

# **Theologia et Apologia**



# **Theologia et Apologia**

*Essays in Reformation Theology and its Defense  
Presented to Rod Rosenblatt*

edited by

Adam S. Francisco  
Korey D. Maas  
Steven P. Mueller

*Wipf & Stock*  
P U B L I S H E R S  
*Eugene, Oregon*

Theologia et Apologia  
Essays in Reformation Theology and its Defense  
Presented to Rod Rosenblatt

Copyright © 2007 Wipf and Stock Publishers. All rights reserved.  
Except for brief quotations in critical publications or reviews, no  
part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior  
written permission from the publisher. Write: Permissions, Wipf &  
Stock,  
199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401

ISBN 13: 978-1-55635-166-2  
ISBN: 1-55635-166-6

In honor of the Rev. Dr. W. Rod Rosenblatt  
on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday



# Contents

Contributors .....	ix
Abbreviations .....	xi
Biographical Introduction .....	1
<i>The Apologetic Thrust of Lutheran Theology</i> John Warwick Montgomery .....	5
<i>Epistemology of the Cross: A Lutheran Response to Philosophical Theisms</i> Jeffrey Mallinson .....	23
<i>The Case for Inerrancy: A Methodological Analysis</i> R. C. Sproul .....	45
<i>The Fundamental Fact of Christianity: B. B. Warfield on the Evidence for the Resurrection of Christ</i> Kim Riddlebarger .....	67
<i>Christianity and Scholarship in a Post-Christian World: The Model of C. S. Lewis</i> Steven P. Mueller .....	87
<i>“Reportage” in C. S. Lewis’s “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”</i> Rick Ritchie .....	105
<i>Luther’s Critique of and Response to Islam</i> Adam S. Francisco .....	119
<i>The Place of Repentance in Luther’s Theological Development</i> Korey D. Maas .....	137
<i>A Lutheran Explanation and Defense of Sola Scriptura</i> Steven R. J. Parks .....	155
<i>Chemnitz’s Pearls vs. Luther’s Rose: A Comparison of Canonical Criteria in the Two Martins</i> Mark A. Pierson .....	177

<i>“True Christianity” and Lutheran Orthodoxy: The Curious Self-Representation of Johann Arndt</i>	
Daniel van Voorhis	199
<i>The Civil Reformer: Philip Melanchthon as Francis Bacon’s Muse</i>	
Eric Casteel	213
<i>Reformation and the Rationality of Science</i>	
Angus Menuge	237
<i>Law, Gospel, and Covenant: Reassessing Some Emerging Antitheses</i>	
Michael Horton	257
<i>A Lawyer Amongst the Theologians: Justice Scalia’s Solution to Our Present Hermeneutical Chaos</i>	
Craig A. Parton	269
<i>Grace and the Father</i>	
Charlie Mallie	281
<i>Emergent Church Ecclesiology</i>	
John T. Pless	297
<i>Apologetics as Pastoral Theology</i>	
Alfonso O. Espinosa	317

## Contributors

**Eric Casteel** (M.A., Ph.D. cand.) and Rod were together involved with Christians United for Reformation (C.U.R.E.) in the 1990s. A Visiting Scholar at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Eric is currently completing his Ph.D. at the University of California, Los Angeles.

**Alfonso O. Espinosa** (M.Div., Ph.D. cand.) studied with Rod at Concordia University Irvine. He is currently the Senior Pastor at Living Word Lutheran Church in The Woodlands, Texas, while also completing the Ph.D. at Birmingham University (U.K.).

**Adam S. Francisco** (M.A., D.Phil.) studied theology under Rod at Concordia University Irvine. He is currently Assistant Professor of History at Concordia College in Bronxville, New York.

**Michael Horton** (M.A., Ph.D.) is one of Rod's co-hosts on the *White Horse Inn*, a nationally syndicated radio program. He is also the J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary in Escondido, California, and editor of *Modern Reformation*.

**Korey D. Maas** (M.Div., D.Phil.) teaches with Rod at Concordia University Irvine, where he is Assistant Professor of Theology and Church History.

**Charlie Mallie** (M.Div.) was Rod's student and Teaching Assistant at Concordia University Irvine. He now serves as Associate Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Tomball, Texas.

**Jeffrey Mallinson** (D.Phil.) studied with Rod at Concordia University Irvine. He is currently Assistant Professor of Theology and Dean of the School of Theology at Colorado Christian University in Lakewood, Colorado.

**Angus Menuge** (M.A., Ph.D.), like Rod, is an occasional lecturer at the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism, and Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. He is also Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Concordia University Wisconsin.

- John Warwick Montgomery** (LL.M., B.D., Ph.D., D. Théol.) taught Rod theology and apologetics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and was later his colleague at the Simon Greenleaf School of Law. He is currently Professor of Apologetics and Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Trinity College and Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana, as well as Emeritus Professor of Law and Humanities at the University of Luton, England.
- Steven P. Mueller** (M.Div., Ph.D.) studied with, and now teaches with Rod at Concordia University Irvine, where he is Professor of Theology and Dean of Christ College.
- Steven R. J. Parks** (M.Div.) was Rod's student at Concordia University Irvine. He is presently completing studies for the S.T.M. at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.
- Craig A. Parton** (M.A., J.D.) studied apologetics with Rod at the Simon Greenleaf School of Law. He is a practicing lawyer and a partner in the firm of Price, Postel & Parma in Santa Barbara, California.
- Mark A. Pierson** (M.A.) studied under Rod at Concordia University Irvine. He currently teaches theology at Martin Luther High School in Greendale, Wisconsin.
- John T. Pless** (M.Div.) serves with Rod as an editorial advisor for *Lutheran Witness* magazine. He also edits *For the Life of the Word*, and is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.
- Kim Riddlebarger** (M.A.R., Ph.D.) is one of Rod's co-hosts on the *White Horse Inn*. In addition to serving as the Senior Pastor at Christ Reformed Church in Anaheim, California, he is also a visiting Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary in Escondido, California.
- Rick Ritchie** (M.A.) studied with Rod at Concordia University Irvine, and with him was integrally involved with C.U.R.E. He is a regular contributor to *Modern Reformation* and is editor of *OldSolar*, an online magazine.
- R. C. Sproul** (B.D., Ph.D.) sat with Rod for many years on the board of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. The founder and chairman of Ligonier Ministries, Sproul recently retired as Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Knox Theological Seminary in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.
- Daniel van Voorhis** (Ph.D. cand.) was Rod's student and Teaching Assistant at Concordia University Irvine. He is completing his Ph.D. at the University of St. Andrews and currently teaches in the history faculty at his alma mater.

## Abbreviations

- AE *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-75).
- BELK *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirchen*, ed. Hans Lietzmann, Heinrich Bornkamm, Hans Volz, and Ernst Wolf (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1952).
- CR *Corpus Reformatorum: Philippi Melanthonis opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Karl Bretschneider and Heinrich Bindseil, 28 vols. (Halle and Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1834-60).
- Kolb/Wengert *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001).
- Tappert *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1959).
- Triglot *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. F. Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).
- WA *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 65 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883-93).
- WABr *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1930-85).



*The Rev. Dr. W. Rod Rosenblatt*  
*A Biographical Introduction*

Attempting to calculate Rod Rosenblatt's immense influence over the many years of his career would be an exercise in futility. In the classroom, in print, on the airwaves, and, not least, in weekly gatherings on the back patio of his home, Rod has influenced a generation of confessional and evangelical thinking about Reformation theology and Christian apologetics. Even the most influential, however, are indebted to the influence of others; and Rod would be the first to admit—and to express his gratitude for—the influence of those who helped shape his own thinking about theology and apologetics.

Anyone who has spoken with Rod for more than a few minutes cannot help but be impressed by his acknowledgement of the debt owed to his father, William Joseph Rosenblatt. Born in western Washington in 1942, Rod was raised in a physician's home where, by his father *qua* father, Rod will explain, the fundamental importance of grace was impressed upon him. His father *qua* physician, Rod will also emphasize, impressed upon him the primary importance—the life and death importance—of critical thinking about empirical evidence. For those inclined to believe (as Rod himself believes) that one's early years may be the single most important factor in the shaping of one's life and thought, the course of Rod's own life and thought can hardly be surprising.

After beginning studies in science at the University of Washington in 1960, Rod transferred to Pacific Lutheran University, where in 1964 he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology. With the intention of eventually pursuing evangelism and apologetics among the sort of empirically minded yet skeptical students he had encountered at university, Rod

entered the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, for more focused theological studies. He received the Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1968. But it was also at this institution that Rod began to see firsthand the consequences which inevitably follow when theologians fail to give due heed to evidence—biblical and otherwise—and its scrupulous interpretation. Increasingly unconvinced by the presuppositions of higher-criticism then in vogue, Rod, before completing his studies at Columbus, enrolled as a visiting student at Concordia Theological Seminary, then located in Springfield, Illinois. The rigorously biblical, historical, and confessional course of studies made available to him at Concordia—along with the mentoring of Concordia’s president, J. A. O. Preus II, one of the foremost Lutheran theologians in twentieth-century America—indelibly impressed upon Rod the necessity of a theology firmly grounded in historical fact rather than faddish theory.

It was this necessity, together with the scholarly reputation of another mentor and lasting influence, John Warwick Montgomery, which then prompted Rod’s 1968 enrollment at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. This was a decision not taken lightly, as it meant forfeiting a “full-ride” scholarship in another graduate program to attend an institution that was, at that time, both obscure and unaccredited. It was, however, a choice Rod would never regret. Under the tutelage of Dr. Montgomery and other Trinity faculty, Rod was immersed in the further study of theology, philosophy, and apologetics, earning a Master of Arts degree in the Philosophy of Religion in 1969. After four years of parish ministry in southern California, Rod followed Montgomery’s path to the Université de Strasbourg, where in 1978 he earned the degree of Doctor of Philosophy under the supervision of French Luther scholar Marc Lienhardt.

These influences absorbed, made his own, and combined with Rod’s own charismatic personality and love of teaching quickly made him an influential figure in his own right. On the strength of his training and at the recommendation of his mentors, Rod was invited to join the faculties of the Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, California) and Westmont College (Santa Barbara, California) even before completing his doctoral studies. As an extremely popular Instructor in Systematic Theology, the mentored became the mentor and Rod soon found himself surrounded by the “disciples” for which he is known at every institution where he has taught. Jealousy being a pet sin among academics, it cannot pass without note that Rod’s

attraction of “disciples” has sometimes been mentioned pejoratively. The fact, however, remains: the rare *discipulo* who actually attends college for the purpose of *discere* will inevitably gravitate towards those professors who know, love, and can communicate their *disciplina*. And in this day of educational agnosticism, pragmatism, and cynicism, any college or university that can attract both students and professors of this sort may count itself blessed.

This was certainly the thinking of John Warwick Montgomery, who in 1979 hand picked his former student to join the faculty of his newly founded Simon Greenleaf School of Law in Anaheim, California. Rod taught there as Professor of Christian Apologetics for ten years, preserving and carrying forward the juridical and evidential apologetic tradition of Greenleaf himself, applying the legal canons of evidence and argument to the documents and doctrines of the Christian faith.

It was also there that Rod’s growing reputation as a theologian and apologist attracted the attention of Dr. Charles Manske, who had also recently founded an institution of higher education. Only a short distance from Anaheim, Christ College Irvine opened its doors in 1976. Within a few short years Dr. Manske had persuaded Rod to teach in the theology faculty at Christ College while simultaneously fulfilling his professorial obligations at Simon Greenleaf. He did so faithfully from 1982 to 1989, the following year resigning his post at the School of Law and being appointed full Professor at Christ College. As Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Apologetics at Christ College—in 1993 renamed Concordia University—Rod has exerted significant influence on the school’s graduates, sending dozens of alumni on to graduate programs at top universities and seminaries in the United States and Europe. To cite only one example, his “disciples” have made a particularly strong showing at England’s Oxford University, once prompting well-known Oxford professor Alister McGrath to state, “Rod, if you educate them as undergraduates, I’ll supervise them as graduate students.”

Rod’s influence, however, can hardly be limited to the classroom. For many years he applied himself to practical apologetics as a staff member of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, engaging skeptical students in the University of California and California State University systems. He has been integrally involved with influential organizations such as Christians United for Reformation and the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. As a popu-

lar speaker at theological conferences, as a regular contributor to *Modern Reformation* magazine, and as a co-host of the nationally broadcast White Horse Inn radio program, Rod continues to shape confessional evangelical thinking about Reformation theology and Christian apologetics.

Though the immense influence of Professor Rod Rosenbladt cannot be calculated, it can be acknowledged, celebrated, and honored. Such is the intention of those who have contributed to this volume: some who have worked with him, some who have been mentored by him, all who have been influenced by him. And all who sincerely thank him for doing what he does and for being who he is—one of those, in the apt words of Eusebius of Caesarea, “who have manfully defended the faith.”

## *The Apologetic Thrust of Lutheran Theology*

John Warwick Montgomery

Can the truth of Christianity be “proven” to an unbeliever? Ought the Christian try to “demonstrate” the veracity of the gospel to the non-Christian? Should one attempt to “establish evidentially” the Bible’s claim to be the very word of God? Here are two representative twentieth-century Lutheran judgments on these questions:

The certainty of Christian faith is not dependent upon the demonstrable character of divine revelation. The idea that scientific studies and investigations should provide a solid foundation for faith and give it certainty is contrary to the nature of both science and faith. If this were indeed possible, it would mean that science, within the empirical reality, which is the object of its study, could discover something of that revelation of which faith speaks. The discoveries of science would in that case verify faith. But this would obviously be to ask something of science which it cannot give without ceasing to be scientific. Whether it be a question of a scientific investigation of nature or history, such a study cannot penetrate to that which is decisive for faith—the revelation of God.<sup>1</sup>

Christian theology is the ability to exhibit, or preach, the Gospel, but not to prove it true by human arguments of reason or philosophy. As the Christian theologian proclaims the truth, he wins souls for Christ, but not as he endeavors to prove true the mysteries of faith by principles of human reason. This also is the meaning of the axiom: “The best apology of the Christian religion is its proclamation.” Let the Gospel be made known, and it will of itself prove its divine character. Christian apologetics has therefore only one function: it is to show the unreasonableness of unbelief. Never can it demonstrate the truth with “enticing words of man’s wisdom.”<sup>2</sup>

Only the presence of biblical citations in the second quotation and the absence of them in the first might suggest a difference in apologetic viewpoint on the part of these two theologians. The first statement derives from Gustav Aulén, the renowned spokesman for Lundensian theology, who categorically set himself against “biblicism” (the verbal inspiration and infallible authority of Holy Scripture)<sup>3</sup> and depreciated the substitutionary (“Lat-

in,” “Anselmian”) doctrine of Christ’s Atonement.<sup>4</sup> The second affirmation expresses the viewpoint of J. Theodore Mueller, the great Missouri Synod dogmatician, who throughout his long career stood fast for the inerrancy of Scripture and the Christology of the historic church, and vigorously opposed Lundensian theology as a Lutheran variant of reformed neo-orthodoxy.

Yet the apologetic stance of these two Lutheran thinkers is virtually indistinguishable! Both claim that Christian revelation stands beyond proof and beyond demonstration—and that any attempt to offer an apologetic to establish its validity is to misunderstand the nature of the Christian gospel. As I have pointed out in other writings, very much the same antipathy to positive apologetic argument is displayed throughout contemporary Protestantism: it has been equally characteristic of the old modernism, of the Barthian “crisis theology” that reacted against modernism, of Bultmannian existentialism, and of the orthodox Calvinism and pietistic fundamentalism, which have fought the errors of liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, and Bultmannianism.

The question we wish to pose in this essay is the difficult but exceedingly important one concerning the proper relation between Lutheran faith and the apologetic task: *Ought* the confessional Lutheran to feel the same antipathy toward the positive defense of the faith as is experienced by liberal Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike? Or does Lutheran theology demand an apologetic for the word as aggressive as its proclamation of the word? Should orthodox Lutheranism share the anti-apologetic bed with contemporary theology, or have we inadvertently picked up the wrong room key altogether?

#### *An Existential Luther with Aristotelian Followers*

We are told that, as those who go by Luther’s name, we should be the last to approach Christianity apologetically. Jaroslav Pelikan, in his influential little monograph, *From Luther to Kierkegaard*, maintains that the young Luther had little interest in “natural theology”—in the knowledge of God or of divine truth which can be attained by the sinner in his unregenerate state—and that even as an old man when he did deal with the question, he orientated it “around the concept of dread.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, Luther’s fundamental approach was not objective, cognitive, factual, but rather existential: he approached truth questions, as Søren Kierkegaard would later, in terms

of dynamic, personal experience. We are told that Kierkegaard's aphorism that "truth is subjectivity" strikes closer to Luther's worldview than any kind of objective arguments for Christianity's validity. Was Kierkegaard not expressing the spirit of Luther's position when he said that to question or defend the truth of Christ is like a husband seriously asking himself whether he could love another woman—even to ask such a question labels his love as unreal?

Pelikan's sketch of the history of theological ideas between Luther and Kierkegaard presents essentially an arid territory of orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians who, while rejecting Aristotelian adulterations of the content of Christian theology, unwittingly incorporate Aristotelian philosophical methodology into their labors, thereby eventually corrupting Luther's existential insights and paving the way for the victory of rationalism. The stress on proofs for God's existence in such later orthodox dogmaticians as David Hollaz is clear evidence that Luther's disinterest in "natural theology" did not long remain among his followers.

One of the chief sources of Pelikan's interpretation, as evidenced by his own bibliographical notes, was the brief section on natural theology at the outset of Werner Elert's *Morphologie des Luthertums*. There Elert—who himself relies heavily on Ernst Troeltsch's *Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Joh. Gerhard und Melanchthon* (1891)—claims that Philipp Melanchthon inconsistently maintained in his *Apology to the Augsburg Confession* that "God can be known in no other way than through the Word," yet he "already accepted the essential elements of the later 'natural theology'" and "demonstrates the natural proofs of the existence of God."<sup>6</sup> From this point things went from bad to worse, both in Melanchthon himself and in the orthodox theologians of the next century and a half: Chemnitz, Gerhard, Calov, Hollaz, Baier. (Only Flacius deserves real praise, for he unqualifiedly condemned sinful man's *ratio*.) Tragically, dogmaticians such as these set forth positive apologetic arguments for biblical truth, and the Lutheran astronomer-mathematician Johann Kepler actually endeavored to harmonize scientific discoveries with the word of God! "How far away from Luther we now are!" cries Elert, and concludes:

The development of "natural theology" is the march of history from Luther's primal experience (*Urerlebnis*) up to the Enlightenment. It ended with the ominous error that Christian faith in God and "natural knowledge of God" are essentially identical. For the naive apologetists, for many a dog-

matician, even for many a politician who wanted to “preserve religion for the people,” this was a comfort and a satisfaction. For the church Philistine, as Tholuck addressed him, it was reason for no longer knowing of an anguished conscience. But then came Ludwig Feuerbach. Then came Karl Marx and Nietzsche. They showed that the knowledge of “natural” man arrives at a totally different result. And when it came to the great test of the revelation of God’s goodness, faithfulness, and mercy on land, at sea, and in the air—which Zöckler and many others taught—the result was decidedly negative. Was it surprising that the generation of the war and the collapse declared the Christian belief in God to be a delusion because it had been refuted by the terrors and the fate that they had experienced?<sup>7</sup>

The Bultmannian and post-Bultmannian Lutherans carry this line of argument even farther. Does Bultmann tear away all objective grounding for faith by declaring that the ostensibly historical descriptions of our Lord’s miraculous acts are really the mythological garb in which the primitive church clothed its existential experience of “authentic self-understanding”? Fine! In this “one sees in unmistakable outlines the shadow of Luther,”<sup>8</sup> for Bultmann is removing the objective, intellectual props by which modern man may attempt to “justify himself,” even as Luther removed the props of moral works-righteousness from sixteenth-century man. Bultmann thus continues Luther’s task of stripping away all the externals from faith—leaving it as it really is, a naked leap, which can never be aided, much less established, by objective evidence or factual demonstration. This viewpoint has been expressed with particular forcefulness by such post-Bultmannian advocates of the new hermeneutic as Ernst Käsemann:

Neither miracle nor the canon nor the Jesus of history is able to give security to our faith. For our faith there can be no objectivity in this sense. That is the finding which New Testament scholarship has made plain in its own fashion. But this finding is only the obverse of that acknowledgment which Luther’s exposition of the third article of the Creed expresses.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, Luther’s central conviction that a man is justified by grace through faith and his concomitant refusal to confuse law with gospel supposedly eliminated for him, if not objective grounds for faith, at least all uses of objective evidences in “defending” the faith. Luther’s immediate followers, however, allegedly returned like the dog to its Aristotelian vomit in endeavoring to establish the truth of faith and to convince others of its

veracity by objective argument. Such argumentation is foreign to true Lutheran belief, we are told, and must be excised as a cancer.

*Luther and the Classical Dogmaticians Revisited*

Energy, existential or otherwise, need not be expended here in refuting the contention that Luther had no objective grounding for his faith. Merely his affirmation at Worms—"I am bound by the Scriptures that I have adduced, and my conscience has been taken captive by the word of God"—should be enough to show that for Luther truth was hardly "subjectivity." For those interested in a detailed analysis of this issue, a previous essay of mine should prove useful.<sup>10</sup> Our task here is the more specialized one of determining to what extent Luther's theology allows for and encourages the *apologetic use* of Christianity's factual character in setting the faith before an unbelieving world. Granted that for Luther God's word was objectively true; does it follow that its truth can be established and defended in the marketplace of ideas, or is the sinful character of the human situation an absolute barrier to such an operation? This is the question before us—and we shall now take it up (not forgetting, however, the sobering consideration that the strongest opponents of a Lutheran apologetic are those who base their anti-apologetic stance on the conviction that Christianity is, after all, nonobjective!).

Even the reading of Pelikan leaves us a bit shaky as to the dichotomy between an allegedly existential Luther and his Aristotelian-apologetic followers. In Luther, admits Pelikan, "we do have at least one passage in which he expounds what virtually amounts to an argument [for God's existence] from the analogy of being. The detailed commentary on Genesis, our chief source for the old Luther, deals with natural theology several times."<sup>11</sup> But this apologetic emphasis is attributed to "the old Luther"—not to the Reformer in his theological prime.

We could answer with E. M. Plass that Luther's Genesis commentary comprises the "longest and, in many respects, the maturest of his lectures."<sup>12</sup> However, this approach is unnecessary, for, as Luther scholars such as Philip S. Watson have shown, the Reformer's concern with natural theology was by no means limited to his later years. As early as 1525, Luther is expressly teaching in *The Bondage of the Will* that "the knowledge of predestination and of God's prescience has been left in the world [after the fall] no less certainly than the notion of the Godhead itself."<sup>13</sup> In his Galatians commentary

(1531)—considered by many to be the greatest of all Luther’s writings—he condemns all attempts by the sinner to justify himself on the basis of the natural knowledge of God, while at the same time stoutly defending the existence of such natural knowledge and encouraging the Christian to dispute intelligently with unbelievers on the basis of it:

When you are to dispute with Jews, Turks, Papists, Heretics, etc., concerning the power, wisdom, and majesty of God, employ all your intelligence and industry to that end, and be as profound and as subtle a disputer as you can.<sup>14</sup>

Such arguments [arguments for divine truth based on human and earthly analogy] are good when they are grounded upon the ordinance of God. But when they are taken from men’s corrupt affections, they are naught.<sup>15</sup>

Though all efforts at self-salvation through natural theology must be unqualifiedly condemned, Luther sees the natural knowledge of God and of his law inscribed on every man’s heart as the point of contact—the common ground—which makes the evangelistic task possible.

If the natural law were not written and given in the heart by God one would have to preach long before the conscience were smitten. One would have to preach to an ass, horse, ox, or cow for a hundred thousand years before they accepted the law, although they have ears, eyes and heart as a man. They too can hear it, but it does not enter their heart. Why? What is wrong? Their soul is not so formed and fashioned that such a thing might enter it. But a man, when the law is set before him, soon says: Yes, it is so, he cannot deny it. He could not be so quickly convinced, were it not written in his heart before.<sup>16</sup>

P. S. Watson summarizes the case in the best traditions of dry Oxbridge humor:

He [Luther] had, after all, read his New Testament; and the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, along with other passages dear to the natural theologians, could not escape his notice. He had, furthermore, too much reverence for the sacred text to ignore such passages, or to dismiss them as unimportant.<sup>17</sup>

*However*, retorts the anti-apologetic Lutheran, does this really penetrate to the heart of Luther’s position? Granted that he held to natural knowl-

edge of God; he nonetheless refuses to allow such knowledge a place in salvation. As specialists on Luther's view of "reason" have pointed out (one thinks especially of B. A. Gerrish<sup>18</sup> and Robert H. Fischer<sup>19</sup>), Luther indeed encourages rational operations in the secular realm (the earthly kingdom) but categorically rejects reason as a normative rule in the realm of salvation (the spiritual kingdom). Reason must never be allowed to govern or restrict God's word; where this occurs, reason becomes Frau Hulda and Madam Jezebel—the devil's whore.

The Kingdom of Reason embraces such human activities as caring for a family, building a home, serving as a magistrate, and (as Röser's MS. adds) looking after cows. All that can be demanded of me by God in such a sphere of activity is that I should "do my best". The important thing not to overlook is that this Kingdom has its boundaries; the error of the sophists is that they carry the saying "to do one's best" (*facere quod in se est*) over into the *regnum spirituale*, in which a man is able to do nothing but sin. In outward affairs or in the affairs of the body man is master: "He is hardly", as Luther drily remarks, "the cow's servant." But in spiritual affairs he is a servant or slave, "sold under sin". "For the Kingdom of Human Reason must be separated as far as possible from the Spiritual Kingdom."<sup>20</sup>

And what possible good can an apologetic do when, in Luther's thinking, natural knowledge of God offers no substitute whatever for the Word of God in Jesus Christ? Knowledge of the *Deus absconditus* can only impart terror; the *Deus revelatus*—God in Christ—offers the sole avenue to peace and salvation, and he is accessible, not to reason and demonstration, but to the eyes of faith. Thus even Christ's miracles did not convince those who would not accept his word: "When miracles are performed, they are appreciated only by the pious."<sup>21</sup> One must come in faith to the lowly Christ of the manger and there, paradoxically, one will meet the divine Savior. Luther's theology calls for proclamation of this truth, not for an impossible defense of it which invariably appeals to the "natural man" desiring to justify himself.<sup>22</sup>

Here we arrive at the core of the matter. Luther very definitely distinguished two kingdoms, the earthly and the spiritual, and in fact considered this distinction to be one of the most valuable aspects of his theology.<sup>23</sup> But does this distinction dichotomize the world into a secular realm where reason and proof operate, and a spiritual realm where evidence has no place? This is precisely the impression given by virtually all modern interpreters of Luther. Especially revealing is Robert Fischer's declaration that for Luther

“such insights [reason, experience, common sense] operate in what would later be called the phenomenal realm; they do not penetrate the noumenal.”<sup>24</sup> The use of the terms “noumenal” and “phenomenal” (borrowed from the Kantian critical philosophy, which is itself dependent upon a Platonic separation of the realm of “ideas” or “ideals” from the phenomenal world of sense experience) is most significant. Luther is painlessly being absorbed into the idealistic-dualistic frame of reference characteristic of virtually all contemporary Protestant thought. Why can neo-orthodox and other varieties of current theology confidently hold to their “theological insights” while simultaneously accepting the most destructive judgments of biblical critics regarding alleged factual errors in the biblical material and the supposed historical unreliability of the scriptural accounts of our Lord’s life? Simply because the (noumenal) truth of theological statements, we are told, is in no way dependent on the phenomenal, secular issues connected with biblical history. After all, the Bible conveys *religious*, not scientific or historical truth! “The Bible is not a textbook of science,” etc.

Is Luther to be assimilated to the Platonic-Kantian perspective? The answer will depend squarely on what kind of *connection* Luther saw between the two kingdoms. If he in fact kept them in water-tight compartments, then a positive apologetic originating in the secular realm could not in principle justify truths lying in the spiritual sphere. The mere fact of Luther’s belief in a natural theology, in the sense previously shown, strongly suggests some kind of connecting link between the kingdoms in his thinking; but what precisely is the nature of the link?

Troeltsch (whom we have already met in passing as one of the sources of Elert’s and Pelikan’s anti-apologetic view of Luther) is best known in Reformation studies for his negative views of Luther’s social ethic.<sup>25</sup> He claims that Luther’s theology produced social quietism because Luther never connected the theological insights operative in his spiritual kingdom with the activities of the earthly kingdom. This allegation has been decisively refuted by George Forell, who shows that, in the first place, Luther’s two kingdoms are connected as to origin, for “these two separate realms are ultimately both God’s realms;” and, even more important, they are linked in practice by the individual Christian believer, who is a citizen of both simultaneously (“Luther explains that a point of contact between the secular realm and the spiritual realm exists in the person of the individual Christian”).<sup>26</sup> A parallel vindication of Luther is needed epistemologically.

As the individual Christian unites the two kingdoms in his person, thereby bridging the sociological gap between them, so *the Incarnate Christ himself* links the two realms epistemologically. The incarnational center of Luther's theology eliminates entirely the possibility of making him an advocate of "two-fold truth"—a kind of sixteenth-century Averroës. In the sharpest possible opposition to Platonic dualism—and to the related modern dichotomies of Kantianism and of Lessing's ditch between historical fact and absolute truth—Luther declares that Jesus Christ, in his own person, offers immediate access to God. One begins with the earthly and finds the heavenly. Luther's words should be carefully pondered in the final version of his Galatians commentary:

Paul is in the habit of linking together Jesus Christ and God the Father so frequently: he wants to teach us the Christian religion, which does not begin at the very top, as all other religions do, but at the very bottom. Paul commands us to ascend on the ladder of Jacob, at the top of which God Himself is resting, and the feet of which touch the earth next to the head of Jacob (Gen. 28:12f.). Therefore if you would think or treat of your salvation, you must stop speculating about the majesty of God; you must forget all thought of good works, tradition, philosophy, and even the divine Law. Hasten to the stable and the lap of the mother and apprehend this infant Son of the Virgin. Look at Him being born, nursed, and growing up, walking among men, teaching, dying, returning from the dead, and being exalted above all the heavens, in possession of power over all. In this way you can cause the sun to dispel the clouds and can avoid all fear and all errors too. And this view of God will keep you on the right path.<sup>27</sup>

Luther insists that the search for God begin at the connecting link between earth and heaven, which exists at the point of the incarnation. There we find a genuine human being ("nursed and growing up," "dying") but also very God of very God ("returning from the dead and being exalted above all the heavens"). "Philosophy," which starts elsewhere, must be forgotten; absolute truth is available only here. Why does Luther concentrate relatively little on traditional proofs for God's existence (even though he considered such argumentation valid)? Because for him it did not constitute the proper point of departure:

If you begin your study of God by trying to determine how He rules the world, how He burned Sodom and Gomorrah with infernal fire, whether He has elected this person or that, and thus begin with the works of the

High Majesty, then you will presently break your neck and be hurled from heaven, suffering a fall like Lucifer's. For such procedure amounts to beginning on top and building the roof before you have laid the foundation. Therefore, letting God do whatever He is doing, you must begin at the bottom and say: I do not want to know God until I have first known this Man; for so read the passages of Scripture: "I am Way, the Truth, and the Life"; again: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). And there are more passages to the same effect.<sup>28</sup>

Luther is not anti-apologetic; he is, rather, exceedingly careful in his starting-point. The *point de départ* must be Christ; in methodology one must "begin at the bottom" with the incarnation; and no reasoning (or anything else, for that matter!) can be legitimately regarded as ground for works-righteousness or self-justification.

Admittedly, Luther did not build a formal apologetic from this incarnational starting-point. His task was not to defend the soundness of the biblical history or of its picture of Christ. In the sixteenth century, no reputable theologians of any school of thought questioned the veracity of the scriptural text. The cold winds of rationalistic biblical criticism had not yet begun to blow. (To be sure, Renaissance humanists such as Lorenzo Valla would later be regarded as precursors of such criticism, but they constituted no negative apologetic threat to biblical authority in Luther's time.) Luther often said that he did his best work when angry; that is, he recognized that his theological activities were determined in large part by the contemporary pressures upon him. These pressures came not from unbelievers doubting the authority of the word but from churchmen who misinterpreted it. Thus Luther's battles were necessarily hermeneutic rather than apologetic in character.

Moreover, since he was especially confronted by the traditional Romanist on the right and the fanatic *Schwärmer* on the left, both of whom appealed to extra-biblical miracles in their midst, Luther preferred to fight on the common ground of the word, emphasizing the truth—which must never be forgotten apologetically in our contingent world!—that those who *want* to discount the clear evidence of God's miraculous dealings can always find some way (improbable though it may be) of doing so.

But the fundamental themes of Luther's theology were most definitely hospitable to a positive apologetic and bore fruit apologetically when, not so many years later, the very authority of the word came under fire. We have already stressed the central role the incarnation played in Luther's thought—

eliminating theological schizophrenia and offering a bridge from ordinary human experience to the divine truth of God's revelation. Related themes of great apologetic consequence in his theology include (1) his psychosomatic *holism* (Luther's refusal, in debate with Zwingli and others, to separate Christ's spirit from his body; he thereby avoided the trap of "spiritualist" theology which is in the last analysis unverifiable and indefensible—as was the claim of Reformed modernists in the last century that Christ rose from the dead "spiritually" but not necessarily in body);<sup>29</sup> (2) Luther's constant epistemological insistence on the *objectivity* of Christian truth (his repeated assertions that to find the true meaning of the gospel one must always go from "the outward to the inward" and that the gospel lies entirely *extra nos* not only precluded subjectivism and auto-salvation, but also provided the foundation for the teaching of the orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians that *notitia*—objective fact—must always ground *fiducia*—personal, subjective commitment—and that Christian heart conviction can be justified by external evidence);<sup>30</sup> (3) Luther's *sacramental teaching* (his firm maintenance of the *finitum est capax infiniti* principle places him most definitely outside the Platonist camp and opens the way to the widest variety of apologetic operations, since every fact in the world—"even the most insignificant leaf of a tree," to use Luther's own expression—becomes a potential avenue to Christ);<sup>31</sup> and, (4) finally, his *inductive methodology* (Luther's requirement that one discover what Scripture is actually saying and not force it into alien categories—such as Zwingli's metaphysical speculations about the nature of "bodies"—made possible the defense of the faith in a world about to recognize the necessity of open, inductive, scientific procedure in the discovery of truth. Those who followed Luther's hermeneutic, as opposed to the deductive model of Ramist Calvinism, were thus—as in the case of Tycho Brahe and Kepler—at the forefront of both scientific advance and the apologetic reconciliation of Scripture and scientific discovery).<sup>32</sup>

Though not himself an apologist in the strict sense, Luther provided, through such theological insights, the basic orientation necessary for the apologetic emphases of the classical Lutheran dogmaticians. Elert finds it especially galling to admit that in regard to the efforts of the dogmaticians and Lutheran scientists such as Kepler to harmonize science and Scripture, "Luther had led the way with related interpretations of Genesis."<sup>33</sup> But is it not far more reasonable to see a positive relationship between the apologetic activity of the great Lutheran theologians following Luther and the work of Luther himself, rather than to claim that somehow all of these theologians—

who were evidently trying to be faithful to the great Reformer—somehow managed to pervert his theology by latching on to peripheral aberrations in his thought?

Even Elert and Pelikan have to admit that hardly a great name in Lutheran dogmatics from Luther's time to the eighteenth century disregarded "natural theology" and the objective defense of Christian truth. The following concise apologetic bio-bibliography should offer sufficiently intimidating evidence in this regard; the citations, taken together, constitute a veritable catalog of apologetic argumentation by the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Lutheran fathers:

Chemnitz (1522-1586): *Loci Theologici* (Frankfurt & Wittenberg, 1653), Pt. 1, pp. 19ff. ("De notitia Dei"); *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, ed. Preuss (Leipzig, 1915), pp. 6ff. ("De Sacra Scriptura").

Heerbrand (1521-1600): *Compendium theologiae* (Leipzig, 1585), pp. 33ff.

A. Hunnius (1550-1603): *Tractatus de sacrosancta maiestate, autoritate, fide ac certitudine Sacrae Scripturae* (Frankfurt, 1591), *passim*.

Hafenreffer (1561-1619): *Loci theologici*, 3d ed., (Tübingen, 1603), pp. 30ff.

Gerhard (1582-1637): *Loci Theologici*, vol. 1, ed. Frank (Leipzig, 1885), pp. 266ff. (on the question of God's existence), pp. 25ff. (on the authority, canonicity, and reliability of the biblical books).<sup>34</sup>

J. V. Andreae (1586-1654): *Sol veritatis sive religionis christianae certitudo*, in his *Rei christianae & literariae subsidia* (Tübingen, 1642), pp. 1-120. (The *Sol veritatis* is an abridgement of Hugo Grotius' *De veritate religionis christianae*, "commonly held to be the pioneer work in modern apologetics."<sup>35</sup>)

Calov (1612-1686): *Systema locorum theologicorum* (Wittenberg, 1655-1677), *loci* on God (e.g., Pt. 2, pp. 61-86) and Holy Scripture.

Quenstedt (1617-1688): *Theologia didactico-polemica*, (Wittenberg, 1685), pp. 97-102 ("An per alia κριτηρια persuaderi possit Sac. Scripturae autoritas?"), 250ff. ("De Deo, ejusque naturali notitia").

Baier (1647-1695): *Compendium theologiae positivae*, ed. Walther, vol. 1 (St. Louis, 1879), pp. 121-31 (catalog of arguments leading to *fides humana*, with references to apologetic arguments in still other dogmaticians of classical Lutheran orthodoxy—not included here for want of space—e.g., Huelsemann and Dannhauer).

Hollaz (1648-1713): *Examen theologicum acroamaticum* (Stockholm & Leipzig, 1750), pp. 106ff. (the external evidences of the divine origin of Holy Writ), 188ff. (the natural knowledge of God).<sup>36</sup>

It will be noted that these citations range across the entire period of Lutheran orthodoxy, beginning with the generation of Luther's and Melancthon's own students. Moreover, the list could be readily extended by the addition of the names of exegetes such as Chytraeus (of whom Elert says sarcastically that he finds "in every chapter of the First Book of Moses the proof for one or more *loci* of dogmatics"<sup>37</sup>) and authors of works defending the Bible against charges of contradiction and error (e.g., Andreas Althamer, whose *Conciliationes locorum Scripturae* of 1527 went through at least sixteen editions).

But did these Lutheran apologists not inevitably weaken the biblical picture of man's total depravity, deemphasize the scriptural teaching concerning the Holy Spirit's work in salvation, and introduce a subtle synergism into the preaching of the gospel of divine grace? Not at all. They recognized (though Elert seemed to have difficulty in doing so) that the Flacian alternative to the view that man retained his thinking and reasoning process after the fall is nothing less than heresy; for if original sin meant the loss of the very image of God in man (including the loss of his rational faculty), man would have ceased to be man, no subsequent revelation could even in principle have been communicated to man, and Christ could not even have become man without becoming an irrational sinner! In retaining Luther's view of the incarnation as the center of theology, the orthodox dogmaticians rightly opposed any Flacian attempt to dehumanize man by a concept of the fall that would lead to a loss of man's ability to distinguish truth from falsehood in secular matters or (which is the same thing) to distinguish true from false claims that God was in fact incarnate in the secular sphere.

Nor did this apologetic approach produce a "de-pneumatized" theology. The dogmaticians rightly maintained that the *fides humana* or "historical faith" could not in itself save. *Notitia* is possessed by the devils also, who tremble but are not saved because of it. There must be the personal commitment—the commitment of the whole person—to Christ for salvation, and that is brought about solely by the Spirit's work. At the same time, however, the orthodox theologians correctly refused to say (as the modern neo-orthodox do) that this personal commitment through the work of the Holy Spirit somehow "produces" the *notitia* or offers the only evidence of its reality. Hardly! The facts of God's existence and of his incarnate revelation in Jesus Christ stand as objectively true and evidentially compelling wholly apart from belief in them; faith in no sense creates their facticity. They stand

over and against man, judging him by their sheer veracity and compelling force—and unless he volitionally refuses to believe, and goes against all sound reasoning in so doing, they will move him to a Spirit-produced conversion and living relationship with Jesus Christ.

“Synergism”? Hardly, for everything is done by God, not by man. The evidential facts are God’s work, and the sinner’s personal acceptance of them and of the Person on whom they center is entirely the product of the Holy Spirit. To argue that the Lutheran dogmaticians fell into synergism because they defended the faith and expected a rational response from the sinner would require our condemning their *preaching* as well (and, indeed, all Christian preaching), on the ground that it presupposes a responsible decision on the sinner’s part. But the same Paul who asserted unqualifiedly that men are saved by grace alone (Eph 2:8, 9) told the Philippian jailer to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31) and defended God’s truth in philosophical terms on the Areopagus (Acts 17) and cited historical evidence for Christ’s resurrection in conjunction with his very statement of the nature of the gospel (1 Cor 15). All appeals to the sinner, whether in evangelistic preaching, or in evidential argument, must assume the existence of rational faculties to permit communication at all; synergism exists only when, following conversion, the justified man is led to believe that in any way *whatever* (rational, moral, volitional) he contributed to his own salvation. Lutheran theology particularly—in comparison with other theological traditions—keeps the knife-edge of this mystery sharp, thereby making possible a most aggressive apologetic combined with a most salutary theocentrism.

*Agony in Search of the Ecstasy: the Contemporary Mission Field*

And yet, our anti-apologetic Lutheran offers his final counter: Surely the “defense” of Christianity violates the most fundamental aspect of Lutheran theology, the law-gospel principle! When arguments are offered for the truth of the word, sinners are led, even when the apologist does not intend it, to rely upon themselves (the misuse of the law) rather than, in realization that *lex semper accusat*, to come to God solely on the ground of his free grace (the gospel).

Let me suggest, however, that the situation is the *exact reverse* of this: the neglect of apologetics is the surest way to *confuse* law and gospel, particularly in our day.

If we go back to the beginning of this essay, we find a strange phenomenon: the orthodox Mueller and the Lundensian Aulén occupying the same anti-apologetic bed. Both argue that “proof” is incapable of being marshaled to justify their positions. One bases his beliefs on an inerrant Scripture, the other upon an erring Scripture and undefined elements in the church’s heritage of faith. Note that, under these conditions, an individual standing outside these two commitments has no way of “testing the spirits” to see which view, if either, is worthy of his commitment. “Begin with inerrant Scripture!” cries Mueller. “Begin with my understanding of ‘the faith of the Christian Church!’” cries Aulén. In the absence of an apology that will make sense to the uncommitted, it is impossible, even in principle, to decide between these views. But if this is where the religious question is left, then the non-Christian will make an *arbitrary* decision—which will be dependent on *himself alone* (not on evidence outside himself)—and his commitment (even if to the true position) will be man-centered and therefore *legalistic*. The neglect of an apologetic for Christian truth thus inevitably confuses law with gospel by turning gospel into arbitrary, self-centered law. Only a genuine apologetic based on external, objective fact as presented in general and special revelation preserves religious decision from arbitrariness, keeps the gospel truly *gospel*, and (to use Watson’s felicitous phrase) “lets God be God.”

Moreover, let us note well that the options before the unbeliever today are by no means limited to a Mueller and to an Aulén. Ours is an age of religious cacophony, as was the Roman Empire of Christ’s time. From agnosticism to Hegelianism, from devil-worship to scientific rationalism, from theosophical cults to philosophies of process: virtually any world-view conceivable is offered to modern man in the pluralistic marketplace of ideas.<sup>38</sup> Our age is indeed in ideological and societal agony, grasping at anything and everything that can conceivably offer the ecstasy of a cosmic relationship or of a comprehensive *Weltanschauung*. Will Lutherans, having perhaps the strongest theological and apologetic resources in Christendom, continue to hide behind our traditions and our ecclesiastical structures, fearing the world of intellectual unbelief, or will we yield to the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth—who can overcome our inertia and bring us into the agoras of our time, there to establish by “many infallible proofs” the true character and message of the Unknown God?

NOTES

This essay was first delivered as one of the 1970 Reformation Lectures at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota, and was first published in *The Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 11 (1970).

<sup>1</sup> Gustav Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church*, trans. Wahlstrom and Arden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1948), 107; cf. 95-96.

<sup>2</sup> J. Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 109.

<sup>3</sup> Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church*, 81-85.

<sup>4</sup> Aulén, *Christus Victor* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), *passim*. For a critique see J. W. Montgomery, ed., *Chytraeus on Sacrifice* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 139ff.

<sup>5</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 23.

<sup>6</sup> Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, vol. 1, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 51. The English translation is preceded by revealing commendatory introductions by Pelikan and ALC theologian Robert C. Schultz.

<sup>7</sup> Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 53, 57-58.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Scharlemann, "Shadow on the Tomb," *Dialog* 1 (Spring, 1962), 22-29.

<sup>9</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Exegetisch Versuche und Besinnungen*, vol. 1, 2d ed. (Göttingen, 1960), 236.

<sup>10</sup> J. W. Montgomery, "Luther's Hermeneutic vs. the New Hermeneutic," in *In Defense of Martin Luther* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1970), 40-85. For other publications of this essay in English, and for published versions in German and French, see the "Acknowledgments" in the same volume.

<sup>11</sup> Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard*, 22. The Genesis commentary references are to be found in WA 42:291-92, and 374.

<sup>12</sup> E. M. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says*, vol. 3, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 1618.

<sup>13</sup> WA 18:618.

<sup>14</sup> Luther's comment on Galatians 1:3.

<sup>15</sup> Comment on Galatians 3:15. Cf. Luther's *Tischreden* assertion that he found Cicero's Ideological argument for God's existence very moving.

<sup>16</sup> WA 16:447.

<sup>17</sup> P. S. Watson, *Let God Be God!* (London: Epworth, 1947), 84. See also Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 2d ed. (Gütersloh, 1963), ch. 3.

<sup>18</sup> B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

<sup>19</sup> R. H. Fischer, "A Reasonable Luther," in *Reformation Studies: Essays in Honor of Roland H. Bainton*, ed. F. H. Littell (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1962), 30-45.

<sup>20</sup> Gerrish, *Grace and Reason*, 72-73.

<sup>21</sup> WA 25:240 (a comment on Isa 37:30).

<sup>22</sup> So Regin Prenter interprets Luther in *Spiritus Creator*, 2d ed. (Copenhagen, 1946), especially chaps. 2 and 3. *Ratio* and *lex* are presented as "belonging together;"

faith is “in contrast to all *sensus*” (i.e., to all “experience which relies on that which can be observed in the visible world”); God’s revelation in flesh as the Christ “is placed in absolute opposition to our human *sensus* and *ratio*;” “theological epistemology” consists of the *transformation sensus* by the Creator Spirit.

<sup>23</sup> WA 38:102 (“Defense against Duke George,” 1533).

<sup>24</sup> Fischer, “A Reasonable Luther,” 39.

<sup>25</sup> See Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol. 2, trans. Olive Wyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 461-575. Cf. K. Penzel, “Ernst Troeltsch on Luther,” in *Interpreters of Luther: Essays in Honor of Wilhelm Pauck*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 275-303.

<sup>26</sup> G. W. Forell, *Faith Active In Love* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), 121, 149.

<sup>27</sup> WA 40/1:79ff. (published 1535 and 1538).

<sup>28</sup> WA 36:61ff. (sermon of 6 Jan. 1532, on Micah 5:1).

<sup>29</sup> See J. W. Montgomery, “Inspiration and Inerrancy: A New Departure,” in *Crisis in Lutheran Theology*, vol. 1, 2d ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1973), 15-44.

<sup>30</sup> See J. W. Montgomery, “The Theologian’s Craft,” in *Suicide of Christian Theology*, (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1970), 267-313.

<sup>31</sup> See J. W. Montgomery, “Cross, Constellation, and Crucible,” in *In Defense of Martin Luther*, 87-94.

<sup>32</sup> Montgomery, “Cross, Constellation, and Crucible,” 94-113.

<sup>33</sup> Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 57.

<sup>34</sup> An examination of these sections of Gerhard’s *Loci* will reveal how wide of the mark is Robert Scharlemann’s attempt, in his book, *Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964) to relate Gerhard to Kant’s critical philosophy, modern German existentialism, and Bultmannian theology by finding in him a dualistic separation between an alleged finite realm of formal, conceptual, objective knowledge and the realm of faith where only the “dialectical word” and “acoustic knowledge” hold sway (see especially pp. 28-37).

<sup>35</sup> J. H. Crehan, “Apologetics,” in *A Catholic Dictionary of Theology*, vol. 1 (London, 1962), 117. On Andreae and his interest in Grotius’ apologetic, see J. W. Montgomery, *Cross and Crucible: Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654), Phoenix of the Theologians*, vol. 1 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971), 42, 90-91.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. J. Pelikan, “Natural Theology in David Hollaz,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 15 (1947), 253-63.

<sup>37</sup> Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> I have developed this point, over against the Reformed presuppositionalists Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til, in my essays “Gordon Clark’s Historical Philosophy,” in J. W. Montgomery, *Where Is History Going?* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1972) and “Once Upon an A Priori,” in J. W. Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978).



# *Epistemology of the Cross*

## *A Lutheran Response to Philosophical Theisms*

Jeffrey Mallinson

Most religious epistemologies have one fatal flaw: they limit themselves to proofs of theism. This presents two problems. First, even if successful, theistic arguments lead to a vague belief that some sort of god or gods exist, but do not address the distinct promises of Christianity, much less a theology of the cross. Second, on their own, theistic proofs introduce people to a cold, non-interventionist deity. Because of these problems, Christians of the cross—especially Lutherans—ought to avoid reliance on theistic proofs, and should demand that both their theology and their epistemology be anchored in the history of the Incarnate One. In sketching an epistemology of the cross, this essay will evaluate Reformed epistemology, a project ostensibly emerging from the tradition of John Calvin, and ask whether this particular religious epistemology is able to confront suffering effectively and support a sustainable faith. This essay will draw from philosopher of science Ian Barbour’s paradigm analysis to highlight the strength of a christocentric religious epistemology. All of this will provide a perspective from which historical evidence for the resurrection is compelling, and a standpoint from which to overcome major objections to theism and the resurrection. The ultimate purpose of this essay is to call thinkers to work toward a religious epistemology that defends Luther’s theology of the cross, understood as a systematic interpretation of belief, personal experience, and history.

### *A Lutheran Critique of Reformed Epistemology*

Reformed epistemology is among the most stimulating projects in the philosophy of religion. It holds that theism is properly basic, the result of