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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

This long overdue issue of *Lutheran Theological Review* is prefaced with the editors' humble apologies that the journal of our two seminary faculties has fallen so unconscionably far behind schedule. Our firm resolve to get back on track requires both diligent editorial labour on our part and also some help from our readership. At the turn of the new century our two faculties are undergoing staffing changes, a factor which exacerbates the existing difficulty of procuring sufficient publishable material from a small body of teaching theologians. In order for *Lutheran Theological Review* to catch up and flourish, we need a plentiful supply of theological essays and therefore invite our readers to direct to the editors papers suitable for these pages.

The editors join with Dr Norman Threinen in extending to Mrs Karen Vahl and her sons Christopher and Corey our condolences on the passing of our late colleague, Dr Ronald Vahl, in whose memory this issue is printed. *Requiescat in pace.*

JRS

Pentecost 2000

RONALD W. VAHL
A TRIBUTE

Ronald W. Vahl, child of God through Baptism in the Triune God, ordained into the Holy Ministry, faithful Professor of Theology at Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton, for fifteen years, died in the Lord suddenly on 11 May 1999 at the age of 62 years. As a member with him of the founding faculty of the seminary and as his colleague on the seminary faculty for the entire fifteen years that he served in this calling, I count it an honour and privilege to write a few words of tribute to this servant for Jesus' sake.

My association with Dr Vahl goes back to September 1956 when both of us enrolled at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He transferred to that seminary from Concordia Junior College, Fort Wayne; I from Concordia College, Edmonton. We spent four years at the seminary plus a year of vicarage and both of us remained for an additional year of graduate study. With a class of about 200 students from across North America, we did not get to know each other very well during those years. But we had the same professors and sat in some of the same classes. Our paths crossed a couple of times in subsequent years, but after 1962, our careers diverged. He became an academician, teaching in Bronxville, New York, and Seward, Nebraska; I accepted a parish call to St. Peter's, Edmonton and then served in an administrative post with the Lutheran Council in Canada in Winnipeg. During those years, we both earned our Th.D. degree: he in Old Testament in 1979, and I in Historical Theology in 1980. Then in 1984, we were both recruited by Dr Ted Janzow to join him in a brand new venture, the launching of this seminary. In the first faculty meeting which lasted two weeks, we, with President Janzow, laid the foundation of much of what is today Concordia Lutheran Seminary, consciously shaping our seminary after our *alma mater* in St. Louis.

The many years during which Dr Vahl served in the classroom and on the faculties of educational institutions were invaluable to our seminary as it developed. He had a sense of how academia worked. He knew what had to be done so that our seminary would gain credibility within academic circles. It was largely through his consistent efforts over the years that our seminary received full accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools in May 1998, a year before his death.

Because of our differing temperaments and ministry experiences, Dr Vahl and I often approached faculty issues in very different ways. However, because we kept in remembrance the Lord whom we both served, and because we were committed to the same goals, our differing views complemented each other and helped to uncover aspects of the issues we

faced which each of us alone would not have uncovered. Over the years, we developed an ever greater respect for each other, and a positive, collegial working style. His presence is sorely missed.

As I reflect on the life and career of Dr Vahl, I believe that his greatest gift was his ability to mine the message of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Students often struggled under the work load which he expected of them but they invariably found his classes exciting and relevant to their future ministry. The Bible narrative came alive as he opened the Scriptures to his students and he seemed to thrive on being in the classroom. In fact, it was not uncommon for people outside the classroom to benefit from his lectures as his booming voice penetrated the walls. At the seminary he consistently taught Biblical Hermeneutics, a foundational course in how to interpret the biblical text. Isaiah and the Psalms were among his favourite biblical books. Archaeology, which occupied his attention on both of his sabbatical leaves from the seminary, was also of special interest to him.

Dr Vahl had a keen analytical mind and a flare for expressing himself verbally in an interesting and humorous way. This enabled him to assist students in their writing of papers and to relating positively to people in various contexts inside and outside of the seminary. Conversation rarely languished when Dr Vahl was present and one always knew when he was in the room. He had the respect not only of his colleagues at the seminary but also of other scholars in his field.

Dr Vahl's interest and commitment to the parish ministry was manifestly evident. His classroom lectures, chapel addresses, and person-to-person contact with students constantly addressed the theme of what it meant to be a good pastor and how the Gospel must remain central to ministry. Second only to his love for the parish ministry was his interest in missions. His own upbringing in Chicago and his sabbatical in Hong Kong prior to coming to the seminary gave him a perspective which enabled him to appreciate and relate well to international students as well as to the multinational context of many of today's urban parishes in Canada. Preaching the Gospel in a multicultural society was a theme which wove itself throughout his teaching, preaching, and conversation.

By leading Dr Vahl to come to Concordia Lutheran Seminary, the Lord gave a great gift to this seminary and to the Canadian church. He will long be remembered not only by his colleagues but also the many students whom he taught and who now proclaim throughout Western Canada and the world the Gospel of reconciliation which he taught them to value so highly.

Ronald W. Vahl, *requiescat in pace*. May he rest in peace.

Professor Norman J. Threinen
Concordia Lutheran Seminary
5 May 2000

Ronald W. Vahl (†11 May 1999)

GOD, HIS WORD, AND THE QUR'AN IN ISLAM
Clues for a Christian Interpretation
of the Gospel for Muslims¹

Ernest N. Hahn

Like the message of the Bible, the message of the Qur'an has been formulated in strong opposition to polytheism and idolatry. This is evident in its frequent assertion against the pagan Arabs, who believed in a multitude of gods or divine powers, that "there is no god except He." It is no coincidence that the principal Islamic creed in Arabic begins with a negative: "Not any god except God." According to Islam the assertion of God's oneness (*tawhid*: "making God one") is the heart of the proclamation of every prophet and the basis of all Islamic belief and practice. To associate anything or anyone with God is the unforgivable sin in Islam. Quranically speaking, to suggest the existence of two gods is to invite a conflict of wills, of purposes, of powers. It is theologically, intellectually, and pragmatically ludicrous and disastrous.²

Thus Muslims who are familiar with Surah 112 of the Qur'an, where it is declared that God neither begets nor is begotten, view Christian belief in the Sonship of Jesus the Messiah to be a perversion of God's unity and an attack on God's sovereignty. They view the Christian belief that the man Jesus is Immanuel (God with us) as a retreat into that same pagan belief which Jesus Himself rejected. To many Muslims in India and elsewhere the doctrine of the Christian Trinity is simply a variation of the Hindu Trimurthi or some such manifestation of Hindu deities or other foreign deities. It too is a return to polytheism against which Jesus so vehemently protested, they might add. Christian theology in its present form is starkly contrasted with the theology of Islam, which Muslims generally refer to as *'ilm al-tawhid* ("the science of God's Oneness").

Indeed, superficially at least, there is something attractive and inviting about the simplicity of the Muslim creed: the unity of God, His revelation of His will to mankind through His prophets and apostles, the Qur'an in particular as the repository of His guidance for mankind. Even more attractive it is, especially to the Muslim, in comparison with the verbal and intellectual acrobatics which Christians perform (badly?) when discoursing on the Trinity, Its one essence and three persons, the two natures of the

¹ This paper was originally presented at the Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids in 1982. Recently I have edited the text and made considerable additions.

² See the comments on Qur'an 21:22 of Muhammed 'Abduh, *The Theology of Unity*, trans. Ishaq Musa'ad and K. Cragg (London: Allen Unwin Ltd., 1966) 51, 52.

Messiah, the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son, etc.³ And so it is, until the Muslim or Christian or any person ventures to enter into the complexities of the various Islamic conceptions of the unity of God to determine not only what it is not but what it is. Anyone who has even only begun to penetrate this labyrinth might wonder whether more breath and ink have been expended on describing the Muslim doctrine of the unity of God than on the Christian doctrine of the unity of God (i.e., the Trinity).

THE GENERAL PROBLEM: GOD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES

Confronted eventually with developed and complex Christian and other theologies and philosophies, Muslims were compelled to ponder the origin and the meaning of their belief in God. What is the relation between God and man? How does man know about God? Who or what is God? What is the significance of His unity: Is He a unity in Himself or in contrast with all creation or both? And how is this unity to be described?⁴

For their answers Muslims naturally turned to the guidance of the Qur'an and the early fathers of the community. The Qur'an itself offers vital clues to these above questions. It speaks about God's beautiful names by which He is known. Thus God is called **the** Knower, **the** Living, and **the** Mighty One. Since He is called by these names, Muslim theology has concluded that He must possess attributes which accord with these names: i.e., He possesses the attributes of knowledge, life and power. Some theologians spoke of seven attributes, others eight, and still others more.

So far, so good. But sailing was less smooth when such questions as the following arose: 1. What is the relation of these attributes (*sifat*) to the eternal essence (*dhat*) of God? Are they to be equated with His essence, or are they somehow different from His essence and yet related to His essence?

³ "Sometimes they say of Christ that He is the Son of God, and sometimes Son of Joseph, Son of David, Son of Man; sometimes He is God the Preserver and Creator, sometimes Lamb of God They say that He was God, although they assert that there is no other God but Allah" Ibn Hazm as quoted by J. W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955) part 2, vol. 1:247.

⁴ Cf. Daud Rahbar, "Relation of Muslim Theology to the Qur'an" in *The Muslim World* 51.1 (Hartford: The Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1961): 45, where he notes: "The only theology in Islam is the Hellenized one" and "Hellenized Islamic theology differs from the simple Semitic atmosphere of the world-view of the Qur'an". This article offers insight for anyone interested in understanding the development of Islamic theology, the tensions within this development, and, by implication, even the response of Islamic theology to Christian faith and theology. For a helpful reference to Bible and Qur'an meetings with Greek philosophy and to early Muslim and Christian theological debate regarding the Word of God and the Trinity as reflected by John of Damascus, see H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) 720-25.

If they are equated with His essence, then does essence = knowledge = life = power, etc., in reference to Him? 2. If they are as eternal as His essence, yet are different from His essence, is God then a compound of eternals: eternal essence and eternal attributes? Do separate eternals then subsist in the eternal essence? Do His attributes then somehow add something to His essence? 3. Moreover, what is the relation of the attributes of God (who is One and therefore completely different) to their human counterparts?

THE PARTICULAR PROBLEM: GOD AND HIS WORD

Muslim discussion about God's essence and attributes focused especially on the relation of one of God's attributes, His Word, to God. For many Muslims the issue was not simply academic; at stake was the Qur'an itself, the primary source of Islam and the measure of its integrity and reliability for the faithful.

Here too the Qur'an provided vital information about God's Word and about itself as God's revelation for man. The following passages are some of the key references which have bearing upon the subject:

1. The creative Word of God:

And Our word unto a thing, when We intend it, is only that We say unto it: Be! and it is (16: 40; cf. 36:81).⁵

2. The creation and the commandment:

His verily is all creation and commandment (7:54).

3. The pre-existent Qur'an:

. . . . A noble Qur'an
in a Book kept hidden
which none toucheth save the purified.
A revelation from the Lord of the Worlds (56:77-80).

Lo! We have appointed it a Lecture (Qur'an) in Arabic
that haply ye may understand.
And lo! in the Source of Decrees (literally "the Mother of Book")
which We possess,

⁵ Quranic quotations are taken from M. M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: The New American Library, n.d.). Pickthall was an English convert to Islam. The passages cited here are especially meaningful to orthodox Muslims. But the Mu'tazilis also have a favourite selection. For the Mu'tazilah, an early Islamic theological school, see "Mu'tazila", *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953). Must "We" in 16:40 be construed as a plural of majesty? Could it suggest plurality within unity?

it is indeed sublime, decisive (43:3, 4).

Nay, but it is a glorious Qur'an
On a guarded tablet (85:21, 22).

From these passages it is evident that a prototype of God's Word existed prior to the creation of the world and the revelation of the Qur'an to mankind. How, then, does "the Mother of the Book" relate to God's Word and the Arabic Qur'an with us?

4. The Qur'an speaks about the Word of God:

And if anyone of the idolaters seeketh thy protection (O Muhammad), then protect him so that he may hear the word (Word?) of Allah, and afterward convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not (9:6; cf. 2:75⁶).

5. The Qur'an speaks about the Words of God:

Say: Though the sea became ink for the Words of my Lord, verily the sea would be used up before the Words of my Lord were exhausted, even though We brought the like thereof to help (18:110).

6. The revealed message:

And it was not (vouchsafed) to any mortal that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation or from behind a veil, or (that) He sendeth a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave. Lo! He is Exalted, Wise (42:51; cf. 2:253).⁷

7. The Qur'an records the incident of Moses and the burning bush as follows:

9. Hath there come unto thee the story of Moses?

10. When he saw a fire and said unto his folk: Wait! Lo! I see a fire afar off. Peradventure I may bring you a brand therefrom or may find guidance at the fire.

11. And when he reached it, he was called by name: O Moses!

12. Lo! I, even I, am thy Lord. So take off thy shoes, for lo! thou art in the holy valley of Tuwa.

⁶ Here (Qur'an 2:75) the reference is probably to the *Tawrat* (Torah). Quranically, while the Qur'an is the Word of God, it is evident from this reference also that the Word of God is more than the Qur'an. While many Muslims readily recognize this fact in theory, too often they ignore, unQuranically, the other revelations, or even reject them as being textually corrupted or abrogated, thereby virtually making the other revelations (the Bible) hostage to the Qur'an and the ultimate meaning of these revelations dependent upon the Qur'an, i.e., the Qur'an, not the Bible, is the ultimate interpreter of the Bible.

⁷ God's address to mankind is variously called a saying, a speech, a guidance, a reminder, a revelation, a warning, a good news, etc. In contrast to the idol, which neither speaks nor guides (7:148), God speaks and thereby shows His favour (2:174; 3:77).

13. And I have chosen thee, so hearken unto that which is inspired.
 14. Lo! I, even I, am Allah. There is no God save Me. So serve Me and establish worship for My remembrance.
 15. Lo! the Hour is surely coming. But I will to keep it hidden, that every soul may be rewarded for that which it striveth (to achieve).
 16. Therefore, let not him turn thee aside from (the thought of) it who believeth not therein but followeth his own desire, lest thou perish.
 17. And what is that in thy right hand, O Moses?
 18. He said: This is my staff whereon I lean, and wherewith I beat down branches for my sheep, and wherein I find other uses.
 19. He said: Cast it down, O Moses!

(20:9-19; cf. the verses which follow also).

All Muslims naturally agree that this incident also involves the Word of God and all, or certainly most, would agree that God is a speaker, even though this term is never specifically used in the Qur'an and is not listed among God's beautiful names. Nevertheless, it is this kind of incident which gave rise to questions that led to the complex controversy about the Word of God and the word of man and their interrelationship. The following are some of these important questions:

1. Are the words of Moses at the time of the incident created or uncreated? Are the words of God at the time of the incident created or uncreated?
2. Are their words, as they are now recorded in the Qur'an, created or uncreated?
3. What is the relation of their words in both the above cases to the pre-existent Qur'an and to the Word of God?⁸

The Mu'tazilah

The Mu'tazilis, Muslims of a rational bent, are often called "the people of unity and justice". They interpreted the Qur'an in the light of philosophy and especially reacted against, in their opinion, the anthropomorphic portrayals of God in the Qur'an.

The Mu'tazilis sought to preserve strict monotheism. God is uniquely One. He is absolute and pure unity. They denied any form of dualism and any resemblance between God and His creation.

⁸ Arabic, of course, does not distinguish between capital and small letters. Here an English translation may refine (or complicate?) the issue: "Our word" (*qaul*: 16:40): could it or should it be "Our Word"? Compare "the Word of Allah" (*kalam*: 2:75) and "the Words (*kalimat*) of my Lord" (18:110) with "the word (*kalam*) of Allah" (9:6). Do the words of Moses become the words of God or the Words of God or the Word of God as Moses' words are represented in the Qur'an? In brief, four factors are involved: God's attribute, the Preserved Tablet, the Speech (of God and man) at a particular place and time, the revealed Qur'an.

Yet they generally affirmed God's attributes, even if for them these attributes were hardly more than names or descriptives. His attributes are eternal and identical with His essence. Moreover they are not separate entities and cannot be added to His essence. A plurality of entities would mean a plurality of eternals, a plurality of divinities. Through this kind of definition of God's attributes the Mu'tazilis contended not only against orthodox Muslims but against Christians who, in their opinion, denied the true oneness of God by their assertion of the existence of personified attributes or qualities within the unity of God.

A. *God's Word*

God is a speaker. He is a speaker not in a sense that He speaks His Word, which eternally subsists in Him as an attribute; rather He speaks His Word, which He creates in a particular place. God's Word for man is thus created. When He spoke to Moses in the burning bush, He created His Word in this bush; the bush really spoke to Moses. For the Mu'tazilis a material, yet uncreated, manifestation of the eternal Word was impossible.

B. *God's Word and the Qur'an*

Thus also God spoke His Word by creating it on the Preserved Tablet. Both the Preserved Tablet and His Word were created prior to the creation of the world. His Word, the Qur'an, is in ordered form and is composed of letters and words. Subsequently it was revealed to Muhammad. Thus the Qur'an is the created Word of God.

But exactly what was revealed to Muhammad? Here the Mu'tazilis seem to differ among themselves. Some say that since the Qur'an itself can exist only in one place, it therefore exists only on the Preserved Tablet where it was originally created. As it is not transferable, therefore the Qur'an revealed to Muhammad is really only an imitation of the real Qur'an on the Preserved Tablet. Others would deny this limitation of place; they would say that by hearing, reciting, memorizing it, the pre-existent Qur'an on the Preserved Tablet is actually with us.⁹

⁹ In general, the Shi'ah, like the Mu'tazilah (vs. the Orthodox), are represented as the zealous advocates of God's unity and justice and thus as teaching that the Qur'an is created. Nevertheless, according to a Shi'ah tradition, Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, stated: "The Qur'an is neither Creator nor created; it is the Word of the Creator." Daud Rahbar, "The Relation of Shi'a Theology to the Qur'an" in *The Muslim Word* 51.2 (Hartford: The Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1961): 93. According to Sweetman, the Murji'ah differed in their opinion about the Qur'an, some saying: "We do not say that it is created and we do not say that it is not created" (Sweetman, pt 1, vol. 2:117). On the whole topic see 115-22.

The Orthodox

The Qur'an clearly indicates many names of God which serve as descriptives of Him. Behind some of these names orthodox Muslims detected a number of abstract qualities which they termed "attributes". These attributes are separate identities, eternal and uncreated, subsisting in God's eternal essence. According to a well recognized formulation "they are not He nor are they other than He".

A. God's Word

Likewise orthodox Muslims affirmed the Word of God as an uncreated and eternal attribute of God, subsisting within God's essence as a separate identity along with the other eternal and separate attributes of God. Whenever God willed, He communicated His Word. When God spoke in the burning bush, it was He, not the bush, who spoke to Moses.

B. God's Word and the Qur'an

There are, however, differences among the Orthodox regarding the relation between God's Word and the Qur'an. To render this account more intelligible, we shall limit our discussion to two groups only, though variations within the two groups themselves were also apparent.

1. The Hanbali School

Ibn Hanbal strongly opposed the Mu'tazilis and their rational interpretation of God's Word. For him God's Word is uncreated, since it is His Word and the Qur'an itself indicates it. Similarly the Hadith (Canonical Tradition) supports it. It is the eternal manifestation of His eternal knowledge. It belongs to the world of command (*amr*) which is imperishable, not to the world of perishable creation. His creative Word "Be" cannot itself be created. Thus also the Qur'an is the uncreated Word of God, including the letters and words which are recited, heard, memorized and written. "What is between the covers is the Word of God." Said Muhammad: "You cannot return unto God by means of anything more excellent than that which went out from Him."¹⁰

But what about the utterance of the Qur'an? Are the letters and sounds, as they come from lips, tongues or pens, eternal? The Hanbalis seem to

¹⁰ W. M. Patton, *Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and the Mihna* (Leiden: Brill, 1897) 160. For an affirmation of the Hanbali position of the Word of God as the Qur'an in Arabic, consisting of chapters, verses, letters and words, see Ibn Qudama, *Censure of Speculative Theology*, trans. George Makdisi (London: Luzac, 1962) 37. See also Ibn Taymiyya's defence of Ibn Hanbal's understanding of the Qur'an, noting his emphasis on the fine distinction between "uncreated" and "eternal". Victor E. Malzari, *Ibn Taymiyya's Ethics: The Social Factor* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983) 52-56.

distinguish between the Word of God and the human utterance or acts related to it. Yet they seem to be hesitant in describing the utterance as either created or uncreated.

In any event, it is clear that the various forms of the revealed Qur'an are the eternal Qur'an and the uncreated Word of God, and are not simply expressions or indications of the Qur'an, or "metaphorically" the Qur'an. Somehow the eternal Qur'an itself is connected with the human acts associated with it.

2. *The Ash'ari School*

Here it is of no concern whether al-Ash'ari himself really belonged to this school or to the Hanbali school or vacillated between them. Our concern is to show the essential differences between the two schools.

The Ash'ari school, too, stated that the Qur'an is the uncreated Word of God and that whoever denies this is an unbeliever. Here they agree with the Hanbali school but differ from the Mu'tazilah.

On the other hand, they agree with the Mu'tazilis against the Hanbalis that the descent of the Qur'an, its piecemeal revelation, its presence in Arabic and the composition and arrangement of its words and letters are created. It eludes them how the Hanbalis are able to assert the eternity of sounds and letters since these are obviously accidents.

For the Ash'aris the Qur'an, the Word of God, is an eternal Idea, subsisting in the essence of God. In this sense it is uncreated. In turn, the Qur'an is written, recited, heard and memorized. Yet it does not subsist in books, lips, ears or minds, since it subsists only in God's essence.¹¹ These created contexts only express or indicate the Idea, like the word "fire" expresses or indicates the real thing.¹²

Nevertheless the Ash'aris apply the term "Qur'an" to the context also, in that it indicates the Idea, as well as to the Idea itself. It can be described as inseparably connected with created things and with the Eternal. It pertains, in reference to the former, to the expression of the reality and, in reference to the latter, to the reality itself. "So that he may hear the Word of Allah" really means "hearing that which indicates the Word".

Others connected with the school, however, appear to have enunciated more clearly the distinction between the Word of God and the Qur'an. They

¹¹ But compare Ash'ari's statement in *al-Ibanah*: "The Qur'an (the Word of God) is really written in our books, really preserved in our breasts, really read by our tongues, and really heard by us (as He has said: 'grant him an asylum, that he may hear the word of God')." W. C. Klein, *Al-Ibanah 'an Usul ad-Diyanah* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1940) 81.

¹² Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam*, trans. E. E. Elder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950) 64.

contrasted the one, simple, indivisible and eternal nature of the Word of God, which is subsisting in God and inseparable from Him, with the complex nature of the created Qur'an present with us in diverse places. For some of them the recital of the Qur'an creates the expression of the Qur'an. According to others this expression of the Qur'an came into existence in the heavenly Qur'an before it was revealed to Muhammad.¹³

The following quotation, in summary form, from Ibn 'Asakir's *Apology*, written on behalf of Ash'ari, offers a later Muslim representation of the differences among the three schools:

In like manner, the Mu'tazila held that God's speech is created, produced, originated. And the Hashwiyya al-Mujassima held that the separate letters, and the bodies written upon, and the colours in which the writing is executed, and everything between the two covers, are antecedently eternal. But al-Ash'ari followed a middle course between them and held that the Qur'an is God's speech, eternal, immutable, uncreated, unbegun, and unoriginated; but the separate letters, the bodies, the colours, the sounds, things limited, and all the qualified things of the world are created, originated, produced.¹⁴

Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali, the premier representative of the Ash'ari school, clearly affirms that God has eternal attributes which are not His essence but are superadded to His essence.¹⁵ According to Ghazali also the term Qur'an has a double meaning: a. "what is read" (*maqrū'*) meaning "God's uncreated Word" and b. "reading" (*qira'ah*) meaning our description of it as chapters (*suwar*), verses, with beginnings and endings, these non-eternal "expressions that point to the eternal attribute If the term (Qur'an) is considered equivocal, the contradiction would no longer exist"¹⁶

¹³ H. A. Wolfson *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) 255-57.

¹⁴ R. J. McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ash'ari* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953) 173. Here the group dividing lines are clear. Yet, even if it is possible to speak of three groups, their differences on this issue do not always appear to be so neat, tidy, and convenient. Ibn Hanbal does not seem to consider every representation of the Qur'an as simply uncreated. He hardly represents the Hashwiyya al-Mujassima.

¹⁵ Abdu-r-Rahman Abu Zayd, *Al-Ghazali on Divine Predicates and Their Properties* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1970) xix.

¹⁶ Abdu-r-Rahman Abu Zayd 60, 61. Cf. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, vol. 3, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), who also relates how the Ash'ari school understood the Qur'an to have a double meaning, i.e., to be uncreated and created (64). For a brief history of the whole conflict between the Mu'tazilah and the Orthodox, see Ibn Khaldun 3:34-69. For a host of comments on the nature of God's Word and its relation to the Qur'an, in chronological sequence and beginning with the relatively early Muslim theologians, see A. S. Tritton, "The Speech of God", *Studia Islamica* 33 (1971): 5-21. One

Significantly Ghazali affirms the reality of God's attributes against those philosophers (such as Farabi and Ibn Sina) whose position about the attributes resembled the Mu'tazilah position.¹⁷

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi

Like Al-Ghazali, Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi was a Sufi, intent on preserving the theology and law of orthodox Islam. His principal antagonist was the famous Sufi Shaykh Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, who proclaimed the doctrine of One Being (*wahdat al-wujud*) and opposed traditional Sunni teaching about the reality of God's eternal attributes in addition to God's eternal essence. He castigated Sufis who claimed they had had dialogues with God and quoted words from God, God speaking in a manner that involves order and sequence. The Speech or Word of God has a twofold significance:

In other words, 'the speech of God' refers both to the internal speech (*kalam nafsi*) and the worded speech (*kalam lafzi*) which God creates without there being anything in between. Hence the worded speech is also the speech of God in reality, and one who denies it is an infidel.¹⁸

For them (Shaykh Muhyi al-Din) there is nothing out there except the Absolute Unity (*Ahadiyah Mujarradah*). The eight attributes of God which have an objective existence according to the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah* do not exist, in their view, except in knowledge.¹⁹

Muhammad 'Abduh

Muhammad 'Abduh, the renowned and highly respected Egyptian scholar of the early part of the 20th century, reaffirms the necessary existence of God, His essence and His attributes.

But as for whether the attributes are other or more than the essence, whether speech is an attribute other than the import of the heavenly books within the Divine knowledge, and whether hearing and seeing in God are other than His knowledge of things heard and seen, and other

early and more precise statement: "The Qur'an is neither creator nor uncreated but is originated", i.e., what is created is outside God; what is uncreated is within Him (Tritton 5). For this reference to Tritton's essay I am indebted to Shabbir Akhtar, *A Faith for All Seasons* (London: Bellow Publishing, 1990) 223.

¹⁷ Abdu-r-Rahman Abu Zayd xix.

¹⁸ M. A. H. Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1986) 91.

¹⁹ Ansari 269, 270. For Shaykh Muhyi al-Din "*Ahadiyah* refers to Absolute or Pure Unity beyond all distinctions; *Wahdah* ("Unicity") refers to unity which is qualified with ideal distinctions, or ideas/ideal prototypes of things to emerge in the world; and *Wahidiyah* ("Oneness") refers to unity that manifests in the multiplicity of things in the outer world without undergoing division or rarification" (323).

such controversial issues, of the pundits and the contentions of the schools—all these are questions impenetrable to us, beyond the wit of human mind to attain.²⁰

Still he plainly states that the Qur'an recognizes itself to be the Word of God, "eternally of His essence".²¹ On the other hand the Qur'an is created in the sense that it is manifest in the world of creation through writings and sounds.²²

Fazlur Rahman

According to the distinguished twentieth-century Muslim scholar, Fazlur Rahman:

... the moral law and religious values are God's command, and although they are not identical with God entirely, they are part of Him. The Qur'an is, therefore, purely divine. ... [T]he Word was given with the inspiration itself. The Qur'an is thus pure Divine Word, but, of course, it is equally intimately related to the inmost personality of the Prophet Muhammad whose relationship to it cannot be mechanically conceived like that of a record. The Divine Word flowed through the Prophet's heart.²³

What interests us here also is Fazlur Rahman's claim that Islamic orthodoxy, while correctly recognizing the divine nature of the Qur'an, did not, or was unable to, reckon with the fact that the Qur'an is also the word of Muhammad. He states:

... the Qur'an is entirely the Word of God and, in an ordinary sense, also entirely the word of Muhammad. The Qur'an obviously holds both, for if it insists that it has come to the 'heart' of the Prophet, how can it be external to him?²⁴

Nevertheless, he adds, Muhammad cannot be identified with God or a part of Him, since associating a creature with God is *shirk* ("association" or idolatry).²⁵

²⁰ Muhammad 'Abduh 56.

²¹ Muhammad 'Abduh 53.

²² L. Gardet, "*Kalam*," EI 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1981). Elsewhere Gardet notes that 'Abduh considered Ibn Hanbal too distinguished a figure "to believe that the Qur'an is uncreated while reading it each night with his mouth and thus reproducing it by his voice." L. Gardet and M. M. Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1948) 86. In footnote 4 Gardet states that the French translation preserves this statement of 'Abduh about Ibn Hanbal, but at 'Abduh's request it does not appear in the second edition of the Arabic work. Nor does it appear in the English translation. Obviously the whole issue was delicate in more than one way.

²³ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 32, 33.

²⁴ Rahman 31.

²⁵ Rahman 33.

Mahmoud Ayoub

In his essay “The Word of God in Islam,” Mahmoud Ayoub of Temple University continues his efforts to promote dialogue and better understanding between Muslims and Christians. At one point he responds to the first part of the prologue of the Gospel according to John thus:

Muslims have also for the most part affirmed that the Qur'an in its essence is the eternal and uncreated Word of God. John tells us further that the Word was with God, but where we differ is with John's next statement, that is, that the Word is God. The great theological controversy over the Qur'an, a controversy which remains unresolved to this day, concerns the relationship of the Qur'an, as the Word of God, to God Himself. To my knowledge no one has asserted that the Qur'an is God.²⁶

He continues a few pages later:

Many have written that what is analogous in the Islamic tradition to the Trinity in Christianity are the divine attributes. From the theological point of view this may be true, because, as al-Ash'ari reminded us, they are “neither he nor are they other than he.” Therefore, divine attributes share in that aspect of ministry²⁷

The Seriousness of the Issue

So serious was the controversy regarding the Qur'an at the time of Ibn Hanbal (A.D. 780-855) that the *khalifah* al-Ma'mun initiated an inquisition which, among other things, declared that those who held that the Qur'an was uncreated were considered to have abandoned *tawhid* and to be classified as idolaters and polytheists. Along with others Ibn Hanbal suffered greatly for persisting in this belief. Under a later *khalifah* the Qur'an was declared to be uncreated.

Some Credal Statements

Generally credal statements in Islam have never attained the status of their counterparts in Christianity. Nevertheless they are important

²⁶ Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, “The Word of God in Islam”, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31.1-2 (1986): 73. One would like to ask Ayoub why he considers the controversy to be still unresolved. Would orthodox Muslims agree? Further, when he notes that he knows no Muslim who states that the Qur'an is God, why does he (conveniently?) omit the second part of the classical orthodox definition of God's attribute: “nor is it other than He (God)”? Asking the Muslim whether the Qur'an is created or uncreated may be as misleading or wrong as asking the Christian whether Jesus as the Word of God is created or uncreated. In both orthodox Islam and Christianity the answer is “both ... and”, not “either ... or”.

²⁷ Ayoub 76.

indications of Islamic belief, especially in orthodox circles. The following credal statements are good examples of some of the orthodox statements on the issue of the Word of God:

We hold that God's speech is uncreated; and that God has created nothing without having said to it "Be!", as He said: "When We will a thing our only utterance is that we say to it 'Be!', and it is."²⁸

We hold that the Qur'an is the uncreated speech of God, and that he who holds the creation of the Qur'an is an unbeliever.²⁹

We confess that the Kuran is the speech of Allah, uncreated, His inspiration and revelation, not He, yet not other than He, but His real quality, written in the copies, recited by the tongues, preserved in the breasts, yet not residing there. The ink, the paper, the writing are created, for they are the work of men. The speech of Allah on the other hand is uncreated, for the writing and the letters and the words and the verses are manifestations of the Kuran for the sake of human needs. The speech of Allah on the other hand is self-existing, and its meaning is understood by means of these things. Whoso sayeth that the speech of Allah is created, he is an infidel regarding Allah, the Exalted, whom men serve, who is eternally the same, His speech being recited or written and retained in the heart, yet never dissociated from Him.³⁰

The Kuran is the speech of Allah, written in the copies, preserved in the memories, recited by the tongues, revealed to the Prophet. Our pronouncing, writing and reciting the Kuran is created, whereas the Kuran itself is uncreated.

Whatever Allah quotes in the Kuran from Moses or other Prophets, from Pharaoh or from Satan, is the speech of Allah in relation to theirs. The speech of Allah is uncreated, but the speech of Moses and other creatures is created. The Kuran is the speech of Allah and as such from eternity, not theirs. Moses heard the speech of Allah, as the Kuran saith: And Allah spoke with Moses—Allah was speaking indeed before He spoke to Moses. For Allah was creating from eternity ere He had created the creatures; and when He spoke to Moses, He spoke to Him with His speech which is one of His eternal qualities.

All His qualities are different from those of the creatures. He knoweth, but not in the way of our knowledge; He is mighty but not in the way of our power; He seeth, but not in the way of our seeing; He speaketh, but not in the way of our speaking; He heareth, but not in the way of our hearing. We speak by means of organs and letters, Allah speaks without instruments and letters. Letters are created, but the speech

²⁸ McCarthy 238, from the creed *al-Ibanah*.

²⁹ McCarthy 241, from the creed *al-Ibanah*.

³⁰ A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1932) 127; taken from the *Wasiyat Abi Hanifa*.

of Allah is uncreated.³¹

The Kuran is revealed to the Apostle of Allah and it is written in the copies. The verses of the Kuran, being Allah's speech, are all equal in excellence and greatness. Some, however, have a pre-eminence in regard to recitation or to their contents, e.g. the verse of the Throne, because it deals with Allah's majesty, His greatness and His description. So in it are united excellence in regard to recitation and excellence in regard to its contents. Others possess excellence only in regard to recitation, such as the descriptions of the infidels, whereas those who are mentioned in them, that is, the infidels, have no excellence.³²

He has attributes from all eternity subsistent in His essence. They are not He nor are they other than He. And they are Knowledge and Power and Life and Might and Hearing and Seeing and Willing and Desiring and Doing and Creating and Sustaining.³³

And Speech. He speaks with a kind of Speech which is one of His attributes, from all eternity, not of the genus of letters and sounds. It is an attribute incompatible with silence and defect. Allah speaks with this attribute, commanding, prohibiting and narrating. The Qur'an, the Speech of Allah, is uncreated and it is written in our volumes, preserved in our hearts, recited by our tongues, heard by our ears (yet) is not a thing residing in them.³⁴

The thirteenth Quality of God is Speech (*kalam*). It is an eternal quality, subsisting in God's essence, not a word or sound, and far removed from order of preceding and following, from inflection and structure, opposed to the speech of originated beings. And by the Speech that is necessary to God is not meant the Glorious Expressions (*lafz*) revealed to the Prophet, because these are originated and the quality that subsists in the essence of God eternal. And these embrace preceding and following, inflection and chapters and verses; but the eternal quality is bare of all these things. It has no verses or chapters or inflections, because such belong to the speech, which embraces letters and sounds, and the eternal quality is far removed from letters and sounds, as has preceded. And those Glorious Expressions are not a guide to the eternal quality in the sense that the eternal quality can be understood from them. What is understood from these expressions equals what would be understood from the eternal quality if the veil were removed from us and we could hear it. In short, these expressions are a guide to its meaning, and this meaning equals what would be understood from the eternal Speech, which subsists in the essence of God. So meditate this distinction, for many have erred in it. And both the Glorious Expressions and the eternal quality are called

³¹ Wensinck 189, from *Fiqh Akbar II*.

³² Wensinck 196, from *Fiqh Akbar II*.

³³ Taftazani 49.

³⁴ Taftazani 58.

Qur'an and the Word (*kalam*) of God. But the Glorious Expressions are created and written on the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawh-al-mahfuz*); Jibril brought them down (i.e., revealed them) to the Prophet after that they had been brought down in the Night of Decree (*laylatu-l-qadr*; Qur. 97:1) to the Mighty House (*baytu-l-izza*), a place in the Heaven nearest to the earth; it was written in books (*sahifas*) and placed in the Mighty House. It is said that it was brought down to the Mighty House all at once and then brought down to the Prophet in twenty years, and some say, in twenty-five. And it is also said that it was brought down to the Mighty House only to the amount that was to be revealed each year and not all at once.

And that which was brought down to the Prophet was expression and meaning. And it is said also that only the meaning was brought down to him. There is a conflict of opinion on this; some say that the Prophet clothed the meaning with expressions of his own, and others, that he who so clothed the meaning, was Jibril. But the truth is that it was sent down in expressions and meaning. In short, the quality subsisting in the essence of God is not a letter nor a sound. And the Mu'tazilites called in doubt the existence of a kind of Speech without letters. But the People of the Sunna answered that because thoughts in the mind (*hadith an-nafs*), a kind of speech with which an individual speaks to himself, are without letter or sound, there exists a kind of speech without letters or words. By this the People of the Sunna do not wish to institute a comparison between the Speech of God and thoughts in the mind; for the Speech of God is eternal and thoughts in the mind are originated. They wished to disprove the contention of the Mu'tazilites when they urged that speech cannot exist without letter or sound.

The proof of the necessity of Speech in God is His saying (Qur. 4: 162): "and God spoke to Moses." So He has established Speech for Himself. And Speech connects with that with which Knowledge connects, of necessary and possible and impossible. But the connection of Knowledge with these is a connection of revealing, in the sense that they are revealed to God by His Knowledge; and the connection of Speech with them is a connection of proof, in the sense that if the veil were taken away from us and we heard the eternal Speech we would understand these things from it.³⁵

CLUES FOR CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF GOD AND HIS WORD FOR MUSLIMS

It is, of course, no mere coincidence that Muslim concerns regarding God, His eternal Word and the Qur'an were analogous to Christian concerns

³⁵ D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903) 335, 336, from a creed by Muhammad al-Fadali.

about God and the nature of the Messiah. That there was an extensive interchange of theological and philosophical thought among Muslims and Christians is a fact. Whether or not there was borrowing does not interest us here.³⁶ What does interest us are the clues which Muslim formulations on these subjects have furnished and continue to furnish the Christian who seeks to interpret Christian beliefs about God, the Messiah and the Trinity to Muslims. Some of these are as follows:

1. The Mu'tazilis steadfastly rejected the orthodox Muslim belief in the existence of eternal attributes as separate identities residing in the eternal essence of God. The orthodox belief, they said, was analogous to the Christian belief in a plurality of eternals and, like Christian beliefs, was a denial of God's unity and even idolatrous.

Given the validity of the Mu'tazilah premise that God's unity allows for no internal plurality, it is difficult to refute the Mu'tazilah claim against both orthodox Muslims and Christians. On the other hand, there is a distinct analogy, however imperfect, between orthodox Muslim and Christian beliefs about the existence of plurality and relationship within God's unity.³⁷

2. Most Muslims accepted the pre-existent Qur'an on the Preserved Tablet. But was the pre-existent Preserved Tablet created or uncreated? The Mu'tazilah conception of a pre-existent created Tablet resembled Hebrew faith in the pre-existent created Torah ("a preserved treasure", "hidden with God") and perhaps also the Christian faith of those who believed in a pre-existent created Messiah. On the other hand, the orthodox Muslim conception of an uncreated Preserved Tablet resembled orthodox Christian belief in the uncreated Word. In any case it plays a mediating role between God and man.

Historically, the idea of a created pre-existent Preserved Tablet probably preceded the idea of an uncreated one, if the matter was at all a concern to the community.³⁸ Probably the later idea of the co-eternal attributes of God gave rise to the uncreated Preserved Tablet.

³⁶ Abdu-r-Rahman Abu Zayd vii and footnote 1. All Western scholarship, he says, claims that "all the sects of Islam were influenced in this respect by Judaic and Christian thinking."

³⁷ "They are, thus, like the Christians when they claim that 'Isa Ibn Maryam was not created because he was the Word of God. But God says, 'Verily we have made it a Koran in the Arabic language'; and the explanation of that is, 'Verily we have created it.'" Patton 67. A possible Sunni response: To say that the revealed Qur'an is the divine and eternal Word of God is not to say that it is God or to imitate the error of Christians who claim that Jesus is God. This Sunni response, however, hardly obviates the objection that God alone is eternal and that, therefore, the revealed Qur'an cannot be eternal. On Ibn Hanbal's response to "the made" = "the created" Qur'an, see M. S. Seale, *Muslim Theology* (London: Luzac, 1964) 99-102.

³⁸ The question of the created vs. the uncreated Qur'an probably had not even arisen. W. M. Watt, *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1969) 73.

3. Does the orthodox Hanbali school, which believes that the Qur'an with its letters, words and all is the eternal and uncreated Word of God, resemble in a sense Christian Docetic belief that the Messiah with us, who appears enfleshed but really is not, is eternal and uncreated only? This would be the case if the Hanbalis totally dissociated the revealed or recited Qur'an from any created element. But it seems that they have not gone to this extreme. On the other hand, when orthodox Muslims believe that both the Infinite and the finite are associated with the Qur'an, does their belief about the Qur'an resemble Christian belief that both the Infinite and the finite are associated with Jesus as the Word of God? Stated otherwise, is it possible to speak of the existence of "two natures", functionally and even ontologically, of the revealed Qur'an, as it is possible to speak of the two natures of the revealed Messiah?

An alternative would be to speak of two Qur'ans, which some orthodox Muslims appear to have done: the Word of God or the Qur'an as eternal Idea and the revealed Qur'an as an expression of the eternal Word of God or the Qur'an, or the eternal Qur'an (on the Preserved Tablet?) of the same being as the eternal Word of God and the revealed Qur'an like the eternal Word of God; in other words, an eternal and uncreated Qur'an and a temporal and created Qur'an, each ontologically separate from the other despite their functional similarity.³⁹ In any case, if the Qur'an as both eternal Idea and as an expression of the eternal Idea can be called the Qur'an, then the Qur'an has two natures.

4. For orthodox Muslims God's eternal attributes, and hence also His Word, "are not He nor other than He". At the same time they assert that the revealed Qur'an is the Word of God. If, then, the Qur'an is God's eternal Word and "is not other than He", it is possible to conclude that the revealed Qur'an is also divine, even though it "is not He". In this sense at least, the Qur'an serves as a mediator between God and man, where the Infinite and finite interconnect and where the Creator and creation meet. As already noted, orthodox Muslims based their contention that the revealed Qur'an is the eternal Word of God on the authority of the Qur'an itself. On this and similar issues about the nature of God they are content with this authority, "without knowing how and without comparison".⁴⁰

³⁹ This thought is reminiscent of Arianism, however imperfect the analogy. See footnote 42.

⁴⁰ As a translation of *bila kayf wa'l tashbih*, an expression to which orthodox Muslims, especially the Hanbalis, continually appeal. For them the Qur'an spoke of God as hearing, seeing, knowing, speaking, etc., that He had hands, sat on a throne, etc., yet at the same time said that nothing resembled Him. They therefore affirmed these things of God on the basis of the Qur'an and sound Tradition, conceding their ignorance of how this could be (*bila kayf*). Through their doctrine of *tanzih* (transcendence: these things characterize God "in their most

What the Islamic formulation “nor is the Word other than He” states negatively, the Bible states positively: “the Word was with God and was God” (John 1:1). This Word, the Gospel account continues, became flesh and dwelt among us. Again, if the Word can become a book, cannot the Word become a human? Christians, of course, rest their claim on the authority of the Holy Bible. They too are content with this authority, “without knowing how and without comparison”.

Thus both Muslims and Christians believe that God is one, that God is eternal, that God’s Word is eternal and that God has revealed His eternal Word to mankind. Consider the statement of Uthman Yahya:

Muslim theology teaches that Divine revelation, contained in the sacred books of monotheism, finds its completion in the Qur’an which is the substantial Word, uncreated, subsisting eternally in God. Truly the spiritual implications of this conception are immense. It allows the human being to enter into direct communication with God. The Qur’an in our very hands is not some exterior act of God, but precisely the Divine presence itself in His eternity. The Muslim who ponders the Qur’an and who conforms his life to the light of the Divine wisdom has veritably a real experience of the Eternal.

The orthodox Islamic doctrine as to the uncreatedness of the Qur’an has affinities with the dogma of the Incarnation in Christianity. According to Christian faith, the Divine nature co-exists mysteriously with the human nature of Christ. The different perspective of the doctrine of the uncreated Qur’an from that of the Incarnation lies solely, according to our view, in the fact of the different modes of manifestation of the Word. In the Christian view the Word was made flesh in the person of Christ: whereas the Word was made expressive (*se fait expression*) in the descent of the Qur’an.⁴¹

No doubt, as Uthman Yahya infers, both Muslims and Christians recognize a difference also in their understanding of the nature and function

exalted sense”) they steered a middle course between *tashbih* (anthropomorphism) and *ta’til* (divested of all qualities).

⁴¹ Uthman Yahya, “Man and His Perfection in Muslim Theology”, *The Muslim World* (Hartford: January 1959): 24. Yet previous to the above quotation the author writes: “... God is essentially in Himself pure and absolutely transcendent unity, in all His magnificent fullness The Divine nature admits of neither division, nor multiplicity, nor sonship ...” (21). However, cf. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, “God: A Muslim View” in *Three Faiths—One God, A Jewish, Christian and Muslim Encounter*, ed. John Hick and Edmund Melzer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) 73: “there is no analogy between the Christian concept of Christ and the Islamic concept of the Qur’an.” He also writes: “It is the basic assertion of Islam that the doctrine of the Trinity is the offence of Christianity against the transcendence of God. ... The Qur’an has severely judged both doctrines of the Church: Incarnation and the Trinity” (70). Yet, we may wonder, how does the Qur’an judge the Incarnation and the Trinity when it does not really address these Christian doctrines.

of the unmediated and mediated Word. For Christians Jesus is Mediator in the fullest sense: as the eternal Word of God and as a human being, He reveals God's eternal Word in space and time and encompasses both.⁴²

5. Likewise in reference to the Trinity the Christian might also confess (rightly understood, though incompletely) that the eternal Word is not He (the one God who is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each distinct from the other as each eternal attribute is distinct) nor other than He (God's essence). No doubt the relation of three "persons" within the unity of God is a mystery; for the Muslim so is the relation of the eternal attributes with the eternal essence within the unity of God; even for the Mu'tazilah so is the simplicity of His unity. Here also, may not the Christian, like the Muslim, appeal to God's uniqueness and his own finite limitation in understanding the infinite God, even the uniqueness and incomparability of God's oneness and the common acknowledgement that God alone fully understands God and therefore He alone understands the nature of this unity?⁴³

⁴² Christians, of course, speak of the eternal Word becoming flesh as incarnation. In the sense that the eternal Word is truly divine and was born into our finite world through the Virgin Mary, Jesus is called the God-Man. Seen from a Christian perspective at least, this is not to say that the divine simply indwells (*hulul*) Jesus, as some Muslims seem to have understood this Christian belief. Suffice it to say that Jesus' incarnation is unique; yet God's Spirit indwells believers. On the other hand those Muslims who believe the revealed Qur'an to be God's eternal Word seem to really accept what they reject in Christian thought and valiantly strive to avoid in general as un-Islamic: the indwelling (*hulul*) of the Infinite within the finite. For those Muslims who reject this indwelling as totally alien to the Islamic conception of God, the Qur'an is simply created; or else there are two Qur'ans: the created and the uncreated. In the latter case their conception is somewhat akin to a semi-Arian conception of Christ: He is of like being (*homoiousios*) but not of the same being (*homoousios*) as the Divine. It is no coincidence that Muslims who are more concerned with the Quranic than with the philosophical data have rejected a "two-Qur'an" theory. Nor is it coincidental that Christians more concerned with Biblical than philosophical data have rejected Arianism. Biblically, by establishing the Messiah as a being like God, Arianism not only destroys the unity of God, which it seeks to defend; even more, it fails to reckon with the self-giving nature of God and His love. Biblically, the Messiah is God's empirical evidence for its philosophical assertion that God, the one God, is love. Seen in this light, God's love manifested in the Messiah serves as the basis for the Christian's understanding of the Trinity and, in turn, for his understanding of the Trinity (Tri-Unity) as a **defence** of God's unity. "The deepest conception we can form of the divine nature is of a being who in Himself carries the Subject and the Object of an eternal love, which we speak of in the deep emblem of 'the Word', and the God with whom He eternally 'was.'" Alexander McLaren, *Exposition of Holy Scripture, St. John chapters 15-21* (New York: George H. Doran Co., n.d.) 217.

⁴³ Yet one should not assume that all Muslims know and understand orthodox Islam's doctrines about God's essence and attributes and the two natures of the Qur'an, not to speak about the controversy within the Muslim community over these doctrines. Suffice it to add, however, that greater Muslim awareness of the complexity of these orthodox Muslim doctrines might evoke increased Muslim sympathy for the complexities of the Christian doctrines of the two natures of Jesus and the Trinity. The Christian should encourage his Muslim friend to study the Bible seriously before engaging in serious discussion about the

Let it be added that many Muslims consider Christian confession of the Bible as the Word of God **and** the word of man to confirm their contention that the Bible is inferior to the Qur'an and even corrupted. Yet, as already noted, clearly, Fazlur Rahman also speaks about the Qur'an as both—though it may be asked how many other Muslims agree with him or are even aware of his argument.

SUMMARY

In this article our intention has been only to show that:

1. Muslims, too, have engaged in serious controversy among themselves in their attempts to define the unity of God.

2. This controversy has focussed primarily upon the nature of the revealed Qur'an and its relation to the Qur'an on the Preserved Tablet, to the eternal Word of God and to God, as well as upon the interrelationship of them all.

3. Generally the difficulties which Muslims detect in Christian thought about the person of the Messiah and the Trinity have distinct analogies within Muslim thought about God, His Word, the Qur'an and their interrelationship, analogies which they generally do not know or understand, or ignore.

The Christian who recognizes these analogies is in a better position to explain the Christian understanding of the person of the Messiah and the Trinity in a more intelligible manner to his Muslim friend. He will strive to focus his discussion with Muslims not simply on God, or on the Qur'an or Jesus, or on humanity, but on God, humanity and the Word of God to humanity as a total context. For both Muslims and Christians it is finally from the Word of God to humanity that they derive their understanding not only of the nature of the Word of God but of the nature of God and of the nature of man.

Yet, even given the Christian's ability to interpret the person of Christ and the Trinity in terms which are more congenial and intelligible to Muslims, there remains the fundamental difference between the Muslim and Christian understanding of God's rationale in addressing mankind through His eternal Word. For Muslims, God's eternal Word, the Qur'an, spells God's guidance; for Christians, God's eternal Word, the Messiah, spells God's redemption.⁴⁴

Trinity, i.e., one studies simple mathematics before engaging in the more difficult mathematical disciplines.

⁴⁴ From the Qur'an Muslims know Jesus as the Word of God (*kalimat-ullah*), though not in its full Biblical sense. On the other hand Jesus as the Son of God or God are alien, often

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odious, concepts for many Muslims. In discussion with Muslims, initially at least, Christians will do well to speak of Jesus as the Word of God, God's Message (*Injil*, Evangel) in word and deed for mankind. For Jesus, the Word of God as the Son of God and God's interpretation of Himself to humanity, see John 1:14.

*TENTATIO*¹

Steven A. Hein

I. *TENTATIO*—ORDINARY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Tentatio is a Latin term that means several related things, all of them rather negative. A *tentatio* is temptation in the sense of a trial or tribulation. The term also can double for such uncomfortable things as suffering, ordeal, and affliction. While not particularly pleasant, *tentatio* is standard equipment in the Church of Christ—and especially beneficial for its theologians. It was Luther who believed that three things are necessary to make a theologian: *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* (prayer, meditation, and temptation). *Oratio* and *meditatio* are what we visit upon God as we are filled with His Word of grace. *Tentatio*, however, is what He allows to be visited upon us by Satan. The former flows, in part, from the latter. From trials and tribulations, we scream to God and are directed to take refuge in His gracious Word and meditate on His saving promises. In this way, the theologian is moulded to see God's Word aright with the eyes of humility and faith. Theologians are not alone, however. Luther reminded the Church in his Large Catechism that Satan assails and vexes all Christians through temptation. His explanation of the sixth petition in the Our Father ("and lead us not into temptation") promised the Christian no exemption from trials and temptations. Rather, Luther maintained that, "no one can escape temptations and allurements as long as we live in the flesh and have the Devil prowling about us. We cannot help but suffer tribulation, and even be entangled in them, but we pray here that we may not fall into them and be overwhelmed by them" (LC III:106).

Heiko Oberman, in his magnificent treatment *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, well captured the legacy of Luther who taught the Church something startlingly new, something radical and perhaps unsettling: spiritual distress is not simply the lot of marginal Christians and occasional crazy monks in monasteries—it is the common inheritance of all believers.² Luther's discovery that the just shall live by faith alone included the recognition that faith will not be left alone in the Christian life. It will be assaulted by attacks and tribulations of the Unholy Spirit. Christian life is

¹ This essay is a revision of a presentation on *Tentatio* delivered at the North American Lutheran Campus Ministry Staff Conference held at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre, Mississauga, ON, 10-13 July 1997.

² Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1992) 184.

found in the cross of Christ and that means we shall also be living with one of our own. Cross life for the New Creation that emerges from baptism not only has us contending with the Old Adam and a fallen world, it also brings us turmoil and affliction from the “powers and principalities” of the Prince of Darkness (Rom. 8:22; Gal. 5:17; Eph. 6:11-12). Peace with God brings conflict and adversity with the world, the flesh and the Devil.

This new evaluation of spiritual distress by Luther leads to twin conclusions both of which are rather unsettling. First, tribulations are not a disease, so there is no cure for them. And, secondly, **only firm faith in God’s unalterable promise enables spiritual crises to be withstood—not overcome.**³ God’s law reveals with brutal lucidity what has become of all of us; everyone is exposed in his unworthiness and spiritual bankruptcy. The Devil is on a relentless campaign to overturn the “Joyous Exchange” of the cross and replace it with the demands of the Law for morality, godliness and good works. God’s holy Commandments are co-opted by the Devil to concoct a seemingly air-tight case that for us there is no salvation! Yet only at this point it becomes clear that the mercy of God in the divine foolishness of the Gospel is our only refuge. Here is the experience, observes Oberman, of what the German mystic, Tauler, called “groaning” and “rapture” or what the present writer has elsewhere described in Luther’s thought as the “agony and the ecstasy” of the cross. “... [T]ribulation and mystical ascent, diabolical remoteness from God and joyous union with God, are no longer typical of the spiritually ill and the spiritual elite, two marginal Christian groups. All parts of the true Church suffer spiritual distress and are at the same time united with God.”⁴ The Church as the community of the faithful is and must remain in this life the community of those afflicted by the Devil.

In what follows, we seek to sketch an outline of the multi-faceted character of *tentatio*, first as it relates to ordinary saints in everyday living. It will draw heavily on the insight of Luther whose sharp awareness and understanding of the trials and tribulations of the Evil One are most instructive and needed today in a church that is increasingly obsessed with seeking ways to escape the fallenness of daily human existence. Secondly, we will examine Luther’s insight into a special *tentatio* that Satan has reserved for the spiritually mature and would-be theologians. In this latter discussion, God’s use of such tribulations and how He would use the spiritual attacks of the Devil to mould faithful servants of the Word will be explored with some modest applications for those who would shepherd the Church today.

³ Oberman 178-79.

⁴ Obermann 184-85; see also my essay, “Overcoming Our Doubts”, *Lutheran Education* 129.5 (May/June): 277.

Our discussion of *tentatio* is framed out by the conviction that normal Christian living cannot honestly be described as it often is today as something gloriously nice, inspirational and cosy with promises that if you will just commit to some Bible-based principles for daily living, things will go better with God. Many of the best-seller books and slick media evangelists who tout law-conditioned triumphal promises for Christian living lie. Becoming a Christian will not make navigating the affairs of earthly living more tranquil and trouble-free. Quite the reverse! A new life in Christ transforms the sinner's life into a battleground with the unholy triad made up of the world, the flesh and the devil (Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 6:10-12). While it is certainly true that the inheritance of glory and an exalted life with God have been given to the Christian in his Baptism, this inheritance is lived with in this fallen age only by faith. Christians place their hope in a future experience of glory. Life in Christ through Baptism has joined the believer to Christ the crucified (Rom. 6). Christian life is cross life. Jesus has been raised from the dead, has ascended into heaven, and has been exalted in glory by the Father, but we have not! The Christian still lives in the cross with the inheritance of glory as a "not yet". Jesus has had His Easter, but we are still waiting on the cross and in the tomb. This means that for now we live in a fallen creation ruled by the Evil One who is on a campaign to separate us from our baptismal inheritance. He is cunning, powerful, and a consummate liar. Experiencing him as he would prowl the Church militant to promote casualties is standard provisional Christian living. And for now we are all consigned to a provisional Christian life as we await our final deliverance from the Evil One and our promised glory. It is not marked with triumph, tranquillity, and spiritual bliss, but rather punctuated by cross, trials, and affliction. *Tentatio* is ordinary run-of-the-mill Christian experience.

The Holy Anguish of Tentatio

Tentatio embraces one of two poles that constitute a fundamental paradox in the way the believer lives in Christ and makes progress to his heavenly home. These poles reflect twin, but conflicting realities, of what it means for the Christian to be simultaneously a sinful citizen of this fallen world, and yet also a righteous member of the Kingdom of God. Flowing from this dual citizenship are the elements of cross and comfort as normative and pervasive aspects of Christian living. *Tentatio*, not some sweet rapture, is the common lot of all believers. The drama of the cross of Christ is the basis and paradigm of this polarity. God's supreme call of His Son to the cross presents us a vision with a tension between what is received by experience and what must be grasped by faith. In the cross of Christ, God worked out but hid His righteousness and pardon of sinners in the wretched shame, agony, and injustice of a Roman crucifixion. Through the experience

of our senses we apprehend all the worldly and fallen aspects of the passion of our Lord, but only by the eyes of faith can we see the glory of God and our righteousness acquired. This duality is also present for Christians living in God's call as His adopted sons and daughters. Christian life in the old creation is God's call to the full range of possible experiences one can encounter from being in the fallen world under the Prince of Darkness. Here *tentatio* may visit the Christian in his journey as a common and frequent companion. But then, on the other hand, the Christian sojourns joined to Christ who through the sacred things showers him with God's favour, peace, and indeed, the full inheritance of God's salvation. All of this is, of course, given to and lived in by faith. In these things we receive joy, peace, and comfort. But neither cross, tribulation, nor any experience of our fallen existence—and then the blessings of Christ given to faith—cancel the other out. We live with a Spirit-wrought peace that passes the awareness and experiences of *tentatio*, but it does not replace them (Rom. 7:14, 24; Gal. 5:22).

Perhaps Melancthon's "in, with, and under" language would be appropriate here. Christians possess their divine citizenship and all of God's blessings of salvation in, with, and under our temporal citizenship and all that its fallen character can bring us. What flows from our temporal citizenship in the devil's playground is fully given to our senses and openly experienced; but what flows from our divine citizenship is given to and apprehended only by faith. The tension between the life of worldly experience with all of its trials and tribulations, and the saving gifts given to faith, is encountered in the daily living of the believer by oscillating back and forth between them. Sometimes we are captivated by *tentatio*—the impact of living as citizens of this fallen world with all of its trials and temptations—only then to be thrown back onto the promises of faith in the saving Word which bring peace and comfort.

How does this play itself out for ordinary saints in everyday life? Perhaps something like this. ... We grow up in ordinary homes, reflecting the ethos of our time and place, and they make their mark on us. We become fully participating citizens of the here and now. We struggle with our sexuality and loneliness, and perhaps we marry. A new household is formed with babies' spilt milk and messy bedrooms. Our teenagers can walk out the door and we know that almost anything can happen to them—and often it does. We experience joys and sorrows with our spouse, our children and our circle of friends. Quarrels and misunderstandings punctuate our relationships with loved ones as well as good times had by all. Our work life moves like the tide between excitement and boredom, success and failure. We can be hired, fired, promoted and forgotten. People who matter to us suffer injury, addiction and disease. So can we. They will get better or they will die. So will we. And more often than we would like, we sense

compelling evidence that our government, our economy and our church denomination are going to the dogs.

We experience life as bitter/sweet: our cup is somewhere between half empty and half full. We long for much more than daily living provides. For that reason, the voice within can hammer us with a painful conclusion: the life we are living falls woefully short of our longings for what it ought to be for would-be citizens of the Kingdom of God. But this is only half of it. We also experience our slice of life as it has passed through the “grim reaper” of the Law that is lodged in our hearts. And perhaps for many of us schooled in the Scriptures, the cutting edge of that Law is razor sharp. The voice of the Law is continually telling us that **we** are falling short of the vision as well. If we are called to a life of fear, love, and trust in God; if we are called to a faith which expresses itself in a life of service with reordered loves—then the Law cuts us with its bitter verdict: we aren’t, we don’t, and we can’t.

Experiences such as these, while ordinary and expected, can drive us to a state of helplessness and hopelessness. It is just like taking in Christ on the cross with all our senses. There is the hammer of our fallen world that beats on our sense of membership in the family of God, and the blade of the Law that assaults our righteousness through faith. Here *tentatio* brings doubt and despair as unwelcome companions. Luther called this helplessness and hopelessness *Anfechtung*. *Anfechtung* is a profound anguish. It is an assault upon us by the world, the flesh and the Devil that can often reduce us to a state of doubt about who and what we are in Christ. It tempts us to despair of God’s promises, it challenges our confidence and it puts our faith to the test.⁵

Yet as Luther also recognized, this is a holy *Anfechtung*, an instrument of the gracious God, and part and parcel of living in the cross of Christ. God is the one behind our *Anfechtung* and He uses it to crucify our fleshly complacency and self-confidence. And then He uses it to send us running back the other way to the security and confidence of the Word of promise that is given to faith. From faith, we see the righteousness of Christ that is ours; and from faith, hope is renewed in the coming glory of the Kingdom. With faith’s vision made ever new in the Gospel promise—again and

⁵ See especially Alister McGrath’s fine discussion of Luther concerning *Anfechtung* and the polarity of faith and experience in Luther’s theology of the cross. He aptly noted that, “the Christian life is characterized by the unending tension between faith and experience. For Luther, experience can only stand in contradiction to faith, in that revealed truth must be revealed under its opposite form. This dialectic between experienced perception and hidden revelation inevitably leads to radical questioning and doubt on the part of the believer with what he experiences.” Alister McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1990) 168-69. Luther’s best discussion of this tension and *Anfechtung* is found in the *Operationes in Psalmos* (WA 5) and *Luther’s Commentary on the First Twenty-two Psalms*, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Sunbury, Penn.: Lutherans in All Lands Co., 1903).

again—faith is strengthened, the New Creation is renewed and the call of the Christian’s vocation is revitalized. Here is the central heartbeat of Christian living. The experience of life in the old world that produces a holy anguish from the Devil’s *tentatio*, and the transforming power of faith fed by the Gospel. In tension—tacking back and forth between them—Luther believed this to be a common inheritance for all Christians baptized into the cross of Christ.

The Afflicted Shall Live by Faith

One of the most comforting passages of the New Testament for Luther was Paul’s introductory theme in Romans 1:17—“The righteous shall live by faith.” It is a quote by Paul from Habakkuk 2:4. The emphasis in Romans is on the fact that the righteous shall live **before God** by faith alone. Luther recognized that the text has a slightly different slant, however, in Habakkuk. Here it is not so much a comfort as a challenge. Its focus is not so much our faith before God, as it is on the fact that the righteous shall live by faith **before the world**. *Tentatio* brings the cross to the Christian and it often involves suffering tribulations and trials that are unjust at the hands of a fallen world. Habakkuk captured the pathos of it all for believers in every age—for Israel and the Church of Christ.

Habakkuk was also a prophet who would fit well into the thought of our modern age. He had a complaint to lodge with the God of Israel and he delivered it with “why” questions. Why is it that the righteous people of God always become the cannon fodder for every godless and blood-thirsty empire that arrives on the scene? And why do they prosper in their idolatry and wickedness while we the people of God must suffer every form of deprivation and injustice at their hands? Why does God, who loves righteousness and hates wickedness, simply sit by and do nothing?⁶ Why? Habakkuk is really a man after our own heart.

Amazingly, God not only favours Habakkuk with a reply; He is quick to deliver it. Habakkuk had a vision of the righteous suffering at the hands of the unrighteous. God did not question that vision, but offered one of His own. The day is coming soon, says the Lord, when all the unrighteous will have their undoing. God will have His day of justice and all that is wrong will be made right.⁷ But for now—for Habakkuk and for us—“the righteous shall live by faith.”

Luther recognized that both visions were climaxed in the cross of Christ. Indeed, the cross is the essence of Habakkuk’s vision. But joined to his vision is the vision God provided. The one God handed over as His

⁶ Paraphrase of Habakkuk 1:1-4, 1:12-2:1.

⁷ Paraphrase of Habakkuk 1:5-11, 2:2-4.

undoing of the unrighteous was His own righteous Son. The day of the Lord's justice was Good Friday. The unrighteous become righteous and live by faith in the Great Exchange. Nevertheless, the contemporary Church of Christ knows that Habakkuk's vision has not gone away. The experience of suffering and injustice at the hands of a fallen world is still with the people of God. *Tentatio* in the form of being victimized by injustice is still a part of the existence of the Christian walk of faith in this life. Moreover, the key question of the prophet remains unanswered. ... Why trials and tribulations? Why does God sit by and allow the righteous to suffer unjustly?

This perplexing question has absorbed our modern age, and the Old Testament shares our contemporary concern with it. Perhaps the quintessential Old Testament expression of unjust tribulation and suffering is found in the book of Job. Job's plight and the unacceptable explanations by his friends bring the question of unjust suffering into as sharp a focus as any modern statement of the question. The reader has to struggle for understanding a God who would put Job through all his suffering and tragedy for the sake of a wager (Job 1:9-12; 2:4-6). Job, however, doesn't even get that much. He is never told about the wager. God's response to his question "why" is met in a whirlwind of thunder and lightning. He doesn't explain, He explodes. Rather than deal with Job's questions, God flattens him for his whining and his audacity to question how He runs the universe (Job 38-40). Job is humbled to repentance, restored in health and possessions, and dies a happy man. But God never answered his question "why".

In the Old Testament writings, there is no mistaking the character of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was just and He was merciful, but He most assuredly was not nice. He played spiritual hardball and was out to win whatever the price. *Tentatio* helps to instruct Christians why we were never taught to pray, "Our **Grandfather** who art in Heaven" And about paying the price, the world would see to what ends He would go to accomplish His saving will with the incarnation of His Son and the cross of Christ.

What is a curious thing is that the question of injustice and "why", so often raised in the Old Testament, is not voiced at all in the New Testament. The apostles suffered much for the faith, but never seem to be bothered by the question "why". Neither raising the question, nor providing an answer, they were concerned with the issues of what God does through suffering and affliction and how it will all come out in the end. They understood Christian living as an expression of our union with Christ. They were captivated by a vision of God's call to live in the cross of Christ with a cross of their own. The key question for them was, therefore, how should we view our suffering and affliction in light of the suffering of Christ? Vision is everything here, but it is not the same thing as sight. Our vision is the sense of what we make of the things we see and experience by the reality of those things we do not

see, but are given to faith. Faith moulds vision. So from faith to faith, the Apostolic Word has instructed the Church of every age in proper vision.

The apostles were captivated by a vision that the struggle against the forces of evil in time and eternity came down to one final wager with Satan that God was determined to win. And in a Job-like confrontation, He wagered His own Son, who without complaint wins a world of sinners from Satan's claim. When they looked at the cross and considered the matter of justice, it was clear to them that God plays by different rules. The righteous suffered for the unrighteous. Therefore, as Jesus suffered and died to sin, we who are joined to Christ suffer and die to sin. As His life and death included suffering the injustice of the world, so also does ours. Our cross is fashioned after His, and for this we may glorify and thank God for the privilege to share in the sufferings of Christ (I Pet. 4:12-13).

Not that the apostles saw something intrinsically virtuous in pain and suffering. These things are evil and they come from the evil one. God takes no pleasure in the suffering of His people. But the New Testament vision is that God will either alleviate it or use it. And at that, mostly the latter with those mature in the faith. Jesus healed many, but Paul was told that his thorn in the flesh would remain to keep him humble and to remind him that God's grace was sufficient for him. Pain and suffering bring us into contact with our frailty and weakness, and interestingly, it is Paul who instructs us that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness (II Cor. 12:7-9). As the country singer sang, "some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers." Living in the cross with one of our own is God's way of accomplishing His purpose of bringing our whole life into conformity with an image of Christ (I Pet. 1:6-9).

One key question remains. How is it that the apostles and the New Testament Church could have such an unwavering commitment to this vision of the cross in the face of all the trials and suffering they endured? When we page through the Psalms and elsewhere in the Old Testament, we constantly meet the people of God sending up urgent petitions for God to vindicate them before their enemies. In Psalm 35:1-2, David cried, "Contend with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of buckler and shield, and rise up for my help." And in anticipation that the Lord would honour His cry, he sang, "and my soul shall rejoice in the Lord; it shall exult in His salvation" (vs. 9). The apostles were convinced that they had personally seen David's vindication and the vindication of all weary and afflicted subjects of the Lord. The empty tomb and hands-on contact with the risen Lord was the vindication of God and His people against all the enemies of darkness.

The vision of living in the cross of Christ with one of our own is a privilege and a sharing in the glory of the Lord. But we see the glory and the triumph of the cross in the empty tomb. Moreover, the resurrection was

God's manifestation that His triumph and our salvation would not be consigned to simply the spiritual and heavenly dimensions of existence. A flesh and blood resurrection signals the end to every manner of earthly affliction that sin has meted out against us in the old creation. If our vision of the cross is that Jesus paid the price for our heavenly mansions, it is the resurrection that certified that we shall inhabit them in flesh and blood. His bodily resurrection guarantees ours.

Living in the cross with a cross is provisional Christian life. It is only the big picture of the here and now, which of course, is but a blip on the big screen of forever. The days of trouble and half-empty cups are limited. The resurrected life with the new heaven and the new earth is hastening to dawn. This was not simply vision for the apostles, the down payment was given to their experience. They took in the risen Lord with all their senses (I John 1:1-4; Acts 2:32). Good Friday and Easter are just preface in the never-ending story of God's salvation. The life we have now been called to live as the people of God is somewhere between the preface and chapter one. For this place in the drama with our experiences of *tentatio*, we can think of nothing better to mould our vision than the Lord's words to Habakkuk that "the righteous shall live by faith."

II. *TENTATIO*: THE CROSS, THE DEVIL AND THE THEOLOGIAN

While Luther realized trials and temptations are the common lot of all Christians, he understood them as diverse in character and intensity depending on age and one's level of Christian maturity.⁸ He wrote in his Large Catechism:

We must all feel it, though not all to same degree, some have more frequent and severe temptations than others. Youths, for example, are tempted chiefly by the flesh, older people are tempted by the world. Others, who are concerned with spiritual matters (that is, strong Christians), are tempted by the Devil. ... [W]hen one attack ceases, new ones always arise. (LC III:107, 109)

⁸ Luther observed that "in this life are many different degrees of tribulations, as there are different persons. Had another had the tribulations which I have suffered, he would long since have died; while I could not have endured the buffetings which St. Paul did, nor St. Paul the tribulations which Christ suffered." Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, trans. William Hazlett (London: Harper Collins Publishing, Fount Classics, 1995) 306.

The Way of the Cross

Our discussion about *tentatio* now turns to this latter group, made up of “those who are concerned with spiritual matters”, that is, the **strong Christians**, particularly those who aspire to being theologians and servants of the Word. From the earliest days of his momentous discoveries in the Psalms and the epistles of Paul, Luther believed that the cross describes the contours of both a true evangelical theology and a true theologian of the Church. “*CRUX sola est nostra theologia*—the **cross** alone is our theology.”⁹ In the most popular and oft-quoted of his *Heidelberg Theses*, he asserted:

19. The man who looks upon the invisible things of God as they are perceived in created things does not deserve to be called a theologian
 20. The man who perceives the visible rearward parts of God [*posteriora Dei*] as seen in suffering and the cross does, however, deserve, to be called a theologian.¹⁰

Luther advanced a theology of revelation that simultaneously described something important about God **and** the would-be theologian. God’s revelation is indirect and concealed. The visible **rearward parts** (to translate *posteriora* politely!) is an allusion to God’s revelation of Himself to Moses (Ex. 33:23). We are denied direct knowledge of God or a direct view of the splendour of His glorious face. **As seen in suffering and the cross** (which reveals the *posteriora Dei*) is a dual reference referring both to the passion and suffering of Christ, and the passion and suffering of the theologian. Beneath the humility and shame of the cross lie concealed the omnipotence and full glory of God. God reveals Himself *sub contrariis*—under the opposite. Humility and shame are the masks which simultaneously conceal and reveal. Theologians of the cross know this, seeing God and His mercy through the eyes of faith—but to others lacking faith this insight is denied. *Theologia crucis* is not merely that God is known through suffering [whether Christ’s or the individual’s], but that God makes Himself known through suffering.¹¹ God is **active** in this matter. Suffering is the *opus alienum* (“strange work”) of God in bringing sinners to Himself—Christ’s suffering and ours. The Devil is God’s instrument who performs this task. Suffering and affliction are not nonsensical intrusions into the world (a theology of glory). Rather, *tentatio* signals the revelation and working out of our salvation by our loving and merciful God. He kills to make alive.

Tentatio turns things upside down for the theologian of the cross. God is not the sweet refuge here; He is the instigator of the turmoil for the

⁹ WA 5:176.32-33; the capitals are Luther’s.

¹⁰ AE 31:52

¹¹ McGrath 150-51.

faithful. Many contemporary theologians speculate about an empathetic deity who enters into solidarity with people who are victimized by injustice and suffer all manner of want and affliction. This is certainly not the God of the Church's confession. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sent His innocent Son to the suffering and tribulation of the cross and there forsook Him! He is also the One who is behind the *tentatio* that the faithful and especially the theologian of the cross must endure. Theologians of the cross to be such must accept the fact that God plays by different rules. In man's justice, everybody gets what they deserve. This is reasonable. In God's justice, however, it is just the reverse. Only in the cross of Christ—when viewed from ours—can this be seen and embraced. Is God unfair? Silent? Hidden? ... Generally, yes. What divine foolishness! The true theologian of the cross ponders all from the vantage point of *tentatio* and through the eyes of faith realizes that because "God so loved the world", He gave His Son over to suffering and the cross. God condemned His righteous Son and pardons wretched sinners. As with the Word made flesh, then so with servants of the Word—everybody gets what they do not deserve.

All is *absconditas sub contrario*, hidden under the opposite. Human analogy and intelligent contemplation of the world order will not yield and make intelligible such mysteries—you must resort to paradox and stretch it. It's like the old American folk hero, the Lone Ranger—the Masked Man! What you don't see is what you get. Hidden under the opposite was the warrior for "truth, justice, and the American way"! And apart from the mask, of course, you see nothing. In the same way *absconditas sub contrario* applies to the justice and omnipotence of God. They are manifested and made perfect in the shame and weakness of the cross. And, of course, apart from the crucified Christ, you cannot find the just and gracious God at all. Moreover, the cross shows how God is at work in the world and in our lives—and, again, under the mask of opposites. The present writer has elsewhere called this paradoxical method of God's redemptive activity "salvific worldliness."¹² Here is the unending tension between faith and experience for the Christian.

Tentatio does not imply God's empathetic solidarity with the sinner; it is His attack upon the sinner—an attack for life. Gerhard Forde wonderfully expressed Luther's thinking here: "the Cross is the doing of God to us."¹³ Before the theologian can be raised to life, he must first be forced to descend to the depths of death; before he can be elevated by God, he must first be humiliated; before he can be saved, he must first be damned; before he can

¹² This characterisation and elaboration of God's saving work was discussed in my essay, "The Outer-Limits of a Lutheran Piety", *Logia* 3.1 (Epiphany 1994). Note especially p. 6.

¹³ Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross—Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997) 4.

live in the spirit, he must first be put to death in the flesh. God condemns us that He may justify us, He makes us a sinner that He may make us righteous, He slays that He may give life. This is simply requisite for all theologians in the Church of Christ; indeed, for all its members.

Let us keep in mind, it is God who does all these things. None flows from our decisions, commitments, choices, or actions. Suffering and tribulation are therefore never to become some new programme promoted in the Church for Christians to implement. We suffer **divine action!** Luther rightly thought it morbid for Christians to search for crosses to nail themselves to. God shall give us our crosses when, where, and as we need them. Of that we may be confident. Sometimes we are afflicted from within, sometimes from without. Job was stricken from without, Luther from within. In either case God would accomplish a humiliation of the heart, not of action. God is interested in producing a humble heart, not coaxing some pietistic self-denying behaviour out of us. What God demands in Philippians 2:5 is the attitude of the Suffering Servant, namely, a humble heart. With such a heart, Christ can use the theologian's head. It is God who produces the humble heart and he does it, in part, through *tentatio*. This humility is no humanly produced virtue; not a human work but a divine preparation. The believer acquires the heart of Christ Jesus in Philippians 2 by God's *opus alienum*, His alien work. Jesus said, "He who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12), but we wretched sinners have no spiritual resources to accomplish this. Humility is the one precondition for grace—God commands it and He creates it.¹⁴ It is God who humbles us, and it is He who exalts us. There is no other way—we must die to live. All of this is eminently practical for the would-be servant of the Word in a theology of the cross. *Tentatio* teaches us that all true theology is done on your knees; it flows out of the confessional or it is a theology of glory.

The Roles of the Devil in Tentatio

The universality and pervasiveness of *tentatio* for the Church of Christ indicated to Luther that in this age, Satan is the *Princeps mundi*, prince of the world.¹⁵ The omnipotence of God is an article of faith hidden in the Cross, not a conclusion of reason applied to the field of human experience. *Tentatio* powerfully raises the question, "Who is really in charge?" and makes reasonable arguments in support of the First Article of the Creed tenuous and questionable. Luther was convinced we are living in the last

¹⁴ By the term "precondition", we do not mean to imply any condition of merit on our part. Nor do we mean to imply that grace is only a future possibility not a present actuality. The term is meant to describe only what is needed for receptivity of God's present and unconditional grace—something that He himself effects.

¹⁵ WA 50:473.37

days when Satan has been unleashed. The Devil is Lord in the world in these End Times. For now, God's omnipotence operates under its opposite—it is perceived in weakness, in cross, suffering and seeming defeat. Luther was convinced that reformation will not come to the believer or the Church until the Better Day. Said Luther, “that God is omnipotent is proved by faith alone.”¹⁶ For now, for our senses and experiential life, Satan rules all we can see.

Christus Victor is an eschatological promise in which we confidently hope. The *Deus revelatus* to us is no omnipotent God—from the baby Jesus to Christ crucified and all points in between, this is made very plain to us. The revealed God suffers and dies to sin. The revealed God is tempted and vexed by the Devil, and so we are. The *tentatio* of Christ is our inheritance in Baptism where we become both participant and part of the battlefield in the cosmic struggle that is not yet finished. Things do not go better with God—sometimes they get downright wretched. *Tentatio* cannot be equated with the mental wrestling of theodicy. It is not something we ponder, it is what we are visited with and experience. Moreover, neither reasonable argument nor personal testimony can make God's control clear. Only faith in God's promises can do that. Actually, for the people of God and especially theologians, there is no time for speculation; the battle enjoins us now. Our baptismal inheritance has given us all that belongs to Christ—His battle, His cause, and His Adversary, the King of the world. In the spiritual marriage all is held in common including the *tentatio* of the Bridegroom. For theologians of the cross, this means that time is short. The need is great for them to get their lessons, and get them right. The Lord is coming soon and His question is not will He find reform and renewal, but will He find faith?

One of the most profound insights of Luther, Heiko Oberman expounds it beautifully: Reformation in the Church is an eschatological hope and Christ will accomplish it Himself at the End Times. Luther was not out to reform the Church, but rather to recover a clear voice of the Gospel within it.¹⁷ Nevertheless, reform and renewal of the Christian and the Church did capture the vision and energies of religious reformers from Erasmus of Rotterdam, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century to modern era reformers and revivalists such as Charles Finney, John Wesley, Dwight L. Moody, and contemporary proponents of church-growth revivalism. They bubble with optimism to harness some power of

¹⁶ Heiko A. Oberman, “Between the Middle Ages and Modern Times”, *The Reformation—Roots & Ramifications*, trans. Andrew Colin Gow (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994) 67.

¹⁷ See especially his essay “Martin Luther: Forerunner of the Reformation”, in *The Reformation—Roots & Ramifications* 23-52.

the Spirit so that, with God's help, the faithful can be empowered, inspired, and committed to implementing God's Law in the Church for a marvellous advance in holy living. They would reform the Church in the power of the Spirit and do it **in this generation!**

This, for Christians who know they are simultaneously sinner and saint, is understood as simply impossible. The Church shall always **appear** wretched with Satan, not God, in control. They simply will **not** "know we are Christians by our love"! They will not know we are the righteous people of God until the *Parousia*. We are consigned in this life—and let the world watch—simply to confess our sins and the righteousness of the Bride of Christ. The real problem for a *sola Scriptura* evangelical understanding of sin and grace is not some conundrum of the omnipotence of God vs. human freedom, but rather the omnipotence of God and the reign of Satan. The Devil rules the world of our experience for now, and that's the truth.

Reformation in the world, however, is possible—that we might make things a little bit better. This Luther thought we could and should do.¹⁸ The affairs of this world are under our enlightened reason and conscience, just as they are with the unregenerate. We may go into the world and work with all citizens of this world to make things a little better. We can make decisions—hopefully good ones—from good education, sound reasoning and an enlightened conscience applying the law written within. Here we shall surely encounter the Prince of this world who will always keep things in a fallen, corrupted state. Nevertheless, we can effect some relief, some improvement.

Luther could also refer to the Devil as the *Magister conscientiaa*—Master of the conscience. It is odd, notes Oberman, that much of the Luther revivals in the 19th and early 20th centuries could portray Luther as the great champion of the conscience over against the powers of this world. Luther insisted that the Christian conscience be tied to the Word of God. Let it thereby be imprisoned by God. "The alternative to this 'prison of God,'" notes Oberman about Luther, "is not 'freedom of conscience' but rather 'conscience imprisoned by the Devil', because the conscience—and this is terrifying even unbearable for the modern ear—is the natural kingdom of the Devil."¹⁹

Affliction and suffering are greatest in matters of conscience that challenge Christ's Word of Grace—either that we have it or that we need it. When we become Christians, we become temples of the Holy Spirit, and by faith we are joined to Christ. But it is the Unholy Spirit who takes up residence in the conscience as its Master. The mirror is the Devil's tool. He would either keep it ever from you or ever before you. Self-righteousness or

¹⁸ Oberman, *The Reformation—Roots & Ramifications* 66.

¹⁹ Oberman, *The Reformation—Roots & Ramifications* 65.

despair is a game he will always win; either because you can do what conscience dictates or because you can't. The Master of the conscience would make grace either unnecessary or unavailable.

The human conscience is the Devil's lethal playground. Tie your religiosity to matters of the heart, conscience, and what can be experienced from within, and you are flirting with spiritual disaster. This is the Hound of Hell's home turf. It is not the allures of the flesh with which Satan launches his greatest assaults; it is in the conscience where he is most devastating. With the Law written on the heart, Satan works from the inside. With Christ it is the opposite. He works from the outside through the **Sacred Things**. Let your conscience be your guide—the cheerful song of Jiminy Cricket and polite civil religion—is Satan's victory either by self-righteous smugness, or bottomless, dark despair. The Law written on the human heart and sweet reason—with or without smug human pride—will damn us all. Theologians and servants of the Word need to take note: the post-modern demand for internal religious experience as the only criterion for spiritual relevance (that has many obliging churches—some called Lutheran!—growing and multiplying like rabbits) will lead the naive seeker into a *tentatio* that is wicked and deadly.

The root of the conflict with the Devil and all *tentatio* is the Gospel. Luther confessed to a friend in correspondence: “The Prince of Demons himself has taken up combat against me; so powerfully and adeptly does he handle the Scriptures that my scriptural knowledge does not suffice if I do not rely on the alien Word.”²⁰ The Devil, in Luther's view, is more adept with the Word of God than he was. Notice, here the brute authority of Scripture is of no use. The Bible has the words that will damn us all and the Devil knows just what they are and how to apply them. But, maintained Luther, the Devil is overcome by the **alien** Word. Where the Gospel has free course, there the Devil is surely most present and active ... yet overcome. The sacred things of the Gospel—Baptism and the Supper—bring God's favour and our alien righteousness. Here He is present in the midst of our turmoil with visible, tangible props, making it possible for us to resist the Devil with the promises of Christ. Infant Baptism performs the “Joyful Exchange” for the empty-handed and the ignorant. Together with the proclaimed Gospel and the Supper—**here** is where God may be found ... for us. These are the Gateways to Heaven where we meet not the omnipotence of God, but His graciousness—not a mighty display of His power, but a generous display of His saving gifts. Fellowship with the gracious God is from the heart, but always at the same time, *extra nos* in His appointed means.

²⁰ As cited in Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* 226.

Luther had one other strange title for the Devil as he considered his work of *tentatio*. He called him *Doctor Consolatorius*—the Doctor of consolation, which is the honorary title of the Holy Spirit! The Unholy Spirit comes to us and makes his case in the conscience that by rights we belong to him. **The Hound of Hell ... has three throats—sin, the law, and death.**²¹ Our sinfulness, in word and deed, has erected a wall between us and God, and we are imprisoned behind it. But it is precisely at this point that we have proof of Christ’s presence and His righteousness. Here we have the unmistakable sign of being the elect of God—justified, and joined to Christ by faith. The Devil is not interested in the unbeliever—he has all of them already. His battle is with those who belong to the “Enemy”; where the Gospel lives in the heart, where the Word of Christ rules the conscience by faith. Here is our experiential assurance—and the Devil provides it—that we really belong to Christ. What comfort! Said Luther, “the fact that the Devil presses us so hard shows that we are on the right side”.²² Satan attacks the conscience and afflicts the heart and soul, pointing out our spiritual poverty—our wretchedness, cowardice, and weakness in fear, love, and trust. But then, here therefore, are the consolations and comforting signs that we most assuredly belong to Christ. God enlists the Devil to assure the Christian of his own election by experiences of the sickness unto death.

For thus God advances His purpose through His strange work and with marvellous wisdom He knows that through the death the devil can effect nothing else but life, so that while he does his utmost against the action of God, he is by his characteristic effort actually working for the divine cause against his own.²³

Here in Luther, notes Oberman, is the overturning of hundreds of years of theology. Never before has there been such a depiction of Satan as one pressed into God’s service of providing comfort and assurance to Christians. A real role reversal—comfort affliction! It is not the temptation to sin, but rather torment of God’s judgement of sin and wrath according to His holy law. Satan comes not to ravage the lost and condemned, but the faithful and righteous—offering them comfort that they do indeed belong to Christ. **This is Luther’s *De Servo Arbitrio Diaboli*, “concerning the unfree will of the Devil”: against his will, he is forced to proclaim God’s Word.**²⁴ None of this is a picture of the Devil, so popular even among those who bear the name Lutheran, who is most to be feared as the instigator of moral offences—and the one who entraps the ungodly by tempted naughtiness.

²¹ Luther, *Table Talk* 296.

²² As cited in Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots & Ramifications* 64.

²³ WA 57:128; my trans.

²⁴ Oberman, *The Reformation—Roots & Ramifications* 64.

Tentatio: *The Theologian's Formation*

Theologians of the cross suffer attacks and afflictions from the Devil. This is God's plan and it is how they become and remain such. *Tentatio* humbles the theologian and promotes existentially shaped theological questions—this one always at the forefront: “what must I do to be saved?” An afflicted and tormented theologian keeps his theological reflection from becoming detached mental exercises with objective principles to be mastered—or ethical causes to be mobilized and motivated. *Tentatio* often has a way of making these things unnecessary luxuries. Nevertheless, such theological diversion has always been a special hazard for ambitious, aspiring theologians who labour in academia, has it not? The temptation is always there to vacate the prescriptive and rightly divided Word of sin and grace for something more academically respectable and universally appreciated. Many a promising servant of the Word has exchanged service in the theology of the cross for a dispassionate objectivity and **scholarliness** in the interest of personal recognition and advancement.

In the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther set forth theses to instruct and defend his theology of the cross, but even more, to describe how one becomes a true theologian of the cross. Here it is the matter of salvation, not academic success, that Luther pushes under the noses of would-be theologians. To this end, his theses set forth how the theologian can advance in the path of righteousness rather than technical expertise.²⁵ The survival of the theologian, not his accomplishments in academia, was Luther's concern.

Through *tentatio*, God would make a servant of the Word out of a would-be theologian. God employs the wiles of the Devil in this work. Satan has a **special care** for strong Christians and shepherds of the soul. His temptations in this regard do not centre so much on the allures of the flesh, as on terrors of the conscience. This kind of tribulation keeps *sola gratia*

²⁵ For a wonderfully clear and succinct analysis of the theses in Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, the reader is directed to the recent little monograph by Luther scholar, Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross—Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997). Forde explains that like two poles with an arch between them, Luther's Thesis 1 presents the Law of God and Thesis 28, the Love of God. The whole Disputation arched by Theses 2-27 is intended to move the reader from the Law of God to the Love of God. In the cross of Christ, theologians move from Law to Gospel by a death that God effects. We do not advance by our works, for these are put to death (Theses 1-12). Nor do we advance by any resolve or commitment of our will (Theses 13-18). Natural man's will is also dead in spiritual matters. Theses 1-18 take the would-be theologian along a path from the Law of God which cannot advance us in righteousness (Thesis 1) to despair of any ability to prepare for God's grace (Thesis 18). The movement is dialectical—from responsibility **to inability**, from the Law of life **to death**, from our best works **to damnable sins**, from resolve **to failure**. From death in the cross, the Love of God works in us what is pleasing. By grace through faith, all that the Law demands is already accomplished (Theses 26-28.)

and *sola fide* from becoming obscured or transformed into dry abstract principles. It can keep them concrete and salvific. It did for Luther:

I did not learn theology at once, but had to seek ever deeper and deeper after it. That is where my spiritual distress led me; for one can never understand the Holy Scriptures without experience and tribulations. ... If we do not have such a Devil, then we are nothing but *speculativi Theologi*, who handle their thoughts badly and speculate about everything with their reason, that it must be like this and like that; just like the way of the monks in the monasteries.²⁶

Luther championed what Ronald Feuerhahn has characterized as the power of negative thinking. Only in the face of sin, death, and damnation does Christ and Him crucified make any sense. Without such negative thought, the Divine foolishness is just ... foolishness. In *tentatio*, the Christian theologian receives the requisite existential instability to see the Word of Christ aright. The Devil sees to it that we really understand that we do not live by a stability born of our own resources; rather, we live by grace or we don't live at all. "God is one's sole refuge, prayer one's sole protection", said Luther. "At such times your only comfort is to take refuge in the Lord's Prayer and to appeal to God from your heart: 'Dear Father, Thou hast commanded me to pray; let me not fall because of temptation'" (LC III:110). Satan, as dangerous as he is, does not have a free hand. He is set to work in God's service schooling Christians in a faith that lays hold of nothing but grace alone. *Tentatio* makes beggars out of theologians and theologians out of beggars.

All of the Devil's attacks on the theologian are directed ultimately at the certainty of his salvation. This can either take the form of confessional distress, as it did with the cloistered Luther—"Is my contrition great or sincere enough?" Or, as the later Luther anguished—"Did God really send His Son to die there for me; is His grace truly sufficient to cover all my spiritual filth?" The Devil would awaken doubts about the reliability of God's promise of mercy. The promise of **grace alone**—you need do nothing—does not alleviate the problem. *Tentatio* does not diminish when demands are lessened. ... The issue is still the same—"Hath God said ...?" Satan attacks by either raising doubts about moral worthiness, or questioning whether God has really chosen you to be His own or whether He has already passed you by—**predestination anxiety**.

Thus said Luther concerning the qualifications of a true theologian: "living, or rather dying and being damned make a theologian, not understanding, reading, or speculating."²⁷ It is through experiencing the

²⁶ WA TR 1:147.3-14, no. 352; as cited in Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* 185.

²⁷ WA 5:163.28-29.

wrath of God that one becomes a true theologian—a theologian of the cross. It is to discover the power of negative thinking. Through the work of the *opus alienum Dei*, the theologian finds himself driven to despair, confidence in the self torn asunder, and under the wrath of God. This is the experience of being totally forsaken. Yet in this way, delicious despair, the power of negative thinking—the poor wretched theologian learns to trust *solus Christus*. Everything else is taken away but God and His grace, and thus we are brought closer to Him. Through cross, suffering, and hell—*tentatio!*—true theology, knowledge, and fellowship with God are obtained. If called shepherds and would-be theologians do not understand and appreciate these things ... whither the flock?

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THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

John W. Kleinig

Do we realize what we would be letting ourselves in for if we ordained women? In his book *What will happen to God?* William Oddie makes this provocative claim:

Women's ordination ... is thought of by many of those most committed to achieving it as a means of installing immovably, in the permanent structures of the church itself, a permanent shift in the Christian tradition: to ordain women as priests will be to change at its foundations our idea of God. And this is no intemperate and unfounded accusation but ... an ambition coolly announced by the most substantial feminist writers. It may be that this ambition should be achieved; but it is right that Christian people should at least know what many of those who are seeking to bring about the change really intend.¹

He holds that the main change would be to the teaching on the fatherhood of God. This would, of course, result in the radical reconstruction of many other areas of doctrine.

As far as I am concerned, the assertion of St Paul in I Corinthians 14:37 that Christ has commanded that women should not be speakers in the liturgical assembly of the congregation settles the matter. My conscience is bound by that word whether I understand the reason for it or not. But at the same time I will try to figure out the reason for that prohibition no matter how tentative my conclusions may be. This paper is my attempt to do so in the light of Oddie's claim, because I agree with him in his assertion that Christ's prohibition in I Corinthians 14:33b-38 has something to do with the doctrine of the Trinity and our participation in the life of the Triune God through the preaching of the word and the celebration of the sacrament.

1. THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY AND THE MISSION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

The three foundational texts for our teaching on the institution of the public Ministry by our Lord are either trinitarian or binitarian in content and structure. First, in John 20:21-23 Jesus "commissioned" the eleven disciples, as the Father had "commissioned" Him (cf. 13:20; 17:18), and gave them

¹ William Oddie, *What Will Happen to God? Feminism and the Reconstruction of Christian Belief* (London: SPCK, 1984) 26.

the Holy Spirit, so that they could pronounce the pardon and judgement of His heavenly Father to human beings. When they forgave or retained sin, they stood in the shoes of the Father and acted by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, in Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus, who had received all authority in heaven and on earth from His Father, and who promised to remain with the eleven apostles after His ascension, commissioned them to make disciples of all nations, by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them all that they had received through Him from His heavenly Father.

Thirdly, in Luke 10:16 Jesus gave the following promise and warning to the seventy two preachers who are regarded in our confessions as the prototypes for the public Ministry of the Word:

Whoever hears you hears Me,
and whoever rejects you rejects Me,
and whoever rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.

He thereby “commissioned” them as His representatives (10:1, 3), as He had been “commissioned” by His heavenly Father (10:16).

If we take these three foundational texts together, we must conclude that the apostles and those who received the Office of the Keys from them were involved in the mission of the Triune God to all people here on earth. They exercised the keys by teaching divine doctrine and correcting false doctrine, by proclaiming divine salvation and divine judgement, by absolving and retaining sin, by baptizing and withholding baptism, by admitting people to the Lord’s table and excluding people from it. As they did this, they worked together with the Son who did the work of His heavenly Father by the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. THE PASTOR AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SON AND THE FATHER

The teaching of Jesus in Luke 10:16 shows that, when pastors preach God’s word, they do not just speak for Christ but actually represent Him. So those who hear their words do not merely hear Christ’s words but hear Christ speaking to them. This means that Christ identifies Himself so closely with preachers in their preaching that those who receive them receive Him in and through them (Matt. 10:40; John 13:20; cf. Gal. 4:14; Did. 11:2, 4). On the other hand, those who reject the preachers do not just reject their message and Christ’s message; they reject Christ Himself. The preachers of the Gospel do not then function on behalf of an inactive Christ, like a person with the power of attorney for a disabled relative, nor do they represent their absent Lord, like the deputy of our Prime Minister when he is absent from office. Rather they represent the risen Lord Jesus who is actually present

with His people in the liturgical assembly. So when pastors preach and administer the sacraments, we do not just hear Christ speaking; we “see” Him at work.

In his Apology to the Augsburg Confession (VII/VIII:28, 47-48), Melancthon concludes from Luke 10:16 that those who hold the Office of the Ministry “represent the person of Christ”. Like St Paul who in II Corinthians 2:10 forgives the sinners in Corinth “in the person of Christ”, they act “in the person of Christ”. In their office they quite properly impersonate Him. Thus, when they present the Word and the sacraments to the saints, they offer them “as Christ” (Latin: *Christi vice*) and “in His place” (Latin: *Christi loco*), for Christ’s Word and His holy Body and Blood cannot be divorced from Him as a person or received apart from Him.

Pastors, however, do not merely represent the risen Lord Jesus; Jesus Himself maintains in Luke 10:16 that they represent God the Father even as they represent Him. They bring the kingdom of God and its peace with them personally to the people who receive them and accept their proclamation (Luke 10:5-9). Those who reject the preachers of the Gospel do not just reject Christ; they reject the Father who sent Him. Hence God’s judgement quite properly falls on those people for their rejection of Christ’s heralds. On the other hand, the people who receive those whom Christ sends receive the Father who sent Him (Matt. 10:40; John 13:20).

This understanding of the pastor as the representative of God the Father was elaborated by Ignatius of Antioch towards the end of the first century. He claimed that the bishop who led a congregation in its worship was “a type of the Father” (Trall. 3:1); he presided “in the place of God” the Father (Magn. 3:1). Melancthon also alludes to this teaching in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession (XIII:12). In his discussion on whether ordination is a sacrament or not, he asserts that God is present in the Ministry. This means that when a pastor publicly exercises the Office of the Keys, he represents God the Father. He speaks the Father’s word of law or grace, accusation or absolution, disapproval or approval, judgement or blessing. Luther sums up all this rather well in a sermon on John 14:10 where he says:

Furthermore, when Christ commands His apostles to proclaim His Word and to carry on His work, we hear and see Him Himself, and thus also God the Father; for they publish and proclaim no other Word than that which they heard from His lips, and they point solely to Him. Thus the process goes on; the Word is handed down to us through the agency of true bishops, pastors, and preachers, who received it from the apostles. ... Thus the apostles and pastors are nothing but channels through which Christ leads and transmits His Gospel from the Father to us. Therefore wherever you hear the Gospel properly taught or see a person baptized, wherever you see someone administer or receive the Sacrament, or wherever you witness someone absolving another, there you may say without hesitation: “Today I beheld God’s Word and work. Yes, I saw

and heard God Himself preaching and baptizing.” To be sure, the tongue, the voice, the hands, etc, are those of a human being, but the Word and the ministry are really those of the Divine Majesty Himself. Hence it must be viewed and believed as though God’s own voice were resounding from heaven and as though we were seeing Him administering Baptism or the Sacrament with His own hands.²

3. CHRIST’S CHOICE OF MEN AS APOSTLES AND PASTORS

The incarnation of God’s Son as a male human was not just a tactical concession to avoid offence in the patriarchal societies of the ancient world. It was, I maintain, an integral part of His mission to reveal God the Father to humankind in the Old and New Testaments (see John 1:18; 17:6). His incarnation as a male person led in turn to his choice of men as apostles and teachers of the Word.

The case for this presupposes the scriptural teaching on the relationship between the creation of the first Adam and the redemption of humanity by the second Adam, as well as the scriptural teaching on the typological relationship between them (see Rom. 5:14). To put it quite simply, Adam, the first human father and husband, is a type of God the Father and of Jesus the heavenly bridegroom, as well as a type of the pastor who represents both of them.

When God created human beings as “male and female” (Gen. 1:27), He did not just design men merely for the business of sexual procreation but also to personify His asexual fatherhood in the order of creation. God’s fatherhood is therefore not the result of the projection, by analogy, of human fatherhood onto the Deity, so that God is held to be something like our human fathers. Rather, as St Paul asserts in Ephesians 3:15, all human fatherhood is derived from God’s fatherhood. Human fathers are meant to be like God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This means that the role of human fathers is not just determined by their masculinity but is shaped by God the Father’s activity in naming and providing for, assessing and approving, accepting, and blessing His human children.

Neither Adam nor any human father after him has ever in reality ever remotely embodied and mirrored the fatherhood of God. In fact, we fathers seem to reflect His fatherhood to our children more by our failure than by success. As a result of our inadequacy they are often filled with a deep longing and spiritual need for some father figure to compensate for what we have failed to be to them and give to them.

² AE 24:66, 67.

Jesus became a male human to fill that vacuum and to fulfil that spiritual paternal role. He revealed the fatherhood of God the Father by perfectly embodying the divinely intended spiritual character of human fatherhood and by fully discharging the spiritual vocation of human fathers. He therefore claims: “Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus in turn appoints mature men to be pastors and teachers in the family of God. They are, as Luther teaches us in the Large Catechism (I:158-63), to be spiritual fathers to their charges. They are to disclose God’s fatherhood by their own management of the church as God’s household (see I Tim. 3:5). Like the apostles, they not only beget “children” through the Gospel but also model and teach how to live as children of God in Christ Jesus (I Cor. 4:14-17; II Cor. 6:13; I Thess. 2:11, 12; III John 4).

In his teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul maintains that, when God created Adam as the husband of Eve, He created him and every human husband as a type of Christ, the heavenly bridegroom. The role of a man as a husband was therefore spiritual as well as physical. As the heads of their wives, husbands, by their love, were meant to model and mirror the demonstrative, self-sacrificial love of Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, for His bride, the church. Now it is, of course, true that we who are husbands reflect Christ more by our failure than by our success, for who of us could ever claim that we have loved our wives “as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25)?

God’s Son therefore became incarnate as a male human to fulfil the role which had originally been given to Adam. As the Messiah He not only revealed the typological character of human husbandhood but also redeemed both men and women by His self-sacrificial love. He husbands the church and presents the church to His heavenly Father as His lovely holy bride (Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22; Rev. 19:7; 21:2). Christ’s maleness does not therefore disclose the maleness of God the Father, who is of course a-sexual, but qualifies Him to fulfil His role as the loving redemptive head of the church.

Jesus in turn calls men who are either celibate, or who have proved to be faithful husbands of one wife (see I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6), to be pastors. As pastors they are appointed to represent Christ. They are to betroth people spiritually to Christ in Holy Baptism (II Cor. 11:2); they are to love, cherish and nourish the church. C. S. Lewis therefore claims:

It is an old saying in the army that you salute the uniform not the wearer. Only one wearing the masculine uniform can (provisionally, and till the Parousia) represent the Lord to the Church: for we are all, corporately and individually, feminine to Him. We men may often make very bad

priests. That is because we are insufficiently masculine.³

Christ, then, did not become incarnate as a male human, nor did He confer the Holy Ministry on certain chosen members of the male sex, in order to indicate that God the Father was a male person, but to fulfil the role of Adam as a type of Christ and of God the Father. If we grant that this is so, then it follows that the ordination of women contradicts the spiritual vocation of men as husbands and fathers and empties marriage and family life of much of their spiritual significance. It also obscures the mystery of Christ and His work in the order of redemption. It obscures the role of Christ as the head of the church as well as the nature of the church as His holy bride. Most of all, it obscures the fatherhood of God and the role of pastors as spiritual fathers. The ordination of women creates symbolic confusion in both the order of creation and the order of redemption.

4. THE ORDER OF THE MINISTRY AS A REFLECTION OF THE ORDER OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The church is not a natural human community which resembles either the family or the state. It is a supernatural heavenly community which is modelled on the community of divine persons within the Holy Trinity. The order of the public Ministry, together with the arrangement of all relationships in the church, has been designed by God Himself to mirror the order of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Trinity is a community of three differentiated persons whose relations with each other are no more interchangeable with each other than the relations of husband and wife in marriage. God the Father is the eternal source and head of the Holy Trinity. The Son is begotten by the Father and derives His unique divine identity as Son from his Father. The Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son and receives everything from Them, even as the Spirit returns completely in love back to the Father. Each is different from the other and yet identified by the other. Each is ordered harmoniously in relation to the other under the headship of the Father.

The Holy Trinity is therefore an ordered community of persons with Its own unique "order" (*taxis*) of self-giving, reciprocating love. This order is characterized by the loving, obedient "subordination" of the Son to the Father. Just as the Father works only through the Son and does nothing apart from the Son, so the Son fulfils the will of His Father and seeks only to please Him. Even though He is in all ways equal to the Father and in no way

³ C. S. Lewis, "Priestesses in the Church?" in *God in the Dock. Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. W. Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970) 234-39.

inferior to the Father, He is nevertheless utterly subordinate to the Father. Thus as St Paul teaches in I Corinthians 11:3, God the Father is the head of Christ the Son, even as Christ is the head of every human husband, and every human husband is the head of his wife. In I Corinthians 15:25-28, Paul goes so far as to say that the Son is not just subordinate to the Father until the resurrection of the dead on the last day but will be forever subordinate to the Father, so that God the Father may be all in all. Christ's relation as Son to His Father is therefore characterized by His subordination to the headship of the Father. It has nothing to do with the dominance and power of the Father. It involves and expresses the harmony of the Son with the Father and His love for the Father.

The "order" of the church as a supernatural community of love differs radically from the order of the family and the order of the state as a political entity because it is based on the order of the Trinity and has been established to reflect that order on a human scale. In the church there are no autonomous persons with sovereign power and individual rights. Rather we have a community which is characterized by willing subordination. Subordination is normal and natural. People who all equally and fully share the same status as children of God in Christ are all called to be subordinate in some way under Christ.

Now this call to subordination in the divinely instituted order of the church is based on the willing subordination of the Son to the Father. As Christ willingly subordinates Himself to the Father, so the church subordinates herself to Christ and His Word (II Cor 9:13). Indeed, all her members are to be subordinate to each other in the life of the congregation (Eph. 5:21). Pastors too are to be subordinate to Christ and His Word. Since Christ has appointed male pastors to represent Himself and His heavenly Father in the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, the members of the congregation, whether male or female, are to subordinate themselves to their pastors (I Cor. 16:16; Tit. 1:10; I Pet. 5:5). All other ministries are subordinate to that basic Ministry and dependent on it. Those who serve in that Ministry pass on what they have received from God the Father through Christ and His apostles. The exercise of the public Ministry depends on this pattern of subordination within the church and cannot operate properly apart from it.

The ordination of women uncouples this link between the order of the Holy Trinity and the order of the Christian congregation. On the one hand, it is associated with the deconstruction of the Holy Trinity with the rejection of the Father's headship and the Son's subordination to the Father. It involves the subsequent reconstruction of the Holy Trinity as an egalitarian community of interchangeable persons. On the other hand, it leads to the loss of spiritual authority by the leaders of the church and delivers the

church to the tyranny of fashion, the clash of opinions, and the self-assertive exercise of unauthorized power.

5. CONCLUSION

William Oddie claimed that the ordination of women would involve a radical change in the teaching of the church about the fatherhood of God. His claims cannot be lightly dismissed as alarmist propaganda, because many of those who have promoted the ordination of women also reject the understanding and use of the term Father as the proper name for the first person of the Holy Trinity. This is commonly justified by the claim that the term Father is nothing but a title, a metaphorical designation for the mystery of the transcendent Deity. While some invoke God as Mother, most insist on the use of inclusive language for the Deity in worship. They therefore avoid the use of Father as a proper name and replace it with other general designations and titles.

It is, of course, impossible to demonstrate conclusively that the ordination of women must logically lead to the rejection of God's fatherhood; or vice versa, that the rejection of God's fatherhood leads to the ordination of women. We aren't, after all, dealing with a system of ideas, a religious philosophy or ideology, but with catholic spiritual realities which are all interdependent and interconnected in a kind of ecological order. My claim is that, since the acceptance of the ordination of women may have implications for the way we view, name, and confess the Triune God, we can not ignore this issue but must deal with it fully before proceeding much further. Those who dismiss the traditional understanding of I Corinthians 14:33b-38 and I Timothy 2:11-15 and advocate the ordination of women must demonstrate that the ordination of women does not imply and will not promote the rejection of God's fatherhood.

I close with some unsettling remarks from C. S. Lewis which have kept nagging at my mind and in my conscience ever since I first read and dismissed them years ago when I was a seminary student. He says:

Suppose the reformer stops saying that a good woman may be like God and begins saying that God is like a good woman. Suppose he says that we might as well pray to 'Our Mother which art in heaven' as to 'Our Father'. Suppose he suggests that the Incarnation might just as well have taken a female as a male form, and the Second Person of the Trinity be as well called the Daughter as the Son. Suppose, finally, that the mystical marriage were reversed, that the church were the Bridegroom and Christ the Bride. All this, as it seems to me, is involved in the claim that a

woman can represent God as a priest does.⁴

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⁴ Lewis 239.

THE CHRISTIAN BODY AT REST

Kurt E. Reinhardt

May God the Father, who created this body, may God the Son, who by his blood redeemed this body, may God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified this body to be his temple, keep these remains to the day of the resurrection of all flesh.¹

Our pastors use this blessing in the committal service whenever the body of a Christian is laid to rest. The blessing confesses a reality about the physical remains of the Christian that is not emphasized in many churches today. The terrible reality of death and its consequences cannot be avoided when we are confronted by an open casket with a loved one inside. Although the funeral parlour does its best to disguise the mark of death upon the body by means of wigs and cosmetics, the grim reality cannot successfully be avoided. The life is gone out of the body. Faced with this terrible state of affairs we often resort to a denial of the body's association with the departed loved one. The statement, "That's not really him—it's only a shell", has probably passed over most people's lips. The thought that this body that will be buried in the ground and deteriorate over time is in some real tangible way associated with the departed person is more than most people can bear. The body becomes only a shell, a container that once held the real person who is now gone. There is, of course, truth in the statement that the human soul is no longer attached to the body in such a way that it can experience sensation through it.² The Christian's soul is indeed with Christ and the person's physical suffering is over. But speaking in this way also involves the real danger of slipping into a Gnostic dismissal or even despising of the body itself. For God created man as body and soul and even when the two have been separated they are still the two constituent parts of an individual. The blessing of the body at the committal service confesses this reality. The Triune God has been directly involved with the body that is now laid to rest. He has created, redeemed and sanctified it and

¹ *Lutheran Worship Agenda*, Prepared by the Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1984) 194.

² So Luther confesses in his Genesis commentary: "Therefore this descent of the godly is nothing else than the changing of this life into another state, where one no longer lives under the sun and on earth. But after leaving this life the godly enter their chamber or bed, in which they sleep and rest until body and soul are again united in the future and eternal life." AE 7:293.

now He will also keep it.³ God does not regard the body as a mere shell or container that may be disposed of, but rather He sees it as a constituent part of one of His children that He will preserve until He raises him again.

In his Genesis commentary Luther discusses the issue of death and the Christian body in relation to the patriarchs. He sees the accounts of their death and burial as a source of comfort for Christians. In the face of death and the corruption of the body Christians can be comforted that the great saints of old suffered the same fate.⁴ For although there is comfort in Christ's rest in the tomb, they identify more with saints whose bodies suffered corruption as their bodies will experience it in turn.⁵ Luther also believes that the bodies of the patriarchs were raised with Christ to comfort us with the assurance that our bodies will also be raised as they were raised.⁶ The resurrection will undo all that time and the earth have done to our bodies. "For thus it has pleased God to raise up from worms, from corruption, from the earth, which is totally putrid and full of stench, a body more beautiful than any flower, than balsam, than the sun itself and the stars."⁷ Although Luther sees the examples of the saints as a comfort to Christians whose faith often is not strong enough to cling alone to the example of Christ,⁸ he does assert that Christ's example is special because of its sacramental character.⁹

The examples of the saints teach that one has to die, and they persuade us to bear death with composure. Over and above this, however, Christ's example says: "Arise. Be alive in death. Your putridity will become more

³ On the burial of the Patriarchs in Genesis, Luther comments: "God does not cast off or scatter the saints but gathers them, and in such a way that not even one of their bones or hairs perishes." AE 6:281.

⁴ "But these things were written for us in order that we may remember how from the beginning of the world all the saints died and were reduced to ashes, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:43: 'It is sown in dishonor.' They underwent the same corruption and dishonor notwithstanding the fact that they were saintly in the flesh and in the spirit." AE 4:190.

⁵ "For it is not so much their own weakness that catches the eyes of the weak as that horrible appearance of dead bodies. Therefore they think: 'If I had a body such as Christ had, which death could not corrupt or worms consume, I would await the last judgment with greater courage.' ... Hence the weak are affected and strengthened more when they see that the corruption of the bodies of the patriarchs is like our own corruption." AE 4:191.

⁶ "Hence they undoubtedly rose with Christ for our comfort, lest we fear death when we see the horrible shape of our bodies after death." AE 4:190.

⁷ AE 4:190.

⁸ "And the hour will come in which they will appear again and come forth from their graves more beautiful than the sun and the stars, namely, those who walked uprightly." AE 6:281.

⁹ "If we were so strong and could believe without any doubt that Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification and life (Rom. 4:25), no terror or fear would cling to us; for the death of Christ is a sort of sacrament which assures us that our death is nothing." AE 4:191.

radiant and more brilliant than the sun.” For Christ’s example is a sacrament which bears witness and makes us certain; it not only teaches or persuades but proves and demonstrates necessarily that Christ’s death imparts life to us.¹⁰

Christ’s death gives us life and Christ Himself preserves us. He preserves not only the soul but also the body, as Luther compares Him to the myrrh used in Egyptian funeral rites.¹¹

This preservative quality of Christ can also be seen in Luther’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper. His treatment of the Holy Supper and its physical effects may shed some light on how the Christian’s body should be regarded. Luther’s 1527 writing *This is My Body* emphasizes the benefits of the Lord’s Supper for both the body and the soul.¹² The consumption of the physical body of Christ has a tangible effect of the body of the one who eats it. Unlike other food that is consumed by the body, the Body of Christ transforms the body of the Christian.¹³ Although it is hidden from human eyes until the last day, the body is no longer mortal but eternal.¹⁴ This truth is not simply attached to some future new body but is true of the bodies of Christians already in this world. The Flesh of Christ comes into contact with the flesh Christians possess here on earth and they are transformed and glorified although in a hidden way until the last day. The mouth, the throat, the whole body that Christians possess here will live eternally.¹⁵ The eternal

¹⁰ AE 4:192. “The example of Sarah is rhetoric, as it were, which draws, arouses, persuades us to despise death; but the sacrament brings about and works in the body what was brought about and worked in Abraham and many saints who were raised from the dead.” AE 4:192.

¹¹ “But it is truly wonderful that there, under the burning sun, they were able to keep putridity and stench from corpses. God wanted to point out that the dead in Christ have been anointed with myrrh. Christ is our myrrh, just as myrrh is also offered to Him by the Magi, as Matt. 2:11 tells. For if we believe in Him, we are anointed with myrrh, so that we do not decay but are preserved for the future resurrection.” AE 8:321.

¹² “Therefore it lives and gives life to all who eat it, both to their bodies and to their souls.” AE 37:125.

¹³ “His flesh is not of flesh, or fleshly, but spiritual; therefore it cannot be consumed, digested, and transformed, for it is imperishable as is all that is Spirit, and a food of an entirely different kind from perishable food. Perishable food is transformed into the body which eats it; this food, however, transforms the person who eats it into what it is itself, and makes him like itself, spiritual, alive, and eternal.” AE 37:100. “For he is not digested or transformed but ceaselessly he transforms us, our soul into righteousness, our body into immortality.” AE 37:132.

¹⁴ “For we see that the ancient doctors spoke of the sacrament in such a way that it even bestowed upon the body an immortal nature, though hidden in faith and hope until the last day.” AE 37:118.

¹⁵ “But the heart knows well what the mouth eats, for it grasps the words and eats spiritually what the mouth eats physically. But since the mouth is the heart’s member, it also must ultimately live in eternity on account of the heart, which lives eternally through the Word, because it also eats here physically the same eternal food which its heart eats

body of Christ provides an eternal life transfusion to the very substance of the Christian's body.¹⁶ Although the body is unaware of this transformation, as it still feels all its aches and pains, weakens and experiences death, the soul knows and believes that body is no longer the same.¹⁷ Luther's understanding of the impact of the Lord's Supper on both the body and soul of a person makes it impossible to view the body of a sleeping Christian as only a shell. Christ has transformed that body and redeemed it just as completely as He has redeemed the soul that was attached to it. There is a promise attached to that body because of the sacramental eating and drinking that it did during its lifetime.¹⁸ This is where the true comfort lies when confronted with a body in a casket—in the promise of God. Although my eyes may see a body that will appear to decay and turn into dust, God promises that it will not because He has preserved it with the eternal body of His Son.

In his discussion of the Lord's Supper Luther also points to an impact of the eating and drinking of Christ's Body and Blood that extends beyond the imparting of an eternal quality. The Body and Blood of Christ are not only eternal, but also holy and spiritual. Luther understands that Christians' eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper also effects a change in the bodies of Christians from fleshly to spiritual and from sinful to holy. He asserts that the Body and Blood of Christ are such a powerful food that they also transform us in these areas.¹⁹ The body of the Christian is no longer something to be despised and regarded as unclean because it has been made holy by the Body of Christ. Perhaps consideration should be given to the manner in which the elements of the Lord's Supper and the vessels that hold those elements are treated when dealing with the body of a Christian. The body of a Christian should be treated with the same reverence and respect as

spiritually at the same time." AE 37:87. "Similarly, the mouth, the throat, the body which eats Christ's body, will also have its benefit in that it will live forever and arise on the last day to eternal salvation." AE 37:134.

¹⁶ "... [T]he sacrament is not a sign of the absent body of Christ but is the body of Christ himself, as that by which not only is our body physically fed but also the nature and substance of our body is nourished, strengthened and sustained unto eternal life and becomes a member of the body of Christ." AE 37:119.

¹⁷ "Even the uncomprehending body does not know that it is eating a food by which it will live forever. For the body does not feel it, but dies and decays as if it had eaten some other kind of food, like an irrational animal. But the soul sees and clearly understands that the body will live eternally because it has partaken of an eternal food which will not leave it to decay in the grave and turn to dust." AE 37:93.

¹⁸ "... [B]ut even giving us his own body as nourishment, in order that with such a pledge he may assure and promise us that our body too shall live forever, because it partakes here on earth of an everlasting and living food." AE 37:71.

¹⁹ "So when we eat Christ's flesh physically and spiritually, the food is so powerful that it transforms us into itself and out of fleshly, sinful, mortal men makes spiritual, holy, living men." AE 37:101.

the Body and Blood of Christ in the sacrament since they share the same holiness. These thoughts are consistent with St. Paul's teaching on the holiness of Christians' bodies. In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul addresses the issue of immorality by instructing them on the implications of their faith for their bodies. He reminds them that their bodies are members of Christ and asks them if the members of Christ should be made part of a prostitute (I Cor. 6:15). Since they have been united with the Lord they have been made one spirit with Him (I Cor. 6:17) and it would be inappropriate to bring Him into a union with a prostitute. All sexual immorality is a sin against the body and since Christians' bodies are now the temple of the Holy Spirit they should be careful what they do with their bodies (I Cor 6:19). The bodies of Christians are holy and are united with the Lord; there is no indication that these conditions are discontinued in death.

Luther further addresses the issue of the bodies of Christians and burial in his writing on *Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague* (AE 43). He is discussing where the dead victims of the plague should be buried when he makes a digression to discuss burials in general. Luther believes that following the examples given in the Old and New Testaments bodies should be buried outside the town.²⁰ This has nothing to do with a question of ritual cleanliness but rather with the purpose that he believes cemeteries serve and with the character of those who are buried there. Luther says: "A cemetery rightfully ought to be a fine quiet place, removed from all other localities, to which one can go and reverently meditate upon death, the last judgement, the resurrection, and say one's prayers."²¹ They are places that should confess the resurrection.²² For Luther the cemetery plays a role in the Christian life. They are places where Christians may go to contemplate spiritual truths and pray to God. He even suggests that, "It might even be

²⁰ "My advice, therefore, is to follow these examples and to bury the dead outside of town. Not only necessity but piety and decency should induce us to provide a public burial ground outside the town, that is our town of Wittenberg." AE 43:136.

²¹ AE 43:137.

²² Luther comments on the burial practices of the patriarchs in his Genesis commentary: "Besides this example teaches that the dead should be buried with special honor and respect because of the faith in and the hope of the future resurrection. Before the times of the martyrs people had graves in every field, garden and house. Later on, however, there was a greater respect. Then special places and cemeteries were designated for burial, just as among the heathen, too, there were dignified funeral ceremonies. Therefore there is all the more reason for some reverence among Christians, on account of the article of faith concerning the resurrection of the flesh, lest we seem to be deprived of life and buried like horses and mules." AE 4:205. "The fathers decorated sepulchers magnificently. They did not throw away the dead like bodies of beasts, but they set up memorials of them for a perpetual reminder so that they might be testimonies of the future resurrection, which they believed and expected." AE 6:273.

arranged to have religious pictures painted on the walls.”²³ The practice of burying the dead under the church floor and locating cemeteries in the churchyard seems to have served this purpose. There could be no way to avoid the reality of death and its impact on the Christian’s life when graves greeted you as you entered church or were located under your feet as you listened to the sermon. Although most cemeteries today are located in such areas as Luther recommends, their use as places of meditation and prayer does not appear to be a prevalent practice. Modern society’s aversion to death may play a part in this phenomenon. The size of modern cities and the accessibility of many cemeteries may also be a factor involved. Reflection on modern Christians’ attitudes toward cemeteries may, however, reveal an adoption of worldly ideals that are inconsistent with the Christian faith.

The character of those who are laid to rest also determines Luther’s advice that a cemetery be located outside of town. He is particularly concerned about the behaviour of those who pass through the cemetery, given that some of the saints may be buried there. He suggests that, “Such a place should properly be a decent, hallowed place, to be entered with trepidation and reverence because doubtlessly some saints rest there.”²⁴ The behaviour of those who enter the cemetery is not so much governed by the hallowed quality of the ground itself but rather by the bodies of those who rest there. Luther does not place an emphasis on the holiness of the ground of the cemetery itself, but rather emphasizes the holiness of the saints who are buried there and their effect on the place. He laments the state of the cemetery in Wittenberg, which appears to have been right in the middle of the city and serving several purposes.

But our cemetery, what is it like? Four or five alleys, two or three marketplaces, with the result that no place in the whole town is busier or noisier than the cemetery. People and cattle roam over it at anytime, night or day. Everyone has a door or pathway to it from his house and all sorts of things take place there, probably even some that are not fit to be mentioned.²⁵

These were probably the graves of the common people who would not be buried in the church but rather in these alleys and market places. Luther is still concerned about the treatment of these graves because some of the saints may rest there. He expresses his dismay over the blatant disregard of his city for their dead.

This totally destroys respect and reverence for the graves, and people think no more about walking across it than if it were a burial ground for

²³ AE 43:137.

²⁴ AE 43:137.

²⁵ AE 43:137.

executed criminals. Not even the Turk would dishonour the place the way we do. And yet a cemetery should inspire us to devout thoughts, to contemplation of death and the resurrection, and to respect for the saints who rest there.²⁶

Luther sees the graves as the actual resting-place of the saints. The bodies laid to rest in the ground still have some tangible connection to the Christian person. The graves should inspire respect because the holiness of the saint holds true of both body and soul.

Luther provides further comment on graves as resting places of the saints in his preface to the burial hymns in a hymnal published by Joseph Klug in 1542.²⁷ Here Luther emphasizes Christian death as a sleep and the grave as a comfortable bed.

But we Christians, who have been redeemed from all this by the dear blood of the Son of God, should by faith train and accustom ourselves to despise death and to regard it as a deep, strong, and sweet sleep, to regard the coffin as nothing but paradise and the bosom of our Lord Christ, and the grave as nothing but a soft couch or sofa, which it really is in the sight of God; for he says, John 11, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep," and Matthew 9, "The girl is not dead but sleeping."²⁸

Christians are to look beyond the visible appearance of death and the grave and see the underlying spiritual reality. For the Christian, death is but the sleeping of the body. In its coffin the body lies cradled in the arms of Christ awaiting the day when He will gently whisper in its ear and awake it from its slumber. The grave is a warm comfortable place to take a rest. The image of sleep conveys the truth that the Christian body is still in a real tangible way connected to the person of the Christian. Just as a person's body is still an intrinsic part of who he is as he lies on his bed at night, so too is this the case in death. The person cannot be separated from the sleeping body that lies on the bed in such a way that it can be said that that is not the person in question. Luther's exposition of the biblical image of death as sleep would imply that the same truth could be applied to the Christian body in death. He does not see the cemeteries or burial places of the dead as depositories for empty shells that are but a memory of the person who once was alive. Luther sees them as places full of sleeping saints. "And we do not want our churches to be houses of wailing and places of mourning any longer, but Koemeteria as the old fathers were wont to call them, i.e., dormitories and resting places."²⁹

²⁶ AE 43:137.

²⁷ AE 53:325.

²⁸ AE 53:326.

²⁹ AE 53:326.

Luther's emphasis on the bodies of the saints as being asleep rather than merely the remnants of a departed life also affects the demeanour of the burial service. He speaks out against a sombre melancholy atmosphere in favour of one that uplifts the downtrodden and mourning by strengthening their faith. "Nor do we sing any dirges or doleful songs over our dead and at the grave, but comforting hymns of the forgiveness of sins, of rest, sleep, life and of the resurrection of departed Christians so that our faith may be strengthened and the people moved to true devotion."³⁰ The demeanour of the funeral service and burial should be one that combats death in its battle against faith. The Christian faith does not avoid death but rather faces it head on and defies it. The Church as the body of Christ marked with the wounds of the passion gazes into the face of the snarling beast and stares it down. Death has no dominion over those who are in Christ. Though the beast may rage and grasp them in his jaws, he cannot hold them forever. For Luther the Christian funeral should have this defiant stance towards death.

For it is meet and right that we should conduct these funerals with proper decorum in order to honour and praise that joyous article of faith, namely, the resurrection of the dead, and in order to defy Death, that terrible foe who so shamefully and in so many horrible ways goes on to devour us.³¹

Death in all appearances may seem to have victory over the Christian body, but in Christ faith knows that the person only sleeps. Luther sees all the other ceremonies of a funeral as contributing to this battle against the deceptions of death. He cites the examples of the use of incense to spite the smell of death and the use of beautiful garments, processions and tombstones to confess the resurrection.³² In his Genesis commentary Luther also commends the practice of closing the eyes of a loved one and throwing dirt on the coffin as rites that confess the resurrection.³³ All honours that we pay to the body of a Christian confess the reality of the resurrection.³⁴

³⁰ AE 53:326.

³¹ AE 53:326.

³² "Later the kings of Judah made a great show and pomp over the dead with costly incense and all sorts of rare and precious spices, all of which was done to spite the stinking and shameful Death and to praise and confess the resurrection of the dead and thus to comfort the sad and the weak in faith." AE 53:327. "Here also belong the traditional Christian burial rites, such as that the bodies are carried in state, beautifully decked, and sung over, and that tombstones adorn their graves. All this is done so that the article of the resurrection may be firmly implanted in us. For it is our lasting, blessed, and eternal comfort and joy against death, hell, devil, and every woe." AE 53:327.

³³ "But the father or the mother closed the eyes of their children because of the hope and glory of the future resurrection. It was a laudable and venerable custom and a very beautiful ceremony that either the parents closed the eyes of their children or the latter, especially the first-born, closed the eyes of their parents. It is a special duty—the final duty that can be performed for the dead in the last hour. This custom undoubtedly took its origin from the

Our faith is not a mere intellectual assertion that has no impact on our physical lives. An encounter with the incarnate Lord through the means He has established to commune with us does not leave us unchanged. Although these changes are often imperceptible to the human eye, God reveals them to us through the divine vision of His Son. Although with human eyes we see fallen sinful beings, God sees us as His beloved children reborn through the waters of Holy Baptism bearing the mark of the sacred cross on our foreheads and on our hearts. Although we see bodies that deteriorate and decay, God sees bodies nourished and preserved by the holy Body and Blood of His Son. No true comfort can come from denying the connection of the body to the soul of the deceased person. The only true comfort can come from seeing reality through the eyes of God as He has revealed it to us. A Christian body lying in a casket is a holy thing that has been created by God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and sanctified by God the Holy Spirit. The triune God who has been intimately connected with that body throughout its life will indeed keep it until the day of the resurrection of all flesh. The blessing bestowed upon the body at burial flows out of God's gracious interaction throughout the earthly life of the Christian and is the final act of the creative Word upon his flesh until he is called forth from his tomb on the last day. May God the Father give us the courage at the death of those we love to stare down this horrible beast. May God the Son help us to stand firm in the face of death and confess Him as victor over the grave. May God the Holy Spirit give us the strength to hold on to the promise that in our flesh we will see God.

fathers, and it is a rite completely worthy of being retained in the church even now because of the hope of the promised immortality and the resurrection of the dead. Thus in some places it is still customary for relatives to throw the first clod into the grave at funerals and by this sign to bear witness to the hope and expectation of the resurrection." AE 8:82.

³⁴ Luther points to this fact when he comments on the Jacob's funeral: "The final chapter deals with the funeral solemnities. Joseph's reverence for his father proceeds from faith and hope in the resurrection. For he is convinced that his father is alive. Otherwise he would not anoint and kiss him." AE 8:320.

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*MEDITATIO*¹

John R. Stephenson

I

After going on for ten years of seminary teaching, addressing conferences such as this present gathering has become second nature for me. As a rule, assignment of a topic is followed by remedial study aimed at pondering and arranging of the material, whereupon a flowing discourse quickly takes shape in the word processor for use on the day of delivery. This time around, the preliminary research has been as engaging as ever, involving chunks of Luther study, a little foray into Hebrew, roving through exegetical and historical data, and being confronted with some basic, inescapable issues. But the actual organizing and writing of these two lectures have been much more difficult than I anticipated when I accepted Pr Jim Caverner's kind invitation to speak to you. Sober reflection on the formidable blockages encountered in preparing this paper has made clear that they originate neither from my eccentricities as presenter nor from your peculiarities as audience, but rather from **the startling mismatch between our subject matter**, on the one hand, **and our ecclesiastical-cultural setting**, on the other. As I hope to demonstrate at length, *meditatio* as classically understood goes against the grain of North American Christendom at the turn of the third millennium.

To draft an exegetical or historical treatment of *meditatio* would be a thoroughly feasible academic exercise, setting forth how *meditatio* should ideally occur or how it has in fact been carried out down the ages. The Old and New Testaments indicate such and such a use of God's Word, and the Christian tradition affords evidence of varying degrees of allegiance to biblical precedent and injunction. To take either the historical or the exegetical approach would, however, opt for the escape route of the coward, since it would enable us to duck the pressing, painful, troublesome issue, which is the critical condition of *meditatio* in our neck of the ecclesiastical woods at the present time. Just as they know themselves called to perpetual *oratio*, so clergy and layfolk are aware that they should be involved in steady *meditatio*. Yet, oddly, there is no support structure, no self-evident pattern, no universal standard of expectation that would foster a flowering of

¹ This essay was delivered to the North American Lutheran Campus Ministry Staff Conference held at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre, Mississauga, ON, 10-13 July 1997.

meditatio in our midst. There may be a grudging admission that *meditatio* should be going on, but this concession is practically annulled by a general conviction that the life of the Church operates on a fuel other than *meditatio*. Against this background all lament their falling short of the law's demand, while not knowing how to structure, organize, and fill their *meditatio*. Whether we are conservative or liberal, high or low church, confessional or pietist, we find ourselves in boats ill adapted to the performance of *meditatio*. *Tentatio* is abundantly given with the fall, but homilies which demand *oratio* and *meditatio* of us the tempted are apt to be Egyptian harangues requiring the making of bricks without straw. Leaving the Holy Spirit out of it for the moment and considering only the earthly Church as we experience it, there is no wind at our backs propelling us to engage in *meditatio*.

Analyse and deconstruct the Introduction to John Doberstein's classic *Minister's Prayer Book* and you will realize that *meditatio* fell on desperately hard times among North American Lutherans long before most of us were born. Like Robert Sauer and George Kraus a generation later, Doberstein discerned an angry, vengeful hiatus where clergy should be having devotional lives, offering his book as a means to plug the gap between what is and what ought to be the case. SD II:16's teaching concerning the preservation of the life conferred in Baptism pinpoints the ideal state of affairs, which is that we be preserved in faith and the heavenly gifts "by means of the daily exercise of reading, and applying to practice, God's Word." Doberstein comments on this confessional paragraph with genteel understatement followed by a hard-hitting quotation from Wilhelm Löhe, who acts as the mouthpiece for his own dim view of contemporary conditions:

Meditation in this broad sense of personal "soul-cure" has always been practiced, but it **has never been common in the sense of being an indispensable element of the minister's day**, as the breviary is in the Roman church. Voices have been raised from time to time, expressing the desire for the practice and guides for it. In 1852 Wilhelm Löhe said, "There is one practice and expression of the inner life which has been completely lost among us, namely, meditation, reflection upon divine words and truths in the presence of God."²

Doberstein shuddered at the prospect that his manual might be taken for a "breviary"; perish the thought that Christian devotion should be prescribed as an *opus operatum*! Whenever a Lutheran scares people with the ancient bogeyman of the *opus operatum*, know that a caricature is being painted

² John W. Doberstein, *Minister's Prayer Book; An Order of Prayer and Readings* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press), XVIII; emphasis added.

before your eyes. Gottfried Martens has demonstrated that Melancthon misunderstood what the medieval theologians meant by this technical term. Along with the ghost of dead orthodoxy, the monster of *opus operatum* is a Halloween stage prop trotted out to frighten not only children, but also grownups who ought to know better. Writing before Vatican II, Doberstein was obliged to take pot shots at the Roman Breviary:

The use of an order can never be a law or an *officium* for evangelical Christians; all *opus operatum*, all merit is excluded. The editor therefore hopes that the term “breviary,” with its wrong associations, will never be applied to this book.³

Ironically, one of the main sources used by Doberstein was Dieffenbach and Müller’s *Evangelisches Brevier* of 1857, and the *Minister’s Prayer Book* ended up being much more akin to the Roman Breviary than to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, a resource much less threatening to Lutheran sensibilities. Common Prayer prescribes (or at any rate, in the days prior to recent liturgical revision used to prescribe) that all clerics in deacon’s orders and above will say the orders of Matins and Evensong, structures centring in Psalmody and Scripture reading, that is, providing the staple fodder of *meditatio*, and ascending into *oratio*. No “high church” associations surround this prescription and its practice, which shaped the spiritual life not only of the Tractarian John Keble, but also of the Evangelical Charles Simeon. Doberstein envisaged three daily offices, the first and third of which have something in common with Matins and Vespers, the second being a mid-day devotion. Common Prayer differs from the Breviary in offering no readings from the Fathers; Doberstein’s abundant provision of a Lutheran equivalent to what contemporary Rome offers as the “office of readings” aligns him with the Breviary tradition against that of Common Prayer. Behind both Common Prayer and the Breviary lurks the *Rule of Benedict*, which envisages Christian character being shaped by the *opus Dei*, the “work of God” that consists in the frequent and continuous reading and hearing of Holy Scripture in the context of the weekly recitation of the entire Psalter. More than a whiff of what we confess as the “monergism of grace” attends Benedict’s notion of the *opus Dei*. By losing what the Quaker writer Richard Foster commends as the “spiritual disciplines”, the Church of *sola Scriptura* has ended up deficient in its acquaintance with the Bible.

Study and use of Doberstein prompts deep respect for this father of the old ULCA, whose concern has been shared and whose remedy has been tried by more recent fathers of the Missouri Synod. Serving as synodical and district vice-presidents respectively, Robert Sauer and George Kraus were sensitive to the spiritual aridity commonly experienced by many clergymen.

³ Doberstein XX.

Sauer's *Daily Prayer* presents a Lutheran version of the by now moribund Anglican tradition of Matins and Vespers, while Kraus's *Pastor at Prayer* offers a Lutheran-style breviary, with the Book of Concord taking the place of the Fathers. My contact with Dr Sauer has been limited to a single telephone conversation concerning my placement twelve years ago, but I got to know Dr Kraus well during a year at the Fort Wayne seminary. To the end of his days, George Kraus practised what he preached to others in his *Pastor at Prayer*, a factor which had not a little to do with the quantity and quality of his preaching and other modes of pastoral care.

Doberstein put his finger on a deep-down problem besetting the devotional lives of Lutheran clergy. The Latin *officium*, which is transliterated into the English "office", has the sense of "duty". Anglican clerics of past generations used to have, as Roman clerics still do today, the duty of reciting their daily office, while we have evangelical freedom to say such offices or their equivalents, or to neglect them. In my experience as a seminary teacher, 98% of students never touch the "recommended" readings suggested in my course syllabi. If something is actually to be read, it must be the stuff of daily quiz or mid-term test. Unless failure to read a primary or secondary source results in a low mark or even no mark, there is little likelihood of a book or article attracting student attention. Lutheran equivalents of the Breviary and Common Prayer are abundantly available, but in the absence of all external pressure only inner need can impel us to use them.

In the Preface to the Small Catechism, Luther pleaded with the clergy to observe a free-style office in place of the eight daily offices which ceased to be obligatory at the Reformation. He already knew that the flesh, liberated from the law, would, like water, take the path of least resistance. But the laziness of clerical flesh is not the only factor making it unlikely that the office-esque structures available in the hymnals, on the one hand, and in such works as those by Doberstein, Sauer, and Kraus, on the other, will find much use. From synodical and district officials to city and country pastors, today's clergy routinely report for duty at the "office", a building or room which has nothing at all to do with the daily synagogue services which developed into Matins and Vespers. American Pragmatism rules the whole Western world, and Christendom is thoroughly infected by its virus. On this continent the Church is a business; pastors and professional church workers in diaconal positions are salespeople; layfolk are ministered to by being drawn into programmes. This business mindset represents a novel departure in church history, which until the mid-20th century did not know the phenomenon of a church body with a head office; and it has manifold consequences for our topic of *meditatio*.

Doberstein was spared the cell phone, which has the benefit of rendering the pastor accessible to all parishioners as he drives to his visits,

but which places severe limits not only on his road safety but also on his opportunities for *meditatio*. Kraus died before the heyday of e-mail, which enables communication, but also swamps it—how many of us can handle forty messages a day? And e-mail often impedes true communication, obliging one to respond before reflecting. Sauer was likely oftentimes torn by a secretary from his *Daily Prayer* to react to a fax just in from some district or other. On arrival at your office, you must respond to messages on your answering machine, make small talk, or lurch straight into administration. One of the benefits of transferring from LCMS to LCC is that, in our smaller structure, district and synod communicate with pastors perhaps once a month, sending out a package whose entire contents can usually be read in considerably less than half an hour. If, on picking up your mail, you were to read only those items sent from the International Centre in St. Louis, you would be left with few spare moments in the day for a sideways glance at Holy Scripture.

If a pastor determines to begin and even punctuate his day with *meditatio* spilling over into *oratio*, he may well run into opposition, given that some secretaries and church members might deem such activity a distraction from work rather than as the most important work done by a pastor on a given day. I know of a parish offended that telephone calls were not answered during the two half hours in the week set aside for staff devotions. Perhaps somewhere out there the impression lurks that *meditatio* and *oratio* should fitly be performed in the pastor's own leisure time, not during the forty to sixty hours based at the office for which he is paid. Certainly a lay officer once informed his pastor that the weekly sermon was to be prepared and written under such conditions!

If the pastors are not adept at *meditatio*, the seminaries probably carry some blame. To this charge I would guardedly plead guilty while in the next breath drawing attention to various mitigating circumstances. Only in the past decade or so has “spirituality” made an appearance in our course offerings. George Kraus encountered some hostility from faculty colleagues when he introduced at Fort Wayne an elective on the “Pastor's Devotional Life”. We offer this elective at St. Catharines, with the sub-title, aimed at ladies and MTS students, “Christian spirituality”. Yes, the seminaries bear a degree of guilt, not least for our failure to infuse the regular course offerings with the spirit of *meditatio*—of that, more later. But the seminaries not only lead the Church in some respects; they also reflect it to a very great extent. There is little pressure from the districts, the clergy conferences, or the parishes for a spiritual formation of future pastors aimed at producing practitioners of *meditatio*. How many congregations complain that their pastors don't read their Bibles and pray?

The only hope for a renewal of *meditatio* is that it will arise out of sheer need, in response to heart-rending cries from hungry, thirsty souls trapped in

a parched desert, despairing of being able to survive the encircling vultures, much less of being in a position to provide refreshment for fellow wilderness dwellers. Prayer, as many of us have learned from a combination of Ole Hallesby's classic book and bitter experience, is born in the awareness of utter impotence. In the same womb there is and, pray God, will be formed an appetite for *meditatio*, among clergy and laity alike.

Transcendental meditation, practised daily by the youthful new leader of Britain's Conservative Party, is among the demons that have rushed into our modern spiritual vacuum. TM, attractively packaged by the Beatles' guru, the survival from the '60s known as the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, claims to offer a fourth major state of consciousness in addition to waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Effortlessly close your eyes for between 15 and 20 minutes a day, and you can achieve "pure consciousness", linking up with "natural law" in the "unified field" which is the updated version of Spinoza's "God or Nature". Demanding no repentance, presenting no instruction, TM would recharge our batteries in such a way that all *tentatio* is put to flight. Christian meditation can only begin when TM is blown to smithereens: the sorely troubled soul, humbled, attentive, hungry and thirsty, crying out with Peter and the Apostles, "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

II

Permit me to begin our second session with a bold statement, fraught with exaggeration, yet containing a sizeable chunk of truth: almost 500 years ago enormous church-historical consequences flowed from one man's *meditatio*. "For days and nights on end" Luther "earnestly meditated"—"*meditabundus dies et noctes*"—on the single expression "righteousness of God"—"*iustitia Dei*"—as it appeared in Rom. 1:17.⁴ The end result of this process was a being grasped by the Gospel which placed its mark on the preaching, liturgy, hymnody, and piety of a considerable segment of Western Christendom. ... *Meditatio* effected the Lutheran Reformation.

The Reformer makes the connection between his monastic practice of *meditatio* and the recovery of the Gospel in the 1545 Preface to the Latin edition of his collected writings. Along with *oratio* and *tentatio*, *meditatio* appears as one of the three cords bound together to form a spiritual life in Luther's 1539 Preface to the German edition of his collected writings. Two brief paragraphs of this Preface explain what the Reformer meant by confessing, in the Smalcald Articles, that God will give no one His Spirit without the external Word. These brief sentences are remarkable, moreover,

⁴ AE 34:337.

in their correspondence with the biblical understanding of meditation, as expressed above all in the Psalms. The word used in Ps. 1:2 (but not in Ps. 119) and translated “meditate”, namely *הגהה haagaah*, has the sense of “moan, growl, utter, speak, muse”. God’s *Torah*, which the blessed man *haagaahs* day and night, is something which he does not just superficially hear, registering in one eardrum and expelling through the other, but which rather takes deep root in his conscious and unconscious being, so that he speaks it to himself as something with which he is thoroughly engrossed. Furthermore, *haagaah* operates at a deeper level than mere intellect; if God’s *Torah* is the object of moaning and groaning, it clearly involves the entire man, including the whole range of his emotions. Luther’s commentary is brimful of concrete implications for both spirituality and the philosophy of education:

Secondly, you should meditate, that is, not only in your heart, but also externally, by actually [*eusserlich*] repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them. And take care that you do not grow weary or think that you have done enough when you have read, heard, and spoken them once or twice, and that you then have complete understanding. You will never be a particularly good theologian if you do that, for you will be like untimely fruit which falls to the ground before it is half ripe.

Thus you see in this same Psalm [119] how David constantly boasts that he will talk, meditate, speak, sing, hear, read, by day and night and always, about nothing except God’s Word and commandments. For God will not give you His Spirit without the external Word; so take your cue from that. His command to write, preach, read, hear, sing, speak, etc., outwardly was not given in vain.⁵

If Christian meditation has fallen on hard times in our day, meditation focussed on topics other than the Word of God is very much alive and well. *Haagah* and *שיח siach* [*“beschäftigt sein”*] in the broad sense are practised by just about every human being. Relaxed concentration, involving the body in unforced alliance with the soul, is spontaneously accorded to our likes and dislikes. Sport, gossip, politics both secular and ecclesiastical, and pornography are very much the object of meditation. A man’s “god” can be determined through an analysis of his meditation. Christian meditation occurs when one’s focus shifts from false gods to the true God made flesh, that is, to Jesus, His Word, and His deeds. This change involves both gift and discipline, and our Lutheran problem arises when we see discipline as

⁵ AE 34:286; Doberstein 288.

automatically antithetical to gift. Discipline perhaps subliminally strikes us as a form militating against the content which is grace.

The risen Lord, present with His disciples to the end of the age, gives and sustains life with Himself through His spoken and sacramental Word, which is both the womb in which we are formed and the breasts from which we draw our nourishment. In his great eucharistic treatise of 1527, Luther pictures the Blessed Virgin Mary as the paradigm communicant, as the one painted by St Luke as physically and spiritually pregnant with the same Fruit, whom she conceived spiritually through faith in the angel's word and thereby also physically in her womb.⁶ Continuing in the vein of the Reformer's perception of Mary as the prime example of the royal priesthood, one might say that Christian meditation is nothing other than "keeping these things—the whole mystery of Christ—in one's heart" (διατηρέω [store up, treasure up], Lk. 2:51).

Luther's insistence that meditation involves more than a cursory reading aimed, say, at mugging up data for an exam and then consigning them to contemptuous oblivion, speaks powerfully to theological education as practised in our circles today; and here I think that we at the seminaries incur grave guilt by not insisting on the meditative imparting and imbibing of theological learning. At British universities, students ideally, in the afterglow of the medieval notion of *lectio*, "read" their chosen subjects. At North American universities they "take courses", which is not at all the same thing. Facts are crammed so that exams may be passed, but very little takes up permanent residence in the soul for its sustenance. Students furiously resist the close inspection of a text, and an instructor's suggestion that a document or at least segments thereof be committed to memory is regarded as good grounds for an appeal to the Ontario commissioner for human rights. Something biblical, Lutheran, and spiritually vital is being lost in this unhappy process. Remember Luther's advice that a text be orally mulled over, and his belief that the "external clarity of Sacred Scripture" is manifested in the **spoken** reading and proclamation of Scripture. Orality is an essential dimension of the hermeneutical enterprise.

An excellent graduate headed to receive holy ordination, asked at his theological interview to list the 21 doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession, failed to get beyond no. 5. Under such circumstances, it is unclear how this young man could consider himself a minister of the Church of the Augsburg Confession. If the *Augustana* is not meditatively known by our whole ministerium, it won't do to accuse the ELCA/IC of departing from a standard with which we ourselves are only dimly familiar. The same

⁶ AE 37:89f.

point could be made of the Small Catechism, for if we do not know this document by heart and pray it, we are Lutherans in name only.

As the proverb does not put it, and as I learned over twenty years ago from one of my OT instructors, **familiarity breeds contemplation**. Mary's paradigmatic διατηρέω is founded on living remembrance, and the meditation exemplified in Psalm 77 includes *haagaah*, *siach*, and a big dose of זכר *zachar* "remembrance" of God's past deeds of judgement and grace. As is well known, Luther looked on the words of institution, the *verba testamenti*, as containing the Gospel in a nutshell, as words to be learned by heart as the fodder for frequent, salutary meditation. Christian meditation thus focuses both on the Bible as a whole, and on the parts of the Catechism in particular, not only the *verba* but also the single commandments and petitions of the Our Father, which the Reformer, in his devotional treatise for Master Peter the Barber, regarded as worthy of regular, detailed attention. Meditate on these mini-texts without looking at your watch, he says, and the Holy Spirit will preach to your heart. Moreover, the liturgy of the Divine Service is the prime instrument used by the Church for instruction in the Word of God. Liturgy, catechism, and hymnody buttress the cathedral-like edifice of the Bible as it exists, and only can exist, in the Church. Take away these buttresses, and you will not bring people closer to the Word of God, but simply remove it further from their grasp.

In preparing this paper I have to come to realize what should have been clear to me when I began to teach my seminary's Spirituality course some years ago: meditation is not a mere option, one possible avenue among many, an item on the smorgasbord which could be bypassed in favour of some other aid to spiritual health. Louis Bouyer puts it well: "The assimilation of Christian truth is effected by meditation"⁷ Objectively, meditation focuses primarily on the written Word of God and secondarily on those derivatives of Scripture which bind us to Scripture, namely liturgy, catechism, hymnody, and the writings of the Fathers. Considered subjectively, the practice of meditation will vary with the temperament and abilities of a given person, whose bent may be intellectual, imaginative, or practical. For most of us, clerical or lay, meditation is best effected through some form of daily office. Since the Counter-Reformation the Roman Catholic tradition has developed various methods of meditation, from some of which much good can be gleaned. A problem implicit in some of these methods arises when the meditating person begins his task seeking certain spiritual fruits and towards the end of the session reviews the whole process, finding fault with his inadequate performance and resolving to do better next

⁷ Louis Bouyer, *Introduction to Spirituality*, trans. Mary Perkins Ryan (New York: Desclee Company, 1961) 25.

time. Such a procedure encourages the spiritual scrupulosity which afflicted the young Luther, and it subordinates the text of Scripture to the agenda of its reader, a vice which can also arise in connection with the goal, malady, means approach known and practised in our own circles for purposes of sermon preparation. Among the Roman Catholic methods of meditation I find the Sulpician method most beneficial, not least when preparing to preach on the Sunday Gospel. Permit me to quote from Louis Bouyer:

The outline of this method is very simple and its development natural. Olier sums it up in three celebrated formulae: Jesus before my eyes, Jesus in my heart, Jesus in my hands. ... After a preparation in which, having put ourselves in the presence of God, we complete an act of contrition for our sins by the invocation of the Holy Spirit, asking Him to inspire our prayer, we then begin by what is called “adoration” (Jesus before my eyes). We are penetrated by the action of Christ, by His word that we desire to meditate, admiring and adoring it for everything that faith can discover in it. Thence we go on to “communion” (Jesus drawn into my heart). That is, we await His establishment in us of what we have contemplated in Him, to be brought about by His coming into us Himself. ... From here we go on quite naturally to the last part, our “cooperation” (Jesus in my hands). That is, in the presence of God and relying on His grace, we make some practical resolve that will bring into our life, in full reality, what we have adored in Christ and drawn into us by the prayer of faith.⁸

Our topic of *meditatio* is marked by acute urgency today as Christendom returns once more to the conditions of the second century of our era. A recent dictionary of British English understands “Jesus” as in first place an expletive; only well down the list does the holy name appear as a vocable denoting a figure who lived on earth twenty centuries ago.⁹ One of your colleagues in Wisconsin told me recently that on his campus the J-word, as he put it, is infinitely more unacceptable than the f-word. Without in-built, ongoing *meditatio* we shall succumb to the world’s catechesis so powerfully presented in all fora of public life. If *meditatio* led to a powerful

⁸ Bouyer 85.

⁹ Already in the 1990 8th edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, “Jesus” is defined as an interjection in colloquial use: “an exclamation of surprise, dismay etc.” Meanwhile, in square brackets is found the information that this word may also be understood as a proper noun: “name of the founder of the Christian religion d. c. AD 30.” One of the few ceremonies practised by low Anglicans, in keeping with the Canon Law promulgated in 1604 by King James I & VI, is the custom of bowing the head at the name of Jesus. Lest it be supposed that this Anglican practice is unsuited for Lutheran use, see C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1928) 167, where “bowing the head at the mention of the name of Jesus” appears among the ceremonies with the Father of the Missouri Synod defends against Reformed criticism.

burst of evangelical proclamation in the 16th century, perhaps it may do so again, even in this grey latter day.

Meditatio, then, wells up into prayer, on the one hand, and shades off into study, on the other. With respect to the first of these aspects, Luther tells Master Peter the Barber how he himself deliberately took time claimed by pressing tasks to go with his Psalter into his private room or a church full of praying people in order to engage in *meditatio* on the parts of the Catechism. Some find themselves without a “chamber” such as is specified by our Lord in Mt. 6:6, and the custom of engaging in private prayer in the nave of the church has long since practically died out among us. Is reprimination in this area either desirable or possible? Addressing ourselves in closing to the second of these aspects, as *meditatio* passes the borderline into study, it prepares preachers, teachers, and catechists for their discharge of their vocation. Without *meditatio*, the teacher’s offerings run shallow. The pragmatic mindset remains our enemy here. We inhabit a different world from Yeshua Ben Sira, the author of Ecclesiasticus, who speaks a powerful message to us in the 38th and 39th chapters of his work, which was much loved by the 17th-century Lutherans, who were not afraid to draw sustenance from the Apocrypha, or deuterocanonical writings. “The wisdom of the scribe depends on the opportunity of leisure; and he who has little business may become wise” (Ecclus. 38:24 RSV). Ben Sira contemplates the busy lives of farmers and craftsmen, whose lack of *meditatio* he contrasts with the blissful existence of the scribe:

How different it is with the man who devotes himself to studying the law of the Most High, who investigates all the wisdom of the past, and spends his time studying the prophecies! He preserves the sayings of famous men and penetrates the intricacies of parables. He investigates the hidden meaning of proverbs and knows his way among riddles. The great avail themselves of his services, and he is seen in the presence of rulers. He travels in foreign countries and learns at first hand the good or evil of man’s lot. He makes a point of rising early to pray to the Lord, his Maker, and prays aloud to the Most High, asking pardon for his sins. If it is the will of the great Lord, he will be filled with a spirit of intelligence; then he will pour forth wise sayings of his and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. He will have sound advice and knowledge to offer, and his thoughts will dwell on the mysteries he has studied. He will disclose what he has learnt from his own education, and will take pride in the law of the Lord’s covenant. Many will praise his intelligence; it will never sink into oblivion. The memory of him will not die but will live on from generation to generation; the nations will talk of his wisdom, and his praises will be sung in the assembly. If he lives long, he will leave a name in a thousand, and if he goes to his rest, his reputation is secure. (Ecclus. 39:1-11 NEB)

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THE CORRELATION OF CATECHESIS AND BAPTISM
Cyril Of Jerusalem's Use Of Imagery
In His Catechetical Homilies¹

Thomas A. Von Hagel

INTRODUCTION

The correlation of catechesis and Baptism is of great import throughout much, if not all, of the Christian Church. In those traditions which practise infant, or paedo-Baptism, Baptism precedes catechesis. Jesus' apostolic commission in Matt. 28:19-20 serves as the paradigm: baptize first and then catechize. Catechesis precedes Baptism among the spiritual descendants of Anabaptism. In the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Philip initially catechizes a eunuch and baptizes him subsequently. Both traditions have quite dissimilar views of Catechesis and Baptism as is exhibited in their contrasting ordering of the two. And yet, both recognize an intrinsic relation between catechesis and Baptism—one does not exist in isolation from the other. Both traditions utilize paradigms which, though different, include both catechesis **and** Baptism in the life of the Christian Church.

The catechetical homilies (c. 350)² of Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-86) provide an ancient and invaluable source for examining the correlation of catechesis and Baptism in Jerusalem during the latter half of the fourth century. These homilies, comprised of one *Procatechesis*, eighteen *Catecheses*, and five *Mystagogic Catecheses*, are well known for their catechetical method, utilisation of imagery, and focus upon Baptism.³ With the opening words of the *Procatechesis*, Cyril paints a vivid picture for the catechumens as they enter the final stage of their Lenten catechesis:

¹ An earlier draft of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the North American Patristics Society on 29 May 1998.

² For an analysis of the authorship concerning these catechetical lectures, see Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (London: SCM, 1983) 128-30; and Edward Yarnold, "The Authorship of the Mystagogical Catecheses Attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem", *Heythrop Journal* 19 (1978): 143-61.

³ Recent studies in these areas include: Owen F. Cummings, "Cyril of Jerusalem as a Postliberal Theologian", *Worship* 67 (1993): 155-64; Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Books, 1992); Pamela Jackson, "Cyril of Jerusalem's Use of Scripture in Catechesis", *Theological Studies* 52 (1991): 431-50; and Hugh M. Riley, *Christian Initiation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1974).

Already, my dear candidates for Enlightenment, scents of paradise are wafted towards you; already you are culling mystic blossoms for the weaving of heavenly garlands; already the fragrance of the Holy Spirit has blown about you. Already you have arrived at the outer court of the palace: may the King lead you in!⁴

It is necessary to note that Cyril does not utilize imagery indiscriminately. Instead, with great forethought, he chooses and applies a myriad of images with careful precision. More precisely, Cyril employs imagery to illustrate various doctrines and liturgical practices. This article will examine Cyril's use of imagery to illustrate the correlation of catechesis and Baptism in the fourth-century Jerusalem Church.

CATECHETICAL IMAGERY

Cyril employs numerous images to portray the role of the catechumen in the process of catechesis. For example, it is compared to fighting a battle, preparing the heart, and running a race.⁵ Initially, these and the many other catechetical images seem too numerous and diverse to be ordered neatly in a systematic fashion. Upon further examination, the majority of these catechetical images foster one prominent theme—the catechumens' active involvement in the catechetical process. These images are best appraised according to the following fourfold categorisation: movement, battle, preparation, and building. This imagery is employed prominently in the initial homilies—*Procatechesis* and *Catecheses* I-III—in which he most directly portrays the process of catechesis to the “candidates for Enlightenment”.⁶

First, Cyril utilizes imagery to depict catechesis as movement from one geographical location to another. For example, the catechumens enter a door, are carried swiftly by their own feet, stand on the edge of a frontier to be crossed, and are running a race.⁷ In a much more detailed fashion, the catechumens are compared to travellers who must avoid danger while they make their way to God:

A dragon lies in ambush for the traveler; take care he does not bite you

⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, 2 vols. trans. Leo P. McCauley and Anthony A. Stephenson (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1969, 1970) 1:69-70 [Procatechesis, para. 1]. References to the Procatechesis (one lecture) will be given as P followed by the paragraph number, to the Catechetical Lectures as C followed by the lecture and paragraph number, and to the Mystagogical Catecheses as M followed by the lecture and paragraph number.

⁵ Cyril 1:84 [P 17].

⁶ Cyril 1:69 [P 1].

⁷ Cyril 1:73 [P 4], 1:77 [P 9], 1:80 [P 12], 1:84 [P 17].

and inject his poison of unbelief. Seeing this numerous company winning salvation, he selects and stalks his prey. In your journey to the Father of souls, your way lies past that dragon.⁸

In all of these examples, Cyril depicts the catechumens as active participants in the process of catechesis: the catechumens are moving toward God.⁹

Secondly, he frequently uses the powerful imagery of warfare:

Be faithful in your attendance to the catechizing. Even though we protract our discourse, do not let your mind yield to distraction. You are taking up arms against the enemy. You are taking up arms against heresies, against the Jews, against the Samaritans, against the Gentiles. Your enemies are many: take plenty of ammunition; you have targets in plenty. You must learn how to shoot down the Greek and to do battle with heretic, Jew, and Samaritan. Your weapons are sharp, and the sharpest of all is “the sword of the Spirit.” But your own right hand must strike with a holy resolution, to fight the fight of the Lord, if you would conquer the opposing powers and make yourself proof against every stratagem of heresy.¹⁰

The catechumens must actively arm themselves and fight against many different enemies in the catechetical process.

Thirdly, he depicts catechesis as a preparation for Baptism:

Yield then, O children of justice, to the urging of John, when he says: “Make ready the way of the Lord.” Remove all hindrances and stumbling blocks, that you may hold a straight course unto eternal life. Make ready the vessels of the soul, purifying them by sincere faith, for the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Begin to wash your garments through repentance that, when you are called to the bridal chamber, you may be found clean.¹¹

Following the biblical examples of David, Solomon, Jeroboam, and others,¹² the catechumens must repent and, in this manner, actively prepare themselves for the holy laver. Using the imagery of clothing, the catechumens must first take off their fouled clothing of “lewdness and impurity”, launder them, and finally clothe themselves in the “bright robe of chastity”.¹³ Hugh Riley explains the symbolism of clothing and the necessity for this change of clothing to be complete:

⁸ Cyril 1:82-83 [P 16].

⁹ “The key was conversion, itself a journey, or as the ancients put it, a change (‘turning’, *epistrephein/conversio*) from one ‘way of walking’ to another. The destination was frequently called ‘salvation’, and many embarked. ... The rites distinctive of the journey to Christianity quickly developed into a rich, extended, and dramatic liturgical journey.” Finn 2-3.

¹⁰ Cyril 1:78 [P 10]. See also, Cyril 1:83-84 [P 16], 84 [P 17], 93 [C 1:4].

¹¹ Cyril 1:109 [C 3:2].

¹² Cyril 1:100-107 [C 2:9-20].

¹³ Cyril 1:73 [P 4]. See Cyril 1:71-72 [P 3].

Cyril embellishes the [Parable of the Wedding Feast, Matt. 22:1-14] with a twist of his own suitable to his mystagogy of the old garment as a sign of the vices of the old self. In instructing those who are beginning their Lenten preparation for baptism he has the bridegroom approach the guest (the baptismal candidate) and berate him for wearing “dirty clothes.” Cyril applies dirty clothes then as a symbol of the guest’s failure to get rid of his bad habits. ... The garments which one has on represent the vices which one has and which cannot simply be cloaked over, but must be torn off.¹⁴

Another analogous image employed is that of purification. Just as a metallurgist purifies gold by burning out various alloys and impurities, so an exorcist along with the Holy Spirit casts the devil out of the catechumens.¹⁵ In these parallel images, Cyril emphasizes the active participation of the catechumens in the first pair, but that of an exorcist and the Holy Spirit in the last.

Fourthly, Cyril portrays catechesis as agronomic growth¹⁶ and a building project:

Let me compare the catechizing to a building. Unless we methodically bind and joint the whole structure together, we shall have leaks and dry rot, and all our previous exertions will be wasted. No: stone must be laid upon stone in regular sequence, and corner follow corner, jutting edges must be planed away: and so the perfect structure rises. I bring you as it were the stones of knowledge; you must be instructed in the doctrine of the living God, of the Judgment, of Christ, of the Resurrection. Many things have to be said in order, which are now being touched upon at random but will then be brought together into harmonious system. Unless you achieve this unity of design, holding the beginning and the sequel in your mind together, the builder may do his best, but your house will be a ruin.¹⁷

In the former, catechesis is compared to planting a tree: a deep hole must be dug and the tree must be planted correctly. Cyril implies that this is the work of both the catechist and catechumens. Much more explicitly in the latter, both the catechist and the catechumens are involved in the building process of catechesis. The catechist initially brings the stones for the building and then the catechumens must set them upon one another and in order. To put it

¹⁴ Riley 163-64.

¹⁵ Cyril 1:77 [P 9]. “Now it is not implied that candidates were considered to be obsessed, like demoniacs, but only that in consequence of original sin and of personal sins, they were subject more or less to the power of the devil.” Lawrence D. Folkemer, “A Study of the Catechumenate”, in Everett Ferguson, ed. *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism in the Early Church* (New York, NY: Garland, 1993) 255.

¹⁶ Cyril 1:79 [P 11].

¹⁷ Cyril 1:79 [P 11].

another way, the catechist teaches the doctrines of the Christian Church to the catechumens, while the catechumens must set them in order in their lives. Thus, the catechist actively participates along with the catechumens in the process of catechesis.

One other example must be analysed. Cyril instructs his catechumens:

Let your heart be fired to piety; let your soul be tempered like steel, as the stubborn metal of unfaith is hammered on the anvil till the dross scales off and the pure iron is left. Let the rust flake away, leaving the authentic metal.¹⁸

πυρούσθω ἡ διάνοια πρὸς εὐλάβειαν, χαλκεύεσθω ἡ ψυχὴ, σφυροκοπέισθω τὸ σκληρὸν τῆς ἀπιστίας, ἀποπεσάτωσαν αἱ περιτταὶ τοῦ σιδήρου λεπίδες, μενέτω τὸ καθαρὸν· ἀποπεσάτω τοῦ σιδήρου ὁ ἰός, μενέτω δὲ τὸ γνήσιον.¹⁹

This exhortation begins with a series of three imperatives: “fire” (πυρούσθω), “temper” (χαλκεύεσθω), and “hammer” (σφυροκοπέισθω). These imperatives can be translated either in the middle or passive voice. The middle voice stresses the active participation of the catechumens: “Let the mind fire itself with the object being piety, let the soul forge itself, let the hardness of unbelief hammer itself.” The passive voice implies the active participation of an unnamed outside agent acting upon the catechumens: “Let the mind be fired to piety, let the soul be forged, let the hardness of unbelief be hammered.” The middle voice parallels the majority of the preceding examples in which the catechumens are the primary actors in the process of catechesis, whereas the passive voice compares favourably in part with the last two images—purification and building—in which outside agents actively act upon the catechumens in the process of catechesis.

Cyril employs numerous images to portray the catechumens’ active participation in the process of catechesis: they are moving toward God, fighting enemies, preparing themselves for Baptism, and building up themselves. These images, though, do not preclude the work of outside agents—exorcist, the Holy Spirit, catechist—who also are involved actively in the process of catechesis. Nonetheless, Cyril stresses clearly the former over the latter. In his initial homilies, this is the main thrust: catechumens must take an active role in the catechetical process. The previously mentioned exhortation consisting of three imperatives should not be overlooked. The translation of this one example neither validates nor rebuts the pattern cited. Instead, the possibility of a middle or passive interpretation

¹⁸ Cyril 1:81 [P 15].

¹⁹ Guilielmus C. Reischl, and Josephus Rupp, eds., *S. Patris Nostri Cyrilli Hierosolymorum Archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia*, 2 vols. (Munich: 1848,1860) 1:20 [P 15].

of these imperatives emphasizes the tension in the catechetical process between the two active participants—catechumens and outside agents. According to Cyril’s imagery, the catechumens are the primary active participants in the process of catechesis, while the active participation of an exorcist, the Holy Spirit, and catechist are secondary and complement the actions of the catechumens.

BAPTISMAL IMAGERY

Compared to catechesis, Cyril’s utilisation of imagery for Baptism is much more extensive. Three matters must be noted concerning this. All of these catechetical homilies revolve around Baptism. Even though a variety of doctrines and liturgical practices are addressed, the *Procatechesis* and *Catecheses* prepare the catechumens for Baptism²⁰ and the *Mystagogic Catecheses* immediately follow the catechumens’ Baptism.²¹ Moreover, Cyril was a theological product of the ancient Church. This means that he was more than knowledgeable of Holy Scripture. Pamela Jackson has shown that he repeatedly comments upon, quotes from, and alludes to the writings of the prophets and apostles throughout his homilies:

Cyril’s homilies are crammed with titles and images drawn from Scripture, which he uses to illustrate his message and render it more compelling. He also makes scenes from salvation history, such as Christ’s harrowing of hell (14.19) or the Last Judgement (15.22ff. etc.), come alive through the use of vivid descriptive language; sometimes he imitates scriptural use of personification, as when he speaks of death as no longer being able to be mighty and devour the baptized (M 1.10). Cyril also employs scriptural imagery to paint word pictures of the life of faith into which he seeks to draw his listeners.²²

And so, Cyril includes many biblical images from both the Old and New Testaments in his depiction of Baptism. Furthermore, even though Cyril was addressing previously trained catechumens,²³ they were still infants in the Christian Faith. As such, he is not a systematician who primarily presents a list of doctrinal *loci* concerning Baptism to theological students, but rather, he is a Pastor/Bishop who immerses the catechumens’ bodies and souls in a

²⁰ See Cyril 1:69-73 [P 1-3], 1:108-18 [C 3:1-16].

²¹ Both *Mystagogic Catecheses* III and IV address Chrism and the Eucharist in light of Baptism. See Cyril 2:170 [M 3:2], 2:184 [M 4:8].

²² Jackson 437.

²³ “Any person who sought baptism in this period was virtually a ‘semi-professional’, often on the point of taking monastic vows.” Young 127. For a more detailed analysis of the stages of the catechumenate, see Folkemer 244-55.

flood of baptismal images. If Baptism is the focal point of these catechetical homilies, then imagery is the means by which Cyril depicts Baptism.

Cyril assembles a collage of images to portray Baptism. For example, Baptism is likened to the waters of creation over which the Holy Spirit hovered, the Exodus, and even the marital imagery from the Song of Solomon.²⁴ The following will analyse the imagery which portrays only one facet of Baptism—the primacy of God’s active involvement in Baptism. To demonstrate this, Cyril utilizes three different collections of images: (1) the baptized are united with Christ in His passion; (2) Baptism is an event in which change occurs; and (3) divine gifts are given in Baptism. This imagery is most prominent in the initial homilies—*Procatechesis* and *Catecheses I-III*—and the first two *Mystagogic Catecheses*.

First, Cyril portrays the baptized as being united with Christ both upon the cross and in the tomb.²⁵ In Baptism, the baptized strip themselves of their clothing like unto Christ’s passivity upon the cross:

Immediately, then, upon entering, you removed your tunics. This was a figure of the “stripping off of the old man with his deed.” Having stripped, you were naked in this also imitating Christ, who was naked on the cross.²⁶

In a similar fashion, the baptized actively confess their faith in the Holy Trinity, but then passively participate in the passivity of Christ’s burial:

You were conducted to the sacred pool of divine Baptism, as Christ passed from the cross to the sepulchre you see before you. You were asked, one by one, whether you believed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; you made that saving confession, and then you dipped thrice under the water and thrice rose up again, therein mystically signifying Christ’s three days’ burial.²⁷

In both examples, the baptized are not the leading actors in a re-enactment of Christ’s Passion. Granted, they contribute actively, but only in a supporting role. These images emphasize that the baptized are being acted upon in Baptism, not unlike Christ was acted upon in His crucifixion and

²⁴ Cyril 1:111 [C 3:5], 1:118 [C 3:16], 2:153-56 [M 1:2-5]. For a brief analysis of Cyril’s use of these biblical themes, see Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1956) 74, 95, 193-98.

²⁵ “Cyril seeks to draw the elect into salvation history by establishing a relation between them and the scriptural figures who have gone before them in that history. One way he does this is to use scriptural figures as both positive and negative models (*typoi*) to guide his listeners’ dispositions toward God and response to Him: as Cyril finds Scripture filled with *typoi* of Christ, so he reads it as providing *typoi* for the believer.” Jackson 444.

²⁶ Cyril 2:161 [M 2:2]. See Riley 162-63.

²⁷ Cyril 2:163-64 [M 2:4].

burial. To put it another way, the baptized are passive participants in Baptism through their unity with Christ in His Passion.

Secondly, Cyril describes Baptism as an event in which change occurs in the baptized. On the one hand, it appears that the baptized initiate this change in their renunciation, *apotaxis*, of Satan:

First you entered the antechamber of the baptistry and faced towards the west. On the command to stretch out your hand, you renounced Satan as though he were there in person.²⁸

On the other hand, Cyril repeatedly portrays God as the principal actor in Baptism. He is a benevolent judge toward the baptized, “cancel[ing] the decree against [them]” and “grant[ing them] an amnesty for [their] former sins”.²⁹ More specifically, Baptism is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives to the baptized what they did not have previously: spiritual enlightenment.³⁰ He also “signs” and “imprints” upon the baptized “the seal of the Holy Spirit”.³¹ In addition, the baptized are first killed and then made alive.³² The baptized are portrayed as being planted and grafted:

The paradise into which you are being planted is not seen by the eye. ... From now on, you are grafted upon the stock of the spiritual olive, like a slip transplanted from the wild olive into the good olive tree, from sin to righteousness, from corruption to purity. You are to be a partaker of the holy vine.³³

The baptized are made new: they are made a new people and given a new birth by adoption.³⁴ The baptized are compared to the blind who recover their sight and the lame who become able to walk.³⁵ The baptized are described as fish being caught in a net.³⁶ According to these images, the baptized are changed in Baptism both in the single *apotaxis* of the baptized and by the abundant actions of God.

A closer examination of these two active agents of baptismal change is necessary in light of the relation between *apotaxis* and Baptism. In the third-

²⁸ Cyril 2:153 [M 1:2].

²⁹ Cyril 1:84 [P 17].

³⁰ Cyril 1:69 [P 1].

³¹ Cyril 1:84 [P 17]. See also Cyril, 1:109 [C 3:3].

³² Cyril 1:74-75 [P 5].

³³ Cyril 1:93 [C 1:4]. See also Cyril 1:96 [C 2:1], 2:162 [M 2:3].

³⁴ Cyril 1:84 [P 17], 1:92 [C 1:2].

³⁵ Cyril 1:99 [C 2:5].

³⁶ Cyril 1:74 [P 5]. See also Cyril, 2:109 [C 17:21].

century, the *apotaxis* had been connected closely to Baptism,³⁷ however, Hugh Riley notes that the two became quite distinct in the ensuing century:

The ritual renunciation, the “apotaxis”, which grew up little by little and was actually the reverse side of the positive baptismal confession of faith, soon gained a ritual independence of its own as it gained in scope and importance.³⁸

According to Cyril’s *Mystagogic Catecheses*, the *apotaxis* takes place in “the antechamber of the Baptistry” or “the outer chamber”³⁹ prior to Baptism. In contrast, Baptism takes place in “the inner chamber”.⁴⁰ While the *apotaxis* is included in the first *Mystagogic Catechesis* and is properly associated with Baptism, it is not Baptism. *Apotaxis* precedes and is preparatory for Baptism and so is connected more closely to catechesis. In support of this connection between catechesis and *apotaxis*, Cyril explains to the catechumens in the *Procatechesis* that as they enter the final stage of their catechesis they have entered, at least figuratively, “the outer court of the palace”,⁴¹ the place of the *apotaxis*. Thus, while the baptized play an active role in the preparatory *apotaxis*, God ultimately changes the baptized in Baptism.

Thirdly, Cyril pictures Baptism as an event in which divine gifts are given. In Baptism, Christ clothes the baptized with spiritual clothing:

Let my soul be joyful in the Lord: for he has clothed me with a garment of salvation and a robe of gladness; like a bridegroom he has adorned me with a diadem; like a bride, bedecked me with jewels.⁴²

Also, the baptized are filled with “the heavenly treasures of the New Covenant”⁴³ and receive an inheritance: “the kingdom of heaven”, “the life prepared for you”.⁴⁴ According to this imagery, Cyril emphasizes the activity of God and the corresponding passivity of the baptized in Baptism—God gives divine gifts to the baptized in Baptism.

This brief survey of Cyril’s baptismal imagery is not meant to be exhaustive in nature, but rather illustrative of one facet of Baptism in the

³⁷ Danielou notes the close relation of the *apotaxis* and Baptism in the third-century practice of Tertullian and Hippolytus: “The first important act at Baptism was the renouncing of Satan” (80).

³⁸ Riley 156.

³⁹ Cyril 2:153, “τὸν προαύλιον τοῦ βαπτιστηρίου οἴκον”, Reischl 2:346 [M 1:2]; and 2:159, “τῷ ἐξωτέρῳ . . . οἴκῳ” Reischl 2:354 [M 1:11].

⁴⁰ Cyril 2:161, “τῷ ἐσωτέρῳ οἴκῳ”, Reischl 2:354 [M 2:1].

⁴¹ Cyril 1:70, “τὸν προαύλιον τῶν βασιλείων”, Reischl 1:2 [P 1].

⁴² Cyril 1:109 [C 3:2]. While this image of clothing clearly refers to Baptism, Cyril uses the image of clothing in other instances (Cyril 1:71-74 [P 3-4]) to depict catechesis.

⁴³ Cyril 1:84 [P 17].

⁴⁴ Cyril 1:92 [C 1:2].

fourth-century Jerusalem church. Cyril amassed image upon image to portray vividly the role of God and the baptized in Baptism. While the baptized play an active role in the preparatory *apotaxis*, stripping of their clothing, and confession of the Holy Trinity, their primary role is passive: they suffer with Christ, are changed, and receive gifts. Conversely, God is the principal actor who changes the baptized and gives them gifts in Baptism.

CONCLUSION

Myriad images fill Cyril's catechetical homilies with which he illustrates catechesis and Baptism. He attempts to be neither exhaustive in his application of imagery nor an eccentric stylist with little or no regard for content. Also, his extensive collection of images is not overtly systematic. Nonetheless, he carefully chooses and applies images which illustrate clearly his understanding of these two events and their correlation.

First, Cyril's use of imagery portrays clearly his contrasting accents concerning catechesis and Baptism. His catechetical imagery stresses the active participation of the catechumens in the process of catechesis. Granted, exorcist, the Holy Spirit and catechist are actively involved, however, the activity of the catechumens is stressed primarily. The catechumens are travelling toward God, arming themselves and fighting against numerous enemies, preparing themselves for Baptism, and building up themselves. In contrast, even though Cyril does not ignore the active participation of the baptized in Baptism, he primarily utilizes baptismal imagery which emphasizes the activity of God and the corresponding passivity of the baptized. God, more specifically the Holy Spirit, is the active outside agent who causes change in and gives divine gifts to the baptized in Baptism. Also in Baptism, the baptized is united to Christ in His passivity upon the cross and in the tomb. Cyril's contrasting imagery of catechesis and Baptism depicts them as two distinct events with two very different accents.

Secondly, Cyril's use of imagery portrays the complementary natures of catechesis and Baptism in the Jerusalem church. A significant, but subtle, shift takes place. In the catechetical process, the catechumens are the primary actors, while the actions of an exorcist, the Holy Spirit, and catechist are secondary. In Baptism, this relation is reversed. God is the principal active agent, while the catechumens' actions are ancillary. In this symmetrical shift from Catechesis to Baptism the stress upon human actions decreases, while emphasis upon the activity of the Divinity increases inversely.

Cyril's use of imagery depicts a second complementary relation of catechesis and Baptism. Even though they are two distinct events, they are, at the same time, not unrelated. On the one hand, the former—*Procatechesis* and *Catecheses*—precedes the latter and is preparation for it. According to Cyril, the catechetical process is necessary preparation for Baptism:

Just as those who set about levying an army examine the ages and constitutions of those who enlist, so the Lord, when he raises His levy of souls, examines their motives; and where He finds a secret hypocrisy, He rejects the man as unfit for the true service. But if He finds a man worthy, He readily bestows His grace upon him. He does not give what is holy to the dogs. ... The recipients of this spiritual and saving seal must have a proper disposition. For as the pen or dart requires the hand of the user, so grace also demands believers.⁴⁵

To put it another way, God does not cause change in or give divine gifts to just anyone in Baptism; not just anyone is allowed to unite with Christ in His Passion. Instead, God performs these actions and allows for this unity only in regard to those who, along with the assistance of an exorcist, the Holy Spirit and catechist, have prepared themselves to be recipients of God's actions in Baptism. On the other hand, the *Mystagogic Catecheses* interpret that which has already happened in Baptism. As such, one does not exist in isolation from the other. Catechesis revolves around Baptism preparing the catechumens for Baptism and interpreting it for the baptized.

Cyril's imagery clearly illustrates the correlation of Catechesis and Baptism in the Jerusalem Church during the latter half of the fourth-century. According to his catechetical homilies, they are at the same time quite different **and** intimately related. Catechumens are the primary actors in Catechesis, whereas in Baptism it is God. This significant difference, though, does not sever their relation, but rather, serves in both complementing the other. More precisely, the catechumens' active involvement in catechesis is necessary for preparation for and interpretation of Baptism, and without God's work in Baptism there is no need for Catechesis.

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⁴⁵ Cyril 1:92-93 [C 1:3].

