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Jordan Voges
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, revgslc@warwick.net


GRAPHO
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GRAPHO
CONCORDIA SEMINARY STUDENT JOURNAL
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
50 YEARS LATER

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The Student Publications Committee would also like to offer a special thanks to Concordia Seminary's staff from Creative Services and Publications for their help and guidance in bringing this project to fruition.

Opening Letters

Letter from the Chairman of Student Publications

Why a student journal? The simple answer is: you, you the writers, and you the readers. To those who want an outlet for their mind and creativity, who want to test their work in the public forum, who have something to say in words to the academy, in poetry, in pictures, or in prose, we offer you these pages. And to those who want to read and see the work of Concordia Seminary students, to debate and discuss, to think and question, to appreciate and applaud, and to thereby be enriched and learn, we offer you these pages now filled with our first issue.

It is common for student bodies to have a place to share and discuss their work, and that is what we want this to be for Concordia Seminary. We have attempted to set a precedent with this inaugural edition by including a number of contributors, all with varied interests and arguments, all demonstrating the theological intrigue, creativity, and thoughtfulness of Concordia's students. To those authors and to everyone who submitted work for consideration, we offer our gratefulness. And I myself would be remiss not to thank the men and women behind the scenes of this project. It would not be happening without you all.

We also owe a special thanks to the Rev. Dr. John Nunes, President of Concordia College, New York. He has shared with us a letter written to our students and seminary community on the topic of Martin Luther King Jr. and the pertinence of listening to King's voice in the present theological climate. Nunes's words are a helpful introduction to our theme: *Martin Luther King Jr. 50 Years Later*. We hope that the submissions presented here might spark some interest in that leader and theologian of the Civil Rights Movement whose life ended half a century ago, but whose impact is still unfolding in the religious landscape of America. Beyond King, we hope our readers take time to seriously and thoughtfully reflect and act on those societal ills which continue to plague not only our country but also our churches. With these ends in mind I present to you *Grapho: A Student Publication of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.*

Jordan R. Voges
Chairman of Student Publications

A Letter of Hope to the Concordia Seminary Community

Rev. Dr. John Nunes
President of Concordia College—New York

Shortly after the death of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., these remarkably blunt words from Lutheran pastor and civil rights leader, William H. Griffin, were released by Concordia Publishing House: "Unless the church faces up to the racism in its own midst, the witness of the church against the racism outside the church will go unheedeed."[1]

Fifteen years after Griffin's words, I composed a faint echo of his wisdom. Upon the completion in 1985 of my undergraduate, pre-seminary training at Concordia College, Ann Arbor, in pain I sent a blistering letter to the president, David Schmiel. Though I was privileged to receive what I yet consider a world-class theological, philosophical, and liberal arts education, the incapacity of many in the campus community to "face up to the racism in its own midst," led me, once my degree was in hand (smile!), to vent. Likely fueled by no small amount of youthful bumptiousness, I protested that my Lutheran college experience was limited by "institutional racism and monocultural myopia."

Irrespective of the opinions that today's seminarians hold about Black Lives Matter or the posture of athletes during the national anthem preceding sporting events in the United States, King's solution to the problem of race aligns with our Lutheran theological approach. Martin King, like Martin Luther, "was a gradualist and reformist, rather than a revolutionary, when it came to matters of injustice."[2]

King's approach was not predicated on racial essentialism or the identity politics that plague our nation. David Brooks, for example, has editorialized compellingly about how identity-based virtuosity is destroying national unity.[3] Every side primarily defines itself as innocent based on it being oppressed by an oppressor—whether white males or the progressive elite or the LGBTQ community or pick your motif du jour. This is the logical outcome of conversations about race that begin (in my estimate, falsely) with the ontology of one group's particularity rather than a theology of the Creator's imprint establishing our common anthropology. King was a proponent of this latter idea, the *imago Dei*. In our time, primary perpetrators of this divisiveness are progressive academic communities which when confronted

with other alternate perspectives label them dismissively or refuse outright to permit them to speak. But let us not overlook also conservative faith traditions. These often require outsiders to convert to cultural forms (social values, liturgical styles, ways of speaking, political alignments) as an indirectly articulated prerequisite to join their community. Christianity has a track record of colonialism. The putative rise of white male victimhood is often used to reinforce this strategy. As a result, the pure doctrine on which The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) insists, for example, is becoming soiled by the subtle, non-essential, social accoutrements we vainly attach to it as core to our identity.

There is no question that the LCMS has formally condemned the sin of degrading other humans based on race. We have a document to prove it published by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations.[4] We, sadly, do not have much tangible evidence—beyond these biblically ground and founded words—that we practice what we preach. For example, consider your own social network. Social networks mean much more than social *media* networks but refer to the whole world of those with whom we ordinarily interact or to whom we consider ourselves connected. It's larger than friendships—which tend to be few and rare—though certainly social networks are often the embryo of friendships. Perhaps we need to consider ways that the church, *coram hominibus*, is a social network that can be expanded with intentionality through kindness and hospitality towards others, through actions which implicitly verify our words rather than beginning with explicit verbal, theological witness. I've never thought theology constitutes the prime attraction to Lutheranism anyhow, though it likely solidifies one's membership. *The Huffington Post* recently reported that "three-quarters of whites have entirely white social networks without any minority presence."[5] Think about the ways in which this contributes to confirmation bias in the church; augmenting our differing ways of seeing the world, of defining the problems of others, of rationalizing our own innocence, of viewing with conviction ourselves as right! And when you're right, why should you change?

There will be no change for an issue of the magnitude of racism—one deeply engrained and tribally reinforced in human behavior—without a radical investment in witnessing to the point of the Greek origin of this word, *martyria*—a notion which humans of the United States are particularly disinclined. We even have religious groups that specialize in health, wealth, happiness, and prosperity—a problem-free philosophy of hakuna matata religiosity. "We don't buy into that garbage," I hear some of us defy, "we trust the Spirit to lead us and build the church." Of course, the word of the Lord grows the church! But, to continue the image, it helps if that seed is fertilized. Tertullian was right: "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."[6] What does fertilization look like? Perhaps sacrificing what is non-essential to the Gospel for the sake of our neighbors? Perhaps surrendering some of our privilege to open doors for minorities who are loaded with potential and committed to hard work

but there is no access to opportunity? All people need to be regarded as more than recipients of charity or objects of pity which ultimately dehumanizes them and compromises their dignity. But motivated by God's timeless love, we reach out. As the poet says, with love:

> Love,
> made seasonless, or, from the high privilege of their birth,
> something brighter than pity for the wingless ones
> below them who shared dark holes in windows and in houses.[7]

Perhaps, in a world that reduces other humans to little more than "wingless" objects of personal pleasure or stepping stones to profit, we deploy a muscular stewardship, we use our power to lift others up and to advocate for those who are unjustly treated? Consider joining those who protest racism? Be prepared to sacrifice even to the point of your own bloodshed? If the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s taught us anything it was: 1) that an appeal to a higher source like the US Constitution and the Bible (rather than, say, an ethnic or racial category, i.e. blackness) can bring social change, and 2) that the blood of the witnesses engaged in non-violent resistance is the seed of racial reconciliation.

We are blessed by the sainted Gudina Tumsa (1929–1979) as a witness. His is a name that should be kept in remembrance among us so that we can emulate his good works. In the 1970s Tumsa served as the general secretary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus. Refusing to bow down to the draconian political demands of the Marxist revolutionary government seeking to silence the church, he was arrested. Refusing to submit or recant, he was tortured. Refusing to flee from Ethiopia while he had a chance (like Dietrich Bonhoeffer who, a generation before Tumsa, remained in Nazi Germany) he was re-arrested and viciously murdered. Each refusal was predicated on his doctrinal conviction: that God's justice in the world and God's justifying act in Christ are inextricably linked. He wrote: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's power to save everyone who believes it. It is the power that saves from eternal damnation, from economic exploitation, and from political oppression… It is the only voice telling about a loving Father who gave His Son as a ransom for many. It tells about the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body. It is the Good News to sinful humanity… It is too powerful to be compromised by any social or political system."[8]

Tumsa was a student of King who predicated his approach to race on an affirmation derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition: that an essential dignity was bestowed by God to all people. For Christians that is only augmented by an indivisible baptismal identity. We are a new creation. We are a new nation. Dividing walls are demolished. In world of bitter and violent divisions, where people struggle to deal with differences, Christ has made Concordia Seminary a community of learn-

ing where mutual respect flourishes. If so-called "minorities"—who constitute both the majority of global Lutherans and the vast majority of this planet's citizens—feel safer, more welcomed and more respected in what we label "secular society" than inside of US faith-based communities, we, 1) at least, have an image problem, 2) at worst, have a racism problem, and, 3) at best, have a Lenten opportunity to engage in self-reflection and renewal. It's a non-negotiable element of our theology. I believe students from this Seminary will lead the church and the nation and planet towards a way of righteousness with respect to race.

Depending on the criteria being used,[9] there are more different kinds of people in the United States of America, living, loving, working, playing, and praying in relative proximity to one another and with relative peace between groups than in any other country, perhaps ever in the history of the planet. Ironically, it is this very diversity—magnified by the global, public prominence of the United States and impelled by the exceptional promise of *e pluribus unum*—that serves to make more obvious in the United States the pockets of resistance breaking faith with our national experiment; this dissonance is especially glaring among those holding to false religions of racism or religious groups which reject racism but, like the LCMS, have been categorically unsuccessful in evangelism among non-white, non-English-speaking groups.[10] The higher the bar is set, the more blatant is the missing of the mark. The louder we let freedom ring and opportunity peal, the more contrastively the discordant notes of exclusion or oppression jangle. The more we confess theological orthodoxy, the more we should expect a corresponding orthopraxy. The more we bask in Christ's light, the more we let our lights shine in the culture.

Western civilization is both remarkably resilient and uniquely pluralistic. The church of Jesus Christ, by comparison, exceeds secular levels of resilience (existing without end) and pluralism (consisting of all people across time and place). The durability of the LCMS is another question, in part due to what Griffin suggests. As the demography—especially child-bearing rates—of the United States becomes a majority of "minorities," our capacity to evangelize externally is inversely related to our tolerance for the cancer of racism internally. This racism is not ordinarily an obscenely overt, roaring racism. We'd quickly denounce that! It is furtive and fused. It requires a renewed consideration of hamartiology. This next generation of clergy must take seriously the cataclysmic character of sin, that it leaves no person, tradition, or institution untouched; and that our theological reflection, while committed to the unassailable truth of God's Word, is also committed to using reason to engage in critical and self-critical reflection. In terms of the ongoing reformation of the church, we must examine our traditions to ensure that they don't fall into the category that our reformers condemned as "useless and contrary to the Gospel."[11] To complicate things more, I encourage us to involve others from outside of our tradition in that dialogue. If we believe it, teach it, and confess it, we should be able to defend it. And if

our arguments don't hold up, we might want to consider changing them.

So, the penultimate word goes to the Lutheran Confessions: "Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every time and place has the right, power, and authority to change, reduce, or expand such practices ["ceremonies"] according to circumstances in an orderly and appropriate manner, without frivolity or offense, as seems most useful, beneficial, and best for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the building up of the church."[12] And the final word to a father of the LCMS, one of your former faculty members, Arthur Carl Piepkorn: "The Christ who in His lifetime manifested Himself as the sworn enemy of injustice, of disease, of prejudice, of discrimination, and of exploitation is calling us to an imitation of Himself in these areas also."[13]

Endnotes

1 William H. Griffin, "God's Call to the City," *The Concordia Pulpit for 1970* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), 343.

2 Gary Simpson, "Lutheran" in *The Encyclopedia of Global Justice*: 668.

3 David Brooks, "The Retreat to Tribalism," *The New York Times*, January 1, 2018.

4 "Racism and the Church," Commission on Theology and Church Relations, February 1994, https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1052.

5 For the original report, see "Race, Religion, and Political Affiliation of Americans' Core Social Networks" PRRI, August 3, 2016, https://www.prri.org/research/poll-race-religion-politics-americans-social-networks.

6 Apologeticus, Chapter 50.

7 Derek Walcott, "Season of Phantasmal Peace," Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57412/the-season-of-phantasmal-peace.

8 See Øyvind M. Eide, *Revolution & Religion in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2000), 280.

9 Human diversity is a fluid and dynamic concept—without a single or simple definition. It is related to how humans understand, interpret, accept, and respect differences and alterity; these include, but are not limited to, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical ability, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and ideology.

10 Lutherans remain among North America's leaders in this category of homogeneity—exceeding, astonishingly, even Mormons.

11 See Augsburg Confession XV in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 49.

12 Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X.9 in Kolb and Wengert, 637.

13 Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist for the One World" in *Concordia Theological Monthly*, February 1972: 101.

Essays

An Excerpt on Slavery from "Synodical Proceedings"

Translated by: Christian J. Einertson

Translator's Preface

Looking back on the impact and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. the issue of civil rights for minority communities obviously comes to the fore. Historically, King's work for civil rights is inextricably linked with the Civil War and surrounding events such as the ratification of the thirteenth through fifteenth amendments a century before his time. In an attempt to engage the issue of civil rights theologically, I present a translation of the report on the debate over slavery from the proceedings of the Norwegian Synod's convention in July 1861 as it is found in *Kirkelig Maanedstidende* v.6, 258–262.[1]

An Excerpt on Slavery from "Synodical Proceedings"

The Norwegian immigrants who would make up the Norwegian Synod came to America in a time when the issue of slavery was central in American political discourse. The Synod was founded in 1853, and in light of the secession of the southern states and ensuing Civil War, slavery quickly became a crucial matter for them to address. Yet the Synod was bitterly divided on this issue. Having immigrated to northern states and learned of the American institution of chattel slavery as absolutely abhorrent to their sensibilities, the majority of the laity were understandably abolitionist and expected their churches to advocate publicly for the abolition of slavery. The majority of the clergy, however, held a more nuanced view of the issue of slavery, seeking to distinguish between the institution of slavery itself and the abuses of American chattel slavery. This position was influenced by C. F. W. Walther and his colleagues at Concordia College in St. Louis, where the Norwegian Synod had been sending their seminarians for theological education since 1859.[2]

Indeed, the relationship with the Missouri Synod was in a certain sense the impetus for the slavery conflict in the Norwegian Synod. Professor Laur. Larsen, the Norwegian instructor at Concordia College from 1859 to 1861, was asked on multiple occasions to state publicly his position on slavery and the position of the seminary faculty. Larsen shared Walther's more nuanced view of slavery and eventually reluctantly responded to the requests by publishing an article in *Emigranten* explaining his position. His article met strong opposition, however, and as a result of the very public debate surrounding Larsen, the issue of slavery was debated at the subsequent synodical convention in 1861. The convention was

contentious, and the minutes presented below in translation record two conflicting resolutions: one stating that slavery was not in itself sinful that was supported largely by the clergy and another calling slavery inherently sinful that was largely supported by the laity. For a detailed and helpful treatment of the slavery debate in the Norwegian Synod, I recommend Theodore Blegen's *Norwegian Migration to America*,[3] which devotes an entire chapter to the topic.

The report of the slavery debate from the 1861 convention is notable for multiple reasons. First, the bitter conflict that can be seen in the proceedings is indicative of a broader conflict within all of Lutheranism in America at that time, where various synods ran the gamut from staunchly abolitionist to entirely supportive of slavery.[4] Second, the position and arguments of Larsen and the pastors reflect and were influenced by those of Walther and thus shed light on the historical relationship between the Norwegian Synod and the Missouri Synod.[5] Additionally, many of the issues discussed at the synodical convention in relation to the issue of slavery remain relevant to other issues of civil rights both in King's day and to the present day. I prayerfully submit this translation in hope that a consideration of its contents will lead Christians today to a more informed understanding of how our fathers in the faith have engaged issues of civil rights theologically and how we can continue to do so today. Finally, I would like to dedicate this translation to the memory of my great-grandfather, the Rev. Arthur Gustavus Baalson, whose background in the Norwegian Synod and work as a Norwegian Lutheran pastor in America inspired my research on the Norwegian Synod.

Slavery

Professor Larsen and many of the other pastors showed from the Scriptures that slavery is not a sin. 1 Timothy 6:1–2 was especially developed, where it says, "Let all who are bound under a yoke hold their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the God's name and the teaching will not be blasphemed." Slaves should therefore not only obey and honor their masters but even hold them as worthy of all honor, and the opposite, says the Apostle, would blaspheme God's name and teaching.

And in the second verse it says that those slaves who have believing masters should not despise them because they are brothers but serve them even more gladly *[desto hellere*] because those who receive their good deeds are believing and beloved. The Apostle could not possibly say that such masters were believing and beloved if it were a sin in itself [*Synd i sig selv*] to own slaves or if it were a necessary result of their faith to set their slaves free as soon as these became Christians, for the Apostle is speaking here to believing slaves. "Teach and exhort this," he says finally, and then he persists in verses 3–4 [original: 34]: "If someone teaches otherwise or does not stay close to our Lord Jesus's true word, he is puffed up, etc." In the Old Testament, it is taught in many places that God not only allowed slavery but also in some cases

commanded it through the Law (e.g. Ex 21:1–7). When there was a commandment that a master should set a Hebrew slave free in the seventh year, it is not possible to conclude therefore that also now every slave owner should set a slave free after seven years. For this belongs to the Jewish political and governmental law, which is not binding for us. God has evidently often tolerated many sins in the Old Testament for the sake of hardness of heart; however, he has never commanded something that is a sin in itself. Thus, he tolerated polygamy and gave rules for it; however, he has never commanded that a woman should become a man's plural wife. It was impossible, for this is a sin in itself. However, he has commanded that one should be sold as a slave in some cases. And slavery is indeed only a particular form, although certainly the hardest form, of a servant relationship.

Erik Ellessen opposed this evidence and expressed that personal freedom was not only the highest good but also a right that no one could deprive the other, but as we should nevertheless support our neighbor unconditionally, if it was in our power, so a Christian master must be obliged to set his slaves free according to love of neighbor, for you shall love your neighbor as yourself. He expressed that in 1 Timothy 6:1, the Apostle only wished to exhort slaves to obedience and patience, that they should find themselves calm in their station, but that it was also the obligation of masters to set them free when they became Christians and thus ready [*modne*, lit. mature] for freedom.

From the other side, it was noticed that freedom is certainly a good, indeed the highest temporal good, but even so only a temporal good that can and must be done without when God does not give it. However, it was not a right that we had by nature. We have no rights: "we have brought nothing into the world," "but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these" (1 Tm 6:7–8). Furthermore, we are all by nature slaves of sin and have as our punishment earned all need [*Nød*] and misery, both in time and in eternity. Accordingly, we have nothing to claim as a right but must be thankful for what God gives us, though it were rather humble in the eyes of human haughtiness. The circumstance in which God sets us is his good, gracious gift to us; if he in his wisdom is pleased to set us in a humble, destitute station [*Stand*], then it is yet grace, and the only thing that God claimed with his leading [*med sine Førelser*] is that we could obtain the Christian freedom in faith by being set free by Jesus Christ and thus God's slaves. With regard to this, it is perfectly indifferent if in my external circumstance I am slave or free, rich or poor, of high or humble station. "Let each one remain in the call to which he is called," it says. "Are you called as a slave, then do not worry about it" (this is accordingly indifferent for the Christian life); "but if you can also become free, then take the opportunity gladly," says the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 7:20–21. For freedom is a good such as money or property; if God allows us to obtain it, it is well; if not, do not worry about it. The Apostle in 1 Timothy 6 says nothing at all about masters setting their slaves

free. That is taught nowhere in Scripture, nor does it follow from the word "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Then, it must likewise become an obligation for a property owner to divide [*dele*] his property with his hired workers, and for the rich one to divide it evenly with the poor. But the commandment does not command that we shall do to our neighbor just as we do to ourselves but that we shall think of ourselves in his place and do to him what we could rightly [*med Billighed*] wish and expect that he would do for us if we were in his place. Thus, a slave can rightly expect that his master will treat him dearly and mildly, teach him Christianity, and thus make him one set free in Jesus Christ, and this is also truly the master's obligation according to the commandment of love. However, whether the master wishes to give him external freedom, if he is suitable for it, must be a free matter as all acts of mercy, just as it is a free act of mercy if a farmer wishes to divide his farm with a faithful servant. No one could make such a thing a necessary obligation for another. But although slavery was not a sin in itself, it was granted nevertheless that it was an evil [*Onde*] from which many dreadful sins and abominations easily resulted, and even more truly often followed. Therefore, when such a master sells a man apart from his wife or vice versa, that is absolutely a sin in itself, for that is to separate what God has united. Likewise, when a slave does not get to learn God's word. One must condemn all such abuse, just as one must recognize that slavery was a result of sin. In the same way poverty, sickness, and all need in the world are results of sin, but it is not therefore a sin in itself to be poor or sick.

Many of the Synod's pastors declared that they could very well excuse that not everyone could apprehend this immediately, for they themselves must confess that, before they had closely examined the matter according to God's word, they had believed that slavery was a sin in itself, especially from reading or hearing of so many disgraceful, ungodly acts that often resulted from it. But when they had tested the matter according to God's word, they had to confess that it was not a sin in itself but rather an evil, and not mostly for slaves but often perhaps at a higher level for the masters, for it easily remained a temptation for them to haughtiness and arbitrariness [*Vilkaarlighed*] of all sorts.

Many wished to treat slavery thus, as it is found here in real life, but to this it was responded that this was a historic or political question, which did not belong here, as there existed challenging historical considerations, such as familiarity with the laws here in the United States and reliable knowledge of the abuses that are alleged to take place. However, it was

> We have no rights: "we have brought nothing into the world," "but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these" (1 Tm 6:7–8).

necessary for each one to admit that wherever one noticed such an abuse and, for example, asked, "Is it a sin to mistreat a slave? Or to sell a man apart from his wife? Or to keep them from learning God's word?" each one was able to answer yes to this according to the Ten Commandments and say, "God has forbidden all such things, and he will punish them." Hundreds of things could be enumerated in this way. It was also shown that the passage in Philemon was far from proving that Paul wishes for Philemon to set Onesimus free, but this passage was perhaps not clear for many, which is why one should rather hold to the clear passage in 1 Timothy 6.

Pastor Fjeld could not express otherwise than that slavery is a sin in itself. If Paul or the Apostles in the first Christian time allowed many things that were remnants of heathenism or Jewry [*Levninger af Hedenskabet eller Jødedommen*], it is not possible to conclude from that that these were not also sins. Thus, we see that Paul allowed one to circumcise. He thought that slavery strove against the spirit of the entire New Testament.

From the other side, it was mentioned in response that the Apostles never allowed sinful remnants of heathenism and that circumcision, which God himself commanded in the Old Testament, was not a sin in itself. Certainly, many sins hang around believers, but God forbids and condemns all these sins and commands us to refrain from them. If slavery had been a sin in itself, he would have had to punish those "believing masters," just as he punished the harlot (1 Cor 5:1), and then he could not have called those slave owners "believing and beloved."

Pastor Muus also expressed that it was not a sin in itself to hold slaves; however, he believed that Christianity would lead one to abolish such a corrupt institution, and therefore a continuation of slavery would be a sin.

Svege also expressed that slavery is not a sin in itself but an evil against which every citizen should work in love and by lawful means.

Thor Halvorsen expressed roughly the same thing that when one speaks of slavery in itself, it could not be a sin, for then Paul would have needed to punish those Christian slave owners and required them to set their Christian slaves free or otherwise enjoined the congregation to ban them as other obstinate sinners.
C. L. Clausen declared also that slavery is not a sin in itself according to God's word, but that it is similarly clear according to God's word that it is one of the greatest temporal evils, which every Christian therefore must wish to do away with and in love seek to abolish.

Erik Ellessen still expressed that slavery must be a sin and could not find otherwise. He thought that maybe those slaves about whom Paul spoke were such as were sold for debts or set in slavery for crimes. That one man can have absolute ownership rights over another, he thought, was in any case contrary to God's word, and he did not think it to be obvious from the stated passages that slavery could be said not to be a sin in any other case but for crimes.

I. Ingebrigtsen also needed to confess that he even still could not recognize that the stated passages or the proofs used convinced him that slavery in general could be said not to be a sin. He thought that the other side spoke of an ideal slavery, which does not exist in reality.

Finally, the whole of the Synod's pastors presented the following unanimous declaration: Though according to God's word, it is not a sin in itself to hold slaves, slavery is however in itself an evil and a punishment of God, and we condemn all the abuses that are connected to it as sins just as we, when our vocation requires it, and when Christian love and wisdom command it, will work for its abrogation.
A. C. Preus, C. L. Clausen, N. Brandt, H. A. Preus. J. A. Otteson, V. Koren, Laur. Larsen. F. Chr. Claussen, N. E. Jensen, B. J. Muus, C. F. Magelssen, H. P. Duborg
n.b. Pastor Stub was absent.

To the question of the laymen in the assembly, whether they were content with this declaration as it contained the teaching of the pastors [*Prästernes Lære*], twenty-eight answered yes, ten no, twenty-eight did not vote, two were absent (see the registry of names, Appendix 1).[6]

Later, the following declaration was presented, which was resolved to add to the proceedings: The undersigned members of the Synod see themselves hereby obliged to give the following

Declaration

Slavery, considered as an institution, can only stand [*bestaae*] through certain laws, and since the laws by which it is supported stand in obvious conflict with God's word and Christian love, it is a sin. And since slavery in the United States has been one of this country's greatest evils both for the church and the state, we consider it our absolute obligation as Christians and good citizens to do all that is within our power by lawful means to mitigate, to lessen, and if possible to abolish slavery when our country's best [*vort Lands Bedste*] and Christian love require it of us.

This our declaration is strongly requested to be added to the proceedings.
E. Ellesson, Jorgen Olsen Wraalstad, Gulbrand Myre, Johannes E. Lee, Ole Olsen Wraalstad, Halvor A. Aasen, Isak Aslagsen, Lars Jaer, Ole A. Ruste

Endnotes

1 *Kirkelig Maanedstidende: Organ for Den Norsk-Evangelisk-Lutherske Kirke i Amerika: Sjette Aargang.* (Madison, WI: Skandinaviske Presseforening, 1861), 258–262.

2 Christian J. Einertson, "Sorrow and Gladness: Norwegian Studies at Concordia College." *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 91, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 33–44.

3 Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition* (Northfield, MN: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1940).

4 cf. Daniel P. Marggraf, "The Lutheran Church Responds to Conflict: The Civil War and Its Issues in Nineteenth Century America." Master of Divinity, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2014, and C. O. Smith, "The Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod's Attitude Toward the Negro Both as Slave and as Freedman." *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1949): 145–149.

5 cf. Thomas Manteufel, "Walther's View on Slavery." *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (2013):12–23.

6 The appendix in *Kirkelig Maanedstidende*, 267–268 lists the vote of each layman: Teacher P. Hekton, Gunder Sørum, Thor Halvorsen, Thore Helgesen, Johannes J. Lindløkken, Aslak Olsnäs, John Hove, Elling Hove, Lars Larsen Lövberget, Halvor Gjerdjord, Nicolai Erdahl, Christian Forseth, John Svendholdt, N. Svege, Lars K. Aaker, Kjöstul Evensen, Nils Fosmark, Gregor Kittelsen, Nils O. Grimestad, Jacob Midböe, Sjur Hansen, Aslak Aabye, A. Aadnesen, Christen Lie, Christian Smedsrud, Ole Herbrandsen, Gulbrand Lommen, and Ole Bäkken voted yes; Jörgen Andreas Nilsen, Thore Hong, Erik R. Sævre, Christian E. Rukke, Knud Steen, Mikkel Brunlaug, Gunder Mandt, Gulbrand Lyste, Torkild Guldbrandsen, Iver Dahl, Ole Ruste, Hans Schager, Johan Ruud, Torger Guttormsen, Lars Röthe, Nils Lie, Peder Jenson, Hans Hansen Spilde, Jacob Andersen, Johannes E. Lie, Hans Dale, Gjermund Gjermundsen, Knud Ingebrigtsen, Halle Stensland, Ingebret Salvesen, Henrik Iversen Domholdt, Gulbrand Olsen, and Isak Aslaksan did not vote; E. Ellessen, Ole Wraastad, Jörgen O. Wraalstad, Harald Omelstad, Halvor Aasen, Peder Golberg, Iver Ingebrigtsen, Gulbrand Myhra, Lars Jaer, and Herman Pedersen voted no; Ole Flesje was sick; and Jens J. Næset was travelling.

Righteousness and Salvation
A Case Study of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus

Tibebu Senbetu

Introduction

Some of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (EECMY) members' understanding of righteousness and salvation fits into neither Pauline nor Jacobite teaching.[1] This short paper examines whether Christians in Ethiopia today correctly understand the whole account of Scripture about righteousness and salvation. It also analyzes what the Scriptures and the Lutheran teachings say on the subject. Knowingly or unknowingly, the full biblical message on soteriology has been neglected by some Christians, which has resulted in a confused understanding of righteousness and salvation. Finally, this paper attempts to bridge the gap between the EOTC and the EECMY members' perception of righteousness and salvation based on the Scriptures and the Lutheran teachings.

This paper is based on several sources, including the author's personal experience as a former member in the EOTC and as an ordained minister in the EECMY.

The EOTC and the EECMY Teaching on Righteousness and Salvation

It appears that righteousness and salvation by faith alone through the work of Jesus is strange to many members of the EOTC. Knowingly or unknowingly, they have rejected the notion of *sola fide* as the only means to righteousness and salvation—even if they acknowledge that the Son of God died for sinners. Many of their teachings and sermons emphasize a righteousness that is acquired by great efforts made by the adherents in addition to their faith in Christ.[2] The EOTC believes and teaches that when faith and work are both found in a Christian life, they bring forth salvation.[3] They believe that God's grace enables them to balance faith and good works in their life.[4] Some say that it is impossible for a person to be righteous by one's deeds. Such people assert that righteousness comes from the merciful God himself through grace; however, practically they still tend towards works-righteousness and salvation by works.[5]

The concept of ጽድቅ (*Tsadik*), meaning righteousness, is linked to one's

good work performed for others. When a person is seen doing good works for others, he or she is regarded as a righteous person. The good works are demonstrations of the member's practical concern and physical support, which they can show in acts of kindness to the poor. This also shapes non-Christians' understanding of the term "righteousness" in Ethiopian society. These acts are treated as meritorious, and it is believed that such acts bring them righteousness and salvation.[6]

The EOTC also regards separation from the world through monastic life as a righteous work. Monks and nuns are considered more righteous than ordinary members of the church. It is believed that monks and nuns have disregarded the temptations of this world so well that they have come out of the world to fully submit themselves to the will of God.

Members of the EOTC observe the seven sacraments and pray to the saints in the hope that they will be assisted in finding favor in the eyes of God so that they can be forgiven, accepted, and become righteous.[7] Even those who profess that they believe in Jesus and consider Jesus's work on the cross as the only gate for salvation still believe that there are many other things which believers should do in order to be righteous and saved at the end. Such works include the seven sacraments, the intercession of the saints, fasting, almsgiving, visiting monasteries, confession of private sins to monks and priests, veneration of saints, and all kinds of striving to shun fleshly desires. It is in this framework that one can think of righteousness and salvation as something not fully grasped simply by "faith alone."

Thus, EOTC's presupposition regarding human performance playing a role in righteousness and salvation twists religious practice in the course of regular life as a Christian.

On the contrary, the EECMY's theology focuses on the forensic aspects of righteousness and salvation as declared by God on the basis of an individual's faith in Christ and in what Christ accomplished on their behalf. The need to live righteously after receiving righteous standing in the sight of God is not denied absolutely, but greater emphasis seems to be given to how one comes to salvation by faith alone.

It is often thought that Pauline soteriological teaching receives more emphasis in the EECMY. But it is hard to tell if justice is done to the whole of Paul's doctrine. Justification and righteousness in the EECMY is primarily the judicial act of the gracious God to pardon the believing sinner. According to EECMY members, what believers did before and do after conversion supplies nothing to their salvation. The concept of righteousness is mainly understood as a public confession of sins and commitment made by individuals to follow Christ.

The EECMY differs from the EOTC's perception on righteousness and salvation in their rejection of any contribution from the side of believers towards achieving their righteousness and salvation. The EECMY also refrains from giving the slightest credit to the virtue of a believer's cooperation with God's grace that

In this situation, we cannot neglect the necessity of giving clear ethical guidance to members in the midst of moral confusion all over the world.

would contribute to their justification (Eph 2:8–9, Ti 3:5, Gal 2–3). However, sometimes EECMY appears not to pay much attention to other texts which instruct believers to obey God's law and grow in their Christian faith as disciples of Christ who are re-created in him through baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Some young EECMY members have misunderstood Luther's profound theology of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*. They have become careless regarding moral life after being saved. In this situation, we cannot neglect the necessity of giving clear ethical guidance to members in the midst of moral confusion all over the world. One might say that some in the EOTC are in danger of being legalist while some in the EECMY are in danger of being antinomian.

Luther's Theology as a Bridge between the EOTC and the EECMY

In his teaching about the theology of the cross, Luther "presented a new conceptual framework for thinking about God and the human creature" against theologians of glory.[8] The Ethiopian Evangelical Churches' theology of righteousness and salvation should be developed and shaped by Luther's theology of the cross, because the Scripture tells that the cross is the only way God wanted to reveal himself and reverse the fall. "It [the theology of the cross] refines the Christian's focus on God and on what it means to be human,"[9] rather than focusing on human's ability to do good for God and attempt to earn his favor for righteousness and salvation. Robert Kolb says,

> The theology of the cross aims at bestowing a new identity upon sinners, setting aside the old identity, by killing it, so that good human performance can flow out of this new identity that is comprehended in trust toward God…. When we attempt to use our decisions and performance to please God—or some created substitute we have made into an idol—we are taking them out of their proper sphere and laying upon them responsibility for making us God-pleasing. They break under the weight of this falsely placed responsibility.[10]

Luther correctly argued that believers' righteousness and salvation is the result of Christ's atoning work on the cross, which God—out of his love, grace, mercy, and

divine favor—granted to people who have faith in Christ. The theology of the cross correctly diverts our attention from what we do for God, seeking to earn his favor, to what God has done for us.

After our re-creation in Christ we should seek to do good (Eph 2:10). Kolb says, "Children of the cross recognize the familial dimension of their new life in Christ."[11] Through the death and resurrection of Christ, our sin is defeated. We are, however, living in the "already but not yet kingdom." We are not yet completely dead to sin and alive to God.[12] The law reminds us that we are still sinners and cannot save ourselves. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins so that we may repent of our failure to love, fear, and trust God in our lives.

In many EECMY members' understanding, salvation is the work of Jesus. Without faith in this work no one receives righteousness and salvation. However, for the biblical authors and Luther this faith is not a mere mental activity that is only related to human knowledge or public confession of Christ's lordship. Many young members of the EECMY today perceive this. But they also realize that same confession anticipates works that flow from the same faith (Jas 2:14–26; Gal 5:19–21; 6:7–10, Rom 12:1–2). Here we may recall what Bonhoeffer said, "Only the one who believes, obeys," and "only the one who obeys believes."[13]

For Luther, justifying faith is nothing other than the confidence that believers maintain in the mercy of God, which remits all sins for the sake of Christ's death on the cross.[14] However, the same faith which justifies a sinner also leads the believer into a faithful life.

Luther's profound slogans—*sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *sola Scriptura*—came into being in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church's notion of the divine-human cooperation to effect righteousness and salvation. Luther clearly attacked the idea of divine-human cooperation in the economy of salvation. For him, faith has as its object what God has done for human beings through the atoning works of Christ. Faith integrates believers into the saving event and makes them certain of their salvation since it has been achieved by God alone without any cooperation on the Christians' part.[15] However, Luther still rejects a faith of mere knowledge, saying that faith that is not fruitful or rejects obedience to God does nothing.[16]

Luther's concept of the two kinds of human righteousness is worth mentioning here. The first kind of righteousness is called "passive righteousness," which is the righteousness outside oneself. It is a forensic righteousness, which is imputed to believers as a free gift of God. This righteousness exists in the vertical realm, in our relationship with God.[17] It is a righteousness that human beings cannot achieve by their own efforts. The second kind of righteousness is called "active righteousness." Human beings can and should be concerned about their actions and efforts in this realm.[18] Active righteousness maintains our positive relationships with other creatures as God's stewards and children.[19] Robert Kolb says, "This is our theology, by

which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active and passive, so that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their own limits."[20] It is these two inseparable but distinct kinds of righteousness that both the EOTC and the EECMY should retrieve from the hermeneutical principles of Lutheran theology.

Concluding Remarks

Confusion over the relationship of faith and good works and their role in righteousness and salvation is found in both EOTC and EECMY members. Members of both churches must perceive that for Paul, James, and Luther salvation is a divine past, present, and future declaration of righteousness and of one's acceptance before God, which is received by a *living faith alone*.

James classifies a dead faith as simple assent to religious truth of the sort possessed even by demons. Such faith is useless for salvation. Paul and Luther by no means accept such dead and fruitless faith as genuine, although they know a sinless life is not possible in the "already not yet kingdom." This is why Luther insisted on the need to regularly repent of our sins for failing to fear, love, and trust in God.

Indeed, the reason Luther emphasized "faith alone" was because medieval Roman Catholicism, much like the EOTC today, misunderstood the book of James as if the author promoted divine-human cooperation for righteousness and salvation. Thus, to address his context Luther emphasized Pauline theology. Luther does so without sacrificing the fullness of biblical theology regarding salvation and righteousness.

On the contrary, some young EECMY members have misunderstood *sola fide* and *sola gratia*. They downplay the necessity of moral life after salvation. In this situation, Luther's teaching on two kinds of righteousness shows how people can practically live out their lives with all the many decisions that are needed today. We should not undermine the necessity of giving clear ethical guidance to our members in the midst of moral confusion all over the world.

Endnotes

1 The EOTC is the Coptic Church which was administered by the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria until the nineteenth century. The *Ge'ez* word *Tewahedo* means "unified," which refers to the EOTC's belief that the divine and human natures of Jesus are unified into one nature. Contrary to the Chalcedonian Creed, which confesses the two natures of Christ, the EOTC strongly teaches about the *unified* nature of Christ. See Alemayehu Desta, *Introduction to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Faith* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2012). The EECMY is the Lutheran church body established in 1959 by the five western evangelical Lutheran missions (Sweden Evangelical Mission (SEM), German Hermannsburg Mission (GHM), Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM), Danish Evangelical Mission (DEM), American Lutheran Mission (ALM). Later the American Presbyterian Church joined the five mission societies' group). See also Gustave Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Addis Ababa: The Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus, 1978), 105–126.

2 *Ya Ityopya Ortodoks Tawahedo Bétakerestiyan: Emnat Sereata Amlekotena Yawec Geneñunat: The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith, Order of Worship and Ecumenical Relations* (Addis Ababa: Tensa'é Masatamiya Dereget, 1996), 68–70. For instance, the examples of Abraham and Rahab are seen as a proof of an emphasis on good works being equally as important as faith for salvation and righteousness (Jas 2:14–26).

3 *Ya Ityopya Ortodoks Tawahedo*, 69.

4 Marcos Daoud, *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, 1954), 10.

5 *Ya Ityopya Ortodoks*, 69.

6 Abera Bekele, ትምህርተ ሃይማኖትና ክርስትያናዊ ሕይወት (Doctrines and Christian Life). (Addis Ababa: Mahbere Qidusan, 2004 [*Ethiopian calendar for 1996*]), 319. See also Berhanu Gobena, መራሂ ድህነት (A Guide to Salvation). (Addis Ababa: Berana, 1998 [*Ethiopian calendar for 1990*]), 128.

7 The EOTC has preserved the *Anaphoras* (the church's liturgical texts) that strongly teach about the sacraments, specifically about the Eucharist since the fifth century. See Emmanuel Fritsch, *Encyclopaedia Aethiopicaz: "Qeddase,"* ed. Siegbert Uhlig, Vol. 4, *O-X* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 271. The seven Sacraments of the EOTC are baptism, Holy Communion, penance, unction of the sick, confirmation, holy orders, and matrimony.

8 Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Theology of the Cross" (Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. XVI, 2002), 443.

9 Ibid., 445.

10 Ibid., 447–448.

11 Ibid., 458.

12 *Luther's Works, Lecture on Galatians 1535 Chapter 1-4*, Vol. 26 (ed.) Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 155–164. Cf. Gal. 2:19.

13 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 63.

14 *Luther's Works, Lecture on Galatians* 1535 Chapter 1–4. Vol. 26 (ed.) Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 155–164. Cf. Gal. 3:13.

15 Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Faith, Systematic Theology" In *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* v.2 (eds.,) Erwin Fahlbusch (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 267.

16 For example, see Article XX of the Augsburg Confession in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 52−57.

17 Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology" (1999), 452–453.

18 Ibid, 453.

19 Kolb, "Theology of the Cross," 447.

20 Kolb, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," 449.

A Map Key to Martin Luther King Jr.

Jordan R. Voges

When and if one hears the name Martin Luther King Jr. at a confessional Christian school like Concordia Seminary, it is often only in passing. The most well-known leader of the African-American civil rights movement is treated much like a roadside monument to a rare geological anomaly: something worth pointing out on the way to somewhere else, worth looking at and reading a paragraph or two about, but hardly a destination for contemplation in and of itself. In addition to the casual manner with which his presence is noted along the highway of theological dialogue, most references to the man are usually made with little more insight than the speaker gleaned from a high school American history course.

But for a Christian theologian at all concerned about understanding the religious terrain of North America, to have only such cursory and nonchalant encounters with one of the most prominent American theologians of the twenty-first century is nothing if not the pinnacle of reckless and wasteful theological tourism. Rather, if Christian theologians desire to tactically approach the landscape of American religiosity, and to do so not as tourists but as guides, they do well to slow their pace and take some time to survey the testament left carved in the rockface of the American religious conscience by Martin Luther King Jr.

The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to present a basic "theological map key" to King. A map key, for those of you who are unfamiliar with the term, is set aside from the rest of the map and filled with terms and images for better comprehending what a map is communicating and what can be found within the landscape a map describes. Put another way, a map key helps one better understand the map and, thereby, better navigate the landscape it is attempting to portray. A theological map key, with its terms and images, likewise helps us to understand what might be included on a theological map and to better navigate—at least in this case—what a theologian or theology left behind.

Before we begin, however, we must make a few more remarks concerning what follows. The first is that this essay (map key) is founded on a more extensive research paper (map) I wrote, surveying twelve of King's more insightful writings, speeches, and sermons.[1] It was through the efforts of making that map that I gained the view of his theology presented here. Second, King never wrote a systematics text, and he never explicitly laid out the topography of his theology. What we have instead are the mass of occasional works King managed to pen in his short life. Therefore,

our map key, being created inductively, maintains a degree of speculation. This is not a hindrance however. The speculation is based on a valid impression of King's work, and it is in the realm of valid impressions where King, I think, has become most influential. Finally, as a reminder, the ultimate goal of this experiment in theological map key making is not a thorough analysis of every detail related to King; that is the job of an expert, not a guide. The aim of this paper is to depict some general and practical loci, from which rudimentary theological insights and opinions can be gleaned and by which new questions and explorations can be launched.

Eschatology

It may seem strange to begin our map key by speaking of eschatology; words about the end are normally expected toward—appropriately—the end. In King's case, however, to glimpse a view of his eschatology is to see the warp and woof of the rest of his theological topography (e.g. God, Jesus, humanity, salvation).

According to his essay, *The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope*,[2] King rejected the general tenets of traditional eschatology. In his theological opinion, there will be no physical return of Jesus, nor a final judgment, and there very well may be no personal existence beyond death—as a disembodied soul or otherwise:

> We must realize that these beliefs were formulated by an unscientific people who knew nothing about a Copernican universe or any of the laws of modern science.… Therefore it is our job as Christians to seek the spiritual pertinence of these beliefs, which taken literally are quite absurd.[3]

An example of how this looked in practice can be found in his *Eulogy for the Martyred Children*.[4] It is noteworthy that King did not use the words "Jesus," "Christ," or "Holy Spirit" once. He did, however, use the term "God" six times, and he devoted a short, nondescript paragraph toward what he considered the Christian expectation of "life eternal":

> I hope you can find some consolation from Christianity's affirmation that death is not the end. Death is not a period that ends the great sentence of life, but a comma that punctuates it to more lofty significance. Death is not a blind alley that leads the human race into a state of nothingness, but an open door which leads man into life eternal. Let this daring faith, this great invincible surmise, be your sustaining power during these trying days.[5]

Instead, and for the most part, he preferred to speak about the cause for which the children were killed. Thus, when he used to term "martyr" for the four girls he did

not have a testimony to the Easter promise in mind: "This afternoon in a real sense they have something to say to each of us in their death.… Their death says to us that we must work passionately and unrelentingly for the realization of the American dream."[6] King's eulogy was focused on aligning the significance of their deaths with the unfolding picture of the African-American civil rights movement and with what he described elsewhere as the kingdom of God. As with his eulogy, so with his eschatology; there is no second coming, there is no resurrection, there is no re-creation, but there is a kingdom. And it was toward the goal of that kingdom that the lives and memories of the martyred children would live on.

The Kingdom of God

What then is the kingdom of God according to King? He again co-opted what he described earlier as the modern scientific worldview and attempted to move beyond or behind the bulk of traditional interpretations (e.g. the Son returning bodily to establish the rule of the Father). King thought he could take hold of what was fundamentally common to all understandings of the kingdom. He thereby found a spiritual significance: the kingdom of God was "the condition of things in which God's will is everywhere supreme."[7]

It is pertinent to note that with this act of spiritualizing King showed how he was influenced by mainline liberal theologians. And more than influenced by these, King was one himself. He stated as much in an essay he wrote when, with agreement, he quoted Theodore Gerald Soares, who said:

> The liberal does not discard old beliefs neither does he discard the Bible. On the contrary, he seeks the truth that is in them. With supreme reverence he joyously cherishes the religious heritage of the past. Only he feels free to bring it to all critical examination of the modern historical method. Thus he attempts to make the spiritual discoveries of the Christian traditions available for modern use.[8]

To return to the topic at hand, again according to his essay, *The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope*, the kingdom "will be a society in which all men and women will be controlled by the eternal love of God,"[9] where all relationships are governed by the principles of Jesus's life: "trust, love, mercy, and altruism."[10] Gleaning from the writings of the more mature King—specifically his *I Have a Dream* speech—we might add to this depiction of the kingdom (and of the American dream) that it is a time and place where all people are treated as equals, regardless of religion or background, and where justice "flows down like waters."[11]

How then will the eschatological kingdom be ultimately established, if not by an act of God to raise the dead and dispense an everlasting peace, or by the second coming of Christ to reign, or by a judgment of the righteous and unrighteous? As

King put it in the final paragraphs of his speech titled *If the Negro Wins, Labor Wins*, the kingdom is the result of the long "arc of the universe."[12] It is with regard to that long arc toward the eschatological kingdom that we catch sight of King's description of God, humanity, the place of Jesus, and the object of religious faith.

God

If the long arc of the universe tends toward the eschatological kingdom of justice and freedom, God's place would be as its overseer and guide. As King alluded to in his speech, *Our God is Marching On*, God worked with the prophets and patriarchs in the Old Testament to direct and guide the course of Israel's history. He presented the example of Joshua and the destruction of Jericho, comparing the march of the Israelites to the march of the protestors from Selma to Montgomery (which had occurred immediately before this speech). His point was that just as God watched over and worked with the Israelites to establish a new country, so too was God watching over and working with the marchers of 1965 to establish a new society. The kingdom which God and humanity were to establish, starting with America, would be a society "that recognizes the dignity and worth of all God's children."[13]

King summarized his vision of God's place above the arc with the poetic words of James Russell Lowell (who goes nameless and uncredited in King's speech):

> Truth forever on the scaffold,
> Wrong forever on the throne,
> Yet that scaffold sways the future,
> And, behind the dim unknown,
> Standeth God within the shadow,
> Keeping watch above his own.[14]

Having noted earlier that King's theology emerged from the milieu of American liberal theologians, it would be a serious error to miss the fact that King was also an inheritor of the African-American experience and of African-American theology. King was, himself, the grandson of former slaves. Both of those perspectives—being a liberal theologian and being from a minority whose perspective and theology had been uniquely influenced by their history of being oppressed—deeply influenced King's conception of God and the story of humanity.

To be an American liberal theologian was, in part, to identify with the theological narrative of the Israelites, freed from Egypt by God and tasked with establishing a new kingdom in the promised land (QED the social gospel movement). To be African-American was, in part, to identify with the narrative of Israel's transition from freedom to enslavement, with the hope of true freedom ever present, but still looming in the distance.[15] King's God, therefore, was the one guiding the American people—black, white, Jew, Catholic, Protestant, or otherwise—so that

they might finally establish God's kingdom, a kingdom marked not by slavery but by freedom, a kingdom of equality and justice based on the shared image of God present in all people. We see an example of this in the closing remarks of his speech, *Give Us the Ballot—We Will Transform the South*: "I conclude by saying that each of us must keep faith in the future. Let us realize that as we struggle alone, but God struggles with us. He is leading us out of a bewildering Egypt, through a bleak and desolate wilderness, toward a bright and glittering promised land."[16]

Humanity

There was more, however, to the establishing of the kingdom than God watching and guiding humanity along the arc toward the kingdom. King thought that humanity had to do its part. The eschatological kingdom would not come of its own accord. As an African-American, King was astutely aware of the fact that without some form of resistance and human effort, people would continue to enslave, oppress, and make war with one another. Knowing their frailties but wanting to maintain their position of responsibility, King thought people needed to cooperate with God in order for the kingdom to be established. As King said in his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, "Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation."[17]

In King's thinking, in order for this kingdom to come—and to come to the whole world—God chose America and prepared it for archetypal work. This comes out clearly in his sermon entitled *The American Dream*.[18] He began by quoting the first line of the Declaration of Independence, because in King's mind the "inalienable rights" mentioned therein were the foundation of the American dream. King contended that these rights were not derived from the powers of the state. Rather, "to discover where they came from it is necessary to move back behind the dim mist of eternity, for they are God given."[19] Unfortunately, America had neither fully realized this dream nor fully appreciated the divine origin of humanity's universal worth. And, according to King, the risk of any further delay in doing so might mean the collapse of the nation: "The price America must pay for the continued exploitation of the Negro and other minority groups is the price of its own destruction. The hour is late; the clock of destiny is ticking out."[20]

Why could King assert with such confidence that the American dream of universal equality was couched behind "the dim mist of eternity" with God and that to neglect this dream might mean the destruction of the nation? On the one hand, he understood equality as deriving from the creation of all people in the image of God.

> You see, the founding fathers were really influenced by the Bible. The whole concept of the *imago dei*, as it is expressed in Latin, the "image of God," is the idea that all men have something within

> them that God injected… And this gives him a uniqueness, it gives him worth, it gives him dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation: there are no gradations in the image of God. Every man from a treble white to a bass black is significant on God's keyboard, precisely because every man is made in the image of God.[21]

On the other hand, America's fate was connected in with its ability to portray what universal equality means for humanity; that was America's God-given task. America was portrayed as the archetype for the world; what was possible in America would be possible for the world, and if America failed then the world would fail: "somehow if we can't solve the problem in America the world can't solve the problem, because America is the world in miniature and the world is America writ large."[22] Despite the potentially dire portrayal, King still held out hope for the American dream; he still thought America could fulfill its role. And if the dream was to be realized, it would be by "a method as old as the insights of Jesus of Nazareth and as modern as the techniques of Mohandas K. Gandhi"[23]—nonviolent resistance.

Jesus and Faith

King did not know Jesus as God. Instead, the mythic divinity of the Messiah was an overly literal portrayal of his personality. In a seminary paper of his (*What Experiences of Christians Living in the Early Christian Century Led to the Christian Doctrines of the Divine Sonship of Jesus, the Virgin Birth, and the Bodily Resurrection*[24]) King concluded that the divine sonship of Jesus was the result of several factors, including the religious influence of the Greco-Roman world and the profound impression Jesus made on his disciples. So enamored were they by his unique and loving personality that they concluded there must be something divine about him. They found something of God in this Jesus from the Galilee, but the only way for them to speak about it at that time was to literally deify him.

Of the virgin conception and birth, King stated bluntly that since Mark—the most "primitive" and therefore "authentic" of the New Testament documents—made no mention of it, and since the objective modern mind knows such things as virgin conceptions cannot happen, the virgin birth of Jesus must be rejected. Rather, it was a contrivance to explain in ways once again influenced by Greco-Roman thought why the personality of Jesus was so extraordinary.[25]

Finally, King summarily rejected a literal reading of the resurrection based on literary, historical, and philosophical grounds. This was not important to King, though.

> The root of our inquiry is found in the fact that the early Christians had lived with Jesus. They had been captivated by the magnetic power of his personality. This basic experience led to the faith that he could never die. And so in the pre-scientific thought pattern of

> the first century, this inner faith took outward form.[26]

It was that experience of Jesus during his life that had made such a lasting impression on the disciples, not a bodily resurrection. If Christ lived past his crucifixion, then it was only by the "spirit" of his personality which continued in the memories of the people he had met. It was that experience of his personality which led to the creation of the erroneous doctrine—according to King—of his bodily resurrection. But it was also those experiences and memories of love and mercy which could never be demolished or undermined, and which King thought he could lay hold of. As he would later say in his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, the civil rights movement had a kinship with Jesus's "God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God's will."[27]

It was to the life of Christ and others like him that King was directing his listeners' faith; faith that if people would live lives of such mercy and righteousness, if America would live out the dream with which it was chartered, if humanity would strive to fulfill the moral arc of the universe, then the kingdom of God would indeed come. As he said toward the end of *I Have a Dream*:

> This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.[28]

Final Observations

The conclusion I have drawn about the wider map of King's theology is that it portrays something like modern deistic synergism, or, more precisely, process theology à la Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). King and his theology were modern in the sense that they were wholly influenced by, and contributed toward, liberal theology, higher biblical criticism, and a version of the social gospel movement. King was deistic in that his God was presented as unipersonal, benevolent, and just, but still sat at a distance. His interactions were to give humanity directions through natural revelation to the goal of the universe's moral arc. From there, humanity and the universe had to play their respective parts. And King was a synergist in that he thought people must work by their own strength in accordance with the will and love of the Creator so that the universe and human society might function properly. For when society functions properly, according to King, it mirrors the love and justice of its Creator. If people did their part, like Jesus, then the world would be transformed into the kingdom of God; if they did not, the world would continue in a never-ending cycle of oppression, slavery, and barbarism.

Put another way, King's theological rhetoric was that of a process theologian. Process theology affirms God's interaction in nature and history and does not limit him to a single act, as deism seems to do with the act of creation. However, Whitehead and others, including King, proposed a replacement of supernaturalistic theism with naturalistic theism. For Whitehead as for King, although God is present in the process of all the momentary events which constitute reality,

> his action is limited to inviting and persuading [events and people] to perceive eternal ideas in their coming to be. He is thus trying to direct the future of the world toward its perfect realization. However, his persuasion may be rejected by actual occasions, which explains the presence of evil in the world.[29]

Thus, King refused to go beyond a rhetoric of the first article of the Creed and thereby did not acknowledge a Trinitarian God. He knew of a Creator and of a creation, he had an appreciation for goodness, justice and love, but anything else was only so much superstition. Thus, the whole of his theology—eschatology, ecclesiology, soteriology, Christology, etc.—had to play out within the bounds of a first article rhetoric; that is, with only the language of Creator and creature. A language which tends toward the themes of process theology.

Now, if the terms in the key of King's theology show us a topography tending toward modern deistic synergism and process theology, what value is he to the Christian theologian? Some may say King was too unorthodox and that Christians would gain little from touring what he left behind; we might as well crumple up the rest of the map and get back on the road to a more stimulating destination. I think that would be very unwise. He is certainly beyond the ken of orthodox Christianity, and most of his faith's foundation is unacceptable to us. But there is much we can and ought to learn from King. We do ourselves no favors if we see only those things with which disagree in him and his message. On the one hand, he gives present onlookers a clear view into American religiosity (as I said at the outset of this essay). It is reasonable to think that King became so popular and influential before and especially after his death in part because his theological rhetoric and perspective had an intense draw on American hearts and minds. By understanding King we thereby better understand America's religious. And if we are to be knowledgeable about the terrain into which we carry the mission of God then we would do well to

Thus, the whole of his theology...had to play out within the bounds of a first article rhetoric... A language which tends toward the themes of process theology.

learn its most significant features and figures, of which King most certainly is one.

On the other hand, King was a martyr for what he believed in. He was murdered for bearing witness to deep societal problems and, in part, for giving challenging answers to deeply theological questions. Whenever societal issues with interlaced theological consequences lead to someone's assassination, we do well as Christians and as theologians to pay close attention. Concerning said societal issues, we learn about the pervasive and insidious sins of entire nations and individuals which can seek to erode any monument to repentance. What he shows us is that our neighbors have needs we are unaware of, and they are often suffering from us in unknown ways; his words show us new paths down which we may walk in love toward those around us. While we may not agree with his entire perspective, we can accept his passion, learn from his prescriptions, and find power in his hopefulness that things can change, even if only in a penultimate sense. And finally, concerning said matters of theological consequence, we can take heed of how he responded to the theological questions posed in his day and which are still present in ours. We can avoid and answer the pitfalls King slipped into while still appreciating those places where his theological path was solid, even if unfamiliar to us. We are thereby empowered and encouraged to amend our own spiritual paths and to better shape our own theological topography.

Endnotes

1 Not referenced below but considered in that initial essay are the following speeches by king: *Acceptance Speech at Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony* and *The Drum Major Instinct*.

2 Martin Luther King, "The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope," The Martin Luther King Jr., Research and Education Institute, November 29, 1949, accessed December 12, 2017, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/christian-pertinence-eschatological-hope.

3 Ibid.

4 Martin Luther King, "Eulogy for the Martyred Children," accessed December 10, 2017, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_eulogy_for_the_martyred_children/index.html.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 King, "Eschatological Hope."

8 Richard W. Wills, *Martin Luther King Jr. and the Image of* God (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 48.

9 King, "Eschatological Hope."

10 Ibid.

11 Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream," accessed December 10, 2017, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/kingweb/publications/speeches/address_at_march_on_washington.pdf.

12 Martin Luther King, "If the Negro Wins, Labor Wins," accessed December 10, 2017, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/if_the_negro_wins_labor_ wins/index.html.

13 Martin Luther King, "Our God is Marching On!" The Martin Luther King Jr., Research and Education Institute, accessed December 11, 2017, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/our-god-marching.

14 Ibid. For the full poem, see James Russell Lowell, "The Present Crisis," Yale Book of American Verse, accessed December 11, 2017, http://www.bartleby.com/102/128.html.

15 Wills, 38.

16 Martin Luther King and James Melvin Washington, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 197–200.

17 Martin Luther King, "Letter From Birmingham Jail," accessed December 11, 2017, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/annotated_letter_from_birmingham/index.html.

18 Martin Luther King, "The American Dream," accessed December 10, 2017, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/5801/transcription/document_images/undecided/610609-011.pdf.

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23 Ibid.

24 Martin Luther King, "What Experiences of Christians Living in the Early Christian Century Led to the Christian Doctrines of the Divine Sonship of Jesus, the Virgin Birth, and the Bodily Resurrection," The Martin Luther King Jr., Research and Education Institute, September 13, 1949, accessed December 12, 2017, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/what-experiences-christians-living-early-christian-century-led-christian.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 King, "Birmingham Jail."

28 King, "I Have a Dream."

29 John Henry and Mariusz Tabaczek, "Causation," *In Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, ed. Gary B. Ferngren (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 386.

Mythical Typology in *The Lord of the Rings*

Andrew R. Jones

A Difficult Tension

When considering potential gospel patterns in J. R. R. Tolkien's work, every critic is met with two conflicting realities. Firstly, the presence of gospel patterns is abundantly apparent in Tolkien's work. Secondly, Tolkien himself stated rather emphatically that he did not intend to create a Christian allegory. Clyde S. Kilby writes, "The story, says [Tolkien], is 'not 'about' anything but itself' and certainly 'has **no** allegorical intentions, general, particular or topical, moral, religious or political.' [Tolkien] declares in fact that he has a 'cordial dislike' of allegory."[1]

Despite Tolkien's non-allegorical intentions, overtones of religion, morality, and politics leap off his pages. I am of the view that Tolkien did not sit down intending to write a story with such a strong connection to his own Christian worldview, but the gospel was such a strong part of Tolkien's life that Christian themes leaked on to the page.

Following Kilby's line of thought, the more Tolkien developed the world of Middle Earth, the more he realized what had happened and gave in to the religious connections. Kilby cites a book of poems by Tolkien entitled *The Road Goes Ever On* and writes about the character Elbereth and her role in Tolkien's background mythology and overall universe. Kilby writes: "There [Tolkien] speaks, for the first time I believe, of Elbereth as 'a 'divine' or 'angelic' person' and admits that elves and men and hobbits 'invoke' her aid in time of trouble and that elves sing hymns to her, and then adds in parentheses the highly significant remark 'These and other references to religion in **The Lord of the Rings** are frequently overlooked.'"[2]

Ralph C. Wood observes of Elbereth, "[S]he is an angelic, mercy-bearing figure with distinctive kinship to the Virgin Mary."[3] We see in the background of Tolkien's universe, not only his Christianity, but his Catholicity leaking out of his pen, creating a character with similarities to the Roman Catholic viewpoint of the Virgin Mary.

It seems Tolkien may not have made the religious system overt in his first drafts of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but as he continued to write the backstory of the world and revise his initial works, he softened to the idea that people were finding Christian themes in his writing and even made them intentional.

With that in mind, it would be a mistake to consider Tolkien's work as

nothing other than a Christian allegory. The world Tolkien develops is abundantly rich in culture, language, and myth. It is not so simple as to be a one to one correlation to the scriptural narrative, nor to World War I, nor any other narrative. Tolkien's narrative of Middle Earth stands by itself, and Tolkien's own worldview as a devout Roman Catholic man, a soldier in World War I, and a man who loved language and myth seeps out of his pen and onto the page to the reader's delight.

Despite Tolkien's non-allegorical intentions, overtones of religion, morality, and politics leap off his pages.

Some believe Christianity is not a focus of Tolkien's writings. Ronald Hutton refers to Tolkien's writings as more pagan than Christian. He observes of Tolkien's universe: "If it was Christian, then it was a Christianity so unorthodox, and diluted, as to merit the term heretical."[4] This is a minority view, but it is a valid conclusion. While the gospel is abundantly present, the pagan ideas of myth and magic are also present, perhaps more so. The pagan and the Christian elements of Tolkien's work are held together in tension, much like they were held in tension within Tolkien himself. But we would be fools if we thought Tolkien himself believed in the pagan elements more than the Christian elements. His faith was grounded in the gospel, and the pagan elements serve in the background to create a wonderful universe.

Hutton found the following of Tolkien: "[Tolkien] declared that the book was 'a fundamentally religious and Catholic work.' He added that this was initially an unconscious feature of it at first, but a conscious one 'in the revision.'"[5]

Within *The Lord of the Rings* there are several points when gospel patterns appear to have leaked from Tolkien's mind. I propose we refer to these patterns as *mythical typology*. I choose this term because Tolkien is clever enough not to give us a simple analogy, utilizing only one character to correspond to Christ and one event to correspond to Christ's death and resurrection. Tolkien presents a variety of characters and events with correspondence to Jesus of Nazareth. Tolkien uses dramatic hedging to ensure we see that none of his characters are enough like Jesus to create a simple analogy. If we view Tolkien's characters and events as *mythical typology*, we see a correspondence to Jesus and his work, but we also see that Jesus is a fuller, more complete version of each of these characters. Just as Jesus is the greater version of Old Testament characters like Moses and Melchizedek, Jonah and Joshua, so too is Jesus the greater version of several Tolkien characters including Gandalf and Galadriel, Frodo and Aragorn. Here Tolkien showcases his faithfulness, knowing he could not create a character as perfect as the Savior himself. We now turn to four of Tolkien's characters.

Gandalf

The wizard Gandalf possesses several characteristics which correspond to Jesus Christ. The most obvious elements occur in Gandalf's encounter with the Balrog—a demon of the ancient world living under the dwarf stronghold of Moria. In this encounter, Gandalf prevents the Balrog demon from harming his companions. But the Balrog takes Gandalf down with him. Tolkien writes:

> With a terrible cry the Balrog fell forward, and its shadow plunged down and vanished. But even as it fell it swung its whip and the thongs lashed and curled about the wizard's knees, dragging him to the brink. He staggered and fell, grasped vainly at the stone, and slid into the abyss. "Fly, you fools!" he cried, and was gone.[6]

In this way, Gandalf sacrifices himself for the sake of his companions. They move on with Aragorn leading them. Here we see the gospel pattern of vicarious sacrifice in Gandalf's facing of the Balrog on the Bridge of Khazad Dûm.

As Gandalf falls into the depths of Moria and beyond, he fights the Balrog. Gandalf describes their battle, "We fought far under the living earth, where time is not counted. Ever he clutched me and ever I hewed at him, till at last he fled into dark tunnels."[7] We see in this a connection to Jesus's descent into hell. Though the scriptural witness thin on this piece of theology, some scholars argue that Paul references it: "In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." (Eph 4:9–10).[8]

Gandalf and the Balrog also ascend up the "Endless Stair." Gandalf defeats the Balrog demon on top of the highest peak. Gandalf then says, "Then darkness took me, and I strayed out of thought and time, and I wandered far on roads that I will not tell. Naked I was sent back—but for a brief time, until my task is done."[9] Gandalf suffered some form of death. Gandalf's post-resurrection stay, much like Jesus's post-resurrection stay, is a brief one. Both will leave again soon. As Gandalf says, he is sent back. In being sent back, Gandalf is transformed. He is no longer Gandalf the Grey, but he is Gandalf the White. This change can be seen in connection to Jesus's own resurrected body, the first fruits of all those who will be resurrected from the dead.

When Gandalf appears to Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli in the forest of Fangorn, they are unable to recognize him and mistake him for Saruman. This serves two purposes in connection to Christ. Firstly, Jesus was not immediately recognized by his disciples after his resurrection. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus do not recognize Jesus until he reveals himself in the breaking of the bread.[10] Likewise, after having a terrible night of fishing on the Sea of Galilee, some of the twelve do not recognize Jesus right away.[11]

Secondly, Gandalf himself is a greater version of Saruman. Tolkien writes, "'Yes, I am white now,' said Gandalf. 'Indeed I *am* Saruman, one might almost say, Saruman as he should have been.'"[12]

This *internal typology* (along with Aragorn's below) is in my opinion the strongest evidence for Tolkien's usage of typology inclined toward the Christian narrative. Gandalf is the greater Saruman, just as Jesus is the greater Gandalf.

After Gandalf has transformed from grey to white, he approaches the King of Rohan, Theoden. Theoden's mind has been poisoned by his closest advisor, Grima Wormtongue, with the aid of the traitor wizard Saruman. Gandalf heals Theoden, or put another way, casts out the demons from Theoden's mind. Theoden initially refuses to welcome Gandalf and his company to his kingly hall, but after Gandalf asserts his power, Theoden says, "Dark have been my dreams of late…but I feel as one new-awakened."[13] Tolkien also writes, "[Theoden] looked at Gandalf and smiled and as he did so many lines of care were smoothed away and did not return."[14] There is a restorative quality to Gandalf's intervention.[15]

Yet for all these Christ-like events and characterizations, Gandalf is not perfect. He knows he cannot carry the One Ring. When Frodo realizes what the Ring is, he asks Gandalf if he will take it. Tolkien writes:

> "No!" cried Gandalf, springing to his feet. "With that power I should have power too great and terrible. And over me the Ring would gain a power still greater and more deadly." His eyes flashed and his face was lit as by a fire within. "Do not tempt me! For I do not wish to become like the Dark Lord himself. Yet the way of the Ring to my heart is by pity, pity for weakness and the desire of strength to do good. Do not tempt me! I dare not take it, not even to keep it safe, unused. The wish to wield it would be too great for my strength. I shall have such need of it. Great perils lie before me."[16]

We see that Gandalf has weaknesses. He does not have power and authority over all creation as Jesus does. As Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt 28:18b).

Gandalf does not have divine abilities, even after his resurrection, in regard to power and authority. Gandalf is a creature, and though a peculiar one with much power and great gifts, he is not God or even a god. Jesus is fully God. He is a greater Gandalf.

Frodo

Frodo tends to get less attention as a type of Christ than Gandalf and Aragorn. There could be several reasons for this. Frodo's failures are a bit more obvious than Gandalf's or Aragorn's. That being said, Frodo's unassuming nature and appearance

connect well to the incarnation, where Christ came in the form of a fragile infant. A hobbit savior is nearly as fragile, helpless, and unexpected is an infant Savior.

Frodo's main Christ-like characteristic is his bearing the weight of the Ring as Christ bears the weight of sin. The heaviness of the Ring increases the closer it comes to Mordor, where it was made, which is where Frodo is heading because that is the only place where the Ring can be destroyed. Frodo describes the Ring's heaviness several times. Here is one example from the beginning of the stairs of Cirith Ungol: "'I must rest a while, Sam,' whispered Frodo. 'It's heavy on me, Sam lad, very heavy. I wonder how far I can carry it?'"[17]

Frodo tries to give away the Ring on two occasions. Knowing his own limitations and not wanting to be drawn into the great battle between good and evil, he offers the Ring to Gandalf (see above) and to Galadriel (see below). However, Jesus Christ knows no one else can carry the sins of the world. He is the only one who can accomplish the task of forgiving the world. Still, Jesus prays to his Father with the words: "let this cup pass from me" (Mt 26:39).

Frodo is often filled with doubt and very near cowardice. Christopher Garbowski writes: "Unsurprisingly Frodo has his moments of doubt. Early on he experiences the visceral temptation to escape danger. In his encounter with the ghoulish Barrow-wights he seriously weighs the possibility of abandoning his companions to a terrible fate to save himself."[18]

While the powers for good in Middle Earth, such as Elrond, Gandalf, Galadriel, and Aragorn, entrust their salvation to Frodo, he cannot cast the Ring into the fires of Mount Doom. Frodo arrives at Mount Doom, showing an incredible resiliency which few other creatures in Middle Earth could have shown, but when the time comes to rid himself of the Ring, Frodo cannot do it. He cannot save Middle Earth and destroy the Ring. The Ring has corrupted him. The people of Middle Earth have put their trust in someone doomed to fail. Tolkien writes:

> Then Frodo stirred and spoke with a clear voice, indeed with a voice clearer and more powerful than Sam had ever heard him use, and it rose above the throb and turmoil of Mount Doom, ringing in the roof and walls.
>
> "I have come," he said. "But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!" And suddenly, as he set it on his finger, he vanished from Sam's sight.[19]

Lee Oser writes of Frodo's failings to withstand the Ring: "[Frodo] begins to realize what Saint Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians calls 'the measure of the full stature of Christ' (4:13 *NRSV*). To choose the dark power is to surrender to our fear and to relinquish our best potential. It is to merge our will with the Ring's instrumental power."[20]

Frodo too needs saving. Indeed, it is eventually Gollum who accidentally

and serendipitously destroys the Ring after stealing it off of Frodo's finger. Frodo does not complete his task. He cannot. Gollum steals the Ring from Frodo and begins Frodo's salvation. Richard L. Purthill observes: "Frodo, though maimed, is saved both physically and mentally: Sam saves him from the fire, and with the Ring gone his mind clears and he realizes the folly of trying to claim the Ring."[21] While Frodo does not complete his mission and is in need of saving, Christ does complete his mission. Furthermore, Christ is not in need of saving. By completing his mission, Jesus saves the world. People are right to put their trust in Jesus.

Despite ultimately failing to carry out his mission, Frodo is also one who accepts the call to serve, however unwillingly and filled with doubt. Frodo is, in a fashion, a good prophet, answering, "Here am I!" along with Isaiah and Samuel. At the Council of Elrond, all sorts of great and powerful men, dwarves, and elves are gathered to decide the fate of the Ring. Silence falls and finally Frodo volunteers, like a good prophet. He immediately recognizes his limitations. "'I will take the Ring,' he said, 'Though I do not know the way.'" Jesus is the greater Frodo, for not only does Jesus know the way, Jesus is "the Way."[22]

Aragorn

One can see from the title *The Return of the King* what the story might address. After Aragorn has helped win the Battle of Pelennor Fields, reprieving Gondor and Minas Tirith, which fulfills his promise to Boromir,[23] Aragorn goes to the Houses of Healing at Gandalf's request. Here Gandalf says, "For it is only in the coming of Aragorn that any hope remains for the sick that lie in the House. Thus spake Ioreth, wise-woman of Gondor: *The hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known*."[24] After this, Aragorn heals many people who had been injured in the battle. The first person he heals is Faramir, now Steward of Gondor and rightful ruler until Aragorn reclaims the throne as king. Tolkien records this beautiful confession:

> Suddenly Faramir stirred, and he opened his eyes, and he looked on Aragorn who bent over him; and a light of knowledge and love was kindled in his eyes, and he spoke softly. "My lord, you called me. I come. What does the king command?"
>
> "Walk no more in the shadows, but awake!" said Aragorn. "You are weary. Rest a while, and take food, and be ready when I return."
>
> "I will, lord." said Faramir. "For who would lie idle when the king has returned?"[25]

This conversation echoes Paul's words in Ephesians: "But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it

says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'" (Eph 5:13–14). Just as Aragorn's light shined on Faramir and awoke the sleeper from the brink of death, so too does the light of Christ shine on us all.

Aragorn continued to heal others, aided by the *athelas* plant, which was worthless in anyone's hand other than the king. Jesus likewise healed many people, but Jesus had no need of any aids in healing, though he did use various means for certain healings. Jesus could heal with or without touch or words. So while both Aragorn and Jesus can heal, Jesus is the greater Aragorn.

As noted above, Aragorn is the heir to the throne of Gondor, but the line of kings has been broken and the throne has remained vacant for many generations. This broken line may remind Christians of the kingly line of David that was broken after the deportation to Babylon.[26]

Aragorn is blessed with a long life for a human, but he is still a mortal. He will die. In the marriage of Aragorn and Arwen, she gives up her own immortality (being an immortal elf). This is actually in stark contrast to Christ. As the eternal Jesus marries his mortal bride, the Church, Jesus gives his bride everlasting life. In this way, Jesus is an antithetical antitype of Aragorn.[27]

Aragorn also has the gospel pattern of being veiled. Initially, Aragorn wears ranger garb and does not present himself as a king, to the point where both allies and enemies fail to recognize him for who he is. Jesus is likewise veiled in flesh and many people do not recognize him. We do not expect our God to come to us in human form. Furthermore, Jesus is veiled as he appears to be the son of a carpenter named Joseph. Jesus does not appear on earth from inside of a palace, but maintains humble human appearance until the proper time. Who would expect a king to be a ranger? And who would expect the King of the universe to be the son of a carpenter?

Aragorn himself is related to another Tolkien character named Beren. Beren is a mortal man who fell in love with an immortal elf named Lúthien. Beren is brought before Lúthien's father, Thingol, and proclaims Lúthien the fairest in the world. Thingol is unimpressed by Beren and says to him, "Bring to me in your hand a Silmaril from Morgoth's crown; and then, if she will, Lúthien may set her hand in yours."[28] In a similar way, Aragorn is told by Elrond, the father of Arwen, Aragorn's eventual bride, that Aragorn may not marry Arwen until he takes the throne of Gondor. Both Beren and Aragorn succeed in their quest to wed fair elven women and do so by overcoming a strangely difficult quest. Here we see another example of *internal typology*. Aragorn may be seen as the greater Beren.[29]

Galadriel

Galadriel is often overlooked in any discussions of Christ types in Tolkien's work. The simplest explanation for this is that Galadriel is a woman. Since this is fiction, I see no reason why Tolkien would not assign Christ-like (and even God the Father-

like) qualities to Galadriel. There are a few critics who connect Galadriel more to the Virgin Mary than to Jesus. Considering Tolkien's Roman Catholic faith and the high view of Mary in that faith community, this is a fair connection. However, the evidence I list below reflects connectivity to Jesus and God the Father more than Mary.

Galadriel has a few instances where her language is reminiscent of the language of Scripture. The first case is in her first meeting with the Fellowship of the Ring in Lothlórien. After holding the gaze of each remaining member of the Fellowship (Gandalf had fallen into the depths with the Balrog), Galadriel addresses the Fellowship, "'Do not let your hearts be troubled,' she said. 'Tonight you shall sleep in peace.'"[30] This is strongly connected to Jesus's words: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27). Both quotations speak of peace being given and not letting one's heart be troubled. Both Galadriel and Jesus have the power to give what they say.

Yet Galadriel is mistrusted more broadly than any of the other Christ-types in Tolkien's writings. People fear her as an elf-witch, an untrustworthy sorceress. Shortly after Galadriel sends the Fellowship off in peace, Tolkien writes:

> "Well, have a care!" said Boromir. "I do not feel too sure of this Elvish Lady and her purposes."
>
> "Speak no evil of Lady Galadriel!" said Aragorn sternly. "You know not what you say. There is in her and in this land no evil, unless a man bring it hither himself. Then let him beware! But tonight I shall sleep without fear for the first time since I left Rivendell. And may I sleep deep, and forget for a while my grief! I am weary in body and in heart." He cast himself down upon his couch and fell at once into a long sleep.
>
> The others soon did the same, and no sound or dream disturbed their slumber.[31]

Despite people's lack of trust in Galadriel, she is a great shield and fortress, a refuge and strength—metaphors often used to describe Yahweh in the Old Testament. Galadriel is able to protect her realm, Lothlórien, and her people from all sorts of disasters and evil.

Another element of Galadriel's connection to Yahweh comes in her admitting to Frodo of her "testing of [his] heart." This echoes Yahweh's relationship with Israel in the book of Exodus.[32] When Frodo offers Galadriel the One Ring, much like Gandalf, we see in her an inability to claim it and control it without the corruption of evil. Her own heart is tested by Frodo. Tolkien writes:

> Galadriel laughed with a sudden clear laugh. "Wise the Lady Galadriel may be," she said, "yet here she has met her match

> in courtesy. Gently are you revenged for my testing of your heart at our first meeting. You begin to see with a keen eye. I do not deny that my heart has greatly desired to ask what you offer. For many long years I had pondered what I might do, should the Great Ring come into my hands, and behold! it was brought within my grasp. The evil that was devised long ago works on in many ways, whether Sauron himself stands or falls. Would not that have been a noble deed to set to the credit of his Ring, if I had taken it by force or fear from my guest?
>
> "And now at last it comes. You will give me the ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair!"
>
> She lifted up her hand and from the ring that she wore there issued a great light that illumined her alone and left all else dark. She stood before Frodo seeming now tall beyond all measurement, and beautiful beyond enduring, terrible and worshipful. Then she let her hand fall, and the light faded, and suddenly she laughed again, and lo! she was shrunken: a slender elf-woman, clad in simple white, whose gentle voice was soft and sad.
>
> "I pass the test," she said. "I will diminish, and go into the West, and remain Galadriel."[33]

So we see that much like Gandalf, Galadriel cannot trust herself with the Ring. She would succumb to its evil rather than be able to master it. Yet she passes the temptation of the Ring. Though she cannot wield it, she does not attempt to wield it.

Herein we find a great difference between Christ and any character Tolkien creates. When Christ comes into the world which is filled with sin and evil, he does not become sinful and evil. Even when Christ takes on the sins of the world, he himself does not sin. He is not infected by what surrounds him, but rather Jesus infects his goodness into those who believe on his name. Jesus is the greater Galadriel.

Conclusion

Far more can be said and has been said about Tolkien and the gospel. There is no lack of literature concerning Tolkien, his writings, and their religious overtones. I conclude that the gospel is undeniably present in *The Lord of the Rings*. While much of the gospel presence may have been initially unconscious and unintentional on Tolkien's part, the more he developed his universe, by his own admission, the more

intentional the gospel elements became. Those gospel elements are best viewed through the lens of typological relationships.

That being said, every reader of Tolkien should be warned not to reduce Tolkien's work to *only* a Christian story. Tolkien provides us with a depth of culture, myth, and language that cannot be ignored for the sake of only paying attention to the Christian elements of Tolkien's work.

Endnotes

1 Clyde S. Kilby, "Mythic Christian Elements in Tolkien" in *Myth Allegory and Gospel* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974), 124. Emphasis original.
2 Ibid., 142. Emphasis original.
3 Ralph C. Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 122.
4 Ronald Hutton, "The Pagan Tolkien" in The Ring and the Cross (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), 69.
5 Ibid., 59.
6 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine, 1954), 371.
7 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* (New York: Ballantine, 1954), 110.
8 For other scriptural witness to Christ's descent to hell, see 1 Peter 3:19 and Hosea 13:14.
9 Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 111.
10 See Luke 24:30–32.
11 See John 21:4–7.
12 Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 102. Emphasis original.
13 Ibid., 128.
14 Ibid.
15 Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Two Towers* makes this encounter between Gandalf and Theoden much more explicitly an exorcism. Sarumuan possesses and speaks through Theoden, but Gandalf casts out the demon Saruman.
16 Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 67–68.
17 Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 354.
18 Christopher Garbowski, *Recovery and Transcendence for the Contemporary Mythmaker: The Spiritual Dimension in the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien*, 2d. ed. (Zurich: Walking Tree Publishers, 2004), 189.
19 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (New York: Ballantine, 1955), 239.
20 Lee Oser, The Return of Christian Humanism (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 63–64.
21 Richard L. Purthill, *J. R. R. Tolkien Myth, Morality, and Religion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 60.
22 See John 14:6.
23 See Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 4.
24 Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 140. Emphasis original.
25 Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 144.
26 See Matthew 1:1–17.
27 The antithetical antitype is most commonly used to describe Jesus's relationship with Adam. See Romans 5:12–21.
28 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (New York: Ballantine, 1977), 197.
29 This is a bit dubious as Beren may also be viewed as greater than Aragorn because Beren's task might be viewed as more difficult than Aragorn's. I stay with Aragorn as a greater Beren because Aragorn's motive seems to be about more than his bride, Arwen. Beren, however, seems to be only focused on Lúthien. The accomplishing of his task is simply a bonus to the reward he receives: his bride.
30 Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 401.
31 Ibid., 402.
32 See Exodus 16:4; 20:20.
33 Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 410–411.

Op. Ed. Article

Rethinking Law and Gospel in the Way We Do Preaching

Benjamin Berteau

Abstract

This paper evaluates the impact of C. F. W. Walther's *Law and Gospel* and Richard Caemmerer's goal, malady, means approach to homiletics, also discussing the potential trap of law-gospel reductionism. A suggested pathway forward is a reemphasis on a creedal approach to Lutheran theology and preaching as well as a renewal of rhetoric as foundational to ultimately restoring a positive view of the third use or function of the law in Lutheran preaching. Having done so, the reader may certainly apply this positive view of the law as it relates to preaching on other topics related to the Christian Life including justice, compassion, and race relations.

Rethinking Law and Gospel and the Way We Do Preaching

Perhaps the most significant change, or better put—daunting challenge—presented to those who matriculate into a seminary program is not the ability to learn theological concepts. Even biblical languages like Greek and Hebrew that are typically thought to be most challenging can be taught to the willing student. What is more difficult is what seminarians and beginning pastors must do with the lofty knowledge gained from such an education—leverage it into clear and distilled preaching for the benefit of everyday Christians who would hear it. The ability to communicate difficult concepts in an understandable way is, at least anecdotally, one of the primary reasons why a potential congregation member might or might not become fully engaged in the life of the church.

It is with this important task in mind that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's first president, C. F. W. Walther, gave his evening lectures to seminary students and local pastors. These lectures, given in his office on Friday nights, would be compiled from student notes years later and collected into what is now perhaps his most famous work: *Law and Gospel*.[1] Those twenty-five theses and a corresponding commentary on each has become a keystone in the LCMS seminary training of future pastors even into the present. Students throughout multiple generations have read this work and still cite it as a primary text in discussions on a wide variety of theological topics. What is helpful to remember is the context to which these theses were delivered and their intended purpose—the encouragement and edification of preachers.

Unfortunately for Walther, by virtue of this being a posthumous publication, he had no editing oversight at all. Only the diligence of his students and the efficacy of the translation from German stand to defend Walther's original words and intent. Walther never could have imagined the widespread impact this publication would have on generations of pastors, and he might very well be concerned about the extent to which it is used and how far into other theological realms it has been taken.

At the heart of what can be considered a misapplication of *Law and Gospel* is the primacy with which the work is used as a framework for all other theological thought. This has resulted in many pastors and theologians becoming either skeptical or outright dismissive of a third function of the law. This resulting underappreciation and distrust of the third function of the law, along with Richard Caemmerer's goal, malady, means work approach to homiletics[2] still has profound impact on preaching in the LCMS today. This paper will seek to evaluate the impact that *Law and Gospel* and goal, malady, means preaching has had on the church, how they might be more helpfully appropriated into the more holistic and all-encompassing framework of the two kinds of righteousness, and how knowing this the church might grow in its appreciation and practice of preaching the whole counsel of God, having restored a positive outlook on the place of the law in Christian life.

The Impact of Law and Gospel*, and Goal, Malady, Means*

Walther's work, as it reflects the broader Lutheran distinction of law and gospel, answers clearly and forcefully the question: "How does God speak?" God speaks in one of two ways in Scripture, either his word of law or gospel. These words are interpreted in a highly contextual and individual manner. Hearers of Lutheran preaching and preachers themselves acknowledge that they simply can't guarantee whether a particular sentence or idea will be heard as law or heard as gospel—the circumstance and predisposition of the hearer influences that.

Perhaps in response to this reality, and in response to Walther's final thesis that in all things the gospel should predominate,[3] after the publication of *Law and Gospel* the impression was given—intentionally or not—that the law was the harsh and inherently negative (bad) word of God, and that the gospel was sweet (good) and by definition the "good news." The law served only to accuse and kill the Christian who stood as a sinner before God's righteous judgement, as the Latin phrase *lex semper accusat* supports. Unable to please God with any human works or effort, people were simply dead before the living God because of their inability to keep the law. The gospel, in complete contrast, was the beautiful word of imputed righteousness—complete forgiveness on account of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on behalf of the sinner. A simple phrase was coined that lasts in the present. Simply put: "The Law kills, and the Gospel makes alive."[4] With these oversimplified words, what John W. Montgomery would later label "Law/Gospel Reductionism" was born.[5]

Another great churchman who had significant impact on law-gospel theology as it relates to preaching was Richard Caemmerer. Caemmerer developed a method for preaching that taught students to identify the goal (main idea), malady (that which prevents the hearer from reaching the goal, or particular sin involved), and means (typically the gospel, or how Jesus has satisfied that particular aspect of the law on behalf of the hearer). While this certainly has important rhetorical effect and can help guide the writing and preaching act, students of Caemmerer would take these ideas and codify them into an ordered structure that each sermon should follow—first goal, then malady, which was finally resolved by the means. As David Schmitt reports, this homiletical theology would be misapplied and become a sermon structure that would always begin with law, then move to gospel proclamation, and a point of application.[6]

This system for preaching served to prop up the law-gospel reductionism that followed the publication of *Law and Gospel*. Sermons often followed a discernable and formulaic pattern that always required the law to play only an accusing (or theological) function in the sermon that would be followed by the "good" word of the gospel. The informed hearer knew that if they could only sit through the initial proclamation of law, there would be forgiveness on the other side. In an attempt to honor Walther's twenty-fifth thesis regarding gospel predomination, often more time was spent binding up the wounds caused by the law with the gospel.

Perhaps what was most insidious about this formula for preaching and theology in general is the unintended effect of placing good works into the realm of the gospel, thereby diluting the very life-saving word itself. If the law has no positive function and doesn't serve as the guide for Christian living, and the Christian must simply live in the gospel, then the works that Christians will be incapable of doing perfectly because of the old man still at work in them will be placed in the realm of the gospel – inadvertently reverting to a works righteousness model.

While not all preaching followed this method, law-gospel became the distinctive feature of Lutheran preaching in the twentieth century, and still remains so. In its defense, this methodology is not in and of itself outside the bounds of orthodoxy and serves well to describe the unique aspects of Lutheran theology, particularly the theology of justification by grace through faith. The Holy Spirit has used this preaching to sustain and grow the faith of many in the church. More will be said about the rightful and perhaps better usage of this exact law-gospel distinction in preaching later.

Even though this is the case, there do seem to be discernable effects of this model of preaching in the lives of hearers and the life of the church. One of the first things taught to Lutheran confirmands are the three uses or functions of the law: curb, mirror, and guide. Affirmed by Luther in response to Melanchthon's use, these three functions are how the law does its work. In this model of preaching, however, the law is primarily intended to be used in the theological or second function to accuse the sinner. Having heard the gospel, the sinner is then set back into the world with the life-giving words of the gospel, often with

little application or teaching in regards to how Christian life should look. To be sure, the preacher must recognize that he cannot guarantee how the Holy Spirit will use particular statements or intended effects of the law in preaching, but this diminution of the third function, or a positive outlook on the law, has led the church and its theologians to ask the question: "Does the law have any place in the Christian's life after conversion?" Often the answer has been given "No, only the gospel is needed," as if the gospel gives the content to direct the Christian in changing his or her ways. These theologians would respond that the law only exists because of the presence of sin outside the church, since murderers and the like must be contained from leading the world into chaos. This thoroughgoing denial of a third use of the law is not equivalent to the Caemmerer preaching system, but certainly bears similar facets, namely, a suspicion or general negative attitude toward the law as if the gospel were the only "good" word.

What are we to do about it?

Having diagnosed how both *Law and Gospel* and Caemmerer's goal, malady, means work have influenced Lutheran preaching, we will seek to chart a way forward that incorporates the positive use of the law-gospel distinction already present, while locating it within the larger framework of the two kinds of righteousness where it fits excellently as a representation of passive righteousness. This framework answers the question: "What does Christian life look like?" It is helpful to both understand one's relationship to God (as law-gospel does well), but also how the human relates to the neighbor and the wider creation itself.

First and foremost, the distinction between the two kinds of righteousness is thoroughly biblical and present in the Lutheran Confessions which frequently mention the "New Obedience." The distinction of two kinds of righteousness posits that humans operate in two planes simultaneously. They operate *coram Deo* (before God) and *coram mundo* (before the world). In the vertical plane, the distinctly Lutheran and biblical teaching of justification by grace through faith fits perfectly, particularly as it is communicated by the law-gospel distinction. It is here in the relationship between God and the Christian that individuals are laid bare and shown to be sinners who can contribute nothing to their own salvation, dead in their sins and trespasses. God, then, on account of the death and resurrection of Jesus, completely forgives the sins of the Christian and makes them alive with the word of the gospel. This is an entirely one-way transaction. God comes down and imputes this righteousness entirely by his work alone. This is called "passive righteousness," since the sinner simply receives what God gives. In this plane the gospel is the normative and final word.

Humans also operate in the world, however. Connected through their vocations, family, living situation, etc. Christians are in relationship with their

neighbors consistently. In this *coram mundo* realm, the Christian is accountable to God for how he or she acts. Having been given the Ten Commandments and the law, the Christian is to do good works for service to the neighbor and in care for creation. The law acts as a guide in this realm and gives content to the Christian life as the person seeks to do God's will. *Coram mundo*, the Christian is able to keep God's law, though not perfectly. God has spoken in his word and told the Christian what is God-pleasing, and God expects this to be done. In the horizontal realm, the law speaks the final word—either the Christian is engaged in "active righteousness" or is accountable for breaking the law of God.

If this framework is to inform our preaching more than it currently does, a return to rhetoric is helpful in the writing and preaching process. Though not altogether different than goal, malady, means, the ideas of "focus" and "function" helpfully concentrate and focus the preaching task. With a rhetorical function in mind, the preacher acknowledges that he intends, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish something—to exhort the Christian toward a particular behavior or away from another. The function can be emotional in nature—whether encouragement, or chastisement, the function is not limited to behavior. This is why an understanding of the distinction between "faith" and "life" sermons is helpful.

Though it seems like a minute distinction in the mind of the preacher, acknowledging whether the function of the sermon is to speak a word of gospel to a particular person or mindset, or to teach about a particular facet of life to be modeled by the hearers, shapes how the preacher approaches law and gospel in the sermon. The Caemmerer model as it is currently used would fit well within the framework of a "faith" sermon, one that speaks to the forensic justification won by Jesus: a sermon that accuses of a particular sin and shares the forgiving word that faith imparts. In this sermon, a third function of the law would necessarily take lesser priority as the function speaks more to an internal reality, than an external one. In a "life" sermon, however, the preacher is able to approach a more positive view of the law that serves to guide the Christian in a particular aspect of daily life, rather than viewing the law only in an accusatory sense. The gospel certainly still has a place in this sermon, but rhetorically it is not primarily about the gospel.

Another approach that might help to place law and gospel in preaching is what Gustaf Wingren suggests in *Creation and Law*—a reaffirmation of a Creedal approach that seeks to begin with God as Creator. In this approach, natural law is affirmed as the eternal desire of God for his creation since its very beginning—the order and structure with which Creation operates by virtue of its design. When we consider theology first in light of our shared creatureliness as those in relationship with the Creator, we see much more clearly the content and desire of God for Christian life. Just as Adam was tasked with care for creation, love of God and neighbor, we in the present are still accountable to this will of God. The work of

When preaching emphasizes the positive didactic function of the law, much changes...

Jesus isn't simply a forgiveness that allows the Christian to survive human life on the way to an escape to heaven. It is seen as a restorative, redemptive work that frees us from the *curse* of the law but not from *accountability* to it! In this creedal approach, sinners are made right with God by Jesus's resurrection, and then in the power of the Holy Spirit are returned to their vocations to live in accordance with God's Law until the final restoration.

When preaching emphasizes the positive didactic function of the law, much changes as a result particularly in light of Wingren. The Christian is exhorted positively to love and serve the neighbor simply as a fellow creature, a creation of God, not as a means to their own salvation. This understanding helps to reaffirm the importance of the doctrine of vocation, as Christians are able to engage joyfully in their vocation knowing that it is God-pleasing. Not only that, but when the law is viewed in a positive sense, the Christian is much more receptive to exhortation such as Bible reading, child rearing, and faithful stewardship in a way that an over-simplistic law-gospel approach could not generally speak.

Conclusion

In this paper, we've discussed the possible effects of an unintended misuse of Walther's *Law and Gospel*. We also considered how Richard Caemmerer's methodology for preaching became a formulaic structure which limited the law to its accusatory theological function. These two works would influence theologians throughout the twentieth century and contribute to a diminution of the third function of the law. Similarly, this thought has contributed to an unintended soft, or perhaps outright, antinomianism in some Lutheran circles.

Moving forward, the church would do well to place the law-gospel distinction within the larger framework of the two kinds of righteousness that allows for a more holistic understanding of the functions of the law, and which preserves the integrity of the pure gospel. Reasserting a rhetorical approach to preaching with considerations for "faith" and "life" sermons, and a creedal approach all serve as potential paths forward to assist in rethinking the way the church engages the law-gospel distinction in preaching.

Endnotes

1 C. F. W. Walther, *Law and Gospel* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010).

2 For a more in-depth look at his goal, malady, means approach, see Richard R. Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959).

3 "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you do not allow the Gospel to predominate in your teaching." Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 455.

4 The origin of this exact phrase is questionable. It can be found in many places today, but Walther does write the following, beginning with a quote of 2 Corinthians 3:6: "'The letter kills, but the spirit gives life.' We do not have enough time to explain this in greater detail, but, if you study the matter further, you will see that *letter* means the Law and *spirit* means the Gospel." Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 262.

5 John Warwick Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), 81–123.

6 David Schmitt, "Richard Caemmerer's Goal, Malady, Means: A Retrospective Glance." *CTQ* 74, no. 1 (January 2010): 23–38.

Sermon

Under the Power and Control

Chris Heaton

Liturgical Setting
Third Sunday after Pentecost, Series B

Text
Mark 3:22–30

Structure
Verse-by-Verse

Focus
Jesus has power over the spiritual realm of Satan, who is bound first through Jesus's ministry and ultimately through his death and resurrection.

Function
That my hearers may endure spiritual testing with full confidence of the victory won over Satan by Jesus, under whose power they are now under in baptism.

Introduction
Context and Set-up

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you, from God our Father through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our text is Mark 3:22–30. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus's family thinks he's crazy.

This is the claim of the verse which precedes our text, verse 21. "He's out of his mind." Upon hearing of the things that Jesus was doing and saying, his family goes out to seize him. But they weren't the only ones who failed to see who Jesus is. Mark portrays Jesus very strangely at times. Misassessments are common in Mark's Gospel.

Jesus also meets rejection. Both his ministry and his person. Already at the beginning of chapter three the Pharisees went out *with their rivals* the Herodians and held counsel with regards to how they should destroy him. Jesus had developed a following—crowds pressed upon him at every turn. This could pose a political threat. He had also "developed" enemies, largely due to his ministry—forgiving of sins, his touching unclean lepers, "working" on the Sabbath, and casting out demons. Doing "God stuff." There are many who misunderstand him, misidentify him, and those

who seek his destruction.

This is the context for our reading, starting at verse 22.

Verse 22

And the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem, were saying, "He has Beelzebul" and "In the power of the ruler of the demons, he is throwing out demons."[1]

Jesus is met by scribes from Jerusalem. Scribes were allies with Pharisees—both conservative groups—and both were troubled with Jesus's activities. He had met members of this group (scribes) before—when he healed the paralytic and forgiven his sins in chapter two. Now a *particular* group of scribes comes and makes a charge: he **has** Beelzebul.

Who is Beelzebul? We aren't sure of the referent; scholars have different opinions. From the second charge though, we can discern that Beelzebul is *seen as the leader of the demons*. In other words, **this is a synonym for Satan**. Jesus makes this very connection in verse 23. But they aren't just him calling names. *The scribes connect the ministry of Jesus to the **work** of Satan*. The healings, the giving of forgiveness, the working on the Sabbath, the casting out of demons are seen by them not as God's work…but Satan's.

In contemporary culture, to make gross miscorrelations against an opponent is common place. It is actually considered to be an art form. Scalding "hot takes" on Twitter. Facebook rants by "keyboard gangsters." However, the scribes aren't just doing art. Throwing out accusations to see what sticks in order to get likes and retweets. They are making the claim that Jesus is under the power and sphere of control of Satan.

> He is a roaring lion who prowls and seeks to devour.

This is the way Jesus understands the charge. Now, on one hand, they have some evidence. The demons seem to know who he is. And…he does possess authority over them. But Jesus also forgives sins. He cleanses lepers—doing things *only God alone can do*. They do correctly discern a truth: *his activity is a physical manifestation of the spiritual realm*. They just attribute his ministry to the wrong realm! And Jesus calls them on it.

Verses 23–27[2]

And summoning them, he began speaking to them in parables:
"How is Satan actually able to throw out Satan? And if a kingdom divides against itself, that kingdom is not able to stand. And if a house divides against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan…has risen against himself and has divided, he is not able to stand, but has an end. On the other hand, no one is able, upon going into the house of the strong man, to thoroughly plunder his stuff, if not first he binds the strong man—and

then his house he will thoroughly plunder."

Jesus, we are told, speaks "in parables." Parables here refer to **both** the three sayings **as well as** the short metaphor. Both are introduced with a rhetorical question: **how is this accusation possible**? How am I able to throw out Satan if I am under the power of Satan? Jesus then answers with three assertions. *The first is always true: If a kingdom divides itself, it cannot stand*. Anyone hearing would likely agree with this. Similarly, *the second one is also true…with a future application…that house will not be able to stand*. But then Jesus moves to a *particular* case, the very thing they are charging Jesus with! If Satan has risen up against himself, he is not able to stand. *He has an end*.

Jesus then tells another parable—the binding of the strong man and the plundering of his goods. This parable also represents a general truth: *Jesus's ministry is spiritual warfare*. Far from being under control of Satan, Jesus Christ, having had the Holy Spirit descend *into* him at his baptism, and subsequently being ejected into the wilderness to endure and overcome temptation by Satan, this Jesus Christ, the Son of God is **under the power, not of Satan, but of the Holy Spirit**. Now, in his ministry, this Spirit-possessed Jesus comes to neutralize the spiritual powers arrayed against him and his people. In his commentary on Mark, James Voelz points out: *this neutralization is the saving act accomplished in the ministry of Jesus*.[3]

This has a greater fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus will bind Satan by going to the cross and dying on behalf of those afflicted by the powers of darkness. His resurrection is the ultimate defeat of Satan. Death itself, the physical manifestation of the fall, of sin and the power of the devil, is defeated once and for all. God's people are no longer to be under the power of Satan. He has been bound; he is neutralized.

You might be saying, "Yeah, but there's still sin; there's still spiritual warfare. Was this binding ineffectual? Temporary?"

No. The binding of Satan, first in the ministry of Jesus, then in his death and resurrection is instantiated **in a new age**. But Satan, while now bound, still has some sway until the return of Christ, that is, the full consummation of this age. We still live with our sinful flesh. And this combination—the sway of Satan and our sin—inflicts damage.

Satan still has a voice. At the end of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the Ring of Power has been destroyed, and things are put to right. A new age has dawned. Yet there still is a malevolent force that wanders Middle Earth: Saruman. Formerly a wizard of great power, he has been bound, defeated. But he still has his voice. Through this voice, he can tempt, cajole, and even cow people into doing his bidding. No, he can't kill or destroy, **but he can do damage**.

Satan, though bound, still has a voice. He is a roaring lion who prowls and seeks to devour. But those under the power and control of Jesus have nothing to fear.

Satan can't kill, he can't harm. But he can tempt, cajole, persuade. Sometimes this is seen in our lives *when we give voice* to the Satanic thoughts or impulses in our minds. Our complaints against others. Our gossip. Our tweets. Acting on lustful thoughts. **Soon what was just an inner voice turns into a full-blown physical manifestation**. All starting with a mere suggestion. This gives the devil's voice a form, gives him a power he doesn't really have. And this is sin. For us as believers, sin is still a present reality. But Christ is victor over sin. Sin can and will be forgiven. We see this claim in the final section of our text.

Verses 28–30

"Truly I say to you: all the sins will be forgiven to the sons of man…and the blasphemies…as much as they blaspheme. But whoever blasphemes with reference to the Holy Spirit, he is not gonna have forgiveness into eternity, but he is guilty of an eternal sin." (He said this) because they were saying, "He has an unclean demon."

The first question: what does it mean to "blaspheme"? And, secondly: why is there a distinction between blaspheming generally and blaspheming the Holy Spirit?

To blaspheme is to speak in way that maligns and denigrates. In the context of Mark, to blaspheme is to speak in such a manner against God, against his Son. And there are many who blaspheme in their misunderstanding of who Jesus is (remember Jesus's family who thinks he is crazy?!). *But Jesus says that they can and will be forgiven.* There are many who don't see the identity of Jesus. Who don't believe. Jesus as victor restores proper relationships to him. In contrition, repentance and faith, the Spirit leads them to sight. He forgives their blasphemy. We see this in Acts 1 where Jesus's mother and brothers are restored and are in the upper room with the disciples.

But the second statement is spoken to the scribes—and any who assert that Jesus is in league with Satan. *To claim that the Holy Spirit's work is actually the work of Satan is a damnable lie.* But it is the kind of lie that Satan wants told, that believers might despair. In other words, to ultimately reject the work of the Spirit and believe that Christ's victory on the cross wasn't enough. And that will not be forgiven.

I started having nightmares when I began seminary. They were the worst in that first quarter. They were dreams of my sinful past, recalling in vivid detail the things I had done. These dreams would wake me. And I couldn't go back to sleep. Sometimes they were dreams of what I as a depraved sinner *hypothetically might do*. I had a dream once that I murdered my family. I can still remember that dream and waking up in terror. It seemed so real.

And the thread through them all was *the whisper of Satan's voice*: so, you want to be a pastor? "You—with your past, with your sin, you want to be a shepherd of God's sheep? I know what you've done! I know what you are capable of! You are a fraud. And he doesn't really forgive you." The goal of Satan's voice was for me to

reject the work of the Spirit.

After several weeks I reached out to my pastor. I will never forget what he said. Tersely, "Tell Satan to go to hell. You are baptized! He has no claim over you!" *In my baptism, in our baptism, we are under the power and control of Jesus Christ. We are Spirit possessed.* We are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. We are joined with the victory that binds Satan. The death and resurrection of Jesus gives us forgiveness and everlasting life. Maybe dreams aren't what afflict you…maybe it's something else…but you need not fear. Satan is bound by Jesus. He cannot harm you anymore.

In this new age that has dawned, in his defeat, Satan wants to convince you he has you under his control. But he doesn't. He doesn't have the power. He just has a voice. This voice will forever be silenced at the reappearing of Christ. Until then, his voice has no claim on you. You may utter outrageous things, demeaning things…but in repentance and faith, you stand forgiven **in Christ**. To be "in Christ" is the end of Satan. It is the negation of the claim made by the scribes, that the work of Jesus is governed by the ruler of the demons. To be **in Christ** is to be under his power and control. And when Satan, with his fell voice afflicts you, in the tradition of Martin Luther, who knew something about spiritual warfare, we say to the devil, "Go to hell. I am baptized! You have no claim over me." And we go to sleep.

In the Holy name of Jesus. Amen.

SDG

Endnotes

1 The translation given in italics throughout the sermon is my own.

2 This section is greatly indebted to and drawn from: James Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 252–263.

3 Ibid.

Poem

A Lost Prayer

Jaron P. Melin

Author's Preface

In my senior year of high school, our class read *Night* by Elie Wiesel,[1] who gives his autobiographical account as a young Jew surviving the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. Our English teacher gave us the assignment to select various quotes as we read the book in order to make a poem which captures a certain theme in the book. The theme of prayer stood out prominently in my view. This was approximately eleven years ago, so my views on prayer and theology have vastly matured since then. Nevertheless, I did have deep convictions for the Christian religion at the time.

What can we learn about prayer from a Jew who survived the Holocaust? Even though we face horrors, tragedies, and trials, prayer is part of who we are even when we don't know why we do it. We also get an existential view of looking at the hidden God in the midst of atrocity. Finally, we see an example of a modern-day lament to God about cruel injustice. So then, we can bring our laments to God about injustice even today. As Christians, we can respond to this lament by saying, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

Endnotes

1 Elie Wiesel, *Night: with Related Readings* (St. Paul, MN: EMC/Paradigm, 2003), 2, 3, 56–57, 61–62, 73, 82.

A Lost Prayer

Created by Quotes from Night *by Elie Wiesel*

"Why do you weep when you pray?"

Why did I pray? A strange question.
Why did I live? Why did I breathe?
I wept because—because of something inside me that felt the need for tears.
Every question possesses a power that does not lie in the answer.

"Man raises himself toward God by the questions he asks Him.
That is the true dialogue. Man questions God, and God answers.
But we don't understand His answers.
You will find the true answers only within yourself."

Question and answer would become one.

Where is God?
Where is He?
Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows.

What are You, my God,
Compared to this afflicted crowd,
Proclaiming to You
    Their Faith,
    Their anger,
    Their revolt?

What does Your greatness mean, Lord of the Universe,
In the face of all
    This weakness,
    This decomposition,
    And this decay?
Why do You still trouble their sick minds, their crippled bodies?
"Bless the Eternal!"

Why, but why should I bless Him?
Because He had had thousands of children burned in His pits?
Because He kept six crematories working night and day,
On Sundays and feast days?
Because in His great might He had created
    Auschwitz,
    Birkenau,
    Buna,

And so many factories of death?

How could I say to Him:
"Blessed art Thou, Eternal, Master of the Universe,
Who chose us from among the races to be tortured day and night,
To see
    Our fathers,
    Our mothers,
    Our brothers,
End in the crematory?
Praised be Thy Holy Name,
Thou Who hast chosen us to be butchered on Thine altar?"

I've got eyes, too, and I can see what they did here.
Where is the divine Mercy?
Where is God?
How can I believe,
How could anyone believe,
In this merciful God?

I had more faith in Hitler than in anyone else.
He's the only one, who's kept his promises,
All his promises,
To the Jewish people.

And, in spite of myself,
A prayer rose in my heart,
To that God in whom I no longer believed.

Bible Study

A Bible Study on Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-10

Joshua Ulm

Introduction

As he wrote, spoke, and marched in the name of civil rights, Martin Luther King Jr. constantly addressed the issue of poverty. It was his opinion that equal rights can never be fully realized until poverty and financial inequality are eliminated. Toward the end of his 1967 Southern Christian Leadership Conference Presidential Address, King said: "[L]et us go out with a divine dissatisfaction. Let us be dissatisfied until America will no longer have a high blood pressure of creeds and an anemia of deeds. Let us be dissatisfied until the tragic walls that separate the outer city of wealth and comfort and the inner city of poverty and despair shall be crushed by the battering rams of the forces of justice."[1]

Poverty was a major factor in King's life and work. Poverty is also a major theme in the Scriptures. The "innocent poor"[2] in the Old Testament were highly valued by Yahweh and would be avenged when his day arrived (Am 8:4,7–8). Mary welcomed the pre-born Messiah by singing that the Lord "has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty" (Lk 1:53).

When exploring the work of Martin Luther King Jr., the topic of poverty is given great importance, and King is not shy about offering specific solutions to what he sees as the problem. When approaching King's work on the subject, a biblical perspective is helpful. Remembering that B.C. Israel is a unique case in human history. (Israel's divinely given policies need not be the policies of twenty-first century America.) This study will look at one example of how Israel handled the poor in her midst.

To guide you through this study, I encourage you to read the Scripture passages and pray the prayers I have listed.

Opening Prayer

> Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.[3]

The Text: Leviticus 19:1–2, 9–10.

> And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.
>
> "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God."

The Essentials of the Text

Who is speaking here? Why is he speaking? Who is he speaking to?

Moses is speaking here. Moses stands between the people and God, interceding for the people (Ex 32:7–14) and speaking Yahweh's words to the people (the phrase "speak to the people of Israel saying" appears multiple times in Leviticus, emphasizing this role). In Exodus 20, the people ask Moses to speak to them because they cannot bear to hear the voice of Yahweh (Ex 20:19).

Moses is speaking to the whole assembly of Israel. He speaks in the second person plural. The words Moses speaks on God's behalf apply to all the people of Israel, as they are a people set apart for Yahweh.

What is Israel to do on the basis of verses 9–10?

The first portion of the text calls Israel to *complete* holiness, holiness that reflects the holiness of Yahweh himself. The second portion calls those who have fields not to harvest the entire field, leaving unharvested crops on the edges of the field for sojourners. The part of the field that they do harvest is to be harvested once. They are not to go over the field again and again to get every last bit of return, but they are to leave leftovers for those who need them.

Where does God lead his people after the Exodus? What sort of place will it be?

God leads them to the land of the Canaanites, driving out the land's previous inhabitants to make room for his people. Yahweh swore to give the promised land to his people. He picked a fertile and plentiful land for them, which he called, "a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8).

Why are the Israelites to act in this way?

They are to be holy because Yahweh is holy. John Kleinig describes this relationship saying that "Israel's holiness derives from [Yahweh's] holiness."[4] Yahweh is the source of all holiness and the only one who is truly holy. His people are to imitate, reflect, and live their lives in light of his holiness.

The Theology of the Text

What do verses 9 and 10 tell us about the character of God?

Verses 9 and 10 tell us that God is merciful, compassionate, and cares for the poor, lonely, and outcast. All things are Yahweh's, and his people are to reflect his priorities in their use of his creation. God does not showcase who he is in his treatment of the high in status but in his treatment of the lowly. Deuteronomy 7:7 says, "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples." This verse reminds us that Israel was not a powerful or numerous nation. Throughout Israel's history it is clear that Israel would have been overrun without Yahweh's protection.

God's regard for the sojourner and poor specifically is shown in Deuteronomy 10:18, "He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing." Mercy and compassion were frequently used in creedal descriptions of the character of Yahweh, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6).[5]

How does God's command (rooted in his divine mercy and compassion) not to harvest the entire field play out within salvation history? Read Ruth 2:1–7; 4:13–22.

The specific mandate not to take the gleanings from the harvest given in Leviticus 19:9–10 was followed by Boaz. Ruth followed behind the reapers gathering the leftovers that were for the poor and sojourner. She used this opportunity to meet Boaz who would marry her, saving her and Naomi and leading to the birth of Obed (Ru 4:17), the grandfather of David and ancestor of Jesus.

Are Christians obligated to keep this section of the Torah? Why or why not?

Christian farmers and landowners are not obligated to follow these cropping regulations given to Israel. They were given to God's people at a specific time for a specific purpose. Even if a Christian farmer were to leave some of his yield for the poor, the practice of gleaning by the needy is not commonplace in the United States, and the produce would likely go to waste. While we understand that the cropping regulations given in this text were for Israel, not for us, Christians are not to ignore God's call to holiness. Peter cites Leviticus 19:2 when he writes "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pt 1:14–16). While we understand that our holiness will always fall short and that we must rely on the holiness of Christ, the call to "be holy" remains. This text also calls us to remember that the lowly of this world have value in the eyes of Yahweh. As Yahweh's holy people, we should value them as well. "Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation" (Ps 68:5).

Leviticus 19 and related themes elsewhere in Scripture

As mentioned above, Leviticus 19:2 is cited in 1 Peter. An early creed of ancient Israel (used when offering tithes to Yahweh) mentioned the sojourning of Israel when recounting the deeds of God, "A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous" (Dt 26:5).

> God's value of the lowly culminates in the incarnation of Christ. Jesus "had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (Is 53:2). Jesus came from Bethlehem, which was "too little to be among the clans of Judah" (Mi 5:2). Jesus's hometown caused Nathanael to say, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46). The Jews rejected Jesus saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" (Jn 6:42). Perhaps most of all, Jesus died in a shameful and despised way. Scripture says, "for a hanged man is cursed by God" (Dt 20:23). But in Jesus, the lowly, despised, scorned, rejected man from Nazareth, "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are" (1 Cor 1:27–28).

For Further Consideration

What is a sojourner? A sojourner is one who is not a part of the nation of Israel but journeys about in its midst. This person (and his or her family) would have no established place in society, no rights under the law, and no family ties in that place. In most nations, the sojourner was often looked down upon and seen as a nuisance or intruder. In Israel, the sojourner was to be cared for (Dt 10:18–19) and even to keep the Sabbath (Ex 20:9).

Questions for Meditation and Application

Why is it important that God values the lowly?
Who are the lowly in today's society?
How are the lowly treated by those who are of high status?
How can I reflect the mercy, compassion, and priorities of my God towards those who are outcasts, downtrodden, or oppressed?
In what sense am I poor and lowly, and what did God do for me in my poverty? (2 Cor 8:9; Rom 5:8).
Read Psalm: Psalm 68:1–10

Closing Prayer

Lord of heaven and earth, you are gracious and merciful to all. You showed your mercy as you led Israel into the promised land and as you instructed your people to care for the poor in their midst through simple means. Most of all you showed your mercy as you sent your Son, lowly, despised, and rejected. Grant that we, looking to Christ as an example and beacon of your mercy and compassion, might show mercy to others. Guide us by your Holy Spirit to strive to be holy as you are holy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Endnotes

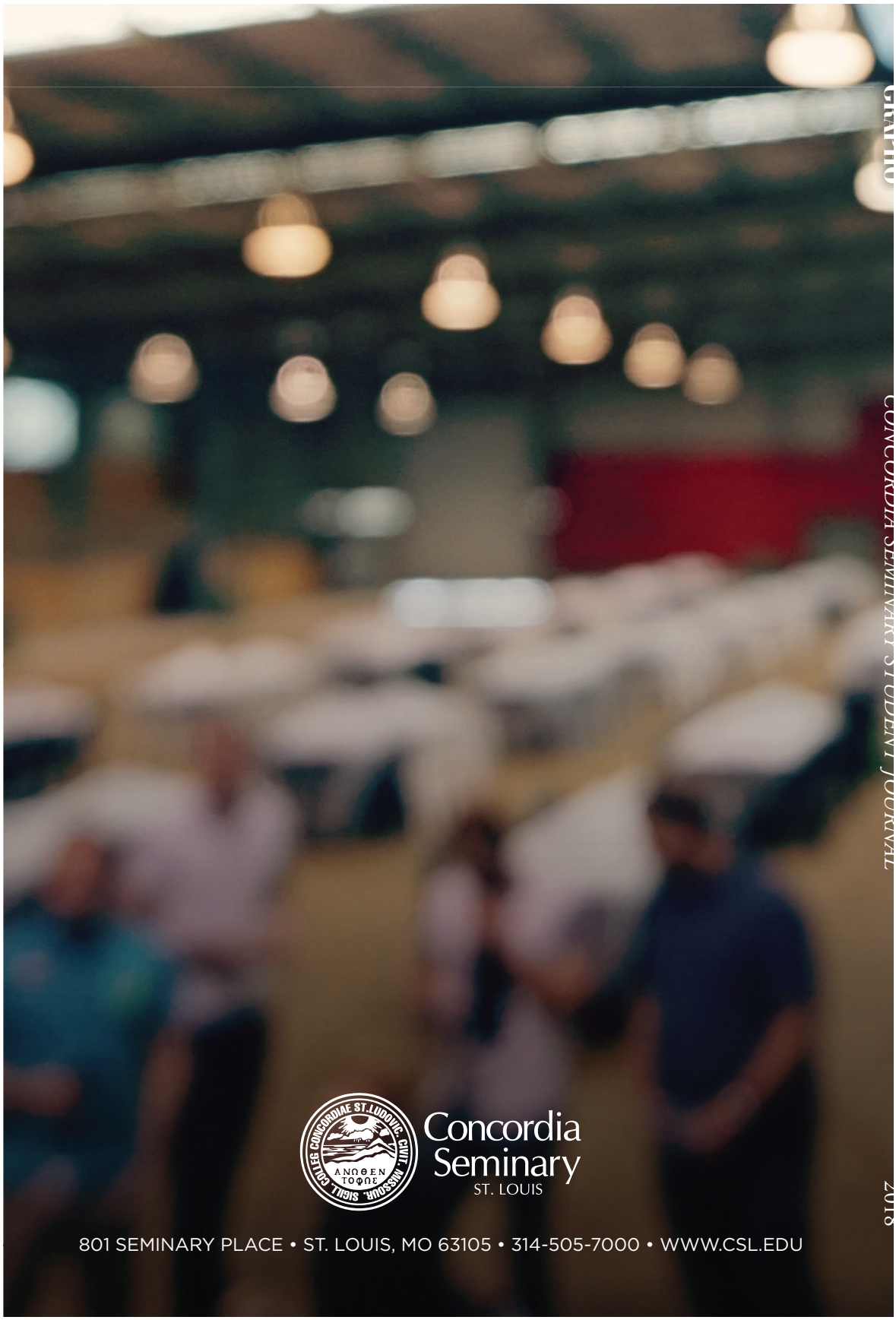
1 Martin Luther King Jr., "The Southern Christian Leadership Conference Presidential Address" Hartford Web Publishing: World History Archives, August 16, 1967, accessed December 31, 2017, http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/628.html.

2 The Old Testament also deals with those who are poor due to sloth or laziness. The primary use of "poor" refers to those who have been abused and oppressed by "the rich" For example, Psalm 10:2 says, "In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor."

3 "Collect for the Word," *Lutheran Service Book* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 308.

4 John W. Kleinig, *Leviticus* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 407.

5 See Mark J. Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).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