argument for the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians

David P. Scaer

Paul as Pharisaical Insider and the Doctrine of the General Resurrection

Paul finds an occasion to present his theology of Jesus' resurrection in response to the denial of the general resurrection by some members in the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 15:12). They had not yet come to the point of denying the resurrection of Jesus, but this would be the logical and necessary conclusion of saying that there was no resurrection of the dead. By listing the witnesses of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:5–7), Paul places it as an event that could be observed. By any account, the resurrection of a dead person is miraculous, but the observation of the resurrection was not miraculous. It was as observable as other events are. Striking is that the Corinthian denial of resurrection is reported in terms similar to how the synoptic Gospels speak of the Sadducees' denial: "As the Sadducees . . . say there is no resurrection" (see Matt 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27).

It is possible, or even probable, that Paul, being closely connected to the religious establishment in Jerusalem, was acquainted with the Sadducees' denial of the resurrection, and as an up-and-coming, academically educated Pharisee, he participated in the debate on issues that kept the two groups apart. How could he or anyone in the upper echelons of the Jerusalem religious leadership have ignored it? His previous commitment to the general resurrection allowed him years later, as an apostle, to side with the Pharisees against the Sadducees on this issue (Acts 22:5–8).

It cannot be discounted that Paul knew about and may have been involved with both the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the arrest and trial of Jesus. At least he knew about their displeasure with Jesus and their intent to silence him. Ananias, the high priest before whom Paul would appear, was himself a Sadducee (Acts 24:1). The Sadducees had confronted Jesus with a test case about a woman who had been married to seven brothers in succession. They had asked him whose wife she would be in the resurrection (Matt 22:23–31; Mark 12:18–25; Luke 20:27–38). This took place just days before the arrest of Jesus. As close-knit as Jewish leadership in Jerusalem was, it is highly likely that the Pharisees, the group to which Paul belonged, heard of this, as Jesus had provided support for their position on the resurrection. Thus, facing the denial of the resurrection among the Corinthians was

David Scaer is the David P. Scaer Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary. He can be contacted at david.scaer@ctsfw.edu.

an issue with which Paul was probably familiar and for which he was equipped from his training as a Pharisee right up to the time he was converted.

The Sadducees and Pharisees had to find reasons on which they could agree to arrest him and take him off the scene (Matt 22:34). Jesus' debates in Jerusalem in the days leading up to his death were conducted in public. The Pharisees and the Sadducees came to agreement that Jesus had claimed he would destroy the temple as an act of political sedition—enough reason to call for his execution. However, their motives were different. Destruction of the temple would end the political dominance of the Sadducees who occupied the post of the high priests and were collaborators with the Roman occupiers. For the Pharisees, sacrifices required by the Book of Leviticus would no longer be possible. Placing a guard at the tomb is sufficient reason to conclude that both groups knew that Jesus, in speaking of the destruction and reconstruction of the temple, was metaphorically referring to the resurrection of his body.[1]

Paul's Reliance on Written Gospels

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul begins his argument by referencing the gospel which he preached. He wrote that Christ died for sins, was buried, and rose on the third day (vv. 1–4). It is unlikely that the word for "gospel" is synonymous simply with the act of preaching. In that case, it would be rendered "the preaching, which I preached." If this was the case, Paul should have simply said that he preached that Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead and avoided the words "according to my gospel." By "gospel," it is more likely that he is referring not to a preached word but something substantive, perhaps a written document, a book which the Corinthians had seen and heard read, as we shall argue. His preaching was based on the gospel as that term was already being applied to written accounts of the life of Jesus, as they were available at the time Paul had visited Corinth and written his first epistle to the church there.

In proposing that the word "gospel" here refers to a written document, we go counter to the nearly universal scholarly view that Paul wrote the epistles years before the canonical Gospels were written. Some scholars propose that Mark was

[1] Matthew 27:62–64: "The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, 'Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, "After three days I will rise." Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, "He has risen from the dead," and the last fraud will be worse than the first.'" Here is a case where what is translated as "chief priests" would be better rendered as "high priests," who would more likely have access to the Roman governor.

the first Gospel, dating it just before AD 70, a few years after the martyrdom of Paul and Peter, and place the dates of the other Gospels between AD 80 and AD 100, though there is no agreement on the dates. They also are likely to hold that 1 Thessalonians and Galatians contain the first references to Jesus' resurrection, at least before the Gospels, and recognize 1 Corinthians as the first extensive discourse on the resurrection.

Yet Galatians, often seen as the earliest of Paul's epistles, mentions the resurrection of Jesus in the first verse. "Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Gal 1:1). It also appears in 1 Thessalonians, for which there is also scholarly support for the theory that it was Paul's first epistle. Christians are to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead (1 Thess 1:10). This leads us to question the widely held hypothesis that Paul's epistles were written before the Gospels, a hypothesis that has dogmatic status in the world of New Testament scholarship.

When Paul said he preached about Jesus what is recorded, "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3–4), he was referencing a written document. In itself, this is a thoroughly rich theological confession.

If Paul did not have use of written documents, such as one of the four Gospels, he would have depended on his remembrance of the oral tradition, which would later be inscripturated into our Gospels. Now comes the question of how much of that oral tradition he could have committed to memory. Since he was not one of the twelve disciples who actually had heard Jesus preach and seen what he had done, what he knew of these things was secondhand.

At the time of Paul's trial before Felix and then high priest Ananias (Acts 22:30–23:10), Matthew's Gospel could already have been written and thus could have come into the hands of the church's Jewish opponents, which the evangelist himself at the time of his writing had anticipated. They were not the first ones to whom Matthew had directed his Gospel, but even without intuition he knew that copies of his Gospel would fall into their hands, especially if they intended to persecute the proponents of the religion Jesus preached. At least they had knowledge that such a document existed, and when it came to their attention, its contents would not have been completely new to them. They had heard this from Jesus himself.

In this same period, Luke had fulfilled a need for a Gospel more conciliatory to both the Jews and the Gentiles than Matthew had provided. Jesus was "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:32). Thus, it is likely that Luke wrote his Gospel in the early 50s, sometime after the Council of Jerusalem (AD 49) and before Paul's second missionary journey. In writing a Gospel whose targeted audience was the Gentiles in Paul's churches, Luke would not have

had Matthew's interest in pointing out the involvement of the Jerusalem religious authorities in covering up the evidences of Jesus' resurrection that was at the time widely known in that city (Matt 28:11–15; cf. 27:8).

The core and heart of the gospel Paul delivered to the Corinthians was that Christ died and was buried and raised (1 Cor 15:3–4), which was something they already knew. They were being reminded of what was common knowledge for them. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection were rehearsed to them and by them Sunday after Sunday. Paul's words may have been taken from an early form of the creed they confessed.

In speaking of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, Paul was not offering an argument for the resurrection and why they should believe it. That would come later, especially in his listing of the witnesses. Instead, Paul was reminding the Corinthians of what they already knew and what they had learned from the Scriptures. "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures [κατὰ τὰς γραφάς], that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures [κατὰ τὰς γραφάς]" (1 Cor 15:3–4). Paul uses the phrase "in accordance with the Scriptures" twice, when once would have been enough. In the Niceno-Constantinople Creed, it appears only once and without the definite article as it does in 1 Corinthians. J. N. D. Kelly recognizes this pericope as an early Christian creed that Paul took over into his epistle, a creed that Paul did not originate.[2]

In 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Paul inserts a similar creedal formula with the addition that the one who died and rose will return: "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep." So also, in Romans 4:24–25, "[We] believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." This pattern of death and resurrection can be found in the message the angel gave to the women who came to the tomb to prepare the body of Jesus for burial.[3] By asking the women to remember what Jesus said, the angel put the focus on Jesus when he spoke this formula about his death and resurrection on the third day (Luke 9:22). So was set in motion the oral tradition that was taken into the Scriptures and preserved in the creeds.

Unique to 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 and distinct from all the parallels in the New Testament is that Christ died, was buried, and on the third day rose again *according to the Scriptures*, a phrase that would eventually be taken into our Nicene Creed.

[2] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, 1960), 303.

[3] "'Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.' And they remembered his words" (Luke 24:6–8).

Most scholars, if not all, hold that Paul was referring to Old Testament passages that speak of Christ's death and resurrection. Paul can locate the christological content of the Old Testament in speaking of Christ as the Paschal lamb (1 Cor 5:7). He also understands that passing through the sea was a baptism for Israel (1 Cor 10:1–2). Christ was the rock from which Moses acquired water (1 Cor 10:4). However, Paul does not specify which Old Testament passages, if this was his intent, he had in mind in referring to Jesus' death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3–4). Since it is the heart of the gospel that he preached, it seems odd that he does not provide specific Old Testament references for Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Some commentators, perhaps most, simply assume "according to the Scriptures" means that the Old Testament is christological. N. T. Wright takes it as a general reference to the entire Old Testament:

> Paul is not proof-texting; he does not envisage one or two, or even half a dozen, isolated passages about a death for sinners. He is referring to the entire biblical narrative as the story which has reached its climax in the Messiah and has now given rise to the new phase of the same story, the phase in which the age to come has broken in, with its central characteristic being (seen from one point of view) rescue from sins, and (from another point of view) rescue from death, i.e., resurrection.[4]

Wright's insight is correct, that the christological content of the Old Testament should not be limited to direct, messianic prophecies or what he calls proof-texting by isolating some passages and ignoring others.[5] However, a general reference to the Scriptures without specification to an Old Testament book does not produce the specific evidences to advance the argument in demonstrating that the Old Testament shows that Jesus had actually risen from the dead. As necessary as acknowledging the christological content of the Old Testament is for belief,[6] this is not what Paul intends here. While affirming that the Old Testament is completely christological, Paul is asserting rather how the Corinthians came to know that Christ died, was buried, and rose from the dead. These were things they heard read from the Gospels when they came together.

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[4] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), 320.

[5] David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 136–143.

[6] A convincing argument that the Old Testament is thoroughly christological is offered by Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2017). Central to his argument is the account of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, "'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:26–27).

Instead of the phrase "according to the Scriptures" as an indication that the Old Testament in general is christological in its content, which it is, it is more likely that the Scriptures to which Paul refers are the Gospels of Matthew and Luke—copies of which Paul had brought with him to Corinth and which the Corinthians heard read out loud Sunday after Sunday.

What is determinative in this argument, that Paul is referring to a public reading of the Gospels, are the Greek words κατὰ τὰς γραφάς. The words "according to" translate the Greek word κατά, a word that has found a permanent place on the top of each page of the four Gospels in Greek New Testaments, e.g., ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΘΘΑΙΟΝ, ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΡΚΟΝ, ΚΑΤΑ ΛΟΥΚΑΝ, ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ.

There is only one gospel presented in four different ways: according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, and according to John. Martin Hengel (1926–2009) held that, supposing one Gospel after another coming into existence after AD 60, each soon would have had to be distinguished from the other, and so the names of the authors, which the first recipients of each Gospel knew, had to be added to the manuscripts.[7] By AD 125, so it is supposed, the names of the evangelists were associated with particular Gospels, so that one could be distinguished from the others. Regardless of the veracity of Hengel's dating of the Gospels, the point is well taken, that really there were not four Gospels, but there was a fourfold gospel with four writers.

If the Greek word κατά carries the force of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, as Wright proposes and most commentators hold, it would be the only place in the New Testament where the word has this meaning. In James 2:8, it carries the meaning of how something is known: "If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well." Here the phrase "according to" indicates how something is known, and this meaning is carried over into the Sunday liturgy in which the pastor announces that the Gospel for the Sunday is according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

Understanding Matthew and Luke as "Scriptures" in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 is not without precedence in the apostolic age. Paul speaks of Matthew and Luke as "Scripture" in 1 Timothy 5:17–18. In advocating fair wages for preachers: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" Paul's reference to not muzzling the ox is taken over from Deuteronomy 25:4, but his reference to the laborer deserving his wages is taken from Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7. When

[7] Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 84.

Paul wrote to Timothy, no more than ten years had lapsed after his writing to the Corinthians. In this time, Matthew and Luke were regarded as Scriptures on the same level as the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy.[8]

Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 is that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are not incidental to his ministry, but these events constitute the content of what he preached and what the Corinthians believed. By denying the resurrection of the dead, the Corinthians had in effect denied the most important element of what he preached: that Christ died for sins, was buried, and rose from the dead. By translating the phrase κατὰ τὰς γραφάς "in accordance with the Scriptures," as the RSV and the ESV do, they provide a valuable and true understanding of the Old Testament as christological, even though this is not Paul's intent here. The divine necessity that Jesus Christ must die and be raised on the third day is found in all three synoptic Gospels and is contained in the Greek word δεῖ ("it is necessary"), that these things happened because of divine purpose (Matt 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22). Parallel to this requirement is that Jesus' death in John happens to fulfill the Scriptures, i.e., the Old Testament (John 19:36–37). In 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, Paul with this phrase is not addressing how Christ fulfills the Old Testament but how the Corinthians had come to know and believe it.

There is not the slightest indication that they doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead. First Paul establishes that Christ was raised from the dead and then concludes that all the dead will rise from the dead.[9] Paul does this by calling on the witnesses of the resurrection to testify, and he does this in a particular arrangement. In 1 Corinthians 15:5–8, Paul places his witnesses to the resurrection in two lists. One is headed by Peter and the other by James. This reflects the importance of these apostles whom the Corinthians recognized as authoritative in establishing the apostolic doctrine. As they were removed by distance and time from Jerusalem where the resurrection had occurred, the Corinthians could not establish the factuality of Jesus' resurrection by themselves. Plain and simple, they were not witnesses to the resurrection as were Peter, the "Twelve," and James (1 Cor 15:5, 7). As a congregation, they could not even handle internal matters like a man fornicating with his father's wife (1 Cor 5:1), let alone come to a belief that the dead would be raised. What they believed about Jesus was more than a parochial issue involving just their congregation. Since it involved what other congregations also believed, matters about the resurrection were "catholic," in the sense they had to

[8] John could refer to what he had written in his Gospel as Scripture (Jn 2:22; 20:9), so there is evidence a document recounting the life of Jesus could be called either a Gospel or Scripture.

[9] See Leroy Andrew Huizenga, "Resurrection Reconsidered: The Corinthian Denial and Paul's Response," in *A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven: Essays on Christology and Ethics in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. David M. Moffitt and Isaac Augustine Morales (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, Fortress Books, 2021), 109–130.

believe what other churches believed. As the Athanasian Creed says, "This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved." It was also "apostolic" in that the apostles had been entrusted with the preservation and proclamation of what Jesus did and taught. No congregation was allowed to go off with its own views on the resurrection, just as no congregation was allowed to go off on its own in having women preachers (1 Cor 14:33–34). When Paul placed himself as the last witness in the second list, this has a double meaning: he was the last one to whom Jesus appeared and, as he goes on to say, he was the least of all the apostles (1 Cor 15:8–10), which correlates with his self-understanding as being the foremost of sinners (1 Tim 1:15). Not listed by Paul among the witnesses of the resurrection are the women who discover the empty tomb in the four Gospels, to whom Jesus first appeared. One explanation for this is that Paul listed only those people known to the Corinthians as preachers and guarantors of the apostolic message.

That being said, the women are the central part in the Gospels' accounts of the crucifixion, the burial, and the discovery of the empty tomb, which Paul lists as the central elements of the Christian faith: that Christ died, was buried, and rose again. They are on the scene from the beginning to the end and on the intervening day between the crucifixion and resurrection in that on Saturday evening, they purchase anointments to complete the burial preparations begun before sunset on Friday (Mark 16:1). The ones who discover the empty tomb on Sunday are the same ones who witnessed the crucifixion and the placing of Jesus' body in the tomb on Friday. Matthew says that they sat opposite the tomb as the stone was rolled in front of it (Matt 27:60–61), and they were close enough to the tomb that both Luke (23:55) and Mark (15:47) record that they observed how the body was placed.

The women who witness the burial of Jesus and his resurrection serve as the historical link to the creed, that the one who was raised from the dead was the same who was crucified and buried. Though they were necessary and unrepeatable in their roles as witnesses to the burial and resurrection of Jesus, after their encounter with Jesus they yield their place of prominence to the disciples, who are to preach that which was first witnessed by the women. In Matthew, the women are to inform the disciples to go to Galilee where they will see him (Matt 28:1–7), and in Mark they are to tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going to Galilee (Mark 16:7). Luke describes Jesus' engagements with the disciples in Jerusalem and two others on the road to Emmaus, events better described as theological convocations, not only to confirm that Jesus had actually risen from the dead, but to confirm its meaning. John places two of these meetings in Jerusalem (20:19–28) and a third one in Galilee (21:1–23). As essential as the women are in observing the death, burial, and empty

tomb, and in meeting the resurrected Jesus, they have no further role to play in the Gospels.

Agreeing, for the sake of argument, to the commonly held view that Mark was the first Gospel, written between AD 66–70, there would be a period of about thirty years between the events observed by the women and their being written down. During this intervening period, these things would have been passed down by word of mouth, that is, by the oral tradition. An assumed date for Luke (around AD 85) and a late date for Matthew (around AD 100) would mean that Luke incorporated in his Gospel oral traditions about what happened fifty years before, and Matthew, seventy years before.

Whatever scenario is chosen, we are faced with the question of how adequate an oral transmission could be in preserving the central content of the proclamation—that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again—without a written document of some kind.[10] Names of women who discovered the empty tomb of Jesus, to whom he appeared and with whom he spoke, were included in the rehearsal of the events themselves among those who remained in Jerusalem, and this might have happened until the church evacuated the city before it was besieged by the Romans beginning in AD 66. Even when a creedal statement had been put in place in the churches associated with Paul, what Paul confessed was standard belief (1 Cor 15:1–4), even though he had not originated it. This creedal formula of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, along with the narrative that would be included in the account later incorporated into the Gospels, was rehearsed every Sunday in gatherings of his followers—along with the names of the women, especially in Jerusalem, where they remained as members. Names of Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate, the political and religious leaders in Jerusalem involved in the death of Jesus, were still known at the time of the writing of the Gospels.

One or more of the evangelists, possibly all four, actually knew the women who had discovered the empty tomb, or they knew those with whom the women shared their encounters with Jesus. This is not an either/or matter. Members of the church in Jerusalem knew the women and those with whom the women had shared their experiences. The women knew where the disciples were staying and may have established temporary residence nearby (Luke 24:24). A post–AD 70 dating for Luke would mean that when he had finished his Gospel and was undertaking to write Acts, the Romans had already destroyed Jerusalem and that the Christians had already evacuated the city. Preserving the precise details of an oral tradition, in which the names of the women were remembered, would have been challenging.

[10] Richard Bauckham, "The Women and the Resurrection: The Credibility of Their Stories," in *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 257–310.

Even if Luke was written in those few years before the destruction of Jerusalem, an oral tradition with all of the details necessary for putting down in writing a fuller account of the resurrection of Jesus would have been difficult.

A better explanation for the detail in the resurrection narratives is that they were recorded close to the time when the events they report happened and not several generations afterwards. John does not list any other woman than Mary Magdalene. Even if his Gospel was written towards the end of the first century, her place in the tradition was firmly fixed as the first one to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared. Jesus' conversation with Mary Magdalene is not unlike the one he had with the woman at the well of Samaria, in that she does not at first recognize that the one with whom she is talking is Jesus (cf. John 4:1–42; 20:11–17).

One plausible reason for why Paul did not list any of the women is that he lists those with whom the Corinthians had come into contact and who were prominently known to them. Paul places Peter, whom he calls Cephas, as the first of the witnesses (1 Cor 15:5), probably in two senses. According to Luke and John, he is the first of the apostles to see the resurrected Jesus, though it is difficult to determine the precise time during that day when this happened. Another and equally probable reason was that his preeminent position among the disciples of Jesus before the resurrection was enhanced afterwards. In Mark 16:5–7, the young man seated in the tomb singles out Peter from the other disciples whom the women are to inform of Jesus' resurrection. John 21 reports a lengthy encounter of Peter with the resurrected Jesus, designating Peter not so much as a witness in the sense that Mary Magdalene, all the apostles, and then Thomas were, but as the one who would assume the role of Jesus in shepherding the church (21:15–17). His importance as a witness to the resurrection in the Gospels of Mark and John corresponds with Paul's listing him as the first witness to the resurrection.

Peter was the authenticator of what Jesus said and did during his ministry, and his word continued to carry weight not only in the churches that he founded but also in those Paul established (2 Pet 3:15). Whereas it might be expected that in his two epistles Peter might say that he was a witness to Christ's resurrection, he first presents himself as a witness of Christ's sufferings (1 Pet 5:1), and then in his second epistle lists himself as a witness of the transfiguration (2 Pet 1:16–18). By referring to himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ, he calls the readers' attention to his own failure in denying Jesus.

In all three synoptic Gospels, Jesus' transfiguration takes place within the context of his predictions of his death and resurrection (Matt 17:1–9; Luke 9:28–36; Mark 9:2–10). Though the proposal by the more radical scholars that the transfiguration account originally belonged in the resurrection narratives is without any textual evidence, the substance of the proposal—that it has to do with what

would happen in the resurrection—is not without value. In both Matthew (17:9) and Mark (9:9–10), Peter, James, and John, who observed the transfiguration, are to tell no one about it until the Son of Man is raised from the dead. In the transfiguration, Jesus set aside the form or appearance of a servant and assumed the appearance of God, which belonged to him and which he would regain and again display after the resurrection.[11] Luke reports that Moses and Elijah, also appearing in glory, spoke with Jesus about the things that would happen to him in Jerusalem. In Luke 9:31, these things are called Jesus' "exodus," a word that in the Old Testament refers to the Israelites facing death in going into the sea and coming out alive. The exodus into, through, and out of the sea fits the pattern of death, burial, and resurrection. In the conversation with Moses and Elijah, Jesus is speaking about his death and resurrection.[12] In his first epistle, Peter speaks of Baptism in terms of the resurrection: "According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3).

While the place of Peter as Jesus' most prominent disciple is beyond dispute, striking is that James is given an equal standing by the way Paul places his name as the first one in the second list of witnesses to the resurrection (1 Cor 15:7). In hearing his name, Paul's readers would have recalled that at the time Paul wrote this epistle (ca. AD 53–55), this brother of Jesus was the bishop of the Jerusalem church (AD 35–62), which had authorized his first missionary journey. James had succeeded in putting together a consensus at the Council of Jerusalem (AD 49) on how Jewish and Gentile Christians were to interact, and so he had a well-earned stature in the church as a wise leader in bringing those together with opposing positions. He authored the letter sent by the council that was to be distributed among the Gentile churches, including those established by Paul (Acts 15:13–29). Paul was present when the letter was framed, and in anticipation of meeting up with the Judaizers who disrupted his first missionary journey, he probably brought a copy with him on his second visit to Corinth. James had recommended that, out of consideration for the Jews, the Gentiles should not eat meat that was strangled or offered to idols.

Now the problem had shifted to whether Christians, Jew or Gentile, would be guilty of participating in pagan worship if they ate the meat sacrificed to idols. If a fellow Christian thought this way, then they should refrain from doing so (1 Cor 8:1–10; Acts 15:29). So, circumcision was being required by some Jewish Christians, and eating meat offered to pagan idols was an issue for Gentile Christians. James

[11] In Lutheran theology, this is called the state of exaltation, a state that displays the *genus maiestaticum*.

[12] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 305–308.

and Paul were addressing similar situations in what Christians were allowed to eat, and they came up with similar answers in that, at times, out of respect for the consciences of others, they should refrain from eating meat.

Unlike Paul, who would travel as far as Rome and perhaps Spain, James remained in Jerusalem until his martyrdom. However, he was known as a church leader in Corinth as he was in Galatia (Gal 1:19; 2:9). Remaining in Jerusalem after the persecution following the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1) with the disciples and others who followed Jesus, James had, after the resurrection, regular contact with the women and the original apostles who had discovered the empty tomb and were the first witnesses of the resurrection.

Paul lists James as a witness of the resurrection without providing details as to the place and time of when this happened (1 Cor 15:7). Events around the empty tomb and the appearances of the resurrected Jesus would have been everyday topics of conversation in the world in which James lived and were not topics reserved only to be recited in worship.

As the oldest of Jesus' four younger brothers, James grew up in the same household with the Lord, and they probably worked side by side in Joseph's carpentry business. He had an insight into the kind of person Jesus was. Since he was with Jesus at the wedding of Cana (John 2:12), an episode that follows Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist (John 1:32), it is not unlikely that James, like Jesus, had attached himself to the movement that gathered around John the Baptist, by whom he would have also been baptized.

James knew things about Jesus that the disciples did not know and could never know. Mark reports that when his family heard that the people in their hometown were saying that Jesus was out of his mind, they grabbed hold of him (Mark 3:21). What Jesus was doing and saying was an embarrassment to his family. This can only mean that Jesus was a topic of frequent conversation among his parents and siblings, who had not yet grasped who he really was. As a member of the family of Jesus, James provided a realistic element into understanding that the one who was declared to be the Son of God at his Baptism and then by Peter was also a real man who lived within the ordinary dimensions of human existence.

In the resurrection, Jesus was not transformed into a spirit or ghost, but the one who was resurrected was and remained the brother of James. James had a place with Jesus in the family of Joseph and Mary, which the apostles did not have. For a few years, Peter took the lead among the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem, but the mantle soon slipped to James, who day by day passed by the places where Jesus was arrested, was put on trial, was executed, and was buried and raised from the dead. It would have been nearly impossible for James and the rest of the church that remained in Jerusalem not to have had a fascination with these places associated with the arrest,

trial, and death of Jesus, and the tomb where his body was placed and from where it rose. At the time when Matthew wrote his Gospel, the place where Judas was buried and the circumstances surrounding its purchase were widely known in Jerusalem (Matt 27:8). For the followers of Jesus, his tomb would have been a must-see place.

By the time our Gospels were written, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also known as the mother of James, the one who stands afar at the crucifixion of her son (Matt 27:56). She with the other women purchase ointments for the anointing of his body on the evening of the following day (Mark 16:1) and visit the tomb to discover that her son's body is missing (Luke 24:10). James is also with her in the upper room in anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). Though he is not chosen as one of the twelve, James and other members of the family follow Jesus and hear his preaching and see his miracles (Matt 12:48–49; Mark 3:33–35; Luke 8:19–21; John 2:12).

Paul makes it clear that Jesus appeared to James, but he does not provide the circumstances. His name is mentioned along with his mother Mary's presence at the crucifixion (Matt 27:55–56), her purchasing of the burial ointments (Mark 16:1), and her discovery of the empty tomb (Luke 24:10). This indicates his prominent standing in the church at the time the Gospels were written. By including his name in the narrative, the evangelists may have intended to say that James also stood off at a distance from the crucifixion without being seen, or that he was closely involved. Since Mary is mentioned as the mother of James in the crucial episodes of Jesus' death, burial, and the events at the empty tomb, it raises the possibility that she was staying with him and the other brothers of Jesus along with the disciples in the days leading up to Pentecost (Acts 1:13, 14).

As the years passed, mother and son would have shared what they remembered happening during this time—how could it have been otherwise? In other words, oral tradition in that household was lively. After all, a man who was their son and brother had come back from the dead.

Matthew writes as if the Field of Blood, purchased with the thirty pieces of silver given by the Jewish authorities to Judas for his betrayal of Jesus, was still accessible to the inquisitive inquirer (Matt 27:8). This, like other places in Jerusalem, which was and remained the site of the mother church, was sacred to the followers of Jesus who visited the city (Rom 15:25–26). No other person would be more qualified as the custodian of these places than James. By remaining in Jerusalem, he more than anyone else provided the link with the past that was necessary for any meaningful doctrine not only of the resurrection but also of the incarnation. After all, his brother was Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory (Jas 2:1). God became man in Galilee, died, and rose from the dead in Jerusalem. By remaining in Jerusalem, James provided the continuity and stabilizing factor as the church expanded from there into Asia Minor,

then Greece and Italy. James gave the church a sense of permanence. With a diminishing membership due to persecution, the Jerusalem church had to rely increasingly on contributions from other churches (Rom 15:25–27), but the city held its place of honor, wherever the followers of Jesus were spread throughout the ancient world, as the place where God brought salvation to his people. We cannot rule out the possibility that members of Paul's churches, especially the wealthier members who had financial means, had traveled to Jerusalem to see the places made sacred by Jesus.

In the fourth century, St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, visited Jerusalem to locate the places in Jerusalem that Jesus had made sacred during the last days of his life. It is left up to the archaeologists to confirm the probability of her choices. However accurate her findings were, pilgrimages to the land of Jesus and the city where he was crucified and raised from the dead began in earnest not only for the spiritual benefit of the pilgrims, but to confirm for them that the events from the life of Jesus had really happened. In support of New Testament books as historical documents affirming that Jesus really existed, locating the places where Jesus conducted his ministry would affirm their authentic character. If the places mentioned in the Gospel were shown not to exist, then they would have been regarded as figments of creative imaginations and the entire Christian enterprise would have fallen flat on its face.

In a strange reference, John notes that Jesus came to Cana, where he had turned the water into wine (John 4:46). Already during Jesus' ministry, and so when John wrote his Gospel, Cana had become such a place of importance that the evangelist had to mention it. Since what happened there could not be forgotten, the changing of the water to wine pointed to the pouring out of the water and the blood from the side of the crucified Jesus (John 19:34), and so Cana had sacramental importance in displaying water and wine as the elements in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Already during the lifetime of Jesus and shortly after the resurrection, Cana and the sites in Jerusalem were on the way to becoming places of pilgrimage destination. Galilee would not have suffered the devastation that Jerusalem did in its destruction by the Romans in AD 70, and so Cana may have remained intact until the end of the first century, the traditional dating of John's Gospel. Christian pilgrims passing through Cana were thus alerted to what Jesus had done there. Cana was only a stone's throw away from Nazareth, where both Jesus and James were brought up.

Jerusalem would have been a city of greater fascination for Christians. Places of historical commemoration were not unknown to the Jews. For example, twelve stones had been placed by the Jordan River as a remembrance of where the Israelites had come into Canaan (Josh 4:20–23).

After presenting Peter as a witness of the resurrection, Paul groups the original disciples under the general category of "the Twelve" (1 Cor 15:5). Without naming them, they were recognized as a collective authority in determining what Jesus taught and what the church was to believe. After the ascension, the followers of Jesus continued in the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42), who were the authenticators of what Jesus had taught.

In speaking of the Twelve, without listing their names, Paul stresses the corporate authority of the apostles as a group. They were entrusted by Jesus with his teachings and were appointed as witnesses of what he had done, in particular of his resurrection: "And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33). So it is not without reason that the first confession of the church that Jesus had risen from the dead evolved into what is now known as the Apostles' Creed. Mention of the Twelve without giving their names, except in the case of Peter, who had a special standing in the church, indicates that the Corinthians knew who the Twelve were. Since Paul participated in the Council of Jerusalem, he would have known who the apostles were. It is also possible, if not likely, that the names that Paul supplied were corroborated by written Gospels that he had taken with him to Corinth.

As already argued, "according to the Scriptures" refers most likely to Matthew and Luke, Gospels in which the names of the apostles were recorded (Matt 10:2–4; Luke 6:14–15).[13] Mark was still to be written at the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians, so it is hardly possible that he was referring to this Gospel. In his resurrection narrative, Mark includes the young man's promise that Jesus' disciples will see him in Galilee, but the actual appearance in Galilee is reported only in the longer ending (Mark 16:14). It is not found in the uncontested last chapter of Mark (16:1–8). In the predictions of Jesus' death, Mark speaks of Jesus being raised in three days and avoids the liturgical formula, already then established, that it would happen on the third day (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; cf. 14:58; 15:29). Matthew uses the "third day" formula (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19), and in another reference in connection with the resurrection narrative mentions that the Jews also knew it (Matt 27:64).

Luke also has two references and one allusion to the resurrection prior to the death of Jesus (Luke 9:22; 13:32; 18:33) and three references in the resurrection

[13] We can only hypothesize as to why John can speak of the Twelve but, unlike the other three evangelists, does not follow up by listing their names (John 6:67, 70–71; 20:24). John may have assumed that his readers knew of their names from oral tradition or from another Gospel. He may have had a still undetected theological motive, for example, that he was the only one of the original disciples who remained. Absence of a listing of the disciples' names as they are found in the other Gospels led to speculation of who Nathanael was (John 1:45–51). It is not unlikely that John's Nathanael appears as Matthew in the synoptic Gospels, since both names mean "the gift of God."

account itself (Luke 24:7, 21, 46). This further suggests that Paul, by saying that Christ rose on the third day according to the Scriptures, has Matthew and Luke in his sights rather than Mark, where the formula is not used. When Jesus said that he would finish his course on the third day (see Luke 13:32), the phrase by itself became synonymous with the resurrection, an understanding that John may have incorporated in his account of the wedding at Cana. "On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee" (John 2:1). In hearing the phrase "on the third day," those who heard this passage read could not help but focus on the resurrection of Jesus.

Oddly, none of the resurrection accounts in the Gospels say that Jesus appeared to the Twelve, a phrase unique to Paul. Matthew says that "the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them" (Matt 28:16), and Luke reports that the women told the eleven what they had witnessed at the tomb (Luke 24:9). Use of the number "eleven" in place of "twelve" was a reminder of the treachery of Judas in betraying Jesus. It was also a reminder that others, including Paul, were called apostles, even though they did not qualify as the original witnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus had also appeared to these other apostles. Matthew is the only evangelist that speaks of the original twelve as both the twelve disciples and the twelve apostles (Matt 10:1–2).

Identifying the five hundred brothers who saw the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor 15:6) remains a riddle. Since Paul says that some had fallen asleep, that is, they had died, this can only mean that a majority of them were still living and known to the Corinthians—some individually, but in any case all of them as a group (1 Cor 15:6). Inaccessible witnesses would have hardly advanced Paul's argument in defense of the resurrection.[14] Paul was presenting a legal-like defense to the Corinthians, who sat almost as a jury who were to be convinced. Saying that some have fallen asleep only has value in an argument if the Corinthians already had come into contact with those who had seen the resurrected Jesus or who had heard their testimony from others. Here Paul's saying that some of the five hundred had fallen asleep may seem to have little value in his argument for the resurrection of the dead. However, if there was no resurrection of the dead, as some of the Corinthians had claimed, they would have no further contact with those who had fallen asleep, that is, who had died. This raises the claim from possibility to probability that the Corinthians had known some of them and had thought highly of them for the preaching of the gospel.

[14] 1 Corinthians 15:5–8: "He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

Since the number twelve already has taken on a symbolical significance referring only to the eleven chosen by Jesus as his original disciples, the number five hundred might be understood as referring to a large number of people without specification as to how many there really were. Though Paul does not name who the five hundred were, some of them may have been those who are named in the Gospels, since it specifically says that the appearance of Jesus to them was of the same kind as the appearances to Peter and the Twelve. They did not appear out of nowhere to witness the resurrected Jesus. Peter J. Kearney makes a good argument that the five hundred were the first believers in Jerusalem to whom Jesus appeared, and so it is not unlikely that these are persons whom Jesus encountered during his ministry.[15] Among them could have been the seventy sent out by Jesus and entrusted with the Gentile mission (Luke 10:1–17), to whom early church fathers assigned names. Also undeterminable is a group called "all the apostles" (1 Cor 15:7), which by implication includes James and Paul, who identifies himself as the least of the apostles (1 Cor 15:9). "All the apostles" may be the missionaries who like Barnabas were commissioned by particular congregations like Antioch for particular missions (Acts 13:2).

Whoever the five hundred were, it indicates that the number of followers of Jesus at the time of his resurrection was considerable. We cannot discount the five thousand and four thousand whom Jesus fed miraculously with bread and fish, or the three thousand who were baptized on Pentecost (Acts 2:41), or the five thousand men who were converted shortly thereafter. Before Jesus' resurrection, they may have seen and heard him in any number of situations, including the Palm Sunday entrance. Whoever the five hundred were, they were a group large enough that while most were living, some had died. Those who had died were still counted among the witnesses to the resurrection, and so their witness to Jesus' resurrection was considered authentic.

In listing Peter (Cephas) and James, the Lord's brother, Paul puts aside any differences he may have had with them (Gal 2:11–12). By specifically naming and placing Peter and James first in their respective columns of witnesses, Paul recognizes the importance of their witness as leaders of the church to the resurrection.[16] Josephus reports that during the absence of Roman authorities in

[15] Peter J. Kearney, "He Appeared to 500 Brothers," *Novum Testamentum* 22, no. 3 (July 1980): 264 n. 84.

[16] It can only be speculated why Paul does not mention John, who with James and Peter was reputed to be a pillar of the church (Gal 2:9), as a witness to the resurrection. It would have been appropriate. This omission could have been for literary reasons, as he had only two columns for the two classes of witnesses. In listing John, Paul would have had to place him after Peter, and that would not have fitted the protocol for the disciple who, on a personal basis, was closest to Jesus. He also did not fit in the second column with those who believed in Jesus after the resurrection.

Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders dropped James to his death from a tower. His martyrdom, shortly before the destruction of the temple,[17] was a prelude to the complete destruction of the city in AD 70 and was one reason among others for the city's devastation, all of which Jesus had predicted (Matt 24:1–2; Mark 13:1–2). At the time Paul was writing to the Corinthians, James was still living. He was a man of standing, according to Josephus, not only in the church, but also among the other inhabitants in Jerusalem.[18] James was also as close as anyone else to Jesus, and against the rise of Gnosticism that "spiritualized" the existence of a real flesh-and-blood Jesus into a ghostlike existence, he was important in the proclamation that Jesus had really risen from the dead.

After Paul's first visit to Corinth, it is likely that Peter also visited the church and with his rugged and charismatic personality stayed long enough to develop a following (1 Cor 1:12). It is unlikely that James ever visited this church. In the approximate thirty-year span between Jesus' resurrection (ca. AD 30–33) and James's own martyrdom, James remained in Jerusalem as the bishop of a declining congregation. Under his episcopate, he assembled into his church not only those who were witnesses of the resurrection, but others who had called for Jesus' crucifixion and so like Peter himself had witnessed the event (Act 2:23; 1 Pet 5:1). Residing in Jerusalem, James had daily contact with those who had witnessed the resurrection, and these witnesses shared their experiences with one another. Jesus' resurrection had to be the topic of every sermon preached in that church. How could it be otherwise?

James had made a reputation for himself in sparing the fledgling Christian movement from disintegration by providing a way for Gentile Christians to be full members of the church without first becoming Jews (Acts 15:13–21). He was known first in Galatia (Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12) and then in Corinth and probably in all the churches that Paul and Peter had established. As he had with Peter, Paul had discussed with James the best possible ways to handle having Gentiles in the church, which until that time was predominantly Jewish. On his second missionary journey, Paul had shared the results of these conversations with the churches that he had already established, such as those in Galatia and Corinth (Acts 21:18). With the Gospel of Matthew in hand, he had probably spoken of James as one of the four brothers of Jesus (Matt 13:55) and equally important now as the lead figure in Jerusalem. Paul could also speak of James's role in the Council of Jerusalem in providing a solution that did not require the Gentiles to be circumcised for inclusion

[17] Florence Morgan Dillman, "James, Brother of Jesus," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* III.621.

[18] Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1.200 in *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston, new updated ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 538, 815.

in the church and in turn asking the Gentiles to refrain from adultery and eating strangled meat (Acts 15:20).

Paul faced both problems in Corinth, and in resolving the problem there it is likely that he referred to James, who provided the solution that would keep together a church on the verge of being splintered. Unless James was known for his prominent role in the church, it is hard to explain why Paul named him as a witness of the resurrection.

In being spared the Jewish regulations, the Corinthians and Gentiles in all the churches that Paul and Peter had established were in debt to James. Even if the Corinthians did not directly know James, they certainly knew of him and his contribution to church life. As the brother of Jesus, he had stature in the church as one who first came to know Jesus not during his ministry but even before it began.[19] Because James did not believe that his brother Jesus was the Christ before the crucifixion, his testimony to the resurrection was made all the more valuable in that the one raised from the dead had actually lived an ordinary life in Nazareth (John 7:5). James belonged to Jesus' family. He heard others say that he was out of his mind (Mark 3:21) and to save themselves embarrassment tried to take him out of public view. Juridically speaking, James, who with the rest of his siblings was ashamed of Jesus, could be described in terms of current legal practice as a hostile witness. He was the constant factor in the history that began with the family of Mary and Joseph, in which he was the first of the younger brothers of Jesus, and ended with his martyrdom in Jerusalem a few years before the Jewish wars broke out.

Paul's list of the witnesses of the resurrection reflects how the church understood itself as spread across ethnic borders and how it understood who its recognized leaders were. The Corinthians did not exist as a separate gathering of believers isolated from the other followers of Jesus, but already in the AD 50s, the church was in a real sense catholic: the congregations established by the apostles were in communication with one another and together they shared a common set of beliefs. This is evident from how he begins his testimony about the resurrection, saying that what he said about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus did not originate with him or the Corinthians themselves but from eyewitnesses (1 Cor 15:3–4).

Form criticism offers another perspective, in that different accounts and understandings of who Jesus was emerged from congregations separated from one another both in distance and in what each believed. Then, as this theory goes, differences later merged into a nearly unified belief in who Jesus was. This is thought

[19] See Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 19–32.

to be a process which continued as late as into the councils of Nicaea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381), when it is alleged by some scholars that the church finally came to a full understanding of the deity of Jesus. Form criticism holds that some of these disparities among the various congregations were taken over into the Gospels, especially in their accounts of the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul's epistles offer a different scenario. As far removed as his churches were geographically from one another, all these congregations constituted one church with one faith and one Baptism (Eph 4:4–6) and one understanding of the resurrection. Paul's task in writing to the Corinthians was to convince them that they constituted one fellowship with the church in Jerusalem, whose bishop was James, and thus with this church they had to believe in the resurrection.

Paul's witness of the resurrected Jesus is of a different kind than the witness by the eleven in Jerusalem and Galilee, by James, and by a group called "all the apostles." Unlike these appearances, the appearance of Jesus to Paul did not happen in the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension. Strikingly different, the resurrected Jesus appeared in a light that shone brighter than the sun, and he spoke in Hebrew (Acts 26:14). This experience is reminiscent of the transfiguration, in which Jesus' appearance is compared to that of the sun (Matt 17:2).

Luke may have deliberately intended that, in hearing of Jesus' appearance to Paul, the readers would recall a similar dazzling moment when the angel announced Jesus' birth and the glory of the Lord encompassed the shepherds (Luke 2:9–10). Those accompanying Paul heard the sound of the voice and saw the light, but only Paul heard and understood the words Jesus spoke (Acts 22:9). Having ascended to God's right hand (Phil 2:9–11), Jesus spoke from God's glory to commission Paul to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16–18).

Paul had to be aware that the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to him was so unique and different from the other appearances of Jesus that there would be grounds for questioning its authenticity. In response to these still unasked questions, Paul bolsters the argument for his apostleship by claiming that he worked more than the others for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor 15:10). He gives details for this argument in 2 Corinthians 11:23–28. By the AD 50s when he was writing to the Corinthians, Paul's suffering for Christ had already become a kind of gospel in its own right that had been known in "all the churches." An argument for Jesus' resurrection based upon Paul's ministry and his suffering for Christ cannot be dismissed as having little value in comparison to the hard evidence of having actually seen the resurrected Christ prior to his ascension.

Although Paul's witness of the resurrected Jesus was of a different kind than what Peter and the other apostles experienced during the forty days between the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension, his apostleship on that account was not

inferior to theirs. Jesus' appearance to Paul comes with the commission to be an apostle to the Gentiles. This was an appearance with vocational purpose.

Witness to the resurrection and the call to the apostleship came to Paul in one event. Compare his call to that of the original disciples, who were chosen by Jesus before his crucifixion and confirmed later in the apostolic commission (Matt 28:16–20; Luke 24:45–49; John 20:19–28).[20] For Paul, his witness to the resurrection, his call into apostleship, and a transfiguration-like experience were all wrapped up into one moment.

Along with his witness to the resurrected Christ, Paul's trump card was that what he had suffered for the sake of the gospel was well known, especially in those churches he had established. He wrote to the Galatians that his body bore the marks of the suffering of Christ (Gal 6:17), and from what he wrote in the second letter to the Corinthians, they saw the evidences of what he had endured. His conviction that he was determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified was matched by what the Corinthians could see as he preached. The content of his sermons was confirmed simply by looking at him.

Though Paul enumerates what he had endured, substantiating his apostleship in his second letter to the Corinthians, they probably knew about these things shortly after he began his ministry among them. He was not telling them anything about himself that they did not already know.

Here Paul's argument could be historically verifiable, not that the same persons had witnessed what he had endured, but that the events that threatened his life by others could be verified, for example, his imprisonment and his being lashed by the Jews. In other cases, his companions were aware of what had happened to him and could have shared what they saw happen to him with the congregations that they established and visited. On this account, Paul's argument is historical in that, like witnesses of the resurrection, others had seen it and shared what they knew with others.

As Paul continues to make his case for the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15, he moves from those that are historically verifiable to a more theologically structured argument that is not based on the witnesses to the resurrection nor on his own sufferings. Paul sets forth his basic premise in the negative: if the dead are not raised, then Jesus has not been raised.[21] Paul could not

[20] The commission of the apostles may be less obvious in Mark but is contained in the account of the young man at the tomb telling the women that the disciples and Peter are to meet Jesus in Galilee (16:7). If Mark's readers knew Matthew, as I believe they did, meeting Jesus in Galilee would have been an occasion to confirm both that Jesus had risen from the dead and that the disciples were to take up the task Jesus had given them as fishers of men (Mark 1:17).

[21] "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised" (1 Cor 15:13).

reverse the argument by asserting a general resurrection of the dead, since some Corinthians flatly denied it (1 Cor 15:12). Rather than beginning with the controverted doctrine of a general resurrection of the dead, whose denial prompted the writing of this epistle, he turns this around and starts with the resurrection of Jesus so that it becomes the greater truth or premise, which all the Corinthians believed, making the general resurrection the lesser or the derived truth. The argument that there was no resurrection of the dead, as proposed by Paul's opponents, would be compromised if Jesus had not been raised from the dead. Paul tackles this head-on by asserting what the Corinthians already believe: that Jesus rose from dead (1 Cor 15:3–4).[22] By doing this, he returns to his first argument, in which he presented the witnesses of the resurrection as the evidences.[23] Paul has made his argument for the general resurrection of the dead and could have ended there: that denying the resurrection of the dead nullifies the resurrection of Jesus on which faith is dependent. But he does not end there.[24]

Now that Paul has established the resurrection of Jesus as the basis for the general resurrection with historical and theological arguments, he addresses the question of why all have to die. On this issue there is no disagreement: everyone has to die. Paul introduces Adam as the cause of universal death. This lays the groundwork for his argument that Christ is the cause of a universal resurrection from the dead.[25] Paul could not have pursued this argument unless he assumed that the Corinthians knew in some detail the Genesis accounts of creation and the fall, especially Genesis 3. The Corinthians were not hearing about Adam for the first time. Elsewhere Paul was able to refer back to the first chapters of Genesis in his explanation of the relationship between man and woman (1 Tim 2:13–15). Paul does not have to prove that death pertains to human existence. As diverse as one person

[22] "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:20–22).

[23] This is in contrast with Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928–2014), who saw the general resurrection of the dead as evidence of Christ's resurrection, which will be demonstrated as true in the future. An argument that makes a resurrection of the dead lying in the future does not provide the kind of evidence around which a historian or anyone else can wrap his hands. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 331.

[24] Leroy Andrew Huizenga takes issue with the commonly held view that the Corinthians rejected the general resurrection and proposes that this was not included in what Paul originally proclaimed. It was not that they denied the general resurrection, but that they interpreted it in non-corporeal terms. Huizenga, "Resurrection Reconsidered," 108–129, esp. 121. Since even belief in some type of non-corporeal personal existence after death was not uncommon in the ancient world, Paul's reference to a "spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44) should be taken as the Holy Spirit who has raised the mortal body to its full glory.

[25] "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:21–22).

is from another or as one people is from another, humanity is joined by a common existence punctuated by death.

God, who is life in himself, in overcoming death follows the pattern he set down in Genesis. The curse that came on all through the one man Adam now will be reversed by giving life to all through the one man Jesus Christ. God created the human race in one man, through whom sin and death entered the world. So also God has reestablished life in the world through one man. In this aspect of his presentation of the general resurrection of the dead, Paul weaves together into one fabric the doctrines of creation, the fall into sin, and the restoration of creation that will take place because God raised Jesus from the dead. Here Paul builds his argument on death as the most universal of all experienced truths, a truth thus accepted by all without proofs. From the commonly held premise that all people die, Paul argues back from the effect to the cause, the one man by whom all were consigned to death. In doing so Paul sets forth God as the cause of all life. The one who created one man's life can take that life away (Eccl 12:7) and then reinstate that life in the resurrection of the dead, in which God will show himself as the creator (1 Cor 15:22).

Paul offers the faith of the readers of his epistle as still another argument for the resurrection (1 Cor 15:17).[26] From what we know from his other epistles, none of Paul's other congregations had as many theological and moral problems as did the one in Corinth. Nevertheless he sees them as believers. "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11), that is, they were baptized in the trinitarian name and had been justified and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Here the argument is striking in that it assumes that the Corinthians held to a recognizable body of doctrinal truths to which Paul could refer in advancing his argument. They evidently believed that at the end time there would be a resurrection of the dead, what would appear in the creed as the *resurrectio mortuorum*. It was a given for Paul and the Corinthians "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"

[26] This argument may anticipate (though unintentionally) Schleiermacher's approach, who derived dogmatics or theology not from the Old and New Testaments but from what Christians believe, which he called Christian consciousness. Hence, the title for his dogmatics, *The Christian Faith*, is well-chosen for the theological program he proposes. In this case, the theologian does not argue from what he can biblically demonstrate, but from what the people believe. Schleiermacher had little use for the Old Testament and gave greater credence to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestantism than to the New Testament. Paul, on the other hand, gave great credence to the Old Testament as the Word of God, but then also uses the faith of the congregation as a secondary argument. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and James S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 94ff.

(1 Cor 15:3–4), and in support of this faith he lists the witnesses to the resurrection and relays his own experiences.

Paul now considers justification as the effect of what the Corinthians believe (1 Cor 15:17). Unless Jesus has been raised from the dead, the Corinthians would still be in their sins and there would be no hope for them or for those who had died. At this time, the Corinthians had not come as far as the Galatians in saying that works of the law were a factor in justification (Gal 2:16–17), but the denial of the resurrection had the same effect—they were still in their sins.

Among those at Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead were probably those who followed the more moderating views of Plato in believing that the soul survived death and not the more widely held view among the Greeks—that the dead have no existence at all (1 Cor 15:11–18). Paul assumes that the Corinthians believed in an afterlife of some kind in which the dead continued to exist.

Asking the Corinthians to recall their deceased members (1 Cor 15:18) indicates that the church at Corinth had been established long enough to have members who believed, were baptized, and had died, and then after death they continued to be involved in the affairs of the living. Eating food that had been offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8, 10) may refer to the custom of visiting the graves of deceased family members on the anniversaries of their deaths to share meals in which the dead were thought to participate. Cults of the dead were common in the ancient world and still are in some cultures (cf. 1 Cor 10:19–20). In some sense, the Corinthians held that the dead had some kind of existence and so could be involved in the lives of the surviving family members. These graveside meals may have been part of their high respect for the dead that led some members of the church to be baptized on their behalf (1 Cor 15:29).[27]

Irrespective of what these practices were and whether they were tolerated without being approved, those who remembered the dead in these practices, such as being baptized on their behalf, had everything to lose if Christ was not raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:29).[28] This passage may have been and can be used as allowing for a kind of universalism, that after death those who died without faith might be given an opportunity to believe.[29] Paul does not clarify what he has in mind, but a universalism that allows conversion after death stands at odds with his regrets for Israel, who for its unbelief is doomed (Rom 11:19–22) and for whom Paul is willing to offer himself as a substitute sacrifice.

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[27] For other scholarly views concerning what "baptism for the dead" means here, see Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 572–578.

[28] David P. Scaer, *Baptism*, ed. John R. Stephenson, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics 11 (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 1999), 56–58.

[29] For a full discussion on the baptism of the dead, see Scaer, *Baptism*, 54–59.

It is not saying too much to say that Christianity from the beginning has had its focus on the afterlife and not this life, a thought that can be gleaned in a negative way from Ecclesiastes that everything in this life passes away. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated this in a positive way by saying that only the treasures laid up in heaven are not subject to corruption (Matt 6:20). Without the promise of an afterlife, Christianity offers hardly more than a philosophical system built on the teachings of a man called Jesus for how life should be lived in this world. Without the resurrection of the dead or some kind of a self-conscious survival of the person after death, Christianity is not a belief worth dying for (1 Cor 15:13–18).

As he comes to the conclusion in his arguments for the resurrection, Paul puts his own reputation and his career as a preacher of the gospel on the line. "We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised" (1 Cor 15:15). It can be concluded from this kind of statement that Paul was well-liked by the Corinthians, who considered him a convincing preacher and had come to see him as their father in Christ (1 Cor 4:15). They had some reason to trust him—and trust him they did.

Through his very first sermons, they had been brought to the conviction that Christ had been raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:3–4). Now if Christ had not been raised from dead, Paul would have proven himself a liar and would have convinced his hearers to believe in things he knew to be totally false. Now, if he could not be trusted to tell the truth on the pivotal doctrine of Christianity—that Christ had been raised from the dead—whatever else he said about this faith was also not likely to be true. Here the choice given by Paul to the Corinthians is that they believe in the resurrection or come to the conclusion that he was a charlatan and that he fabricated other things or perhaps everything else he had said. At stake was not only Paul's reputation, but any affection the Corinthians had for him—and this would have been considerable. All past efforts in establishing and maintaining any friendship with him would have proven to be meaningless. Should this prove to be the case, the Corinthians would have relegated themselves to a pathetic situation of having no hope for the future. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor 15:14)—a double whammy: his preaching was a sham as was their faith in what he said.

In laying out his argument for the resurrection, Paul assumes that the Corinthians are an orthodox congregation that already believes in the resurrection of Jesus. They are people who await the revelation of the day of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:8), a belief that presupposes that Jesus had been raised from the dead. He who returns as judge is living through the resurrection. As the epistle moves to its conclusion, it is more and more evident that the congregation has serious doctrinal

and ethical problems so that their faith might not have matched Paul's accolades. Paul seems to have been pointing to real underlying problems when he states his desire that they would be of the same mind (1 Cor 1:10).

In the midst of their confusion of what they collectively or individually believed, they were still assembling weekly to hear about and also to confess Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and to celebrate the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17–20). They heard about the resurrection of Jesus Sunday after Sunday not only in what was preached to them but in a nascent form of what would become our Apostles' Creed. In 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, he is arguably making a verbal play on a "creed" the Corinthians knew.[30] He probably had already done this in his confession that creation came from the Father through the Son in 1 Corinthians 8:6, "Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." This is Paul's trinitarian expansion of Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Paul had a way of expanding creedal formulas into sermons. From these primitive creedal formulas, which developed first into the Romanum and Nicene Creed, there would come the saying that all things were made "by him," that is, the Son. For justification or the forgiveness of sins to have any meaning, Jesus would have had to be raised from the dead. Without the factuality of Jesus' resurrection, what they heard read in their Scriptures and in their liturgies would be vacuous.

Though a majority of scholars hold that 1 Corinthians is the first theologically extended account of the resurrection, there is good reason to hold that Matthew and Luke had been written by the time Paul arrived in Corinth. At least with Matthew in hand and maybe Luke also, the Corinthians knew the narrative of the resurrection with the discovery of the empty tomb. The burial of Jesus belongs to the confession that Paul received and to the message he proclaimed (1 Cor 15:3–4), and essential to this message was that the tomb of Jesus was discovered as empty. Recognition that the tomb of Jesus was empty does not constitute the belief that Jesus was raised from the dead, but without the conviction that the tomb was empty, there is no resurrection faith.

[30] "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3).

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Creation Accommodated to Evolution: Hermann Sasse on Genesis 1–3

Benjamin T. G. Mayes

In much of Western Christendom, the words of Scripture are no longer accepted as ultimate authority in and of themselves. What has led to this is a long process of European philosophies and worldviews going back to the seventeenth century.[1] Since the late nineteenth century, it has especially been Darwin's theory of evolution that has presented a challenge to many Christians and has led them to reject biblical authority, since macro-evolution has come to be viewed as fact and as incompatible with the account of creation in Genesis 1–3. Responding to the new science, Christians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reacted in essentially three ways. First, the orthodox rejected or relativized science wherever it conflicted with Scripture as traditionally understood. Second, many attempted to adjust Christian theology to allow the results of science to stand. Third, many made a wall between theology and science, in such a way that the two realms became non-overlapping magisterial authorities.[2] Robert Preus grouped the widely varying twentieth-century exegeses of Genesis 1–3 into two groups: those who regard Genesis 1–3 as an account of what really happened, and those who disbelieve that it could possibly describe what really happened.[3] The latter group often consisted of Lutherans who attempted to reject biblical inspiration and inerrancy (and thus its

[1] Klaus Scholder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology: Origins and Problems of Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. John Bowden (London; Philadelphia: SCM Press; Trinity Press International, 1990).

[2] Frederick Gregory, *Nature Lost?: Natural Science and the German Theological Traditions of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Frederick Gregory, "The Impact of Darwinian Evolution on Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 369–390; Keith E. Yandell, "Protestant Theology and Natural Science in the Twentieth Century," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 448–471. Yandell gives four categories instead of three, but I regard his second and fourth categories as having the same approach: adjusting Christian theology so that it fits the new science.

[3] Robert D. Preus, "Biblical Hermeneutics and the Lutheran Church Today [1966]," in *Doctrine Is Life: The Essays of Robert D. Preus on Scripture*, ed. Klemet I. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 149.

Benjamin T.G. Mayes is an Associate Professor and chairman of the Department of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary. He can be contacted at benjamin.mayes@ctsfw.edu.

plenary authority) while still maintaining a semblance of standing in the mainstream of the Lutheran tradition. They did this, first, by making a false caricature of the Lutheran Orthodox position, and second, by asserting the non-inspiration and errancy of Scripture.[4]

In many ways, these false views were opposed by Hermann Sasse (1895–1976). Sasse deserves, in my opinion, to be considered the twentieth-century church father of confessional Lutheranism. No one else in the twentieth century had the theological depth, confessional Lutheran commitment, and global influence as did Sasse. His life interacted with all the important theological movements of the century. On most theological issues, he was the representative lonely voice calling Lutheran churches and all Christians to greater faithfulness.

Yet Sasse was a critic of the Lutheran Orthodox doctrine of Scripture's verbal inspiration and of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's doctrine of biblical inerrancy.[5] Some think that Sasse changed his views by 1951 to agree essentially with verbal inspiration and biblical inerrancy,[6] but others say that his change was more in the way of how he expressed himself—that he avoided controversial expressions like "errors in Scripture" without substantially moving away from his previous position.[7] Even if Sasse substantially changed his views, the question remains,

[4] Preus, 170–174. He notes that Werner Elert and Robert Scharlemann did the former, Warren Quanbeck and Karl Barth did the latter, and Gerhard Forde did both.

[5] Hermann Sasse, "On the Doctrine *De Scriptura Sacra* [Letter 14, June 1950]," in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison, trans. Ralph Gehrke, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 240–286; Hermann Sasse, "What Does Luther Have to Say to Us on the Inerrancy of the Holy Scripture? [Letter 16, Christmas 1950]," in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison, trans. Ralph Gehrke, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 331–366.

[6] Jeffrey J. Kloha, "Hermann Sasse Confesses the Doctrine *De Scriptura Sacra*," in *Scripture and the Church: Selected Essays of Hermann Sasse*, ed. Jeffrey J. Kloha and Ronald R. Feuerhahn, Concordia Seminary Monograph Series 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1995), 337–423; Kurt E. Marquart, "Hermann Sasse and the Mystery of Sacred Scripture," in *Hermann Sasse: A Man for Our Times?*, ed. John R. Stephenson and Thomas M. Winger (St. Louis: Concordia, 1995), 167–193; John R. Stephenson, "Hermann Sasse's Influence on Confessional Lutheranism in North America since 1945," in *Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker*, ed. Werner Klän, Oberurseler Hefte. Ergänzungsband 24 (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020), 133–146.

[7] Simon Volkmar, "Volles Gotteswort und volles Menschenwort. Hermann Sasses Beitrag zu einem lutherischen Verständnis der Heiligen Schrift," in *Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker*, ed. Werner Klän, Oberurseler Hefte. Ergänzungsband 24 (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020), 50–71; Simon Volkmar, "Lutherisches Schriftprinzip im 21. Jahrhundert: Impulse von Hermann Sasse," *Evangelische Theologie* 79, no. 2 (2019): 130–144; Gottfried Wachler, *Die Inspiration und Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift: eine dogmengeschichtliche und dogmatische Untersuchung zu H. Sasse, Sacra Scriptura*, Biblicums skriftserie 4 (Uppsala: Stiftelsen Biblicum, 1984), 9–11, 72–93; Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen um die Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," *Lutherische Blätter* 32 (1980): 1–51. While Volkmar is aware of Sasse's change

"Changed to what?" For example, while Jeffrey Kloha demonstrated clearly that Sasse changed his position on inerrancy, "the question is the extent of the change."[8] Thus we still have different, irreconcilable views of Sasse on Scripture: the German-speaking restricted-inerrancy Sasse and the English-speaking, unrestricted-inerrancy Sasse.

Perhaps part of the reason for this difference of opinion is that Sasse's claims for the truth of *evolution* were published only in German during his lifetime. Examining Sasse on biblical inerrancy and authority, and how to deal with contemporary scientific theories, such as evolution, is of the utmost importance today, no less than it was at Sasse's time.[9]

Sasse's Early Views on Creation

In 1932, Sasse denied that the creation narrative in Genesis 1–3 was historical, and therefore he claimed that the unity of the human race was neither anthropological-biological nor historical, but only theological. "The unity of the human race, the noteworthy *ex henos* ('from one,' Acts 17:26) cannot be understood in an anthropological-biological manner nor in a historical manner. . . . There is knowledge of the one humanity only where it is known that humanity is the creation of God (Mark 16:15)."[10] In this passage, he seems to say that only the church knows

in attitudes on inerrancy, he still uses Letter 14 "On the Doctrine *De Scriptura Sacra*" (1950) when presenting Sasse's views on Scripture.

[8] Kloha, "Hermann Sasse Confesses the Doctrine *De Scriptura Sacra*," 415; see also Stephenson, "Hermann Sasse's Influence on Confessional Lutheranism in North America since 1945," 139–140. Marquart claimed that by 1970, Sasse rejected the idea that the biblical writers retained their limitations of worldview and wrote non-factual statements on history, science, geography, and the like. Marquart, "Hermann Sasse and the Mystery of Sacred Scripture," 176–177. According to Simon Volkmar, the kind of inerrancy that the mature Sasse affirmed was that there are no errors in the Bible "ontologically," even though there appear to be errors "phenomenologically." Moreover, besides these apparent errors, Sasse stressed even after 1951 that some statements of the biblical authors remain stuck in an antiquated worldview. These are the "human aspects" of Scripture that continued to alienate Sasse from other confessional Lutherans. Volkmar, "Volles Gotteswort und volles Menschenwort," 60–61.

[9] See Michael Young, "On the Need for a Thoughtful, Distinctively Lutheran Perspective on Creation," *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 30, no. 3 (Holy Trinity 2021): 35–40; Charles P. Arand, "A Travel Guide to the Evangelical Creation Debates: Introduction," *Concordia Theology* (blog), December 12, 2017, https://concordiatheology.org/2017/12/evangelical-creation-debates-travel-guide/; Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "Creation, Science, and God's Omnipotence," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 82, no. 3 (2018): 290–301.

[10] "Die Einheit des Menschengeschlechts, das merkwürdige ex henos (von einem), Apg. 17,26, ist weder anthropologisch-biologisch noch historisch zu verstehen. . . . Von der *einen* Menschheit weiß man nur da, wo man von der Menschheit als der kreatur Gottes (Mark. 16,15) weiß." Hermann Sasse, "Die Ökumenische Bewegung," *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 59 (1932): 532; cited in Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen," 10. My translation; emphasis original.

about the unity of humanity, but one should notice the reason: because such a unity is not in the realm of biology or history.

The next year Sasse rejected the historicity of Genesis 1–3 and went further to accept an eternal world and an eternally ongoing creation.

> The *primeval history* of which the first chapters of the Bible speak is not history in the normal sense of the word. The creation of the world lies before and above all history. . . . We cannot categorize the beginning of time and space in our spacial-temporal view of the world. Creation is a supratemporal event. It is still happening. . . . We also cannot place the date of the fall into sin into a historical chronology because we cannot conceive of that "then" when we all—we who were not yet born—sinned "in Adam."[11]

Thus, in the years before his shift to a form of biblical inerrancy, Sasse read Genesis 1–3 as figurative, non-historical, denying even the biological unity of the human race.

"Toward Understanding the Six Days of Creation" (1953)

By 1951, Sasse was distancing himself from his earlier essays on Scripture, in which he held open the possibility of minor "errors" in Scripture. How did this new view of scriptural inerrancy affect his views on creation? In his 1953 open letter to Lutheran pastors, "Toward Understanding the Six Days of Creation," he addressed the question of how to understand the six days of creation in a modern scientific age of atomic science, astrophysics, and modern geology. In this letter, he claims that Christians from the early church through the ages have followed the "apologetic solution" of trying to reconcile Genesis 1–2 with their contemporary views of the world. Luther's approach was not so much to affirm the literal sense of Scripture. Rather, Luther, too, adapted his exegesis to fit the philosophical view of the world that he held, according to Sasse. Sasse rejects this approach.[12]

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[11] "Die *Urgeschichte*, von der die erseten Kapitel der Bibel reden, nicht Geschichte im gewöhnlichen Sinne des Wortes ist. Die Schöpfung der Welt liegt vor und über aller Geschichte. . . . Wir können den Anfang der Zeit und des Raumes nicht in unser raum-zeitliches Weltbild einordnen. Schöpfung ist ein überzeitliches Geschehen. Sie geschieht heute noch. . . . Wir können auch nicht das Datum des Sündenfalls in eine Zeittafel der Geschichte einordnen, weil wir uns jenes 'Damals' nicht denken können, als wir alle—wir, die wir noch nicht geboren waren—'in Adam' sündigten." Hermann Sasse, *Das Volk nach der Lehre der evangelischen Kirche*, Bekennende Kirche 20 (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1934), 21–22; cited in Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen," 7. My translation; emphasis original.

[12] Hermann Sasse, "Toward Understanding the Six Days of Creation [Letter 33, Mid-November 1953]," in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, ed. and trans. Matthew C. Harrison, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia, 2014), 280–284; Hermann Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks [Brief 33, Nov. 1953]," *Lutherische Blätter* 6, no. 34 (1954): 16–19.

Another way of understanding the creation account is to take it as "myth" or "saga," as Karl Barth does. Sasse does not quite affirm this approach, but says that all pagan myths about the beginning of the world must be taken seriously, and by comparing and contrasting Genesis 1 with them, the meaning of the six days of creation becomes clear. For Sasse, the meaning is this: a real creation, a strict distinction between creation and Creator, and creation from nothing.[13] Other details of the creation account are apparently not doctrinal and thus unimportant. Although he uses a comparison with myths to understand the content of Genesis 1, Sasse insists it is not myth.

> The Bible speaks, in distinction from myth or saga, of what has actually happened in the creation of the world. It speaks not on the basis of human wisdom, human research and thinking, or a religious "divination," which still always remains in the realm of human reason. It speaks on the basis of actual, genuine inspiration. . . . It is not a human word like the myth and the saga, and even like the utterance of the deepest human perceptions is and remains a human word. Rather, it is God's Word in the strict sense, not a figurative sense, and therefore it is the word of eternal truth.[14]

Here Sasse defines "myth" and "saga" as that which is the word of man. By this definition, Genesis 1 cannot be myth or saga, even though it is comparable to myth and in other respects has mythical features.

The third approach that Sasse rejects is the attempt to let bad science make assertions about the origin of the world when it does not stay within the limits of demonstrable knowledge. At the same time, he warns against the attempts of some Christians to find proof for the creation or the existence of God from modern scientific findings. This sort of natural theology is impossible. Thus there are limits to science.[15]

Instead of the apologetic, mythological, or natural-science approaches to creation, Sasse wants creation to be a "pure article of faith,"[16] by which he means

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[13] Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 284–285; Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 19–21.

[14] "Die Bibel redet im Unterschied vom Mythos oder der Sage von dem, was wirklich geschehen ist in der Schöpfung der Welt. Sie redet nicht auf Grund menschlicher Weisheit, menschlichen Forschens und Denkens oder einer religiösen 'Divination,' die doch immer im Bereich der menschlichen Vernunft bleibt. Sie redet auf Grund wirklicher, echter Inspiration. . . . Es ist nicht Menschenwort wie der Mythos und die Sage, und wie auch das Aussprechen tiefster menschlicher Erkenntnisse Menschenwort ist und bleibt. Sondern es ist Gottes Wort im strengen, nicht bildlichen Sinne und darum das Wort der ewigen Wahrheit." Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 21, my translation; cf. Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 285.

[15] Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 286–288; Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 21–24.

[16] Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 288; Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 24.

one that can only be believed, not one that can in any way be verified by observation. That is, just as the last things are not yet experienced and are expressed in Scripture using figurative language, so also the biblical account of creation is figurative and does not describe things that could be perceived with the senses. So then, what is the actual doctrinal content of the creation account? It is only theological. It tells us about God and his acts, not details about the world.[17] We should notice here that Sasse wants to reduce the doctrinal content of Genesis 1 in such a way that it will not make assertions about the natural world, even though God's *actions* included creating *the world*. This is similar to the attempt by some to posit theology and science as non-overlapping magisterial authorities.

To assert that the six days were not "natural days," Sasse points to the fact that days one to three lacked sun and moon, and that on the seventh day God "rested."[18] Yet Sasse still affirms that there must be some reality underlying the figurative speech of Genesis 1.

> There really is a "firmament" even if we cannot account for it in our worldview. It is really so that man did not develop from the animal world, but stepped forth into existence through an inconceivable miracle of creation, even if we cannot perceive how this was so. It is really so that in the beginning a pair of human beings existed, and that the first Adam is precisely as much of a reality as the second Adam, even if we, who live on this side of the fall, cannot conceive of those who lived before the fall.[19]

Notable in this quotation is that Sasse affirms the non-evolutionary creation of mankind and an original pair of human beings. This seems to be a correction to his earlier published views. As we shall see, however, it is a position to which he did not continue to hold. He would express more openness to evolution later.

On the basis of the first things being indescribable, like the last things, Sasse asserts that they necessarily could *only* be described in figurative language. "Thus we will also have to accept that some words on the first things were said in figurative speech, which no one will deny for Gen. 2:7. With this the reality of what is recounted is not denied."[20] Thus, according to Sasse, the formation of man from dust and breathing the breath of life into his nostrils (Gen 2:7) is figurative language, but there is some reality behind this picture language. But what is this reality that Sasse will not deny? He apparently denies the dust, nostrils, and breath, and then does not identify what reality lurks behind the figurative language.

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[17] Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 289; Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 25.

[18] Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 289; Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 25.

[19] Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 289; Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 25.

[20] Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 26, my translation; cf. Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 290, which is missing the last sentence of the quotation.

At this point, Sasse appeals explicitly to the principle of accommodation to support his figurative reading of the creation history.

> He [God] caused the biblical writers to speak in the language that their readers could understand. He did not, as the books of Enoch claim for themselves, reveal to them a new cosmology, but revealed the miracle of creation to them in such a way as they could express it under the presupposition of the contemporary view of the structure of the cosmos. As a Catholic theologian rightly noted concerning their view of the starry heaven: "Here, too, the grace of inspiration obviously did not elevate them above the secular knowledge of their age. . . . The fact that the Bible speaks to us in this way is a *synkatabasis* ("condescension"), of which Chrysostom speaks as being a parallel to the condescension of the *Logos* in the incarnation, e.g., in the homily on Gen. 2:7: "Behold, with what a condescension of words He instructs us, which He used on account of our weakness."[21]

That is, God accommodated biblical revelation not just to the way phenomena appear but also to outdated views of the world, though Sasse is careful not to call the premodern views of the world "errors" here. Here we also see how closely linked is the concept of accommodation with the incarnation. As we shall see, Sasse often uses an incarnational analogy for Scripture: it is both fully divine and fully human. When he speaks this way, the "human side" of Scripture often includes an accommodation of divine revelation to human ways of speaking and even to outmoded, erroneous views of the world.

At the end of his essay on the six days of creation, Sasse asks whether there can be any real conflict between theology and natural science. His answer: "*No*. There cannot be any such conflict if each of the two disciplines 'remains with its topic'."[22] While this seems like an assertion of non-overlapping magisterial authorities, Sasse does not give totally free reign to science. Specifically, science is not competent to

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[21] "Er [Gott] hat die biblischen Schriftsteller in der Sprache reden lassen, die ihre Leser verstehen konnten. Er hat ihnen nicht, wie es die Henochbücher für sich beanspruchen, eine neue Kosmologie offenbart, sondern er hat das Wunder der Schöpfung ihnen so offenbart, wie sie es unter der Voraussetzung der damaligen Anschauung von der Struktur des Kosmos aussprechen konnten. Wie ein katholischer theologe von ihrer Anschauung vom Sternenhimmel richtig bemerkt: 'Die Inspirationsgnade hat sie offenbar auch hier nicht über das Profanwissen ihrer Zeit hinaufgehoben' . . . Daß die Bibel so zu uns redet, das ist jene 'synkatabasis' ('condescensio'), von der *Chrysostomos* als einer Parallele zur Herablassung des Logos in der Fleischwerdung redet, z.B. Homilie zu Gen. 2,7: 'Sieh, mit welcher herablassung der Worte, die er um unserer Schwachheit willen gebraucht, . . . er uns belehrt'." Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 26, my translation, emphasis original; cf. Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 290.

[22] "*Nein.* Es kann einen solchen Konflikt nicht geben, wenn jede der beiden Wissenschaften 'bei der Sache bleibt'." Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 27, my translation, emphasis original; cf. p. 26; cf. Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 290–291.

judge about miracles and cannot deny their existence. On the other hand, theology must not make a Christian astronomy, geology, or paleontology based on the creation history.[23]

So how did Sasse's new view of scriptural inerrancy affect his views on creation? First, human evolution seems to be rejected, and this is a change from his earlier published views. Second, Genesis 1–2 is still viewed as non-literal, figurative language. Like the genre of "myth" or "saga," there is some theological truth behind the figurative language. Sasse redefines "myth" as that which is the word of man, and this puts "myth" into a totally different category from Scripture, as though by definition God could not use myth as part of his revelation. (Here Sasse obfuscates. He is using words in a new way to avoid the conclusion that he still treats Genesis 1–2 as myth.) This identification of the creation account as non-literal is supported next by invoking the principle of accommodation and the incarnational analogy. Thus, it seems as if Sasse has substantively changed one part of his earlier views (human evolution), but otherwise accommodation allows him to treat Genesis 1–2 as he had previously, while not denying the inerrancy of Scripture.

Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift (ca. 1968)

So far no one has analyzed what Sasse said in the completed chapters of what was to be his definitive book on the doctrine of Scripture, his *Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift* (posthumous). In at least the last decade of his life, or at least until 1968,[24] Sasse was working on this book, which he never finished, but which was published after his death in 1981.[25] Chapter 6 of the *Studien* is entitled "Toward

[23] Sasse, "Zum Verständnis des Sechstagwerks," 27; Sasse, "Six Days of Creation," 291.

[24] This date is established by Sasse's quotation (p. 106) of a work published in 1968, which came to him after he had already finished that particular chapter.

[25] Hermann Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," in *Sacra scriptura: Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1981), 9–154. The editors of this volume report that the posthumous chapters were conceived as a whole, and were being worked on by Sasse until the end of his life. By the mid-1960s, some chapters were already fit for printing. Hans-Siegfried Huß, "Nachwort des Bearbeiters," in *Sacra scriptura: Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift*, by Hermann Sasse, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1981), 361–362. According to Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, Sasse was working intently on this book during his last years. His program was outlined in his essay on Augustine's doctrine of inspiration: first destructive, then constructing a new doctrine of inspiration. [Hermann Sasse, "Toward Understanding Augustine's Doctrine of Inspiration [Letter 29, February 1953]," in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison, trans. Ralph Gehrke, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia, 2014), 203–224; Hermann Sasse, "Sacra Scriptura: Bemerkungen zur Inspirationslehre Augustins," in *Festschrift Franz Dornseiff zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Horst Kusch (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1953), 262–273; Hermann Sasse, "Zur Inspirationslehre Augustins [Brief 29, Feb. 1953]," *Lutherische Blätter* 5, no. 31 (1953): Beilage.] The introductory chapter "On the Word of God" was not done as of December 3, 1968. Other parts were essentially the same as the Australian unity theses. Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen,"

Understanding the Biblical Primeval Revelation."[26] It is the longest chapter of the book. Based on internal evidence, this chapter most likely was finished by 1968.[27] Kurt Marquart suggested the book was never completed because by the end of his life Sasse realized it was an impossible task to find a defensible middle position between the Lutheran Church's historic doctrine of inerrancy and modern critical views of Scripture.[28] Our interest is in the sixth chapter, where Sasse presents extensive reflections on Genesis 1–3.

Foundational Matters

Section A of chapter 6 deals with foundational matters for understanding the Bible's primeval revelation. According to Sasse, modern exegetes regard Genesis 1–11 as the *Urgeschichte* ("primeval history"), identifying the God who called Abraham as the Creator of heaven and earth. This primeval history is the necessary context for the whole Bible. Without it we cannot rightly understand the fall into sin, Christ as the new Adam, and Pentecost, for example.[29] One of Sasse's foundational observations deals with how to understand the details of Scripture. Scripture in many places presents multiple versions of historical narratives with differing details. "This begins with the two creation accounts," he says.[30] These differing details cannot and should not be harmonized, but neither should they be viewed as the accidents of careless redactors.[31] Yet since there are two conflicting creation accounts, according to Sasse (1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–25), it would be absurd to construct a "cosmology" from the beginning of Genesis. The biblical statements about the created world are, in part, thoughts common to humanity, "figurative, poetic speech, not the language of dogmatic cosmology."[32]

43–45; cf. Lutheran Church of Australia, "The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy: Adopted by the Lutheran Church of Australia, Convention, October 20–26, 1972," *The Springfielder* 37, no. 2 (September 1973): 84–88.

[26] "Zum Verständnis der biblischen Uroffenbarung."

[27] A footnote indicates that after finishing this "Abschnitt" ["section"], Sasse received a journal article from the 1968 volume of the *Harvard Theological Review*. Because he had already finished this section, he included a summary of the new article not in the body text but in a footnote. This suggests that the chapter may have been finished by 1968 or 1969. Even if this comment refers only to section F of chapter 6, this was the last section of the chapter, and no dates later than 1968 are found in the entire chapter. Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 106 n. 19.

[28] Marquart, "Hermann Sasse and the Mystery of Sacred Scripture," 176–177.

[29] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 45. All English translation of this work are my own.

[30] "Das beginnt mit beiden Schöpfungsberichten." Sasse, 46.

[31] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 46, cf. 108.

[32] "bildliche, poetische Sprache, nicht die Sprache dogmatischer Kosmologie." Sasse, 46.

Even when the Lord Jesus used such language about the created world, such as in Mark 13:24–27 about the end of the world, he was merely using such language.[33] In his state of humiliation, the Lord was limiting himself to the human knowledge of the world that was available at the time. Sasse writes:

> This is picture language, which cannot be translated into dogmatic propositions about the structure of the universe. The fact that Jesus in His days on earth did not know everything, that instead part of the estate of His humility included that He, the eternal Son of God, also took upon Himself the limitations of human knowledge, is stated by Himself in the very next verse: "But about the day and the hour no one knows, not the angels in heaven, nor even the Son, but only the Father (v. 32)."[34]

Here Sasse again uses the principle of accommodation. It is based on the state of humiliation, and Sasse extends it far wider than Mark 13:32—the Last Day. Here it is applied to all of the Lord Jesus' statements about the created world. One could then ask why the same principle should not be applied to what the Lord says about everything else. Why not say that Jesus accommodated his speech or knowledge to the errors and superstitions of his Jewish audience, as was asserted in the Enlightenment?[35] Sasse does not go that far, but it is unclear why he would apply accommodation to creation, but not to other articles of faith.

Commenting on the creation of the stars in Genesis 1:16, Sasse shows he thinks that astronomical distances entail an old age of the world. "'Moreover the stars'—this comprehends the immense universe with its billions of galaxies with an expanse that can be measured only with light-years and the corresponding measures of time."[36] Here we should note his assumption: stars shining millions of light-years away requires a universe at least millions of years old. Sasse apparently assumes that the laws of physics must always remain constant.

Sasse also turns to the history of doctrine for a fundamental aspect of how the creation account should be understood. Noting that modern natural science and technology arose nowhere else but in Christian Europe, Sasse says this is because

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[33] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 47.

[34] "Dies ist Bildersprache, die man nicht in dogmatische Propositionen über die Struktur des Weltalls übersetzen kann. Daß auch Jesus in seinen Erdentagen nicht alles gewußt hat, daß es vielmehr zu dem Stand seiner niedrigkeit gehört, daß er, der ewige Gottessohn, auch Schranken menschlichen Wissens auf sich genommen hat, das sagt er ja gerade selbst in dem nächsten Vers: 'Von dem Tage aber und der Stunde weiß niemand, auch die Engel im Himmel nicht, auch der Sohn nicht, sondern allein der Vater' (V. 32)." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 47.

[35] See below, the section "Accommodation to Error."

[36] "'Dazu auch die Sterne'—das umfaßt das unermeßliche Universum mit seinen Milliarden von Galaxien mit einer Ausdehnung, die nur mit Lichtjahren gemessen werden kann und den entsprechenden Zeitmaßen." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 48.

Christianity never dogmatized a particular natural-scientific view of the world.[37] Here he must mean "in the early church and middle ages," because it is not hard to find examples in the early modern era of church discipline being applied for deviance in one's view of the world (the most famous example being Galileo's trial before the Inquisition in 1633). In any case, an easy response is that when there are no challenges, the church does not make a dogma. Churchly dogmas are the result of conflict and intense study of Scripture.

Nevertheless, with his assertion that Christianity never dogmatized a view of the world, Sasse concludes that the great tragedies of church history include the condemnation of the Copernican view of the world, and the defense of a geocentric model of the solar system, which was defended by the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed churches in the early modern era.[38] Sasse singles out Francis Pieper as one who continued to hold a geocentric view of the world—an egregious example of naïveté about natural science. To Sasse, Pieper's theology on creation is "barbaric."[39]

Thus the foundational aspects for Sasse's examination of Genesis 1–3 include the following. The first eleven chapters of Genesis set the context for the whole Bible. There are multiple variant narratives of the creation account (which he calls the "law of parallels").[40] The Bible includes no scientific cosmology. Biblical language about the created world is accommodated to the worldview of ancient people. And despite lamentable episodes in church history when a world picture was dogmatized, there actually is no classic Christian dogma concerning any view of the world. With these as his foundations, what will Sasse find when he investigates the details?

The Creation of Mankind

Section B of "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift" deals with the creation of mankind. In this section, Sasse argues that the creation accounts of Genesis 1–2 cannot be reconciled with each other, and thus cannot be read literally. While he rejects atheistic evolution, he is open to theistic evolution, and with this in mind he sees the theological message of the creation account as including a close connection of mankind with the rest of creation.[41] Sasse begins the section by asserting that the "law of parallels" is applicable in Genesis 1–2. Genesis 1:1–2:4a cannot be

[37] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 50.

[38] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 52–53.

[39] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 53. Sasse refers to Franz Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924), 578 n. 1454b; Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 474 n. 11.

[40] "Gesetz der Parallelen." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 55, see also 102–103.

[41] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 55–62.

harmonized with Genesis 2:4b–25. In literary style, they differ. Also the events of the creation of Eve and the fall into sin do not fit into the six-day creation of Genesis 1:1–2:4a. As proof for the latter assertion, Sasse points to Genesis 2:19, where the creation of animals apparently comes later than the creation of Adam. Likewise he says it would be too quick if the creation of Eve and the fall happened all on the original Friday.[42] "The holy primeval history becomes a film played in a racing hurry."[43]

By means of a figurative reading of Genesis 1–2, Sasse then opens himself to the possibility of evolution.

> These chapters, which speak of things that lie beyond all experience and all human abilities of imagination, contain figures of speech and images that we are unable to explain. We do not doubt that God made man from a "clod of dirt" [Gen 2:7] but we are unable to say what this clod of dirt was. What if it was a living being that had come forth from the animal world, which God had predestined to become man, the bearer of His own image?[44]

Besides entertaining the possibility of human evolution from beasts, here we also see Sasse's theme of creation being ineffable, beyond human imagination, and thus not described literally by Genesis 1–2. It is also perhaps ironic that, directly after saying that man cannot explain what the clod of dirt was, Sasse then gives a suggestion for what it was, a suggestion which accords very well with his scientific view of the world.

While Sasse continually rejects what he calls "a false biblicism," parallel to the "hopeless fight against the Copernican view of the world" mainly practiced in English-speaking Christendom, he also rejects popularized Darwinism, which presents itself as a replacement for religion.[45] Instead of godless evolution, Sasse sees the theological meaning of evolutionary creation in the idea that man is bound to the rest of creation, and God's dealings with man extend to all creation.[46] "It is biblical doctrine," he says, "not theological or philosophical speculation, that

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[42] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 55–59.

[43] "Die heilige Urgeschichte wird zu einem Kinostück, das in rasender Eile abgespielt wird." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 58; see also 108.

[44] "Diese Kapitel, die von Dingen reden, die jenseits aller Erfahrung und aller menschlichen Vorstellungsmöglichkeit liegen, enthalten Redeweisen und Bilder, die wir nicht zu erklären vermögen. Wir zweifeln nicht daran, daß Gott den Menschen aus einem 'Erdenkloß' gemacht habe, aber wir vermögen nicht zu sagen, was dieser Erdenkloß war. Sollte es etwa ein lebendiges Wesen gewesen sein, aus der Tierwelt hervorgegangen, das Gott dazu prädestiniert hatte, Mensch, Träger seines eigenen Ebenbildes, zu werden?" Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 59.

[45] "ein falscher Biblizismus . . . hoffnungslosen Kampf gegen das Kopernikanische Weltbild." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 59.

[46] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 60–62.

creation participates in the fall and redemption of man."[47] With this quotation, Sasse moves himself into the shadow of the evolutionary theology of Teilhard de Chardin, whose work he knew.[48] For Teilhard, salvation is universal, including not only human beings but the entire cosmos.[49]

The Fall of Man

With this openness to an evolutionary account of human origins, it makes sense that Sasse would next turn to the fall of man in section C of "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift."[50] Sasse, who valued the Lutheran Confessions so highly, never taught universal salvation and always affirmed the reality of original sin. With original sin, the doctrine of the image of God hangs together. For Sasse, whatever else the image of God may be, it includes linguistic ability in general and the ability to understand the word of God specifically. "We hear in Scripture that God made man according to His image. This includes the fact that He spoke with him and was understood by him."[51] Just as being addressed by God and understanding him constitutes part of the image of God, so also the original sin involved refusing to hear and believe God. "The image of God has been lost," he says. "It was lost when the man no longer wanted to consider the Word of God as true, when he let it be torn out of his heart by an uncanny, anti-divine power and granted hearing to that other voice, which promised him: 'You shall be like God' [Gen 3:5]."[52] Yet the details of the fall into sin are ineffable, beyond human comprehension, and thus, according to Sasse, Genesis 3 must be taken figuratively.[53]

Sasse admits that the fall into sin is "one of the most difficult questions of theology,"[54] that is, it is difficult when one accepts an old creation and the

[47] "Es ist biblische Lehre, nicht theologische oder philosophische Spekulation, daß die Kreatur am Fall und an der Erlösung des Menschen Anteil hat." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 62.

[48] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 67.

[49] J. Matthew Ashley, "Original Sin, Biblical Hermeneutics, and the Science of Evolution," in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: 1700–Present*, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 420–423.

[50] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 63–71.

[51] "Wir hören in der Schrift, daß Gott den menschen zu seinem Bilde gemacht hat. Das schließt die Tatsache ein, daß er mit ihm redete und von ihm verstanden wurde." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 63.

[52] "Das Ebenbild Gottes ist verloren gegangen. Es ging verloren, als der mensch nicht mehr das Wort Gottes wahrhaben wollte, als er sich durch eine unheimliche widergöttliche Macht aus dem Herzen reißen ließ und jener anderen Stimme Gehör schenkte, die ihm verhieß: 'Ihr werdet sein wie Gott.'" Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 63.

[53] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 64.

[54] "eine der schwierigsten Fragen der Theologie." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 63.

evolutionary origins of humanity. It is difficult for Sasse's theology of creation because he admits that St. Paul and the Lord Jesus view Adam not just as a collective representative of "humanity" but also as an individual in history (see Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:21ff, 45ff; Matt 19:4ff; Mark 10:6–7).[55] "If the first Adam is not historical, then the historicity also of Christ as the Redeemer becomes doubtful."[56] Yet, according to Sasse, the events of Genesis 1–3 cannot be dated historically, since they are ineffable, outside the experience of any human. "But this changes nothing about the fact that the fall happened."[57]

Next, Sasse writes that "Adam" also means "man" per se, every individual human being. "At the same time it must be seen that 'Adam' is not only an individual, but man per se. In each human being his history is repeated."[58] Here it is not entirely clear whether this is Sasse's understanding of the historical Adam—i.e., a universalized story, that what happened in the fall with Adam and Eve describes what happens to every human[59]—or whether this is a digression, adding a teaching aside from the fact that there was an Adam and fall somewhere in history. It is worded as a digression, but it is placed right after the assertion that the events of Genesis 1–3 cannot be historically dated. Yet without a real fall from a state of integrity to sin, Sasse rightly notes that Christian theology would become either Manichaean (teaching a natural, original fallenness) or Pelagian (teaching man as a continuously developing product of nature). The end result would be universal salvation, which the New Testament and the Athanasian Creed so clearly reject.[60] So there has to have been a real fall. Sasse writes: "Thus the Gospel of the Church and the entire Christian faith stands and falls with the doctrine of sin as a condition of natural man. Sin would not be sin, not guilt, if the fall of man, the fall of humanity as a whole and of every individual, were not a reality."[61]

It is indeed one of the most difficult questions in theology for those who affirm human evolution. Sasse explicitly rejects two contemporary reformulations of the

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[55] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 63–64.

[56] "Wenn der erste Adam nicht historisch ist, dann wird auch die Historizität Christi als des Erlösers zweifelhaft." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 64.

[57] "Aber das ändert nichts an der Tatsache, daß der Fall sich ereignet hat." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 64.

[58] "Zugleich muß gesehen werden, daß 'Adam' nicht nur ein Individuum ist, sondern der Mensch schlechthin. In jedem menschen wiederholt sich seine Geschichte." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 64.

[59] For the consequences to theology of universalizing the event of the fall into sin, see Ashley, "Original Sin, Biblical Hermeneutics, and the Science of Evolution."

[60] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 66–67.

[61] "So steht und fällt das Evangelium der Kirche und der ganze christliche Glaube mit der Lehre von der Sünde als einem Zustand des natürlichen Menschen. Sünde wäre nicht Sünde, nicht Schuld, wenn der Fall des Menschen, der Fall der Menschheit als ganzer und jedes Einzelnen, keine Wirklichkeit wäre." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 66.

doctrine of original sin. Regin Prenter's existential reformulation fails because it does not affirm the reality of the transmission of Adam's sin.[62] Roman Catholic attempts, such as that of Teilhard de Chardin, in essence remove original sin and replace it with the idea that God created the world in a disordered state and brings it gradually to ever greater perfection—a twentieth-century version of Pelagianism.[63] Rejecting these reformulations, Sasse concludes:

> Thus we will have to consider the fall as a historical event—although here we do not want to dispute about words like "historical" and "prehistoric." What we mean is an event that happened here on our earth—shifting the fall to a preexistence is a myth that Origen invented—and at the beginning of human history. For at some point indeed the human sin must have had its beginning.[64]

Also, the fall cannot be something that happened in multiple places, as would be necessary under normal evolutionary circumstances. Sasse explains: "The idea that the fall took place at the same time in multiple places—as one would have to assume if the creation of man is imagined as a sudden emergence of a new species of human beings at different places of the earth—would take away from the fall its character as a personal sin."[65]

This is as much as Sasse affirms about the fall into sin. The image of God includes the ability to hear God's speaking to man. The loss of the image includes refusing to believe him. Roman Catholic and existential Protestant ways of reformulating the doctrine of the fall into sin with the acceptance of evolution lead to Manichaeism or Pelagianism, and ultimately universalism, all of which Sasse rejects on the basis of the New Testament and the church's confession. Therefore Sasse affirms a historical fall into sin of the first humans, whenever that might have happened.

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[62] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 66, 69–70.

[63] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 67–68.

[64] "So werden wir den Fall als ein historisches Ereignis zu betrachten haben—wobei wir über Wörter wie 'historisch' und 'praehistorisch' hier nicht streiten wollen. Was wir meinen, ist ein Ereignis, das hier auf unserer Erde—die Verlegung des Falles in eine Präexistenz ist ein Mythos, den Origines erdacht hat—und am Anfang der menschlichen Geschichte stattgefunden hat. Denn einmal muß ja die menschliche Sünde ihren Anfang genommen haben." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 70.

[65] "Daß der Fall gleichzeitig an mehreren Stellen stattgefunden haben solle, wie man annehmen müßte, wenn man die Schöpfung des Menschen als ein plötzliches Auftreten einer neuen Art von menschlichen Lebewesen an verschiedenen Stellen der Erde sich vorstellt, würde dem Fall seinen Charakter als einer persönlichen Sünde nehmen." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 70.

Adam and Christ

In section D of "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," Sasse describes the theological connection between "Adam" and Christ, using a comparison with ancient world religions. On the basis of this comparison, he sees that the creation of the first Adam and the first promise of the gospel in Genesis 3:15 are central to the Bible's message.[66]

> The word of the divine judgment upon the "serpent" and upon fallen man is accompanied by the first Gospel in Gen. 3:15, in which the Church at all times has seen the first promise of the coming Redeemer, thus of the incarnation of the Son of God. This is the connection between the first and the second Adam, whom Paul so clearly recognized. We must acknowledge Him as the essential content of the biblical truth.[67]

The Church's Doctrine of Creation

Section E is entitled "The Dogma of Creation in the Confession of the Church."[68] In this section, Sasse argues that until the Galileo case (1633) and various confessions of Reformed churches, no Christians made a dogma out of the definition of the creation days. Therefore, he argues, Lutherans should not do this. His definition of a confession explains why the early Christian dogma of creation was brief:

> Not every sentence of Scripture is elevated to the level of an article of faith, but this does not mean that the truth of Scripture may be doubted. The confession of faith does not say everything that the Church believes; in short sentences it pronounces the central truths of the divine revelation in Holy Scripture, whose denial would destroy the Gospel and, thereby, the Church.[69]

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[66] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 73–83.

[67] "Das Wort des göttlichen Gerichts über die 'Schlange' und über den gefallenen Menschen ist begleitet von dem Protevangelium Gen. 3,15, in dem die Kirche zu allen Zeiten die erste Verheißung des kommenden Erlösers, also der Menschwerdung des Sohnes Gottes gesehen hat. Das ist der Zusammenhang zwischen dem ersten und dem zweiten Adam, den Paulus so klar erkannt hat. Wir müssen ihn als wesentlichen Inhalt der biblischen Wahrheit anerkennen." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 82.

[68] "Das Dogma von der Schöpfung im Bekenntnis der Kirche." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 85–89.

[69] "Nicht jeder Satz der Schrift wird zum Glaubensartikel erhoben, aber das bedeutet nicht, daß man die Wahrheit der Schrift bezweifeln darf. Das Glaubensbekenntnis sagt nicht alles, was die Kirche glaubt, es spricht in kurzen Sätzen die zentralen Wahrheiten der göttlichen Offenbarung in der heiligen Schrift aus, deren Leugnung das Evangelium und damit die Kirche zerstören würde." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 86–87.

By this definition, the understanding of the six literal days of creation could not possibly be a dogma. This is his basic argument here. If denying a scriptural truth would destroy the gospel, then the church should make it a confession. But with regard to the creation days, Sasse sees it as impossible to understand these as ordinary, twenty-four-hour days. He raises a series of rhetorical questions meant to undermine the possibility that these days could have been the same length of time as the days that we experience.

> For what is the "normal day"? It is the period of time in which the earth revolves around itself once, or, in the view of the older era, the period of time which the sun requires to move around the earth. When would this movement of the sun or of the earth have begun? . . . When did the earth begin to rotate? Genesis 1 assumes that the earth is older than the sun and stars, that it is the firm middle point of the universe. What can a day with morning and evening be without this movement, without that which we call the rising and setting of the sun?[70]

In Sasse's view, it is *simply impossible* for the first three days, at least (before the creation of sun and moon), to be ordinary twenty-four-hour days. He can think of no way that there could be normal-length days with morning and evening, without the movement of the earth, and without the sun. Therefore Sasse wants the definition of the creation days to remain an open question, as he says it was in the early church and the middle ages.[71] Only the narrow-minded Tridentine Roman Catholic Church made an issue out of a picture of the world in the trial of Galileo, and Reformed churches in the latter half of the sixteenth century did the same. For Sasse, it is extremely significant that the Book of Concord did not do this.[72] Sasse's pathos about this topic and his ire against conservatives on this topic are especially evident as he speaks about American Lutherans.

> For the author of Genesis 1 there is an absolute time—a day is a day in the whole universe. "I, too, am an old 24-hour man," says an older pastor in America. Sure, a farmer or a pastor in the Midwest can afford to say that. But would they expect this also of their children, of their students, and their

[70] "Denn was ist der 'gewöhnliche Tag?' Er ist der Zeitraum, innerhalb dessen sich die Erde einmal um sich selber dreht, oder in der Anschauungsweise der älteren Zeit, der Zeitraum, den die Sonne braucht, um sich um die Erde zu bewegen. Wann hätte diese Bewegung der Sonne oder der Erde angefangen? . . . Wann hat die Erde angefangen, zu rotieren? Gen. 1 setzt voraus, daß die Erde älter ist als die Sonne und die Sterne, der feste Mittelpunkt des Universums. Was kann ein Tag mit Morgen und Abend sein ohne diese Bewegung, ohne das, was wir den Aufgang und der Untergang der Sonnen nennen?" Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 88.

[71] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 89.

[72] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 89.

> professors, this "orthodoxy" which basically is not a right belief at all, but only thoughtlessness?[73]

On this topic, Sasse lashes out at any who with simple faith would simply accept the literal reading of Genesis 1. He not only pleads for openness toward his evolutionary ideas, he mocks Midwestern American Lutherans who see it differently. What Sasse feared was that this conservative American Lutheran view of creation would prevail and become dogma, binding consciences by adding the shibboleth of a particular worldview. "The Lutheran Church did not dogmatize Luther's view of the creation days. Only later, under the influence of American fundamentalism, does the creation day of 24 hours threaten to become, among some Lutherans, an article on which the Church stands and falls."[74]

Age of the World

The last section of the chapter on the primeval revelation is section F, named "Supputatio Annorum Mundi" ("Calculation of the Years of the World"), the title of a chronology by Luther in which he dated the beginning of the world at 4004 BC.[75] In this section, Sasse criticizes Luther's chronology, stating that the attempt to figure out the age of the world from biblical chronology is impossible. He posits an evolutionary development of mankind, claiming that at some point in his evolution, God first spoke to man. This was the beginning of humanity in a theological sense. Finally, in this section he postulates what prehistoric religion may have been like.[76]

Just as the length of the creation days was never a dogma in the early church and Middle Ages, according to Sasse, so also, the age of the earth was never a dogma. Due to the differing chronologies of the Masoretic Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Septuagint Greek translation, such a firm and certain date was impossible.[77] According to Sasse, ancient genealogies, including those in the Bible, were never

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[73] "Für den Verfasser von Gen. 1 gibt es eine absolute Zeit, ein Tag ist ein Tag im ganzen Universum. 'Ich bin auch so ein alter Vierundzwanzigstünder,' sagt ein älterer Pastor in Amerika. Gewiß, das kann sich ein Farmer oder Pastor im Mittleren Westen leisten. Aber würden sie auch von ihren Kindern, von ihren Studenten und ihren Hochschullehrern diese 'Orthodoxie' erwarten, die im Grunde ja gar keine Rechtgläubigkeit, sondern nur Gedankenlosigkeit ist?" Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 88.

[74] "Die lutherische Kirche hat Luthers Anschauung von den Schöpfungstagen nicht dogmatisiert. Erst unter dem Einfluß des amerikanischen Fundamentalismus droht der Schöpfungstag von 24 Stunden bei manchen Lutheranern ein articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae zu werden." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 89.

[75] Martin Luther, *Supputatio Annorum Mundi* (1541/1545), in Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009), vol. 53:22–184.

[76] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 99–111.

[77] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 103.

meant to be understood literally. Therefore the dates of the biblical genealogies are not really historical. Genealogies are rather a literary genre that allowed authorial freedom.[78] This then allows Sasse the possibility of accepting modern views of the world.

Here Sasse not only argues that one may accept an evolutionary view of the world, but that one must. Just as the church had to accept the truth of the Copernican, heliocentric solar system, so also it must accept what prehistoric research and paleontology sets forth as fact.

> One must have this cosmos with its expanse in millions of light-years before his eyes in order rightly to evaluate the expanse of the history of humanity. Just as the Church and her theology must accept the *facts* divulged by astronomy and astrophysics, so it stands also with the facts placed before us by prehistoric research and paleontology. We are speaking about facts, not about theories and hypotheses, which have been proposed to explain these facts.[79]

Here it is clear that Sasse saw a necessary connection between the astronomical distance of stars as measured in light-years and the age of the created universe, as if one could calculate the latest possible date of creation by finding the distance to the most distant visible star, as if God could not create stars with their light already reaching us on earth, or as if the laws of physics in the beginning of creation must be the same as we now experience in the world. Also it is clear here that Sasse accepted the findings of these disciplines, including paleontology, as including facts that necessitate a figurative reading of Genesis 1–3. What controls his exegesis of Scripture in this case lies outside of Scripture.

So how does the creation of man in the image of God fit with the evolutionary idea of constantly developing organisms that go from less to more complex through survival of the fittest? How is it possible for man to develop by evolution gradually from lower life forms, and yet at some point *man* is present as created by God? In a section that seems to be at odds with his previous section on the fall into sin, Sasse explains his view of evolutionary creation. He says that while the oldest written

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[78] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 104–105.

[79] "Man muß diesen Kosmos mit seiner Ausdehnung in Millionen von Lichtjahren vor Augen haben, um die Ausdehnung der Geschichte der Menschheit recht zu würdigen. Wie die Kirche und ihre Theologie die von der Astronomie und Astrophysik enthüllten *Tatsachen* annehmen muß, so steht es auch mit den Tatsachen, vor die uns die Vorgeschichtsforschung und die Paläontologie stellen. Wir reden von den Tatsachen, nicht von Theorien und Hypothesen, die zur Erklärung dieser Tatsachen aufgestellt worden sind." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 106, emphasis original. On this passage, see Wachler, *Die Inspiration und Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift*, 92.

records go back to about 3000 BC, humanity actually appeared on earth hundreds of millennia prior to this.[80]

> Whatever the natural-scientific anthropology may consider to be the beginning of man in distinction from the pre-human creation, such as inventing and using tools (*homo faber*) or mastering fire, man in the theological sense begins with the address of God, who calls him into being as His image and as His representative in the mastery of the earthly creation.[81]

For Sasse, this is the truth that lies behind the figurative speech of Genesis 1–2. Interesting here is that Sasse really cannot point to any created, biological difference between man in the theological sense and pre-human creatures. According to Sasse's model, *homo sapiens* could have existed for thousands of years before God spoke to them the first time. This, then, raises unanswerable hypothetical questions about the salvation-theological status of such human beings. Also, in this place, apparently the linguistic aspect of humanity has become so central to Sasse's view of the image of God that without linguistic ability it is difficult to conceive of humanity being in the image of God. In any case, it is clear that none of this can be derived from Genesis 1–3. Sasse has set aside the literal meaning of the creation account and substituted an evolutionary myth for it. The biblical act of creation has been changed to the evolutionary act of transformation.[82]

The next theological question arising from this account of human origins is this: What should be thought about the religion of prehistoric humanity during the hundreds of thousands of years before the revelation that is recorded in Scripture? Sasse gives his opinion: "The 4000 or 5000 years of the old 'Calculation of the Years of the Earth' have expanded to several hundred thousand years. In these unimaginably long periods of time, did God not only deal with men in judgment and grace, but also speak? We must assume this."[83] With a view of history that was much shorter, Luther and Augustine, too, tried to account for how the "first Gospel" (Gen 3:15) would have been preserved and what the religion of the oldest period of

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[80] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 107.

[81] "Was immer die naturwissenschaftliche Anthropologie als den Anfang des Menschen im Unterschied von der vormenschlichen Kreatur betrachten mag, wie die Erfindung und den Gebrauch von Werkzeugen (homo faber) oder die Beherrschung des Feuers, der Mensch im theologischen Sinne beginnt mit dem Anruf Gottes, der ihn ins Dasein ruft als sein Ebenbild und als seinen Stellvertreter in der Beherrschung der irdischen Kreatur." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 108.

[82] Cf. Wachler, *Die Inspiration und Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift*, 116–118.

[83] "Die 4000 oder 5000 Jahre der älteren 'supputatio annorum mundi' haben sich erweitert zu einigen hunderttausenden von Jahren. Hat Gott in diesen unvorstellbar langen Zeiträumen mit den Menschen nicht nur gehandelt in Gericht und Gnade, sondern auch geredet? Wir müssen das annehmen." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 108.

humanity would have been. Luther posits an oral tradition from father to son, while Augustine posits revelations from angels.[84] Sasse opines: "The only thing that we have to say is this: mankind never was completely without the Word of God in Law and Gospel; even in that past that to us is dark, God spoke to men."[85] As proof, Sasse points to how God is reported to have spoken to mankind both before and after the flood[86] (which account, however, Sasse does not consider historically reliable). On the basis of non-Israelite believers in the Old Testament, Sasse suggests: "But if all of that happened at the time of the biblical history of salvation, then we may assume that it also happened before that time. There may have always been priests like Melchizedek. Also there may not have been a lack of prophets, even if nothing of the word that was commissioned to them has been preserved."[87] Finally, "The conflict between faith and unbelief, the conflict of faith in the one true God against idolatry was the theme also of the long millennia of human history that lie in the darkness of prehistory."[88]

Thus for Sasse, Scripture does not actually give us details on creation, only a few theological truths. The details of creation must instead be learned from prehistoric research, paleontology, astronomy, and geology. What Genesis 1–3 teaches is that God is the Creator, the creation is not eternal, there was a real fall into sin, and there was a first promise of the Savior. But, according to Sasse, Genesis 1–3 is not to be taken literally regarding nature. This is impossible, and not actually what God intended, says Sasse. Yet throughout this chapter on primeval history, Sasse is careful not to call Genesis 1–3 "myth," nor does he ever say that Scripture has errors. Genesis 1–3 was inspired by the Holy Spirit and is God's word, just as the rest of Scripture is. But by the use of the "law of parallels" (parallel narratives that cannot be harmonized) and by definition and application of various genres (e.g., non-historical genealogy), Sasse is able to escape the literal sense of the text. The "law of parallels" enables him to treat Genesis 1–3 as myth (even if he does not call it

[84] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 109.

[85] "Das einzige, was wir zu sagen haben, ist dies, daß die Menschheit niemals ganz ohne das Wort Gottes in Gesetz und Evangelium war, daß Gott auch in jener uns dunklen Vergangenheit zu Menschen geredet hat." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 109.

[86] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 109.

[87] "Geschah das alles aber zur Zeit der biblischen Heilsgeschichte, dann dürfen wir annehmen, daß es auch schon vor dieser Zeit geschah. Priester wie Melchisedek mag es zu allen Zeiten gegeben haben. Auch an Propheten mag es nicht gefehlt haben, auch, wenn nichts von dem Wort erhalten ist, das ihnen aufgetragen war." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 110.

[88] "Der Kampf zwischen Glauben und Unglauben, der Kampf des Glaubens an den einen rechten Gott und gegen den Götzendienst war das Thema auch der langen, im Dunkel der Vorgeschichte liegenden Jahrtausende menschlicher Geschichte." Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 111. This same idea of prehistoric religion was taught previously by a man Sasse revered: Augustinus Bea, "Praehistoria et exegesis libri Genesis," *Verbum Domini* 17–18 (1937–1938): 14–20, 344–347, 360–366.

"myth"), and the definition of literary genres likewise enables him to remove sections of Scripture from being considered historically reliable.[89] The identification of non-literal genres is aided by Sasse's common use of arguments from the history of the church and the history of religions.[90] While doing all of this, he can still claim to uphold the plenary inerrancy of Scripture and its divine inspiration. Moreover, by claiming that creation is ineffable and outside the grasp of the human mind, he is able to regard any biblical details of creation as figurative, just by definition.[91]

What is especially evident is that although Sasse has maintained Scripture's inerrancy and inspiration, he has sacrificed its authority. For Sasse, the Lutheran Church's doctrine of sin and grace is regarded as certain, and from here he argues back to the need for a real fall into sin. But for Jesus (Matt 19:8), St. Paul, Augustine, and Luther, the historical fact of the fall of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis 3 was certain, and was the basis for their teaching on original sin and grace. Thus, if the doctrine of original sin needs to be reformulated, on what basis can Sasse maintain that the *Lutheran* doctrine of original sin needs to be maintained? This he tries to do by a history-of-religions comparison of Christianity with other ancient religions. He finds the specific characteristic of Christianity to be the forgiveness of sins.[92] Apparently this uniqueness of Christianity in the history of religions suffices as proof, since Genesis 3 can no longer be taken literally. But does uniqueness entail truth?

Chapter 6 of Sasse's *Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift* reads as a finished product, ready for publication. Nevertheless, significant internal contradictions remain within it. Regarding the fall into sin in section C, Sasse rejects the normal evolutionary belief that mankind developed as *homo sapiens* at various places around the same time. Sasse claims there must have been one original man who fell. Yet in section F, Sasse accepts the evolutionary theory of the development of mankind and states that man was really man in the theological sense when God began speaking to him. Here there is no room for a creationally, biologically distinct human creature, who is different from his pre-human ancestors. Only God's address makes a difference between man and beast. There is apparently no created, physical, biological difference. Sasse also remains curiously silent about major theological problems inherent in evolutionary creation. For example, how is the evolutionary

[89] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 46, 55–59, 108, 102–103; cf. Hermann Sasse, "Defining of the Basic Issues Arising Out of Genesis Chapters 1–3" (unpublished manuscript, August 30, 1967), 5–6, 11–12.

[90] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 50, 52–54, 85–89, 103, 108.

[91] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 59, 64; cf. Sasse, "Defining of the Basic Issues Arising Out of Genesis Chapters 1–3," 14–15.

[92] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 64–66.

process before the appearance of *homo sapiens* to be reconciled with Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death"?[93]

Accommodation to Error

Accommodation is a technique Sasse used to avoid a literal reading of Genesis 1–3. This is stated when he claims axiomatically that these chapters are not cosmology but rather that they use the picture of the world common to ancient people.[94] This is the strategy he used to adjust exegesis to fit contemporary biblical studies and science. This is often where he was aiming when he used the incarnational analogy for Scripture, that it is not just fully divine but also fully human. While the two-natures analogy in itself may be helpful in highlighting how God spoke through real human beings in real human language, Sasse sometimes used the analogy to suggest certain statements of Scripture might be inaccurate.[95]

What is accommodation, really? Accommodation was a technique used in the seventeenth century to adjust scriptural interpretation to fit with contemporary philosophy and science without denying its inspiration and divine authorship.[96] Accommodation, or condescension, has been used since the early eras of the church to explain God's self-revelation (e.g., in anthropomorphisms and by use of human language).[97] Since the seventeenth century, however, the Socinians popularized a

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

[94] Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 46–47, 104–105; cf. Sasse, "Defining of the Basic Issues Arising Out of Genesis Chapters 1–3," 11, 13–15. Others have noticed places where Sasse used accommodation, without connecting his use to the long history of accommodation within Christian history, especially since the Enlightenment. Volkmar, "Volles Gotteswort und volles Menschenwort," 60–61; Kloha, "Hermann Sasse Confesses the Doctrine *De Scriptura Sacra*," 358–359, 363–364, 368, 395, 416–417.

[95] Wachler sees Sasse as using the two-natures analogy to affirm errors in Scripture, but he does not notice how this theme in Sasse's later writings is used not to assert "errors" but rather accommodation to common, outdated views of the world and erroneous opinions (though Sasse would not call them erroneous). Wachler, *Die Inspiration und Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift*, 87–93. Regarding modern Evangelical uses of the incarnational analogy to assert errancy or accommodation to errors, see Hoon J. Lee, "Accommodation: Orthodox, Socinian, and Contemporary," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 75, no. 2 (2013): 340–341. For a better use of the two-natures analogy than how Sasse uses it, see Wachler, *Die Inspiration und Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift*, 88–91.

[96] For example, Dutch center-Cartesianist Balthasar Bekker's *De Betoverde Weereld* (1691) *[The World Bewitched (1695)* used the doctrine of accommodation to reject the real existence of angels and demons, claiming that it was never God's intention to teach the reality of such angelic beings. Scholder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology*, 128–131.

[97] Johann Gerhard made extensive use of the idea (in the narrow sense). Johann Gerhard, *On the Nature of God and on the Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, trans.

different kind of accommodation theory, in which God's scriptural word was accommodated not just to the human point of view and human language but even to the supposedly erroneous ideas of its original audience. This then allowed its practitioners to discard any biblical statements or teachings that they found difficult to accept.[98] In the words of Christoph Wittich (1625–1687), who helped to popularize the idea in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, "We can now add passages of Scripture in which the resting of the earth [and] the motion of the sun around the earth is ascribed, and thus also by these examples can prove that Scripture speaks according to the opinion of the common people, not always according to the accurate truth of reality."[99] Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791), too, made an extensive use of "accommodation" to argue that certain doctrines within Scripture were never intended to confirm the teachings which they seem to affirm, such as angels, demons, the bosom of Abraham, and Christ's second coming. This is where Semler's accommodation theory differs from Rudolf Bultmann's (1884–1976) demythologization program. For Semler, the New Testament writers did not intend to teach outmoded, primitive conceptions, but deliberately accommodated their speech to what the audience could grasp. For Bultmann, on the other hand, the biblical authors themselves held these outmoded, primitive ideas.[100] In this respect, Sasse's use of accommodation is closer to Bultmann's than to Semler's. For Sasse, the biblical authors' worldview was outdated and is no longer tenable.

While inspiration and inerrancy may be compatible with a broad use of accommodation, biblical authority is not, because accommodation allows the interpreter to read as figurative any and every challenging passage of Scripture. And if there is no challenge as Scripture confronts contemporary worldviews, then it has no authority.[101] There are several dangers that arise from the misuse of accommodation. Besides the fact that in the Enlightenment it was claimed that God

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Richard J. Dinda, Theological Commonplaces, Exegesis II–III (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 115–116, 125–128, 143–144, 150–151, 153, 230.

[98] Lee, "Accommodation"; Vern S. Poythress, "Rethinking Accommodation in Revelation," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 76, no. 1 (2014): 143–156.

[99] "Possemus nunc subjungere locos Scripturae, in quibus Terrae quies Soli motus circa terram adscribitur atque ita etiam his exemplis probare, quod Scriptura loquatur ad vulgi opinionem, non semper ad accuratam rei veritatem." Christoph Wittich, *Dissertationes duae, quarum prior de S. Scripturae in rebus philosophicis abusu examinat* (Amsterdam: Ludovicus Elzevirius, 1653), 62; Scholder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology*, 124–125.

[100] Boris Paschke, "The Contribution of Johann Salomo Semler to the Historical Criticism of the New Testament," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 1–2 (2016): 121–124.

[101] Another way of looking at it is to say that Sasse never fully accepted biblical inerrancy. Accommodation for him meant that God's revelation condescended not just to human perception but also to outdated and erroneous views of the world, things that he could not accept as true, but ridiculed as naive. Nevertheless, after 1951 Sasse avoided the words "erroneous" and "error."

accommodated his biblical revelation to human error and superstition, it is possible to claim false transcendence and false immanence, and to set up reason or observation of the world (science) as the arbiter that determines what biblical content is or is not accommodated.[102]

Sasse seems to have taken a step away from the higher criticism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but he always refused to return to the doctrine of Scripture taught by Lutheran Orthodoxy. Instead he stayed with the accommodation theory as was being taught in the early Enlightenment. By turning to the modern evolutionary theory of origins as his standard for interpreting Genesis 1–3, it seems that Sasse has found his superior viewpoint outside of Scripture, according to which Scripture must be interpreted.[103] Sasse's view of inerrancy does not actually function to exclude the allegorization or mythologizing of historical facts. If Genesis 1–3 is myth, accommodated to the erroneous worldview of the ancient Near East, why could the same procedure not be applied to the real presence in the Lord's Supper or to the resurrection of Christ? Whatever modern man finds impossible to believe—whether it is physical resurrection, the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper, or a young earth—Sasse's kind of "inerrancy" would allow the biblical assertion of fact to be read as myth, a truth spoken in the language and according to the worldview of the ancient world, which modern man no longer shares, and cannot share. Here "inerrancy" no longer functions as a safeguard for dogma.

What should a Christian think about accommodation? We readily confess that Scripture is accommodated to human speech and thought. Moreover, God revealed himself using anthropomorphisms. Moreover, many details of the world in Scripture are stated from the standpoint of human observation (such as the standing still of the sun in Joshua 10, or the "firmament" in Gen 1:6). But God did not accommodate his word to human errors, superstitions, or *outdated* views of the world or of anything else. Scripture instead *corrects* human errors in viewing not just God but also the world, his created work.

It is ironic that Sasse so often claimed to be blazing a new trail regarding the doctrine of Holy Scripture.[104] Yet his hermeneutics are quite close to those of Semler and other Enlightenment theologians. Also, progressive Evangelical scholarship has used the exact same tools and made the same moves as Sasse did in order to make room for the acceptance of an old creation and evolution. Jack Rogers and Donald

[102] Instead of this view of accommodation, Poythress helpfully observes: "God's speech is always coherent with the contexts that he himself specifies by his speech governing the universe (Heb. 1:3). That is the real meaning of accommodation." Poythress, "Rethinking Accommodation in Revelation," 155.

[103] Cf. Poythress, 154.

[104] Cf. Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen."

McKim's 1979 book *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* proposed a view of inspiration in which God accommodated his revelation not just to human language, thought, and perceptions, but also to human limitations and errors, especially concerning history and science. Thus for them, as for Sasse, the sphere of biblical truth is restricted to matters of salvation, not to matters of history and science. More recently, Peter Enns, like Sasse, narrows the definition of "error" in order to affirm inerrancy while still asserting that the biblical picture of the world was mythological and not really accurate. That is, Sasse adopted what many progressive Evangelicals now hold: that Scripture is inspired and inerrant, but Genesis 1–3 is figurative, not really accurate on the details of creation.[105]

Questions for Sasse

In his efforts to reject the classic Christian and Orthodox Lutheran doctrine of Scripture's inspiration, Sasse sometimes claimed that the Book of Concord did not give a doctrine of inspiration, and therefore we should leave the question open and not make it church-divisive.[106] Sometimes Sasse insisted that Lutherans needed a new doctrine on Holy Scripture, or that the lack of a full doctrine of Scripture in the Book of Concord does not mean that this doctrine is unnecessary.[107] And elsewhere he laments that the churches of the Reformation forgot the "dogma" of the inspiration of Scripture.[108] These conflicting statements on the doctrine of inspiration indicate that, despite all his beneficial contributions to confessional Lutherans, when it came to the doctrine of Scripture, Sasse was trying to find, but never succeeded in finding, a consistent middle position between the Lutheran Orthodox view of Scripture and modern critical exegesis. Despite the high esteem which many Lutherans have for Sasse on the doctrine of Holy Scripture, there are some insuperable problems and contradictions which have been made clear above. I close now with a few questions that arise from Sasse's understanding of Genesis 1–3.

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[105] Cf. Ashley, "Original Sin, Biblical Hermeneutics, and the Science of Evolution," 407–419; Jack Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979); Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2021); Kathryn Applegate and J. B. Stump, eds., *How I Changed My Mind about Evolution: Evangelicals Reflect on Faith and Science* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2016); see the discussion in Mark Rogers, "Charles Hodge and the Doctrine of Accommodation," *Trinity Journal* 31, no. 2 (2010): 225–242.

[106] Hermann Sasse, "Zur Lage der lutherischen Freikirchen in Deutschland" (June 25, 1946), in Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen," 29–30.

[107] Letter 14 to Lutheran Pastors, in Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen," 14.

[108] Letter to Augustinus Bea (June 13, 1965), in Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen," 38.

For Sasse, no matter how historically and literally the text of Scripture may be worded, he axiomatically excludes it as a standard of truth for the way in which the world and humanity were created. His standard for truth is not *sola Scriptura* but astronomy and paleontology.[109] Is this not a magisterial use of reason and experience? Also, if differing biblical accounts, which cannot be harmonized, mean for Sasse that Genesis 1–2 cannot be accepted literally, why should the Gospels be accepted literally, of which we have not just two, but four accounts? Also, despite his claim that creation is ineffable and beyond human experience, Sasse describes how he thinks evolutionary creation really happened. If creation is ineffable and beyond human experience, how can he presume to describe it along the lines of evolution? Also, while Sasse refuses to harmonize apparently contradictory biblical narratives, he proceeds to harmonize the biblical accounts with his view of world history as derived from astronomy and paleontology. If the history of the world is also of God's authorship, why not just leave the conflicting narratives—Scripture and the observations of the world—unharmonized? As a German confessional Lutheran put it:

> The warning should very certainly be embraced, that we should not take an old, human view of the world and read it into the Bible, and put it to use against researched facts. However, one also may not take every new theory of the origins of the world, which basically is the pagan theory of development put forth by the Greek natural philosophers, and read it into the Bible—in contradiction to the facts testified by the Bible.[110]

Also, even if Genesis 1–3 were figurative, but the doctrines testified there are still true, a few important doctrines from Genesis 1–3 have been left out of Sasse's account. Sasse's acceptance of evolution discards the distinction between creation from nothing and the preservation of creation. In Sasse's version, only the creation of primordial matter is from nothing. Everything else develops over the course of eons. But this contradicts what Genesis 1:31–2:2 reports about the completion of day six of creation—a categorical distinction between the creation and its preservation, something that the evolutionary theory forbids.[111] Also, Sasse lacks a discussion of the state of integrity of Adam and Eve before the fall. To try to maintain all that Scripture says about the state of integrity before sin and death

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[109] E.g., Sasse, "Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift," 48, 88, 106–107.

[110] "Ganz gewiss ist die Warnung zu beherzigen, nicht ein altes menschliches Weltbild in die Bibel hineinzulesen und sich dann damit gegen erforschte Tatsachen zu stemmen. Aber man darf auch nicht jede neue Weltentstehungstheorie, die im Grunde die heidnische Entwicklungstheorie der griechischen Naturphilosophen ist, in die Bibel hineinlesen—im Widerspruch zu den von der Bibel bezeugten Tatsachen." Wachler, *Die Inspiration und Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift*, 117.

[111] Wachler, *Die Inspiration*, 117–118.

conflicts with and can never be allowed by the evolutionary theory. To try to hold to the rest of the evolutionary theory except for this point—is this not untenable according to Sasse's assumptions? Will one not have either to return to the authority of the literal sense of Genesis 1–3 or surrender the state of integrity?[112]

Also, why can Sasse defend miracles and the virgin birth of Christ, which are scientifically impossible and have repeatedly been considered myth,[113] but attack the literal meaning of Genesis 1–3, a six-day creation and a young earth, which to many people seem scientifically impossible and have repeatedly been considered myth? Can creation be considered a miracle? If so, why should science be competent to dictate to us against the literal sense of Genesis 1–3?[114] Also, Sasse took the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper seriously and concretely, despite appearances. Why could he then not have held to Genesis 1–3 as real, literal history, despite the fact that it appears to contradict certain findings of the natural sciences? That is, if the *verba Christi* in the Supper must be taken literally, why not Genesis 1–3? If he believes in the real presence on the basis of the words of Christ, why can he not believe also in a recent creation on the basis of the words of Christ? Any argument against the literal sense of Genesis 1–3 could be used by Zwinglians against the literal sense of the *verba* in the Supper. But Sasse will not allow this, and rightly so.

Sasse wrestled with the doctrine of Holy Scripture and the understanding of Genesis 1–3 until the end of his life. While he came to accept the inerrancy of Scripture, this did not really change the way he did his exegesis, and as has been shown, this exegesis undermined the authority of Scripture. With this in mind, it seems that both groups of interpreters have noted something true. The Missouri Synod line of interpretation has rightly seen that Sasse gave up talk of errors in Scripture, and the other, mainly German, line of interpretation has rightly seen that he did not really change his views or his approach to Scripture.

What remains to be said is that this approach to the Scriptures, despite Sasse's intention, puts man's reason and observations of the world in higher authority than the words of Scripture. Sasse will still remain a father of the church (similar, in my opinion, to St. Augustine, Martin Luther, Johann Gerhard, and C. F. W. Walther), yet he should not be considered an infallible father. He still has much to teach us on confessing Christ, on the Holy Supper, and a score of other topics. May we continue to have him as our teacher, even if we do not count him as our authority.

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[112] Wachler, *Die Inspiration*, 119–120.

[113] Hopf, "Hermann Sasse und sein Ringen," 20.

[114] Sasse says science is not competent to judge or rule out miracles. See above, n. 23.

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A Lutheran Perspective on the *Filioque*

Aaron Moldenhauer

Should Christians confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*?[1] Since the ninth century, the addition of the word *filioque* to the Nicene Creed by the Western church has been a contentious issue between East and West. The Eastern church rejects both the change to the wording of the Creed without official endorsement by a council and the doctrine that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.[2] In recent years, this question has taken on new life in Evangelical circles in America. Among Evangelicals, the question is one avenue into deeper disagreements over the correct approach to trinitarian theology and is intertwined with debates over the relationship between men and women. These debates are a timely impetus for Lutherans to revisit the arguments that support a confession of the *filioque*.

Debates over trinitarian theology have arisen in Evangelical circles as some have rejected the idea that the Father generates or begets the Son. Seeing insufficient scriptural evidence to establish a relation of begetter/begotten as the eternal origin of the Son, alternative suggestions of how the Father and the Son are distinguished have been advanced.[3] One prominent alternative is the idea of eternal functional subordinationism (EFS), that from eternity the Son (and, for our purposes here, the Holy Spirit) submits to the Father.[4] In a strong version of the argument, such submission is the basis for the distinction of Father and Son.[5] This direction in

[1] This essay is adapted from a panel paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society's 73rd annual meeting, November 16–18, 2021, in Fort Worth, TX.

[2] A useful survey of the history of the debate from the Orthodox perspective is found in John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 91–94.

[3] Wayne Grudem, as one example, reinterprets the language of "begetting" and "proceeding" to indicate nothing more than "relating as a Son" or "relating as a Spirit." Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 254 n. 38. Grudem's definitions here are part of a move away from "begetting" and "proceeding" as relations of origin within the Trinity. John Peckham lists several examples of those rejecting eternal generation: Millard Erickson, John Feinberg, Paul Helm, Bruce Ware, and William Lane Craig. John C. Peckham, *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon,* Sola Scriptura, *and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 141.

[4] While the Holy Spirit is included in this submission, the focus is more often on the Son. For a survey of the debate and the term EFS, see Keith Whitfield, *Trinitarian Theology: Theological Models and Doctrinal Application* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2018), 5–10.

[5] Kevin Giles diagnoses this move and has written against it. Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 139.

Aaron Moldenhauer is Assistant Professor of Theology at Concordia University Wisconsin. He can be contacted at aaron.moldenhauer@cuw.edu.

trinitarian theology derives, in part, from a desire to respond to feminist theologians who deny an eternal subordination of the Son to the Father.[6] That is, Evangelicals have looked to the eternal subordination of the Son as a basis for Christian life, particularly as part of an argument for the proper roles of man and woman. Other Evangelicals have, in reply, contended that the eternal generation of the Son is a crucial insight into trinitarian theology that cannot be given up.[7]

This broader conversation about the Trinity has led to reengagement with the *filioque*. Evangelical authors taking a fresh look at the Trinity question whether there is sufficient biblical warrant for the *filioque*. They ask whether the doctrine is based on tradition rather than Scripture.[8] For instance, Malcolm B. Yarnell III critiques the *filioque* in light of Scripture. He finds sufficient warrant to conclude that the Son relates to the Father by being generated, while the Spirit relates to the Father by proceeding. This difference in vocabulary (*begotten* vs. *proceeding*) is sufficient, Yarnell argues, to distinguish Spirit and Son. He is ambivalent on the question of the *filioque*, finding evidence in John's Gospel of an eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father, but only evidence for an economic sending of the Spirit by the Son.[9] William Lane Craig uses the same exegetical criteria to push further. Craig holds that, while the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are creedally affirmed, these doctrines have virtually no biblical warrant. Moreover, Craig argues that they introduce subordinationism into the Godhead. His model of the Trinity does not hold to a derivation of one person from another. At the same time, he does not wish to preclude such a derivation. Regardless, Craig thinks it a foundational mistake to assume that the economic Trinity reflects the eternal, ontological

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[6] See the essays in Bruce Ware, ed., *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2015). Not all Evangelicals opposing feminism give up the eternal generation of the Son. See Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002); and Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2012).

[7] Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain, eds., *Retrieving Eternal Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017). For a critique of using the trinitarian life as a model for relations between husbands and wives, see Darren O. Sumner, "Obedience and Subordination in Karl Barth's Trinitarian Theology," in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 144–146. For one example that lays out the relation between Father and Son as the model for husband and wife, relying on perichoresis to frame both relations, see Tom Smail, *Like Father, Like Son: The Trinity Imaged in Our Humanity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), especially 239–269. In the background for much Evangelical thought in recent years (including Smail's work) is Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996) and, more broadly, Karl Barth's trinitarian theology.

[8] Whitfield, *Trinitarian Theology*, 5–13; Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 137, 140–141.

[9] Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *God the Trinity: Biblical Portraits* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016), 153–154.

Trinity.[10] Obviously, if Craig is correct and the Spirit does not eternally proceed in any sense, then there is no *filioque*.[11]

The Lutheran approach to the *filioque* differs from these Evangelical approaches in at least three ways. First, Lutherans hold to an identity of the economic and ontological Trinity, as shown below. This flows out of a robust Christology at the heart of Lutheran theology. By way of contrast, Evangelicals take different approaches to how much the economic Trinity reveals of the ontological Trinity. Fred Sanders surveys possible answers, addressing the question of the temporal sending of the Spirit specifically. Sanders reports that some Evangelicals maintain that the temporal sending of the Spirit by the Son reveals "nothing" about God's eternal nature, others maintain that it reveals "everything," and more are in between these two extremes. At the very center of the spectrum is the answer that the temporal sending of the Spirit reveals the eternal relation of Son and Spirit.[12] That would mean that the temporal sending of the Spirit by the Son is evidence for the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Son along with the Father. Sanders's work makes clear that while some Evangelicals share with Lutherans the idea that the economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity, other Evangelicals do not. Second, as we will see, Lutherans stand in line with a Western tradition that does not see the different terms of *begotten* and *proceeding* as sufficient to distinguish Son and Holy Spirit. Given these Evangelical debates, the Lutheran stance on the *filioque* is part of a broader approach to trinitarian theology. The Lutheran defense of the *filioque* is a defense of a creedal trinitarian faith that sees significance in the eternal relations of origin within the Trinity. Third, if it is not already clear, Lutherans place more value on the tradition when approaching a doctrine like the Trinity than some Evangelicals who approach Scripture with a blank trinitarian slate.

Lutherans, with almost no exceptions that I have found, uphold the teaching that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This Lutheran doctrinal commitment was made clear already in the sixteenth century and remains true to this day. Lutherans insisted on the *filioque* in a literary exchange between Lutherans at Tübingen and the Eastern Patriarch Jeremiah already in the 1570s.[13] Later, the seventeenth-century Lutheran theologian Johann Conrad Dannhauer wrote a 320-

[10] William Lane Craig, "Is God the Son Begotten in His Divine Nature?," *Theologica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology 3*, no. 1 (2019): 25–31.

[11] Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 140–141.

[12] Fred Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity & Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 23.

[13] George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982). Mastrantonis gives a helpful survey of the correspondence on pages 12–20.

page treatise defending the *filioque*, showing commitment to and interest in the question.[14] Both the long history of the doctrine within Lutheranism and the attention given to the doctrine by Dannhauer point to the *filioque* playing a significant role in Lutheran theology. The role of the *filioque* suggests that Lutherans today do well to attend to the doctrine and the questions surrounding it. Particularly as conservative Evangelicals debate the *filioque* and trinitarian theology more broadly, Lutherans need to be equipped with scriptural arguments to diagnose and root out problematic approaches to the Trinity. Attitudes toward the *filioque* often reveal deeper commitments to trinitarian theology, and being clear on the *filioque* equips theologians to identify sound trinitarian doctrine.

While Lutherans remain committed to the *filioque* today, the exact force of this doctrine is changing among some Lutherans. Various Lutheran theologians in the last few decades have reached different conclusions about whether or not the *filioque* is a necessary doctrine, and some have reinterpreted it in light of new approaches to the Trinity. This paper will survey Lutheran arguments for the *filioque*, arguments which have remained fairly stable throughout the history of Lutheran theology and are still current among Lutherans today. I will then give some attention to a few new Lutheran framings of the *filioque*, which do not change these arguments as much as put them into different contexts to move ecumenical dialogues forward. The central argument of this essay is that Lutherans hold that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son* in terms of the Spirit's eternal origin and defend the doctrine with arguments from historical, exegetical, and systematic theology. I have organized typical Lutheran arguments, roughly, by these theological disciplines.[15] My hope is that this survey of Lutheran arguments for the *filioque* will bolster Lutherans in their confession that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and increase appreciation for a classic Western approach to the Trinity.

Historical Arguments

Lutherans hold to a higher view of the ecclesial and theological tradition than other Protestants. Identifying Lutherans as conservative Reformers captures the

[14] Johann Conrad Dannhauer, *Stylus Vindex Aeternae Spiritus S. a Patre Filioque Processionis, Internae Immanentis Emanationis, Avita Religione Hactenus Creditae Ac Necessario Credendae, Nudius Tertius in Dubium Vocatae et Negatae* (Straβburg: Staedelius, 1663), https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/details:bsb11402570. See Bruce D. Marshall, "The Defense of the *Filioque* in Classical Lutheran Theology: An Ecumenical Appreciation," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 44, no. 2 (2002): 155.

[15] Such distinctions are, of course, not an exact science. Good systematic arguments derive from scriptural evidence (exegesis) and are frequently in conversation with historical sources. Nevertheless, I have sorted out arguments by how the major emphasis of the argument aligns with each theological discipline.

Lutheran ethos that critiques tradition on the basis of Scripture while holding a high view of traditions that pass the scriptural test.[16] In regard to the *filioque*, this respect for the history of the church and doctrine applies first to the text of the Creed and second to the Lutheran view of patristic sources.

Lutherans retained and confessed the ecumenical creeds as they received them in the West, both in worship and in their doctrinal works. They were and are aware that the version of the Creed codified in 381 did not contain the *filioque*. However, they point out that the original Creed does not assert that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone.[17] The absence of the *filioque* from the Creed does not deny the doctrine. For Lutherans, this means that more is needed on either side of the argument than a discussion of conciliar authority and of illegitimate additions to the Creed.

Moreover, the version of the Nicene Creed included in the Lutheran Book of Concord contains the *filioque*. The confessional statements assembled in the Book of Concord are held as a correct interpretation of Scripture. Part of this confessional standard is a commitment to the ecumenical creeds, the two relevant for the *filioque* being the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed.[18] Since the Athanasian Creed says that the Spirit "is from the Father and the Son, not made or created or begotten but proceeding," Lutherans argue that this Creed contains the idea, if not the precise formulation of the *filioque*.[19] Moreover, the text of the Nicene Creed printed in the Book of Concord includes the *filioque*. This gives the *filioque* greater ecclesial authority among Lutherans than it has for other traditions; while the patristic councils did not include the phrase in official doctrinal formulations, the Book of Concord does.[20] For Lutherans who hold a robust (*quia*) subscription to the Book

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[16] Such a characterization comes from Charles P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology: As Represented in the Augsburg Confession and in the History and Literature of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1871).

[17] Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 242.

[18] The Kolb and Wengert edition retains the language of the *filioque* in its translation of the Nicene Creed, but puts the phrase in brackets. The brackets reflect the ecumenical thought among some Lutherans detailed below. "We believe . . . in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]." Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 22–23. A footnote in the Kolb-Wengert edition explains this complicated history, noting that the word is missing from Greek manuscripts, was added to the Nicene Creed by the Council of Toledo in 589, and was an "innovation" critiqued by Pope Leo III in later centuries. Without denying the doctrine, the notes and brackets suggest that this is a problematic addition to the Creed. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 23 n. 28.

[19] Carl Beckwith, *The Holy Trinity*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, ed. Gifford A. Grobien, vol. 3 (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Luther Academy, 2016), 246.

[20] The language of the Creed with the *filioque* is echoed in Lutheran dogmatics texts. See, for instance, Leonard Hutter, *Compend of Lutheran Theology: A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Derived from the Word of God and the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,* trans.

of Concord, the *filioque* is binding doctrine.[21] For those with a weaker (*quatenus*, merely a "historical witness," or similar) subscription to the Book of Concord, this is not a doctrinal commitment but still stands as an important witness.

A further historical argument raised by Lutherans is patristic witnesses to the *filioque*. Lutherans hold the church fathers in high regard. Careful Lutheran scholars have read the fathers with appreciation due to the belief that Lutherans remain part of the church catholic.[22] As such, Lutherans see church fathers who hold to the *filioque* as authoritative voices on this question.[23] To be clear, patristic witnesses are secondary authorities for Lutherans, as the church fathers are to be normed by Scripture. Furthermore, Lutherans have long noted disagreements among the fathers on many things, including the *filioque*.[24] An appeal to the church fathers as impartial judges on the *filioque* question fails for this reason. Such an appeal also fails because interrogating the church fathers of the first five centuries on the *filioque* is an anachronism. Nevertheless, Lutherans find it significant when the fathers speak in terms that agree with the *filioque*. Lutherans note that Augustine teaches something like the *filioque* and argue that his words carry theological weight. They repeat Augustine's formula that the Spirit proceeds principally from the Father and also from the Son.[25] Additionally, Lutherans are aware that the *filioque* arose out of the Arian controversy and remain vigilant against incursions of Arianism, including

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H. E. Jacobs and G. F. Spieker (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1868), 22; and Johann Wilhelm Baier, *Joh. Guilielmi Baieri Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, ed. Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (St. Louis: Luth. Concordia-Verlag., 1879), 2:68–69.

[21] For a contemporary reflection on the significance of confessional subscription, see Scott R. Murray, "Confessional Loyalty or 'I Let That Subscription Lapse'?," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (January 2022): 25–42. For a confessional Lutheran on the *filioque*, see David Jay Webber, "The Nicene Creed and the *Filioque*: A Lutheran Approach," *LOGIA* 8, no. 4 (Reformation 1999): 45–52.

[22] This conviction is behind the seminal *Magdeburg Centuries* of Matthias Flacius Illyricus. Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002), 233–242.

[23] For instance, see Gerhard's treatment of the *filioque* question, in which he cites numerous fathers throughout. Johann Frederick Cotta, ed., *Iohannis Gerhardi theologi quondam Jenensis celeberrimi Loci Theologici cum pro astruenda veritate* (Tübingen: Georg Cotta, 1762), 1:319–331; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4. This particular *locus* does not appear in the 1863 Preuss edition or the English translation published by Concordia Publishing House. And note that in the 1762 edition, this section mis-numbers the locus as "V" instead of "IV" on the pages, while correctly identifying it as "IV" in the index. For a useful reference guide to what is included in the various editions of Gerhard's *Loci*, see the "Comparison of Editions of Gerhard's Loci" in the introductory section of each of the Concordia Publishing House translations of the *Loci*; one instance is Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces: Exegesis II–III: On the Nature of God and on the Trinity*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, trans. Richard J. Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), xii.

[24] Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople,* 239–243.

[25] Webber, "Nicene Creed and the *Filioque*," 47.

any that might come from a denial of the *filioque*.[26] While they note that many fathers do not use the language precisely, Lutherans argue that the fathers intended to say the same thing as the *filioque* with phrases such as "depending on the Son" or "flowing forth from the Son."[27] While they note these patristic witnesses, for Lutherans, patristic sources are insufficient to establish doctrine. The real test for Lutherans is whether a doctrine has scriptural support. They find such scriptural support for the *filioque*.[28]

Exegetical Arguments

Lutherans turn to numerous Scripture passages as evidence for the *filioque*. I will group these together here in three unbalanced categories. The first is a central passage on the question in the Lutheran view, John 16:13–15. Second, Lutherans see passages that speak of the "Spirit of Christ" as evidence for the *filioque*. Finally, passages that speak of Christ sending the Spirit provide exegetical evidence.

In John 16:13–15, Jesus promises that the Spirit will come and guide the disciples into all truth. Key for Lutherans is the point that the Spirit "will take what is mine [Christ's] and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine [Christ's]; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (vv. 14–15).[29] These words of Jesus make clear that the Spirit receives something from Jesus, and Jesus and the Father share in all that the Father has. Identifying what the Spirit receives and what Jesus and the Father share are critical for answering the *filioque* question.

Lutheran exegesis is built on the conviction that the divine essence is what Father and Son share and what the Spirit takes from Jesus. Luther himself sets the direction for Lutheran exegesis, interpreting "what" the Spirit receives in John 16:13–15 as the divine essence.[30] If not the divine essence, Luther reasons, then what

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[26] Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., "More Promise than Ambiguity: Pneumatological Christology as a Model for Ecumenical Engagement," in *Critical Issues in Ecclesiology: Essays in Honor of Carl E. Braaten*, ed. Alberto A. García and Susan K. Wood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 192–193.

[27] Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 246–247. Webber notes that Chemnitz and Andreae read the fathers this way also. Webber, "Nicene Creed and the *Filioque*," 48.

[28] For a particularly clear instance, see Beckwith, who argues that this doctrine is more than just a point in the history of dogma. Rather, the Lutheran position on the *filioque* is scriptural truth. The scriptural truth is the key issue here, as even the tradition of the *filioque* arose from early readings of Scripture and not from later disputes over the wording of the Creed. It is also significant for Lutherans today, who ought to teach the *filioque* because it is scriptural. The creedal and historical concerns are secondary to Scripture. Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 244–245, 261–262.

[29] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[30] "There the Holy Spirit is true God with Christ and the Father, but in such a way that he has his divine essence not from himself, but from both the Father and Christ. For Christ here says that

could the Spirit take from Christ? Not a piece or a crumb of the Godhead, for this essence cannot be divided. Luther concludes that this is a reference to the Spirit receiving the divine essence from the Father and the Son. Since Jesus also talks of having all that the Father has in these verses, Luther reads the entire section as a discussion of what the persons of the Trinity have in common: the divine essence. The Spirit is true God, sharing in the same essence which he has taken from the Son and the Father. The sole distinction of the Spirit is that he is a different person than the Father or the Son.[31] Later Lutherans follow Luther on this point. Since Spirit and Son already share the divine essence, Christ has nothing else that the Spirit might take. The Spirit, for instance, is already omniscient and so could not take some particular knowledge from the Son. So it is all or nothing: either the Spirit takes the divine essence from the Son, or there is nothing for the Spirit to take from the Son.[32] At first glance, such a reading does not seem to account for the future tense of "will take." Lutherans understand the future tense as a reference to the work of the Spirit in time to make truth known to the disciples and to the church after Christ's resurrection and ascension. But they ascribe the "taking" to the eternal origin of the Spirit, that is, the *filioque*.[33] If the Spirit and the Son are consubstantial, the argument goes, there is nothing that the Spirit could take from Christ that he did not already possess.

The second scriptural argument for the *filioque* comes from passages that speak of the "Spirit of Christ." Scripture contains numerous passages that use the phrase.[34] While recognizing that genitives may have different force, Lutherans argue that "Spirit of Christ" is a genitive of origin, identifying the eternal relation of the Spirit and the Son. They observe that this is parallel to scriptural identifications of the "Spirit of God" or the "Spirit of the Father."[35] Since this last "Spirit of the Father" represents a genitive of origin, and Lutherans read "Spirit of Christ" as a parallel construction, they take the meaning to be that the Spirit proceeds from the Father

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the Holy Spirit eternally takes that which is his own, namely the divine essence, not from the Father alone, but also from Christ." Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009), vol. 46:66.23–29 (hereafter WA). Luther interprets the same thing about the Father and the Son: "All that the Father has is mine" is a reference to the eternal sharing of the Father and Son in the divine essence and therefore all things. WA 46:66.36–67.13. See also Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 169.

[31] WA 46:68.33–69.2; Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 170.

[32] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 170. For a later theologian picking up the argument, see Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 1:144.

[33] One example is Gerhard, *Loci* 1:325–326; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, §§ 78–80.

[34] For instance, Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19; and 1 Peter 1:11.

[35] See, for instance, Chemnitz, *Loci* 1:143–144; Gerhard, *Loci* 1:319–320; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 49, 1:323–324; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 73. In the last reference, Gerhard adds that the plural "Elohim" in "Spirit of Elohim" is a reference to the divinity of the Father and the Son.

and the Son.[36] Furthermore, the order is never reversed: Scripture does not speak of the "Son of the Spirit."[37] The very order of the persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is traced back to these kinds of passages as evidence for the *filioque*.

Finally, Lutherans look to scriptural texts that speak of the Son sending the Spirit. The key texts here are in John, including Jesus' discourse after the Last Supper (John 15:26; 16:7) and his post-resurrection appearance to the disciples when he breathes on them and gives them the Spirit (John 20:22).[38] Lutherans read these passages and interpret them as a giving of the person of the Spirit, not just the gifts of the Spirit. While the Spirit comes with the gifts, Lutherans see Jesus' gift to the disciples as the person of the Spirit who bears the gifts to them.[39] For the Son to give the Spirit, Lutheran dogmaticians argue that he must have the power of sending (*potestas mittendi*). This is a power held by some persons of the Trinity, but not all, according to Lutheran dogmaticians. When the Son sends the Spirit, they take this as evidence that the Son has this power. They then reason that this power must be grounded in the eternal, immanent Trinity.[40] This particular line of thought is only one of the ways in which Lutherans argue that the temporal sending of the Spirit is grounded in the eternal origin of the Spirit.[41] Linking temporal mission to eternal origin in this way is part of a larger Lutheran commitment to the notion that the immanent Trinity is identical to the economic Trinity. And that point takes us beyond exegetical arguments into systematic arguments.

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[36] The argument stretches back to sixteenth-century Lutherans; see Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 232. Here Abraham Calov is clear: "Just as he is called the 'Spirit of the Father' . . . and the Spirit 'of God' . . . because he is breathed by the Father (*spiratur a Patre*) . . . and is from the Father by eternal procession, so also he is equally named the Spirit 'of the Son' . . . and Spirit 'of Christ' because he is equally from the Son by eternal procession, and is breathed by the Son of God, just as by the Father." Abraham Calov, *Systema* (Wittenberg, 1659), 3:812; quoted in Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 158. See also Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 252–253; and Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, trans. Richard A. Krause and James Langebartels (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 2:188–189.

[37] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 159. Lutherans point to these genitive constructions as the source for the order of trinitarian persons. Gerhard holds that if the Spirit does not proceed from the Son, the order of the persons is uncertain. Gerhard, *Loci* 1:326; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 82.

[38] For an example in a short book on the Holy Spirit as a simple catechetical tool, see William Dallmann, *The Holy Ghost* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1930), 10. Dallmann references John 15:26, and notes that in Galatians 4:6 God sends forth the Spirit of his Son. Along with similar passages, these are sufficient for Dallmann to demonstrate why Lutherans hold to the *filioque* over against the Greek church. See also Gerhard, *Loci* 1:319; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 49.

[39] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 163; Chemnitz, *Loci* 1:145–146.

[40] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 164.

[41] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 164. Hoenecke restricts the sending of the Spirit in John 14 to temporal mission, but he also identifies the Son's breathing out the Spirit as an *opus ad intra*. Hoenecke, *Dogmatics*, 2:188–189.

Systematic Arguments

In my estimation, the systematic arguments over the *filioque* are at the heart of the matter. Historical questions about the text of the Creed, as widely recognized, cannot resolve the debate. The church fathers do not present a consensus on the issue.[42] Scriptural interpretations lead to systematic commitments which, in turn, shape how passages are read. For instance, Christian theologians in the creedal tradition (or at least all with whom I am familiar) grant that in time and in the economic Trinity, the Son sends the Spirit and the Spirit proceeds from the Son. To interpret Jesus' promise to send the Spirit as evidence of an eternal procession depends (in large part) on a commitment to the economic Trinity being the same as the immanent Trinity.[43] Lutherans hold to this identification with tenacity due to a systematic commitment to how God reveals himself. After working out why Lutherans insist that temporal sending must reflect eternal origins in the Trinity, I will lay out the particular Western approach to the Trinity used by Lutherans, and then turn to some more recent, novel systematic arguments for the *filioque* arising from Lutherans.

For Lutherans, the self-revelation of God occurs through the Son. The Son, as the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), makes God known to humans. Lutherans will (at least on occasion) push this to the point of asserting that the only knowledge we have of God comes from Christ.[44] This line of thinking goes all the way back to Luther, who wants no God outside of Christ.[45]

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[42] On these points, Peckham is correct in noting the limitations of historical theology, a theme running through his chapter on theological method and the Trinity. Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 154–169.

[43] Lutherans are not alone among Western theologians in asserting this identity. Among Roman Catholic theologians, Karl Rahner makes it a foundational principle (see below). Other Western theologians are less committed to the principle. Another Roman Catholic, Yves Congar, accepts Rahner's rule with some reservations or limits. First, Congar is comfortable identifying the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity (since the content of God's revelation is himself), but is concerned with identifying the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity. That is, what is significant for Congar is the order of what is being identified with what . He is hesitant to equate the free economic Trinity with the necessary immanent Trinity. Furthermore, Congar places a limit on what humans can know of God. Short of the beatific vision, human knowledge of God in himself is necessarily limited. Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Complete Three-Volume Work in One Volume*, trans. David Smith, Milestones in Catholic Theology (New York: Crossroad Herder, 2000), 3:11–22. Some Evangelicals question Rahner's principle. See Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, "Introduction," in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 17–18. They suggest that the rule is either "trivially true, or extremely controversial."

[44] For a contemporary work of Lutheran Christology that takes the humanity of Christ as the entry into knowledge of Christ, see Ian A. McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019).

[45] WA 54:66–69; Martin Luther, *Last Words of David* (1543): vol. 15, pp. 313–316, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House,

Carl Beckwith nicely summarizes how this point leads to identification of the economic and immanent Trinity. He argues that we may know God only as he reveals himself. Because of our reliance on divine revelation to know God, whatever we say about the Trinity is learned from history as God reveals himself to us. We conclude from these points that what God does in time for our salvation reveals his eternal being to us.[46] Since the only knowledge we have of God comes from God's revelation of himself in history as he comes to save, that temporal mission is our window into the eternal nature and being of God. The economic Trinity is identical to the immanent Trinity, even as the two are distinct.[47]

An emphasis on God's revelation of himself as the source of our knowledge of God sets the Lutheran view of the economic and immanent Trinity apart from other views. The terminology of "economic" and "immanent" is rather recent; Fred Sanders traces the distinction back to the Lutheran theologian Johann August Urlsperger (1728–1806).[48] Not all Lutherans since Urlsperger have adopted this particular vocabulary. Francis Pieper does not use the terms when discussing the Trinity, but retains a more traditional discussion of God's works *ad extra* in relation to inner-trinitarian relations.[49] The most well-known adherent of the terminology of "economic" and "immanent" was the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner. Rahner used the terminology as a way to integrate trinitarian theology into all of theology by insisting that the Trinity happens in us. He feared that the doctrine of the Trinity was only superficially incorporated into theology, and particularly feared that the argument that any person of the Trinity could become incarnate reduced trinitarian theology to something superfluous to Christian theology. He counters that only the Son can become incarnate, with the result that the economic Trinity must be identical to the immanent Trinity. Furthermore, each person of the Trinity communicates himself to man in a way proper to his personal being. Thus the self-

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1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE. WA 40/1:77–78; AE 26:28–29.

[46] Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 248.

[47] Adolf Hoenecke dissents from this principle to some extent. Hoenecke argues (against Philippi) that the experience of salvation is only an apparent proof of God's eternal relations. Hoenecke, *Dogmatics*, 2:189–190.

[48] Fred Sanders, *The Triune God,* New Studies in Dogmatics, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 147–148.

[49] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 371–463. While the terminology is new, ancient tradition considers the works of God *ad extra* as indivisible. Lutheran theologians have accepted this rule from Augustine with the qualification that the properties of each person remain distinct. For a concise and insightful summary of *opera ad extra*, see Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 315–335. This discussion depends on some kind of distinction between the Trinity in itself and the works of the Trinity extending into creation. However, the terminology of "economic" and "immanent" Trinity is a more recent development.

communication of God to us is not an image or analogy of the immanent Trinity, but is the Trinity itself. The Trinity takes place in us; it is not a reality expressed in dogmatic terms.[50] With these arguments, Rahner integrates trinitarian theology into all doctrine, so that Christian theology would not be possible without the Trinity. In the process, Rahner collapses any distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity. This is a different approach to the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity than the one Lutherans take. Lutherans, as noted above, look to God's actions in history to reveal who God is to us. A Lutheran stance on the economic and immanent Trinity insists that the God we know in revelation is the same as the God who is otherwise hidden from us.

Drawing an implication from their understanding of the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity, Lutherans insist that the Son's temporal sending of the Spirit must be grounded in the eternal origin of the Spirit in the Son as well as the Father. That is, the temporal sending of the Spirit presupposes the Spirit's eternal procession from the Son.[51] Lutherans from the sixteenth century onward have been aware that Eastern Orthodox churches see the distinction of temporal sending and eternal procession as more significant, such that the Son can send the Spirit in time without the Spirit proceeding eternally from the Son.[52] Nevertheless, Lutherans insist that the power to send the Spirit must be grounded in an eternal origin of the Spirit from the Son.[53] And they are insistent that the Son's temporal sending of the Spirit reveals the eternal relation between the Son and the Spirit. Jesus gives the Spirit in order to show who God is from eternity. When Jesus breathes out the Spirit on his disciples, this act reveals the eternal relation of the Son and the Spirit.[54]

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[50] Karl Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smith (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 77–102. For more details, see Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (1970; repr. New York: Continuum, 2001).

[51] Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 223–228; David P. Scaer, "*Cum Patre et Filio Adoratur:* The Spirit Understood Christologically," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61, nos. 1–2 (January–April 1997): 102–103, who also cites Quenstedt in support.

[52] Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 223–224.

[53] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 164. For one word of caution on this equation, see Helmut Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith*, vol. 2, *The Doctrine of God and of Christ*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1997), 176–181. Thielicke does not see the two Trinities as antithetic, but cautions lest the economic Trinity be absorbed by revelation. He is concerned that since revelation happens in this world, God will be constricted to human, philosophical categories. Nevertheless, Thielicke begins with the idea that our knowledge of God comes from divine self-disclosure in time, the basic premise with which Lutherans begin as they consider the Trinity in time and in eternity.

[54] Chemnitz, *Loci* 1:143. On this point, Lutherans are following a particular argument of Augustine. More broadly, see Chemnitz, *Loci* 1:144, for Jesus' temporal sending of the Spirit as a

Lutherans further bolster the argument by pointing to the language of Scripture. The language that Scripture uses to describe the Son sending the Spirit runs parallel to language of the Spirit proceeding eternally from the Father. In John 14, Jesus says that the Father will send the Spirit (read widely as the eternal procession of the Spirit), and uses the same language to describe Jesus' sending of the Spirit.[55] The parallel language, the argument runs, means that the Son's sending the Spirit in time is identical to Father and Son breathing out the Spirit in eternity. Moreover, the same parallel in language is found in the relation of the Father to the Son. The Son proceeds from the Father in eternity and is sent by the Father in time. The temporal sending of the Son reflects the Son's eternal origin in the Father. The alignment of the Father's temporal sending of the Son with the Son's eternal origin in the Father suggests that the Son's sending the Spirit in time reflects the Spirit's eternal procession from the Son as well as from the Father.[56] Gerhard puts forth as a principle that a divine person is not sent by another divine person unless the one sent proceeds (broad sense of *proceeding*; see below) from the one sending.[57] By these various sendings in time, the triune God saves.[58] And the way God reveals himself in his temporal mission to save humans (here, Son sending the Spirit) identifies who God is from eternity, as the parallel language for eternal and temporal sending makes clear.

But, one might object, Scripture is quite clear that the Spirit comes to rest on Jesus and leads and directs Jesus on his earthly mission. Would this not then prove that in eternity the Spirit must come to Jesus as well, rather than proceeding from him? This point is critical to a new direction in the *filioque* charted by Leopoldo Sánchez and surveyed below.[59] Here I note that Lutherans have long recognized the objection. Their traditional response has been to argue that the Spirit's leading of Christ is carried out on account of his human nature. The Spirit is leading the person, but that leading is needed because of Christ's assumed human nature, a nature which he took on in time and did not possess from eternity.[60] Accordingly, the Spirit leading Christ does not reflect eternal origins, but arises in time on account of the incarnation. By appealing to the human nature as cause for the Spirit leading

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revelation of the eternal Trinity. Gerhard later reiterates the point that the temporal sending is a "manifestation" of the eternal God. Gerhard, *Loci* 1:319; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 49.

[55] Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 248–249.

[56] Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 251–252.

[57] Gerhard, *Loci* 1:324; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 76.

[58] Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 263.

[59] See footnotes 87ff.

[60] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 167–168; Gerhard, *Loci* 1:324; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 76.

Christ, Lutherans push this counterargument aside to cling to the main point that the economic Trinity is identical to the immanent Trinity.

The second major systematic argument Lutherans make for the *filioque* arises from their commitment to Western trinitarian theology. Much could be said here; space permits only a review of some relevant points. Following Augustine and the Western tradition, classic Lutheran trinitarian theology begins with the unity of God's essence. The persons of the Trinity are distinguished only by their relations to one another.[61] These relations are limited: paternity, filiation, passive spiration (procession). Along with the Father being unoriginated and active spiration, there are no other distinguishing relations between the persons of the Trinity.[62]

Aquinas sharpens thought about these relations. Since the only thing distinguishing persons are a small number of interpersonal relations, what is necessary to distinguish the persons are pairs of opposite relations. The Father is distinct from the Son because the Father begets and the Son is begotten. The Father is distinct from the Spirit because the Father breathes out the Spirit and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. But what distinguishes the Son from the Spirit? There must be some opposed pair of relations, but only a handful of relations from which to choose. Moreover, to maintain the unity of the Spirit, the Spirit's relation to the Son must be the same as the Spirit's relation to the Father: passive spiration or proceeding. If there were some other relation, this would lead to two Spirits instead of one. From this the *filioque* necessarily follows: for the Son and the Spirit to be distinct, there must be a pair of opposing relations. That pair is spiration: the Son breathes out the Spirit and the Spirit proceeds also from the Son. Minor points support this as well: the only thing the Father can do apart from the Son is beget the Son. And breathing out the Spirit is an action that the Father and Son do jointly.[63]

Lutherans adopt this line of trinitarian argumentation from Aquinas. Evidence for this dependence on Aquinas runs throughout the Lutheran tradition from the sixteenth century on.[64] Lutherans describe the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son as from a single divine essence, or "one essential source."[65] Like Aquinas, Lutherans fear that without the *filioque* the Son and the Spirit will be indistinguishable. Both the Son and the Spirit, loosely speaking, come forth or

[61] For a short summation of this approach to the Trinity, see Hoenecke, *Dogmatics*, 2:185–186. For a more detailed survey of Western theological approaches to the Trinity with a focus on the *filioque*, see Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:19–132. See also Chemnitz, *Loci* 1:63–79.

[62] For a summary of this approach among Lutheran systematicians, see Baier, *Compendium*, 2:3–75.

[63] Avery Dulles, "The *Filioque*: What Is at Stake?," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 59, nos. 1–2 (January–April 1995): 36.

[64] Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 225. Gerhard explicitly points to Aquinas in his treatment of the *filioque*. Gerhard, *Loci* 1:326; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 83.

[65] Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 232–234.

proceed from the Father.[66] For many Lutherans, the difference in scriptural vocabulary between begetting and proceeding is insufficient to distinguish the two persons. Here Augustine is in the background. He contends that whatever is begotten also proceeds, but not the other way around. So to say that the Son is begotten means that the Son proceeds. Since both Son and Spirit proceed from the Father, what would distinguish the Son from the Spirit?[67] A pair of opposing inner-trinitarian relations is needed to distinguish them. And the only pair available is active and passive spiration—a new pair would lead to two Spirits.[68] Lutherans, at this point, typically confess that they do not know the exact force of "begetting" or "proceeding" in this trinitarian context. What is clear is that both terms mean receiving the divine nature.[69] But rather than explain what they mean, Lutherans are content to confess (say the same thing) as Scripture does.

It is worth pausing here to reiterate that this Western approach to the Trinity begins with and is primarily concerned with preserving divine unity and simplicity. A bare minimum of relations is asserted to distinguish the persons of the Trinity, who as a single essence have everything else in common. This concern to preserve divine unity is evident from Lutheran criticisms that denying the *filioque* will divide the divine essence. If the Spirit proceeds only from the Father as from an essence, Lutherans have argued, then the essence of the Father would differ from the essence of the Son and the unity of the divine essence would be divided.[70] Or, to put it positively, the Son receives the divine essence from the Father. Since Father and Son are consubstantial, the Spirit receives his essence from the essence that is common to the Father and the Son.[71] Furthermore, the Son must have everything that the Father has in order to be consubstantial with the Father, save what is necessary to

[66] In Latin translations, this was more than loosely speaking. The verb *procedere* was used to translate the Greek ἐξῆλθον of John 8:42 and ἐκπορεύεται of John 15:26. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:87–88. Congar analyzes Thomas Aquinas, who states clearly the concern that since both Son and Spirit come forth from the Father, something more than a different term is required to distinguish them from each other. Thomas uses *procession* to mean simply "comes forth from," a dynamic that is true of both the Son and the Spirit and that accordingly complicates the distinction between Son and Spirit. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:116–121.

[67] Chemnitz, *Loci* 1:144–145. Chemnitz notes that Maximus, an Arian, challenged Augustine by asking why we do not say that the Holy Spirit is begotten, since both "begotten" and "proceeds" mean "to receive one's essence from." Chemnitz holds that the correct response is that what is not written is not to be believed or said. Since Scripture does not say that the Holy Spirit is begotten, neither should we. And while there must be a difference between generation and procession, Chemnitz observes (with Augustine) that we cannot know what that difference is.

[68] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 160–161.

[69] Gerhard specifically includes this receiving of the divine nature in his definition of "proceed." Gerhard, *Loci* 1:320; locus 4, pars 3, caput 4, § 76.

[70] Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 225.

[71] Chemnitz, *Loci* 1:144.

distinguish the Father and the Son. Otherwise the *homoousios*[72] itself would be lost.[73] No *filioque*, Lutherans fear, and no *homoousios*.

In a similar vein, Lutherans also view the *filioque* as necessary to avoid subordinationism.[74] The Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz lays out this concern succinctly in a way that represents the broader Lutheran tradition. If the Spirit proceeds only from the Father, rests on the Son, and then passes through the Son to created beings, Chemnitz observes a hierarchy being established. The Father is highest, then the Son, then the Holy Spirit, then angels, etc., in a descending order.[75] The *filioque* is a way to subvert a kind of hierarchy among divine persons based on an overly great commitment to the monarchy of the Father. Like the concern for the *homoousios*, this concern derives from the Western approach to the Trinity through the single divine essence. We shall consider how this differs from the fundamental Eastern approach to trinitarian theology shortly when I turn to ecumenical dialogues. But first, I note two recent systematic arguments from Lutheran theologians.

The first comes from Carl Beckwith, who argues from the sacramental life of the church to the *filioque*. The Father would have us know him only in the Son; the Son would have us know him only in the Spirit. That Spirit comes in the church by Word and Sacrament. As people hear the Word in church, they come to know the Spirit first as the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit who leads people to know God in Christ. Any other Spirit—a Spirit leading away from Christ, even if going away from Christ means going directly to the Father—would be a false Spirit, opposed to Christ.[76] Sacramental theology, part of God's saving mission, is a further reflection of the eternal nature of God, and the Spirit's procession also from the Son. Note again that this argument depends on the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity, so that the Trinity's work in time reveals his eternal being.

The second argument comes from David Scaer, who draws the *filioque* as a conclusion from the doctrine of inspiration. The Spirit who inspires Scripture must proceed from the Son if the Son is to have a role in the inspiration of Scripture. Since the Spirit proceeds from the Son, this Spirit necessarily includes the Son in the work of inspiration. The *filioque* functions to keep the work of inspiration an indivisible

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[72] "Of the same substance," the crucial description of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father, confessed in the Nicene Creed against Arianism.

[73] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 171.

[74] Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, 237. See Dulles, "The *Filioque*," 40, a Roman Catholic who raises the same concern over divine unity and the equality of persons.

[75] Chemnitz, *Loci* 1:143.

[76] Beckwith, *Holy Trinity*, 262. This argument runs parallel to a point raised by Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith*, 2:298. If there is no *filioque*, Thielicke argues, then salvation is directly between the Father and humans, bypassing the Son entirely.

external work of the Trinity: the Spirit who inspires is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Christ.[77] Whether these new systematic arguments will take root among Lutherans remains to be seen, but the arguments are evidence of continuing thought about and support for the *filioque* among Lutherans.

Ecumenical Endeavors

Trinitarian theology, and the *filioque* in particular, has been reframed in recent years by Lutherans, particularly in light of theological dialogues with Eastern Orthodox churches. Before turning to these developments, here I note one Lutheran who reframed the Trinity in such a way as to exclude the *filioque*. This theologian was the German Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg. He grounded the Trinity in threeness, beginning with the three persons and working from them to God's unity and essence. He based the distinction between divine persons not on relations of origin but on reciprocal relations, placing the Trinity into a Hegelian framework of mutuality. For Pannenberg, "person" is a relational, correlative term. "One gains one's personality by giving oneself to one's counterpart; thus identity is gained in separation from, yet also in dependence on, the other."[78] In this way, Pannenberg sought to preserve a true mutuality among the persons of the Trinity, and moved away from an emphasis on origin in the conception of inner-trinitarian relations.

Pannenberg thought that it is a mistake to reduce the relations of the trinitarian persons to relations of origin (begotten, proceeding). For him, emphasis on relations of origin leaves no room for reciprocal relations between the persons. In particular, Pannenberg was concerned that identifying the Father as unoriginate leaves no room for trinitarian mutuality. Since the Father can only be the Father in relation to the Son, the Father's identity is in some way dependent on the Son. To avoid an exclusive focus on relations of origin, Pannenberg spoke in terms of "self-distinction" far more than "begotten" or "proceeding." The result is that Pannenberg claimed that the Son receives his deity in his act of self-distinction from the Father. Pannenberg's principles of preserving divine mutuality and not reducing the persons to relations of origin shaped his view of the *filioque*. He argued that the term *filioque* is uncanonical and should be removed from the Creed. While he did not condemn the term as heretical, Pannenberg did conclude that it is an inappropriate

[77] Scaer, "*Cum Patre et Filio*," 107–110.

[78] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 131. For a helpful overview of Pannenberg's trinitarian theology, see the entire chapter in Kärkkäinen, *Trinity*, 123–150.

formulation because it describes the divine fellowship in the vocabulary of a relation of origin.[79] But Pannenberg is an outlier among Lutherans discussing the *filioque*.

Most Lutherans continue to uphold the *filioque*, including some who make other moves to advance ecumenical dialogues. Ecumenical conversations between East and West in recent years have led some Lutherans to retain but reframe the *filioque*. Official dialogues between Lutherans and Eastern churches have only rarely touched on the *filioque*.[80] The most conversation on the *filioque* came between American Lutherans and the Orthodox, leading to a Lutheran/Orthodox Common Statement adopted in 1999. Some in the dialogue suggested that, on the question of the *filioque*, East and West have similar motives. Both wish to preserve the monarchy of the Father and the equality of the Spirit as a distinct hypostasis. The differences on the question of the *filioque* were in linguistic usage rather than doctrinal content.[81] Despite members of the dialogue advocating for this understanding, the Lutheran/Orthodox Common Statement did not go that far. Lutherans grant in the document that the addition to the Creed was illegitimate and problematic. Many Lutherans, the Statement holds, are ready to confess a Creed without the word "*filioque*" to help relations with the East. But they will not completely abandon the doctrine, nor grant that it is a heresy. Instead, the Common Statement explains: "Lutherans can now acknowledge that the *Filioque* is not ecumenical dogma, but has the status of a local tradition which is not binding on the universal church."[82] The stance on the liturgical usage of the Creed does not signal a shift on the doctrine itself, other than relativizing its importance to a "local tradition." In the same document, the Orthodox report that they cannot grant the *filioque*, but are open to talk of the Spirit proceeding through the Son as well as proceeding from the Son in the Spirit's temporal mission.[83] One of the participants in the dialogue, Bruce Marshall, has written after the dialogue to defend the *filioque*. Or perhaps more precisely, he assembles arguments to show that the *filioque* is compelling, and hopes to dispel the notion that ecumenical dialogue has settled the

[79] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 1:300–327.

[80] Here I rely on Risto Saarinen, who continues to survey dialogues between East and West. See Risto Saarinen, "Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue from 2004 to 2015," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 50, no. 3 (December 2016): 226–239, as well as the articles and resources on Saarinen's blog at https://blogs.helsinki.fi/ristosaarinen/lutheran-orthodox-dialogue-2/ (accessed February 21, 2023).

[81] Risto Saarinen, "Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogues 1995–2013," available at https://blogs.helsinki.fi/ristosaarinen/z2/ (accessed February 21, 2023).

[82] "A Lutheran-Orthodox Common Statement on Faith in the Holy Trinity," https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/A_Lutheran_Orthodox_Common_Statement_on_Faith_in_the_Holy_Trinity.pdf (accessed February 21, 2023).

[83] "A Lutheran-Orthodox Common Statement on Faith in the Holy Trinity."

issue in favor of the Eastern view.[84] It should be noted that the Lutherans involved in this document do not represent the confessional Lutherans of North America, such as the LCMS, WELS, and ELS, who continue to confess the *filioque* in the Creed.

A different reframing of the doctrine is evident in the work of Robert Jenson. Jenson upholds the doctrine, but only within a new way of approaching the Trinity. In short, Jenson argues that both East and West get the Trinity wrong by approaching the Trinity through pagan (i.e., classical Greek) philosophical categories. Those categories, defining *being* in terms of persistence, force the Trinity into the category of a fixed, frozen substance—a view that falls short of a living, dynamic God. Instead, Jenson holds that the Trinity is identified by narrative. God's self-identity is defined by *dramatic coherence*. Like a drama, God is unfolding in events that are unpredictable but the result of preceding events; the causation is only seen after the fact. In this view, God is identified by narrative: whoever raises Jesus from the dead, for instance, is God. So while Jenson can and does read John's Gospel and declare it sufficient to establish the *filioque*, he rejects both East and West as off base on the Trinity. The problem in both East and West is the focus on *being* as a persistent category and the related question of origin. Better, Jenson holds, to start with divine teleology and ask where God is going. Better also to broaden talk of relations to relations in time—such as the Spirit glorifying Christ. The end result is that Jenson holds that the *filioque* establishes that the Spirit derives his *energia* (participation in the divine life) from the Son, but not his being.[85]

I am not convinced that Jenson has escaped the problem of philosophical categories that dictate theological conclusions. Jenson's defense of the *filioque* relies on postmodern philosophical commitments that reject substance and insist that everything is always becoming something else. These postmodern commitments displace traditional categories shaped (in part) by Greek philosophy. This argument would be more compelling, I think, if the case were made more carefully that Greek philosophy unduly influenced traditional trinitarian theology, rather than taking every use of a term from Greek philosophy as an encroachment of philosophy on theology.[86] This is particularly necessary, because Jenson's approach to the Trinity

[84] Marshall, "Defense of the *Filioque*," 172.

[85] Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Triune God* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 64–70, 148–159.

[86] One example of this nuanced analysis of the relation of Greek philosophy and theology can be found in the work of Trevor Hart, albeit in taking up different theological questions than the *filioque*. Hart carefully distinguishes when Greek philosophy is dominating the account and when theological sources are prominent and philosophical categories are in a subservient role. Trevor Hart, *In Him Was Life: The Person and Work of Christ* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2019). Another theologian defending classical philosophical principles as aids to theology is Reinhard Hütter. He has recently argued that the metaphysical category of "substance" does not eliminate

uses postmodern categories without asking if they themselves are a corrupting encroachment of philosophy into theology. After all, the idea that there is no fixed substance may in fact twist the scriptural witness in different directions than Greek metaphysics, but directions that still corrupt the biblical view of God.

On the other hand, confessional Lutherans continue to insist on the *filioque* as scriptural and binding doctrine. Recent examples include David Scaer, David Jay Webber, and Carl Beckwith.[87] This is unsurprising given a strong subscription to the doctrine in the Book of Concord among confessional Lutherans.

One such confessional Lutheran charting a new path as an ecumenical suggestion based on a perichoretic model of the Trinity is Leopoldo Sánchez. Sánchez hopes to meet both Eastern and Western concerns through a Spirit Christology—Christology that focuses on Jesus as the one who receives and bears the Spirit. He maintains the eternal divinity of Christ (as opposed to some Spirit Christologies). Of interest is his suggestion that, at least alongside the *filioque*, theologians ought to assert that the Son is begotten "*in spiritu*," in the Holy Spirit.[88] This would involve the Spirit in the begetting of the Son in some way, namely as the space or horizon in which the Father and the Son love one another.[89] This works with a similar commitment to identification of the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity as noted above, but now applies this commitment to the Son receiving the Spirit in time. Sánchez argues that Christ receiving the Spirit in time reflects an eternal resting of the Spirit on the Son.[90] This is a version of a perichoretic Trinity with the three persons mutually entwined.

The likelihood of any of these ecumenical approaches succeeding depends, I think, on whether they can satisfy the questions that lie underneath the *filioque*. It is widely, if not universally known, that underneath the differences on the *filioque* is a

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faith or mystery, but is critical to grounding faith and mystery in received reality. Reinhard Hütter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation: The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 7–8.

[87] Scaer, "*Cum Patre et Filio*"; Webber, "Nicene Creed and the *Filioque*"; Beckwith, *The Holy Trinity*.

[88] Sánchez sets this apart from suggestions that the Son comes from the Father and the Spirit. For instance, Jürgen Moltmann holds to such a *spirituque* Christology. Moltmann advocates removing the *filioque* to allow one to say that the Father breathes out the Spirit in the Son and begets the Son in the Spirit. In this way, talk of either the Son coming forth from the Father or the Spirit always involves talk of the Third Person of the Trinity. The coming forth of the Son and the Spirit are not two separate acts, but an act in which each is in the other. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 71–73. Sánchez is aiming for the same kind of mutuality within the persons of the Trinity, but wants to retain the *filioque* alongside the idea that the Son is begotten *in spiritu*.

[89] Sánchez, "More Promise than Ambiguity," 189–214; Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God's Spirit: Jesus' Life in the Spirit as a Lens for Theology and Life* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 110–141, 239.

[90] Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver*, 138–139.

difference in the primary category used to think of the Trinity between East and West.[91] As noted, the West begins with the single divine essence. The three persons are seen as strictly identical to the divine essence, save those relations noted above.[92] The East begins with the category of *hypostasis*, or the tri-personality of God. John Meyendorff, the noted Eastern Orthodox theologian, rightly argues that the real question between East and West is whether tri-personality or consubstantiality ought to come first in trinitarian theology.[93] I suspect that until this question is dealt with, ecumenical efforts on the *filioque* will not lead to real results. Is one approach right and the other wrong? Are they different ways of saying the same thing? What distinguishes the persons of the Trinity, and how do they relate to the single divine nature? These seem to be the questions to discuss before moving on to the *filioque*.

Other formulations will, I fear, only run afoul of theologians in both traditions who object to them based on their own starting principles. The East will continue to question whether the *filioque* collapses the persons of the Trinity into the divine essence.[94] Can the persons of the Trinity be reduced to hypostatic relations within the divine essence?[95] Conversely, the West will continue to ask if the absence of the *filioque* lessens the divinity of the Son, divides the divine essence along the lines of a social Trinity, or subordinates the Son and the Spirit to the Father. And Evangelicals will not reach a consensus on the *filioque* until they have some consensus on the relations of origin among the trinitarian persons.

Much work remains to be done. Perhaps the unique Lutheran contribution to the conversation rests on the commitment to God's self-revelation in Christ. If Christ is the heart of theology and is the one who makes God known to us, then

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[91] See, for instance, Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:xv–xx; and Crisp and Sanders, "Introduction," 14. Note also a current objection to this view of East and West as outlined by Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 135–136.

[92] Sánchez, "More Promise than Ambiguity," 19; Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:200–202.

[93] Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 94.

[94] From Photius onwards, the basic objections from the Eastern church are that Latin theology thinks of God as a single and philosophically simple essence and that this essence precedes God's existence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The East objects that God's personal/hypostatic existence is reduced to the concept of mutual relations between the three persons. And they fear that attributing procession of the Spirit to the Father and the Son confuses the hypostatic characters of Father and Son and so falls into Sabellianism. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 60–61.

[95] "As time went on, it became increasingly clear that the *Filioque* dispute was not a discussion on words—for there was a sense in which both sides would agree to say that the Spirit proceeds 'from the Son'—but on the issue of whether the hypostatic existence of the Persons of the Trinity could be reduced to their internal relations, as the post-Augustinian West would admit, or whether the primary Christian experience was that of a Trinity of Persons, whose personal existence was irreducible to their common essence. The question was whether tri-personality or consubstantiality was the first and basic content of Christian religious experience." Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 94.

Lutherans reason that his Spirit must be the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son from eternity. Confessional Lutherans have good reasons to confess the *filioque* as outlined above. These arguments and the scriptural points they express help us recognize better the christocentric confession of the triune God in whom we trust for salvation and life.

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Theological Observer

Christian Reflections on the Sanctity of Life after *Dobbs*

The *Dobbs* decision has given much to be thankful for. The U. S. Supreme Court essentially abandoned its previous undemocratic overreach.

Recall that 1973's *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* undermined the sanctity of human life. They mandated abortion access across the country. They invited termination anytime during gestation and for any asserted reason. They allowed, but did not oblige, legal protections for babies, and only after viability when little ones can survive outside mother's womb. They arbitrarily divided pregnancy into trimesters and limited abortion restrictions ("the state's interest" in safeguarding fetal life) to the third, beyond the twenty-eighth of forty weeks. Of course, viability itself depends on medical intervention; advances in knowledge and technology over the last fifty years have enabled infants to endure earlier premature births, so that now about fifty percent of children born at twenty-two weeks will live.

In June of 2022, the Court's 6-3 majority corrected its earlier error. They recognized that popular rhetoric rather than legal analysis (the Constitution nowhere enumerates or even conclusively implies a "right to abortion") was propping up the jurisprudence. In *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, they extricated the government from "bench legislating," leaving it to the representative lawmaking assemblies to regulate abortion. The people's elected officials may now establish or relax the boundaries according to the public's will. To be sure, scientific reality, clear reason, and the common good clearly demand more. A truly free, fair, and safe society outlaws abortions altogether. But while *Dobbs* stops short of securing justice in entirety, it steps in the right direction.

What does this mean for the Christian church? We rejoice that God intervenes. He has mercifully interrupted and restrained the trajectory of human immorality. He has straightened crooked ways to conform more closely to his own inviolable law. We also owe appreciation to five decades of faithful veteran voices. These preceding generations have braved repeated disappointment and ridicule to speak truth and show love in advocating the sanctity of every human life. In their steadfast witness, they have delivered a precious gift to us and our posterity. Moreover, we remember that salvation does not come from government. Our comfort and motivation do not derive from laws. The atonement of Jesus Christ alone will make all things right, as sure as his resurrection from the dead. No matter who holds office or how they decide, the Lord our God reigns. Only at his pleasure and permission do they proceed this way or that.

Yet much remains at stake. Surprise pregnancies will occur, and abortions will still happen. They have transpired throughout recorded history. As I write, 9 states (Alaska, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin) have prohibited all abortions (excepting procedures to save the mother's life) since *Dobbs*. Four more (Idaho, Mississippi, Oklahoma, West Virginia) sanction abortions only in situations involving mother's life, sexual assault, or lethal fetal anomaly. Five states (Arizona, Indiana, North Dakota, Utah, Wyoming) have similar provisions currently under injunction during litigation, and a further four (Georgia, Iowa, Ohio, South Carolina) forbid abortions (with one or more of the above exceptions) after detection of an embryonic heartbeat (about eighteen days' gestation). But seven states only disallow abortions after fifteen (Florida), twenty (Montana, North Carolina), twenty-two (Kansas, Nebraska), or twenty-four weeks (New Hampshire, Pennsylvania)—the presumed points of fetal pain sensation or viability. Be aware that this information may have changed.

And the other twenty-one states effectively authorize abortions until delivery. Any stipulations exist only as technicalities evaded by a concession for "mother's health" defined so broadly as to encompass any justification. Some of them have expanded abortion access and funding (including travel, lodging, and even childcare for residents and, in some cases, outside clients) or codified it into their constitutions (this remains an active initiative at the federal level as well). Though the changes have caused sixty-six facilities in fifteen states to cease abortion services, the Department of Veterans Affairs has directed its hospitals and clinics to offer them (even for civilians, and even in states with laws to the contrary).

In addition, use of pharmaceuticals for at-home abortions continues to increase. Chemical abortions now account for over half of them all. They also come with higher rates of complications (including hemorrhage, retained tissue, sepsis, subsequent surgery, and death) than instrument abortions. Most abortionists who prescribe them provide no follow-up, instead directing patients to their local emergency room if adversities arise. Federal regulations no longer require in-person consultation with a physician and instead allow videoconferencing. This prevents the doctor from screening for life-threatening ectopic pregnancy, which abortion chemicals do not remove. Women's magazines and White House websites are instructing adolescent girls (as young as eleven years) how to obtain and administer the drugs. Mail-order pharmacies and activist organizations are already distributing them to locations where abortion has become illegal. Public universities in places like California, Florida, and Illinois have committed to having their student health services dispense them. Pending lawsuits are presently appealing to make them available at pharmacies nationwide. Reports of women being deceived or compelled to take abortifacient drugs without their consent continue to accumulate.

Indeed, misinformation always and everywhere accompanies abortion. It has certainly proliferated in the wake of the *Dobbs* findings. Contrary to widespread media claims, neither the verdict nor any ensuing statutes obstruct medical attention to miscarriages or ectopic pregnancies. They all contain explicit exemptions for measures meant to save a woman's life. However, such interventions never necessitate abortion—the intentional ending of unborn life—though they may call for premature delivery—separating baby from mother's body (and reasonably foreseeing the child's death soon thereafter despite best efforts otherwise).

No jurisdictions have approved or even entertained policies that prosecute mothers for their abortions (almost all laws against abortion specifically excuse them from punishment). Pregnancy and delivery do not cause more injury and mortality than abortions do (though nobody ought to dismiss concerns about maternal health for that reason). Forbidding abortions does not force pregnancy (biology does that, and only after intercourse, which remains elective in the vast majority of circumstances). Sexual assault does not make one automatically desire an abortion or benefit from it (many victims report either that abortion compounded their trauma or that childbearing contributed to their recovery). Neither does adverse prenatal diagnosis. Life-affirming pregnancy resource centers do not deceive about the services they offer (though they may optimize their web pages to appear in search results for "abortion"), and they do not emotionally manipulate (though they may make women aware of alternatives and assistance, and they may welcome women to explore and express their emotions). Sanctity-of-life advocates and communities do care about and care for children, women, couples, and families after birth (though they may endorse different social welfare priorities and approaches than certain abortion supporters do). No scientific or judicial dispute exists about when a human life begins (though debates do rage on about what makes a human life worthy of preserving).

Furthermore, abortion does not pose the only peril to the sanctity of human life. Even if we succeed in banishing the practice from our land, evil will discover or invent new avenues. The same "sexual revolution" that has undermined procreation and marriage is now obscuring the worth and purpose of every individual body God has made male or female. Promotion of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia is corroding regard for persons with disabilities or terminal diagnoses. Embryocidal experimentation—whether genetic editing, cross-species hybridizing, stem cell harvesting, in vitro fertilization, or vaccine manufacture—is taking life even where abortion is not. Many hormonal contraceptives also bring about the death of embryos by preventing implantation. Investing animals and environments with personhood rights (or preferring pets to kids) diminishes the dignity of human beings, and often deliberately.

So the church has ample opportunities to confess, teach, and show mercy. Advancing and defending the sanctity of every human life proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ and puts it into practice. Whatever political controversies, public opinions, or personal choices these matters may intersect, they concern God's truth and Christ's love above all. The Bible clearly and consistently declares that his grace gives human lives infinite significance, and that no one else's age, appearance, or ability (not even one's own) impairs or improves it. The word of the Lord extends the creating work of Almighty God and the redeeming labors of his incarnate Son to fetuses and embryos. It defines unborn children as persons, designates all children as precious, and forbids killing any of them (not even one's own). And the Christian church has upheld these convictions since her inception, not as peripheral but as central to her message and mission.

So civic action offers ongoing opportunities. We track bills and contact lawmakers, advocate, and vote in order to love neighbors. We research, educate, publicize, and dialogue in order to serve the least of these. We build relationships with acquaintances, engage in conversations with colleagues, and have interactions with relatives and friends. We listen to hurts and hopes. We identify and affirm common ground. We volunteer at charities and donate to them.

We aspire to do more than changing legislation, more even than changing behaviors. We aim to change hearts, to receive every neighbor as gift and privilege, to embrace the one right in front of us as brother or sister with whom we may enjoy every blessing the heavenly Father promises to those who trust his Son. We delight in birthdays and anniversaries. We commend husbands and wives. We applaud parents and children. We welcome widows and orphans. We speak courage, show mercy, and share life. We prepare for what to say, what to give, what to do when our congregations and households encounter surprise pregnancy. We proclaim forgiveness to those deceived into viewing death as their solution, and we apply grace to any grieving or guilty over the abortion of their own children. We pray for the Father to look with favor upon mothers, fathers, pastors, and parishioners. We pray for the Son to intervene among elected officials and medical professionals. We pray for the Spirit to visit journalists and judges. We dedicate ourselves to civil discourse and community, justice and safety, truth and logic. And we await and hasten the day when the sanctity of life prevails.

Michael W. Salemink
Executive Director, Lutherans for Life

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Book Reviews

***One Lord, Two Hands? Essays on the Theology of the Two Kingdoms.* Edited by Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2021. 487 pages. Softcover. $39.99.**

"The man who considers something to be necessary which appears to others to be of little help, or even to be pernicious, does not hesitate to repeat the necessary teaching and is ready to make clear its necessity by summing up its essential elements. At the same time, precisely from the standpoint of necessity we cannot stop at summary repetition." Such are the words used by Gerhard Ebeling, maybe the most prominent German Luther scholar in the second half of the twentieth century, in the introduction to his essay on page 12 of the book at hand, an essay which first was published in German in 1963 in one of Ebeling's early books.

After having published voluminous collections of essays on equally controversial topics, such as women pastors (CPH, 2009) and closed communion (CPH, 2017), Harrison and Pless have ventured to equip the church of our day with another theological treasure chest which will prove its benefits for those who read, use, and apply it. Again, the editors added a question mark to the title of their book, making clear from the outset that important theological topics always lead us into conflict. "No other aspect of Luther's theology has been so fiercely attacked as this doctrine. Where Luther drew a clear line between spiritual and temporal authority, and expressly emphasized that under no circumstances should these two realms be confused, this has been interpreted as if he had thereby opened the door to the secularization of society and given a completely free hand to the state. Some critics have gone so far as to see in this doctrine the ultimate root of the National Socialist ideology" (3).

This is no surprise, at all, when we take into account that conflict is intrinsic to the book's topic anyway, since we are dealing with partially connected, partially overlapping, partially opposing spheres, realms, kingdoms, and powers. There is, after all, not only the kingdom to the left, and the kingdom to the right, but also the devil's kingdom, seeking to destroy and confuse both kingdoms (18–20, 117, 127–128). And there is the angels' kingdom, seeking to protect both kingdoms for the sake of mankind (128–130). Kenneth Hagen ends his excellent contribution with this magnificent statement: "Luther frames his understanding of the kingdoms with basically two horizontal and two vertical kingdoms. The frame is under siege by the devil and guided by the angels" (131). One may consult and pray Luther's morning and evening prayer for this aspect. As long as the eschaton is still a matter of the

future, the church and every responsible theologian will not escape the obligation to prove on the basis of the New Testament and the gospel (5) the necessity of our theological doctrines, especially when they are disputed or left behind by many. This is done, as Franz Lau says, "by pitting Scripture against Scripture" (36) and by pondering the biblical testimonies in all their fullness, including Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17; Acts 5:29; John 18:22ff; and Matthew 5:38ff (35–36, 77). It is also noteworthy that the relevance of the biblical distinction of God's right hand and God's left hand is overwhelmingly obvious in both above mentioned volumes by Harrison and Pless.

The distinction of the two hands of God, which throughout the ages are active and creative in the two "kingdoms" on earth, on one side is surprisingly clear (and clarifying our sense of reality, 13) and simple, and on the other side is deeply complex and permeates the Scriptures as well as the confessions of the church and thereby, of course, also any theology which claims to be biblical, confessional, catholic, Lutheran. Distinction, not confusion, nor separation (9), is the Lutheran solution for the relationship between both kingdoms, between the *iustitia civilis* and the *iustitia evangelii*, between the *coram mundo* relationship and the *coram Deo* relationship of mankind (26–29). Not only in this respect, the distinction of the two kingdoms is a result and a necessary implication of the distinction of law and gospel (14–18).

The complexity as well as the simplicity can be discovered in important passages of the Lutheran Confessions (Edmund Schlink's excellent essay, taken from an English translation of his "Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften," covers them all, 197–235), like Augsburg Confession Articles 16 and 28, the explanation of the Fourth Commandment and the Fourth Petition in the Catechisms, including the Table of Duties (433–442), parts of the Apology and the Smalcald Articles, and of course Formula of Concord Article 10 on the "Adiaphora" (193). The triune God as Creator and Saviour in his omnipresence and omniscience works in both realms, spheres, or kingdoms. In the world, that is, in the nations and peoples therein, God works through the law and through political human agents for the sake of preserving the world and protecting mankind against the evil one, who wants to destroy all human endeavours to organize common life by throwing everything into chaos and cruelty. In the church, that is, among God's chosen people, God works through the gospel and the office of the ministry for the sake of saving ungodly sinners and reconciling them with their God and Creator through the precious blood and suffering of Christ. This also is directed against the evil one, who wants to destroy faith and love and the church through persecution and false doctrine. Wherever both kingdoms are confused, the theology of the cross is lost and a variant of the theology of glory creeps in (156–163).

The two kingdoms, thus, can be perceived and distinguished by looking at the means through which God works (the word here and the sword there), by looking at the goals which God brings about (temporal bliss here, eternal life there), by looking at the human agents, the "means and intermediaries" (33), through which God acts as through his "larvae" and "masks" (33) (political authorities here, the preachers of the gospel there). The very fact that both the incarnation of the Son of God and the work of the Holy Spirit through the mission of the church take place in time and space makes the relation between both realms and kingdoms inescapable for each generation. Manifold are the relations and touchpoints between both kingdoms. Manifold are the concrete manifestations of this relationship throughout history, from enmity, persecution, overreaching into the respective opposite realm from both sides, to peaceful mutual toleration, support, and even cooperation. And interestingly enough, the kingdom of the left can even serve as a metaphor for visualizing aspects of the kingdom of the right (130).

The complexity of the topic can already be discovered when Luther's statements and positions are examined. Quite naturally, there are certain writings of the reformer which are named and elaborated upon by almost every scholar, discussing our topic from a historical perspective:

> "Von weltlicher Obrigkeit/On Temporal Authority" (1523)—Nygren (5), Bornkamm (55, 103), Alfsvåg (79), Hagen (125–127), Slenczka (141–145), Stephenson (176–185), and Nestingen (189).
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> "Letter to the German Nobility" (1520)—Lau (32), Bornkamm (55, 92), and Slenczka (134–136).
>
> "Whether Soldiers Can Live in a State of Salvation" (1526)—Bornkamm (103), Hagen (125–127), Slenczka (141–151), and Nestingen (189).
>
> "Galatians" and "The Bondage of the Will"—Hagen (122–125) and Slenczka, (149–151).

There are differences of emphasis between the early reformer, who fought against papal theocracy, and the mature reformer, who fought also against the enthusiasts who wanted not only to terminate the abuse of power in both realms but who wanted to overthrow any authority on earth, thereby only producing chaos and bloodshed (7, 35, 79, 189, 334–350). To be sure, in his later years, Luther did not only talk about the "Two Kingdoms" but at least as prevalent also about the "Three Estates" or "Three Orders": the Church, the Family or Household, and the State, as distinct, related, and interdependent agents of God's preserving power (81–88). There were also situations when Luther was not able to make himself heard, both from the rulers and the ruled, like in the time of the Peasants' War. And there was the question when and where legitimate resistance against ungodly authorities ends

and when and where illegitimate rebellion starts (145–149). This was the case during Luther's lifetime and even more so after his death. The Magdeburg Confession, unfortunately, did not make it into the Book of Concord. Nevertheless, it is a highlight of sound Lutheran theology, which is made very clear in the essay by Wade Johnston ("We Must Obey God Rather than Men: The Lutheran Legacy of Resistance," 395–405). Concerning some of the aberrations of the old and tired Luther, John R. Stephenson gives some marvellous advice when he writes: "The two kingdoms doctrine affords the most efficacious remedy for Luther's own excesses" (187).

All authors whose contributions the editors have chosen to include into this volume lived most of their years in the second half of the twentieth century, some (though not many) still making their contributions in the twenty-first century. The division into two parts ("I. Foundations in the Theology of the Lutheran Reformation", and "II. Implications for Doctrine and Practice") is not fully convincing, since some articles in the second part would better fit in the first. But that might be a matter of taste.

In the first part, the foundations are laid by two authors from Scandinavia (Anders Nygren from Sweden, 1949; Knut Alfsvåg from Norway, 2005), four from Germany (Gerhard Ebeling, 1963; Franz Lau, 1965; Heinrich Bornkamm with one essay from 1966 and two more contributions from his book [German, 1953; English: 1966]; Notger Slenczka, 2012), and Kenneth Hagen from North America (1995). In the second part, thirteen contributions by North American authors from different Lutheran churches follow (Steven Paulson, John R. Stephenson, James A. Nestingen, Zachary Oedewaldt, Gregory Seltz, Erling Teigen, Kenneth F. Korby, Paul T. McCain, Peter Brock, Gregory P. Schulz, Wade Johnston, Matthew C. Harrison, and John T. Pless). This is supplemented by four prominent German names with rather older contributions (Hermann Sasse, 1932; Edmund Schlink, 1961; Jobst Schöne, 1969; Werner Elert, 1940). The biggest surprise for a present-day German reader is the appearance of Bornkamm ("Luther on the Nation"; "Luther on the State") and Elert with the extensive eschatological chapters from his Dogmatics "Der christliche Glaube." Both works are not really present any more in German theology or in the consciousness of present-day German theologians. But they sure are worth reading.

Concerning the application of the doctrine of the two kingdoms in certain historical situations, it certainly is no surprise that the editors included Hermann Sasse's magnificent essay from 1932 "The Church and the Political Powers of Our Time" into this collection (236–256). Sasse, one year before the "great dictator" seized power, clearly and openly stated that Point 24 of the Nazi party program was in no way compatible with the biblical doctrine of man's sinfulness and would—if

implemented into state law—necessarily result in the persecution of the church. Zachary Oedewaldt (257–268) comments on this text by showing that both, the state and the church, had lost their specific identity at the outset of this conflict and that utilitarianism in both realms had driven out the quest for the truth (see also Brock's essay, 372–375). Oedewaldt writes, concerning the time of Nazi rule in Germany: "It is not that the people turned their back on the church, but rather the church turned its back on them" (261).

This, to be honest, sends shivers through the bones of the reviewer, since my observations and my resulting sentiment concerning the many ways the churches and their representatives in their vast majority at least in Germany acted during the years of the COVID pandemic in the 2020s, is exactly the same: "It is not that the people turned their back on the church, but rather the church turned its back on them." This happened in a situation which could be fittingly labelled a backslide into "medieval" practices. Thus it can be learned in one of Bornkamm's contributions, when he writes concerning the endeavour of many medieval rulers in German territories to overreach into the church (111): "Without further ado, they made bold to interfere with church matters in emergencies (and it is always easy to construe any situation as an emergency)."

Concerning application to further historical and political situations, the reader of Jobst Schöne's contribution will find interesting glimpses into the situation of the divided city of Berlin in post-war Germany with the communist East facing the capitalist West who was about to experience not only the revolution of the students (308–319). Only rare are explicit applications in our volume to our present time, which in many respects is a time of harvesting what had started with the not only sexual revolution in the 1960s. Some of the authors mention the relevance of the doctrine of the two kingdoms for topics like sexual ethics (including "gay marriage") or abortion (85, 304–307, 376–394).

Steven Paulson, in his outstanding essay, takes this a step further. He does so by showing how the church, if it is faithful to the theology of the cross, proves itself to be a nuisance for the champions of "liberal democracy." "Today the state particularly overreaches" (163). This is the case especially since the state nowadays without much ado confuses "the government's powers of recognition with those of God himself. In short, people need their Creator's recognition; they need His justification. The problem in the old world is that the only conceivable way people possess to get God's recognition is through works of the Law, and so such people force the state to give them what God will not" (168).

> The state cannot seem to reject religious zealotry without throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and against all fears to the contrary, it is not the church that encroaches upon the state, but the state encroaches upon the church. . . .

> The state religion decides it can stand churchly laws and traditions of one sort or another as long as these laws and traditions are kept private and are not pushed on others in the public square – but it cannot stand the *divine election of the Gospel.* The Gospel removes the false hope of the general faith that the Law actually saves. Thereupon is the actual end of history. History's end comes not with a bang, but a whimper of gentle approval of the bourgeoisie that we have reached the best of all possible worlds in the form of liberal democracy and the freedoms it—and it alone—gives. The state will set you free. If Christ came to them and said, "I will set you free," they would say: "But we have never been slaves to anyone, we are our own father. Who are You to claim we are unfree and need some savior other than ourselves?" Yet not only is this false faith produced by a liberal democracy appointed to destroy the preaching of the Gospel—to persecute it—it is positively and necessarily appointed to death instead of life in the old world, to nihilism instead of benign neglect. The government becomes preoccupied with structures of death, removing what it considers those who refuse its equality: abortion, the culmination of the right to medical care in the form of euthanasia, the redefinition of marriage as letting people love whomever they want (as long as there is the law of adult consent to enter a self-interested contract). . . . The state that authorizes itself also establishes its own power to make new laws as the only divine power left in the world. (168, 170–171)

Paulson takes the reader far beyond historical knowledge and theological correctness. He draws conclusions for the present situation which the churches in the Western world have settled in so comfortably and numb. Paulson's observations hurt, ache, and are troublesome. But they—like the doctrine of the two kingdoms which he very wisely applies in his essay—serve as salutary medicine. Paulson's essay should be read and pondered over and over again.

There are many reasons to be thankful to the editors that they have undertaken the important service to publish this book. May it serve as a helpful and enlightening contribution for the challenges which face the church in our day and age. May many Christians, theologians, and ministers of the church, Lutheran and beyond, experience, what Matthew C. Harrison writes so wonderfully about the teaching of the "Two Kingdoms": "It is the particular greatness of Luther's teaching that it frees the conscience, and stiffens the backbone when needed, in the context of life's manifold and frequent challenges" (407–408).

Armin Wenz
Professor for New Testament and Biblical Theology
Lutherische Theologische Hochschule, Oberursel, Germany

***Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services.* Edited by Paul J. Grime. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2022. 1,052 pages. Hardcover. $99.99.**

Are the "worship wars" of the 1980s and 1990s over, or have they gone underground? Regardless of how you answer that question, the publication of *LSB: Companion to the Services* marks a turning point in the worship history of the LCMS. Gone are the days of frantically trying to stay ahead of the onslaught of contemporary Christian music. There was a time in our history when "Join the Resistance: Support the Liturgy" was both a slogan and a T-shirt sold by CPH. It would now seem that the liturgy is no longer the resistance, but the establishment.

This is, in the words of the Preface, the "everything else" that accompanies the two-volume *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns*, which came out in 2019. From psalmody to the orders of service, this covers everything to do with *LSB* apart from the hymns themselves.

Its publication as a separate volume is but one of many markers that set these volumes (taken together) as a maturing of our church's ongoing conversation regarding liturgy and worship. There was one volume that accompanied *The Lutheran Hymnal*, one volume after *Lutheran Worship,* and various volumes that came out in the nineties and early two thousands. *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* (CPH, 1993) is as much an apologia for a Lutheran approach to worship as it is a commentary on *LW* itself. Then at the end of the decade came *Through the Church the Song Goes On* (CPH, 1999), a volume designed to prepare for a new hymnal. When this volume was produced, A. L. Barry was president, and it seemed as though the course to a new hymnal would be fairly easy sailing.

Some storms cannot be foreseen.

A. L. Barry's death in 2001 began a decade of uncertainty when it came to the synod and worship. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick was elected in the summer of 2001, and the smooth sailing leading to *Lutheran Service Book* turned into three years of rocky waters, storms big and small, and culminated in *LSB* being passed at the convention by a remarkable margin (92 percent, as I recall).

LSB was actually released in 2006, and since that time we have seen a collection of companion volumes, all with the signature wine/burgundy color. This volume marks (I believe) the final volume that will come out as a part of the *LSB* Hymnal Project, twenty-three years after *Through the Church the Song Goes On* was published. Now that is a hymnal legacy!

In many respects, it is not one book but six. There are a series of prefatory essays that set the stage, and then sections on the church year, the Divine Service, the daily office(s), and pastoral acts (e.g., Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, and the Burial Rites), culminating with a commentary on services for Lent and Holy

Week. Each one of these sections could be a volume in its own right. Taken together as one volume, it makes the substantial list price a little less painful (MSRP is $99.99).

The contributors to the volume include many of the individuals who were instrumental in shaping the structure and content of the services in *LSB*. They include Paul J. Grime (who also served as the editor), Thomas M. Winger, William M. Cwirla, Kent J. Burreson, Timothy C. J. Quill, Scott E. Johnson, Andrew S. Gerike, D. Richard Stuckwisch Jr., Mark P. Surburg, Frank J. Pies, and Randy K. Asburry.

It would be difficult to review each of the sections of this volume and give them justice. What follows may be considered a dip into the waters of this fantastic work.

The volume begins with an essay on the liturgy by Thomas M. Winger, longtime professor and now president at our sister seminary in St. Catharines, Ontario. Unlike *LWHP*, the tone of the essay reflects how matters of worship are more settled than they were a generation ago. He handles everything from the sacrament/sacrifice to adiaphora in matters of ceremony. The result is an approach to Lutheran worship that is centered around Jesus Christ as the one who serves (Luke 22:27), and how the doctrine of Christ, his person and work, shapes everything about Lutheran worship.

One of the more adventurous essays in the volume is by Kent J. Burreson, who served as the dean of the chapel at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for many years. Entitled "Soaked in Christ: The Gift of Symbolism," Dr. Burreson does us a great service by introducing the Lutheran reader to the symbolic world, and tries to redeem the use of symbolism and its relationship to ceremony. Because of our objections to a symbolic understanding of Christ's presence in the Supper, *symbolic* in Lutheran circles has come to mean "not real." While that is true when dealing with dogmatic questions around the Lord's Supper, understanding how imagery and symbolism fits in our liturgical life together is enormously helpful. It is about time that we start talking about this more in the LCMS, and not just leave it to Gordon Lathrop and others in the ELCA to be the only voices on the topic.

The commentaries on the various services are delightful. They manage to give historical context, biblical and doctrinal logic, and solid pastoral advice on what and how things are in *LSB*, without going too far overboard on either critiquing what is different or turning into a sort of liturgical hagiography.

Probably the biggest criticism of this volume will come not from what is said, but over what is not said. It does not really address the phenomenon of contemporary worship. It does not try to answer questions about musical style, at least not at a larger level. The goal of this book is not to critique the American worship scene or any particular tradition. The goal is to provide context and

commentary on the services in *LSB*. As long as that is understood by the reader, it will be well.

One other minor quibble. The list price of $99.99 is substantial, whereas the Kindle ebook price is $84.99. As a reference volume, this is one of the works that would make a lot of sense to have as some kind of print/ebook package. Please, CPH?

I was a young pastor when the synod in convention passed *LSB* in 2004. As a delegate to that convention, I had an inkling of what good could come from a hymnal that would work to unify the practice and doctrine of the LCMS. What I did not know was how much *LSB* would shape my own ministry and the ministry of many still to come.

This volume is a culmination of work which began in the mid-1990s with the "Real Life Worship Conferences" all over the country. What began as a slogan has become the water we swim in as pastors and teachers.

Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services will not answer every liturgical ephemera about our hymnal. That is what Google is for. But this volume will help set us on the path to receiving the gifts of God in the Divine Liturgy with grace and reverence. And that is a very, very good thing.

Todd A. Peperkorn

***Himnario Luterano*. Santiago: Editorial de La Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile, 2021. 1075 pages. Hardcover.**

La iglesia cristiana es litúrgica. So begins the much-needed and greatly awaited *Himnario Luterano* (*HL*). The liturgical church lives by the word of God—receiving his gifts and saying back to him what he first says to us. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs redound to his glory with much thanksgiving. To lead this praise and adoration, the church takes into her use a hymnal. Our brothers and sisters from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay undertook this weighty responsibility with reverent and deliberate care, giving us *HL* to guide the liturgical life of Spanish-speaking Lutherans around the world.

HL sits within a Spanish-language hymnal tradition closely resembling our own English hymnals. In 1964, *Culto Cristiano* (*CC*) attempted to unite Spanish-speaking Lutherans around the world under a common hymnal. Four different church bodies from five Hispanic countries, along with the LCMS and the Latin-American committee of the LWF, all contributed towards the first universal hymnal for Spanish-speaking Lutherans. A similar demand arose in the mid-1980s, leading to ¡*Cantad Al Señor!* (*CAS*) in 1991. *HL* seeks again to unify the Spanish-speaking

Lutheran world under one common hymnal—*una maravillosa obra de gran impacto*.

While *CC* shares much affinity with *TLH*, as *CAS* with *LW* (and not just that the first two are red and the next blue), so also, *HL* immediately presents itself as the *LSB en español.* It looks, feels, and roughly follows the same layout. They share the same cover design, fonts, and images. The rites, such as Baptism and Private Confession, are nearly identical (however, *HL* does not include any rites for Confirmation, Weddings, or Funerals). Those familiar with *LSB* will find *HL* a larger (heavier!) version of the same—except, of course, the different language.

But *HL* offers more than a mere translation. While *LSB* provided a scaffolding, *HL* reveals a content clearly driven by its own South American context. Similar to *LSB*, *HL* offers five Divine Service options. The first comes from *CAS*; the second from *CC*; the third from the Argentinian hymnal, *Himnario Evangelico Luterano* (1982), which adapts *LSB* Setting 3; the fourth comes from Chile's *Himnario Luterano* (2018); and the fifth loosely adopts Luther's *Deutsche Messe*. Other interesting differences include the following:

HL's unique presentation of the Small Catechism, which not only differs in translation from the recent CPH edition, but also reverses the order in the fifth chief part, placing "Office of the Keys" prior to the Short Form of Confession.

After every salutation, *HL* retains the traditional response: "*y con tu espíritu* [and with thy Spirit]."

HL includes all of the appointed collects and proper prefaces.

HL provides no list of commemorations, moves the Feast for St. Mary from August 15 to September 8, recommends violet before blue for the Advent season, omits rose for *Laetare*, leaves white as the third option for Maundy Thursday, and has the Last Sunday white.

HL includes in its prayers a particular collect "*Por las diaconisas* [For Deaconesses]," which reveals their enduring impact on the mission in South America.

HL has new psalm tones (often with guitar chords).

HL includes about 93 psalms, 8 of which are partial, and 15 provide antiphons.

Perhaps we should also say something about the hymns. Like *CC,* the first hymn is "Oh, ven! Oh, ven Emanuel!" (*HL* 371). Unlike *CC,* however, *HL* includes all seven stanzas as well as the "O Antiphons." The whopping 669 hymns in *HL* eclipse the 412 hymns in *CC* (including the 1976 appendix, which brought it to 477 hymns). The improvement exceeds the number. Compared to *CC's* 11 Gerhardt hymns (six

of which were added in the later CC appendix), *HL* boasts 15. The contrast grows with Luther: *CC* had 6 (adding two more in 1976), while *HL* has 31. The massive translational effort must be noted. For instance, Sergio Fritzler accounts for 46 of the hymns, half of which were original contributions, the other half are translations—chiefly of German hymns like Luther and Gerhardt. Thanks to Fritzler, *HL* now includes for the first time "Savior of the Nations, Come" (385), Decius's "Lamb of God, Pure and Holy" (453), Luther's "Christ Lay in Death's Strong Bands" (510), and "Jesus Thy Boundless Love to Me" (919).

Finally, a more mundane word must be said of the book itself. Due to COVID limitations, the production is bulkier than desired. Another printing (on thinner paper) will help. In the process, the pages can also be reduced with a reduction in graphic size (particularly the musical lines in Divine Service Setting Two and the Psalms). Speaking of the Psalms and a second printing, any expense of size should be sacrificed in order to include the whole Psalter!

These Southern Cone churches—and we, in the LCMS as well—pray that through this work the Lord will produce great fruit for his kingdom. *Esperamos que, como resultado de la publicación del* Himnario Luterano*, la iglesia hispano parlante encuentre un recurso de testimonio, fortaleza, unidad, esperanza e inspiración.*

Though retailers do not currently stock this hymnal, Lutheran Heritage Foundation makes this resource available for a donation. Churches with Hispanic Ministries will find this and many valuable Spanish-language resources at www.lhfmissions.org/spanish/request-lhfs-spanish-books/.

Rev. Dr. Geoffrey R. Boyle

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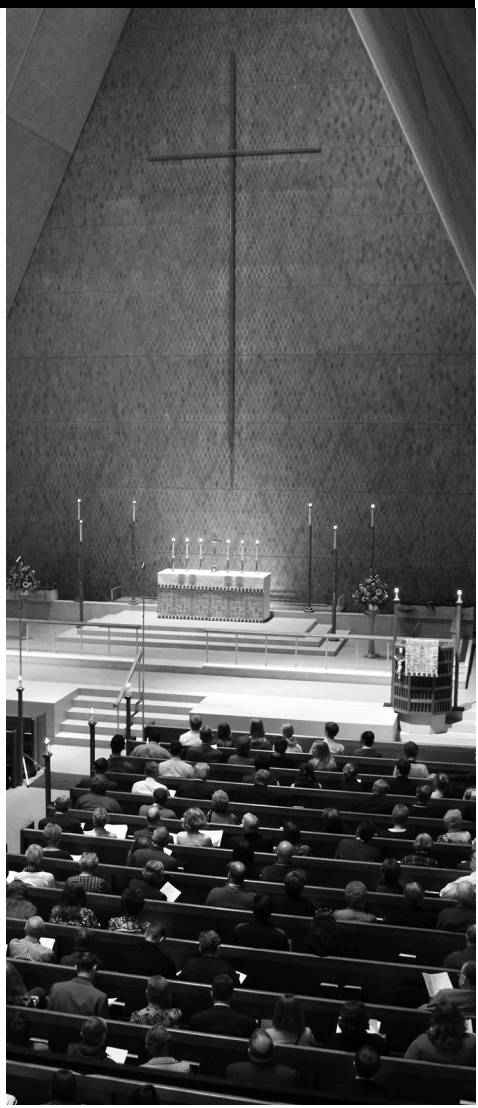

Open to all, Good Shepherd Institute hosts an annual conference that focuses on pastoral theology and sacred music. The conference includes plenary presentations alongside sectionals focused on a specific topic, offering attendees the opportunity to choose how they would like to focus their learning. Music is an important aspect of the Good Shepherd Institute; the first two evenings conclude with a special service of music, with regular daily chapel services and other recitals throughout the conference.

Of course, no Good Shepherd Institute would be complete without the annual organ recital. Each year a special guest organist performs a recital which is followed by a Choral Vespers service.

For more information or to register online, please visit ctsfw.edu/GSI.

Books Received

1 Peter: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching. By Timothy E. Miller and Bryan Murawski. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2022. 336 pages. Hardcover. $32.99.

40 Questions about Women in Ministry. By Sue Edwards and Kelley Mathews. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2022. 336 pages. Paperback. $24.99.

A Guide to Theological Reflection: A Fresh Approach for Practical Ministry Courses and Theological Field Education. By Jim L. Wilson and Earl Waggoner. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020. 185 pages. Paperback. $18.99.

Church Revitalization: A Pastoral Guide to Church Renewal. By Russell N. Small. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2023. 240 pages. Paperback. $23.99.

Divine Love Theory: How the Trinity is the Source and Foundation of Morality. By Adam Lloyd Johnson. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2023. 336 pages. Paperback. $22.99.

Ecclesiastes: A Reflective Exposition. By Thomas Miersma. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2022. 246 pages. Hardcover. $27.99.

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh: New Clues for an Old Problem. By Kenneth Berding. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2023. 280 pages. Paperback. $29.99.

Redeeming Our Thinking about History: A God-Centered Approach. By Vern S. Poythress. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. 256 pages. Paperback. $24.99.

The Church and the World: What It Means to Follow Christ in a Post-Christian World. By Robert W. Wheeler. Sequim, WA: Ireland Farms Writer Services, 2023. 124 pages. Paperback. $8.00.

The Politics of Ritual. By Molly Farneth. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. 232 pages. Paperback. $99.95.

What Grace Is: Meditations on the Mercy of Our God. By Craig A. Evans. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022. 136 pages. Hardcover. $16.99.

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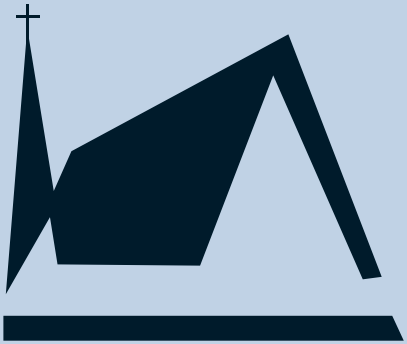

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