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CONTEMPORARY CONFESSIONAL COMMITMENT: A MODELS-BASED APPROACH
WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON GLOBAL SOUTH LUTHERANISM

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Roberto E. Bustamante
February, 2020

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I dedicate this work to my beloved wife and children, Eunice Amancay, Tobías, and Ana Selene.

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Soli Deo Gloria

ABBREVIATIONS

ALC	The American Lutheran Church
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession ¹
BC	Book of Concord
BSLK	<i>Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche</i> . Edited by Irene Dingel. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014. ²
CA	<i>Confessio Augustana</i> (The Augsburg Confession)
CJ	<i>Concordia Journal</i> (theological journal of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis)
CTCR	Commission on Theology and Church Relations (of the LCMS)
CTQ	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i> (theological journal of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne)
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
ET	<i>Estudos Teológicos</i> (theological journal of IECLB)
FC	Formula of Concord
IECLB	Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil
IELA	Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina
IELB	Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil
IL	<i>Igreja Luterana</i> (theological journal of IELB)
ILC	International Lutheran Council
LC	Large Catechism
LCA	The Lutheran Church in America

¹ The abbreviations of the documents that form the Lutheran Confessions are those used in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000). The present dissertation takes this as the standard edition for English citations.

² The present dissertation takes BSLK as the standard edition for the original German and Latin texts.

LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
<i>LQ</i>	<i>Lutheran Quarterly</i> (theological journal)
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works: American Edition</i> . Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman. 56 vols. St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955–1986.
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MPL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completes: Series Latina</i> . Edited by Jacques P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris & Turnhout, 1859–1963.
PI	Wittgenstein, Ludwig. <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> . 2nd. ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> . Edited by Philip Schaff. 28 vols. in two series.
<i>RT</i>	<i>Revista Teológica</i> (theological journal of IELA)
SA	Smalcald Articles
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
<i>ST</i>	Aquinas, Thomas. <i>The Summa Theologica</i> , trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benzinger, 1947.
Tr	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
ULCA	The United Lutheran Church in America
VELKD	Vereinigte Evangelische-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands (United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany)
WA	Luther, Martin. <i>Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . 65 vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993.

ABSTRACT

Bustamante, Roberto E. “Contemporary Confessional Commitment: A Models-Based Approach with a Particular Focus on Global South Lutheranism.” Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2019. 297 pp.

Current scholarly research on creeds and confessions is in a paradoxical situation. We live in a golden age of such research because of its growing findings and new contributions, but at the same time we are experiencing what is arguably the deepest crisis in terms of confessional alliance and semantic clarity. Additionally, Global South Lutheranism is in a search of identity and legitimate reasons that may justify ascribing the Lutheran Confessions a relevant role in shaping that identity.

This study proposes to discuss the confessional issue under the notion of confessional commitment and within the framework of a models-based approach. This framework allows us to integrate and organize a diversity of contemporary North Atlantic contributions as a typology of three discrete models of confessional commitment. This work tests how this typology performs the double function a model is to exert on a particular object of study, namely, to provide a coherent appreciation of it, and to explore its challenges and possible solutions. We also test the productivity of our models of confessional commitment by applying them to a set of case studies that represent part of the actual conversation and struggles of Latin American Lutheranism.

In this way, the present dissertation attempts to contribute to the field of confessional studies by proposing a models-based strategy to address and cope with the perceived confusion that affects current scholarly research on the subject, and a rationale to account for the fundamental theological treasure our current Lutheranism still can find in its symbolical books.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Do Creeds have a future as well as a past?” With this question former Yale historian Jaroslav Pelikan concluded his *racconto* of the history of creeds and confessions in *Credo*, his last main contribution on the Christian creeds.¹ Modern and postmodern society, and Global South Christianity, arguably seem to be prompted toward anything except submitting themselves and their current challenges and desires under the foreign and questionable normativity of ancient creedal formularies. Why should ancient creeds retain such an authority today? Would this not amount to fighting “the military battles of the twentieth [and twenty first] centur[ies] with the weapons of the sixteenth?”² How is it possible to keep speaking in terms of religious commitment to ancient confessional texts such as the Lutheran Confessions in a post-Christian and post-colonial age?

Notwithstanding, even in this global context, there still remains a genuine ecclesial concern for establishing and shaping a confessional Lutheran identity in several local and national churches. Moreover, there is a considerable variety of robust and fruitful scholarly contributions regarding the nature and function of the Lutheran Confessions. The time is ripe for mining the implications that all this ecclesial and scholarly concern might raise for the church’s actual commitment to her symbolical books.

Presupposing and taking for granted the Lutheran Confessions’ claim of normativity, this work will explore the validity of the Lutheran Confessions and of some of the contemporary

¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to the Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 508–15.

² Hermann Sasse, “The Confessions and the Unity of the Church,” in *The Lonely Way*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison et al. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001), 1:358.

proposals regarding confessional commitment in terms of how they meet Global South Lutheranism's expressed struggles and hopes for establishing an ecclesial identity.³

Problem and Background

The present study is interested in recent North Atlantic conversations regarding the Lutheran Confessions, as well as in Latin American Lutheranism and its relation to the symbolical books. Consequently, this chapter will offer an initial depiction of the present dissertation's background by taking these two aspects of Lutheran research into consideration.

Shifts in the Discussion Regarding the Lutheran Confessions

In their recent article "I Make These Confessions My Own," Robert Kolb and Charles Arand affirm that there has been a series of shifts of interest in the discussion regarding the confessional question throughout the last three centuries.⁴ The authors say that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the discussion revolved around "the extent of confessional subscription,"⁵ initially in terms of the alternative options between an unconditional subscription (*quia*) and a conditional one (*quatenus*).⁶ "This in turn," continue Kolb and Arand, "raised

³ Thus this dissertation will move in similar lines with the spirit of John XXIII's solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council: "At the outset of the Second Vatican Council, it is evident, as always, that the truth of the Lord will remain forever. We see, in fact, as one age succeeds another, that the opinions of men follow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun. The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations." Pope John XXIII, "Opening Speech for the Council Vatican II," October 11, 1962, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/es/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council.html.

⁴ Charles P. Arand and Robert Kolb, "'I Make These Confessions My Own:' Lutheran Confessional Subscription in the Twenty-First Century," *CJ* 41, no. 1 (2015): 23.

⁵ Arand and Kolb, "I Make These Confessions," 23.

⁶ See, e.g., Carl F. Walther, "Answer to the Question: 'Why Should Our Pastors, Teachers, and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings of Our Church?'" in *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth*,

questions about the content of the Confessions and what was included in confessional subscription and what was not included.”⁷

In 1980, John Johnson declared that toward the end of the last century both the *quia- quatenus* distinction and the discussion regarding the extent of confessional subscription had ceased to be the real issue at stake.⁸ Instead, Johnson advances, Lutheranism was facing a “radically different ... type of confessional problem” that he defines as “a grave misunderstanding of what it means for a church to be confessional and a persistent doubt that there is any scriptural warrant for subscription to confessional statements.”⁹ Therefore, what became a priority in the discussion, according to Johnson, was to demonstrate the “Biblical legitimacy” for a Church to have a confessional norm.

Kolb and Arand update this description, pointing out that during the last few years a new topic appeared on the stage related to the way “we use the confessions today,” that is to say, the hermeneutical and actual role we ascribe to the Lutheran Confessions. Several years before, Robert D. Preus had already advanced a similar summary of the different topics under contention:

I suppose that few subjects are more controverted today among Lutherans than the nature of confessional subscription, the force of our symbols’ biblical basis, the hermeneutics of the Lutheran Confessions and their validity, the nature of

ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Lutheran Legacy, 2009), 119–37; Pfarrer Höppl and Hermann Sasse, “*Quatenus or Quia? An Interchange on the Nature of Confessional Subscription*,” trans. Matthew C. Harrison, *Logia* 8, no. 2 (Easteride 1999): 5–7.

⁷ Arand and Kolb, “I Make These Confessions,” 23.

⁸ Though this hardly seems to be the real case. See, e.g., Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 51; Robert D. Preus, “Confessional Subscription,” in *Doctrine is Life: The Essays of Robert D. Preus on Justification and the Lutheran Confessions*, ed. Klemet I. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 197–201. Previously published as “Confessional Subscription,” in *Evangelical Directions for the Lutheran Church*, eds. Erich Kiehl and Waldo J. Werning (Chicago: Lutheran Congress, 1970), 42–52.

⁹ John F. Johnson, “Confession and Confessional Subscription,” *CJ* 6, no. 6 (1980): 236.

Lutheranism, and even the truth and relevance and meaning of basic Lutheran doctrine.¹⁰

Both Robert Kolb and Charles Arand have themselves made important contributions in exploring and unpacking the different possible uses of the Confessions that have been proposed by the Lutheran tradition across the centuries. Here, three segments of this history will be picked up, as they are reviewed either by Kolb or Arand.

The first segment of history, as suggested by their own recent article, considers “how they [i.e., the confessional writings] came to be regarded and used in the two generations during which they were written and accepted.”¹¹ In his *Confessing the Faith*, Robert Kolb attempts to distill from his historical research the way those two first generations came to learn how to confess their faith and use their Confessions.¹² Throughout this monograph we find several examples of this. Thus we read that at Augsburg, “[t]he written confession served not only as a symbol of the faith but also as a legal definition which regulated the church’s life and its place in society.”¹³ Later, Kolb reviews the functions that Luther ascribes to the symbols of the Church in 1538: they (1) summarize the faith, (2) protect and secure true doctrine (against heresy), and (3) norm what has to be preached in the Church.¹⁴ Still exploring the genesis of the Lutheran ethos of confessing the faith, the author refers to Gottfried Seebass’ four proposed reasons or “concrete needs” that are addressed by the Confessions:¹⁵ they (1) offer a form for public teaching and

¹⁰ Robert D. Preus, “Can the Lutheran Confessions Have Any Meaning 450 Years Later?” in *Doctrine is Life*, 253.

¹¹ Arand and Kolb, “I Make These Confessions,” 23.

¹² Robert Kolb, *Confessing the Faith: Reformers Define the Church, 1530–1580* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1991).

¹³ Kolb, *Confessing the Faith*, 18.

¹⁴ Kolb, *Confessing the Faith*, 24.

¹⁵ Gottfried Seebass, “Die reformatorischen Bekenntnisse vor der Confessio Augustana,” in *Kirche und Bekenntnis*, ed. Peter Meinhold (Weisbaden, 1980), 26–55.

preaching, (2) constitute a public presentation before the political authorities, (3) confess the truth over against alternate proposals, and (4) define the basis for political and military alliances.¹⁶ In a similar line of thought, Kolb himself summarizes four ways the heirs of the Augsburg confessors used the *Augustana* (The Augsburg Confession): (1) as a legal definition of the religious stance of Lutheranism in the Holy Roman Empire, (2) as a rule to establish what is to be taught and practiced in the congregations, (3) as secondary authority for interpreting Scripture, and (4) as a way of confessing the truth before the world.¹⁷

The second segment of history to be considered here is covered by Charles Arand in his *Testing the Boundaries*.¹⁸ In this book, Arand describes a spectrum of positions that American Lutheranism has taken toward its confessional writings during the past two centuries (from the end of the eighteenth century through the end of the twentieth century). Arand presents four distinct trajectories that initially moved between the extremes of a totally historical understanding of the Confessions and a totally dogmatic or scriptural one,¹⁹ and that finally came near each other in a middle ground where the author's own proposal seems to be located.²⁰ Arand

¹⁶ Kolb, *Confessing the Faith*, 27–28.

¹⁷ Kolb, *Confessing the Faith*, 38–42.

¹⁸ Charles P. Arand, *Testing the Boundaries: Windows to Lutheran Identity* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1995).

¹⁹ Four different church bodies or associations represent each of these trajectories: (1) The LCMS is initially located at the *dogmatic or scriptural extreme* (C. F. W. Walther and Theodore Engelder), though later gets distanced from it (Arthur Piepkorn and John Tietjen); (2) The General Synod is on the other (*historical extreme*) (Samuel Schmucker and Samuel Sprecher), but later comes nearer the center (Theodore Tappert and Willard Allbeck); (3) the General Council (Charles Krauth and Henry Jacobs); and (4) the Iowa Synod (George Grossmann and Johann Reu) represent a central position, leaning toward the dogmatic and the historical side respectively, but finally embodying the general confluence toward a central common ground through the formation of a series of union church bodies (Juergen Neve, Carl Braaten, and Robert Jensen).

²⁰ Maintaining a “dynamic tension” between both extremes is not only the concluding proposal of the book, but a repeated case Charles Arand makes. Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 266; Charles P. Arand, “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Confessions,” *CJ* 28, no. 1 (2002): 21–22; Charles P. Arand, Robert Kolb, and James A. Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 16.

reviews an important number of representatives of each trajectory and the different functions they ascribe to the Lutheran Confessions. Let us consider some of these functions: According to C. F. W. Walther (1811–1887; LCMS), the Confessions (1) help the church to confess its faith, (2) distinguish the church from heterodox communions, and (3) regulate the ministers’ task.²¹ Theodore Schmauk (1860–1920; The General Council) proposes that the Confessions (1) summarize the scriptural content, (2) guide their interpretation, (3) bring the church into agreement, and (4) serve as a medium for catechesis and theological education.²² According to Henry Jacobs (1844–1932; The General Council), the Confessions serve (1) as a bond of union, (2) to distinguish one communion from the other, and (3) as a solemn contract for preachers.²³ For Theodore Engelder (1865–1949; LCMS), the Confessions (1) are “*normata*, but still *norma*,” (2) express the pure doctrine, and (3) reject error.²⁴ Arthur Piepkorn (1907–1973; LCMS) ascribes the Confessions the functions of (1) witnessing to the scriptural content and its traditional interpretation, and (2) setting the criteria or standard for preachers.²⁵ Theodore Tappert (1904–73; ULCA) takes the Confessions to (1) express the common faith, (2) secure fellowship, (3) exhibit the continuity of the church, and (4) facilitate religious thinking.²⁶ Carl Braaten (1929–; ELCA) and Robert Jenson (1930–2017; ELCA) assert that the Confessions are useful as (1) a hermeneutical map, (2) an ecumenical proposal, and (3) a regulating principle for dogmatics.²⁷ Charles Arand himself (1957–; LCMS) suggests that the Confessions provide (1) a

²¹ Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 98.

²² Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 59.

²³ Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 62.

²⁴ Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 226.

²⁵ Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 228–30.

²⁶ Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 196–97.

²⁷ Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 251–52.

road map for reading Scripture, (2) a theological framework for a Christian worldview, and (3) the proper vocabulary for Christian conversation.²⁸

Finally, as representatives of the third segment of history of exploration regarding the functions ascribed to the Lutheran Confessions (i.e., the present and immediate future), both Kolb and Arand, together with James A. Nestingen, propose that the Book of Concord serves current Lutheranism as “[t]he memory bank” that “guide[s] our understanding of the entire framework of biblical teaching as we are called to deliver it to the twenty-first-century world.”²⁹ Then, they proceed to list five different aspects of what seems to be the mood or disposition with which the Confessions help current Lutheranism face its confessing task: (1) they help us to focus on the proper “evangel of Jesus Christ” that has to be “at the center of proclamation,” (2) they inspire “eschatological sensitivity, (3) ecumenical commitment, (4) evangelistic passion, and (5) the desire to edify God’s people for the comfort of their conscience and for the further confession of their faith in word and deed.”³⁰

Behind the uses and final application of the Lutheran Confessions lies the discussion regarding the “mechanism” for a proper reading of their texts. In private conversation, Robert Kolb has pointed out that this still remains an area in need of further exploration.³¹ However, two essays written by systematic professors at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis contribute to this discussion. One of them is Arthur Piepkorn, who presented a series of theses for discussion in 1957.³² Piepkorn discusses sixty five hermeneutical principles, organized under four different

²⁸ Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 13.

²⁹ Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 7.

³⁰ Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 9.

³¹ Robert Kolb, interview by author, Concordia Seminary St. Louis, 5 January, 2013.

³² Arthur C. Piepkorn, “Suggested Principles for a Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Symbols,” *Concordia*

headings: (1) general considerations related to a theological reflection on the nature of the Lutheran Symbols and the ethics of confessional subscription; (2) common hermeneutical considerations related to the proper understanding of a text; (3) a detailed identification of the authoritative edition of each document in the Book of Concord; and (4) specific hermeneutical considerations related to the limits of the Confessions' binding force and the way to proceed in interpreting the text. The other St. Louis systematician is Charles Arand, who has discussed for years the hermeneutical problem of keeping the proper tension between two extreme approaches to the Confessions.³³ The first extreme, called the *historical or extra-canonical interpretation*, takes as its starting point the fact that the Lutheran Confessions are a product of particular historical circumstances. Thus, they are to be read in a diachronic way, as one instance within a continuum in the church's pronouncements, and in light of external sources such as the rest of the Lutheran Reformation private writings.³⁴ On the other hand, the *dogmatic or canonical interpretation* takes as its foundational hermeneutical principle the conviction that the Confessions express the pure doctrine of Scripture, the eternal truth that was revealed by Christ. This approach moves toward a synchronic and intra-textual reading of the Symbols. In other words, one normative text is to be read in the context and under the light of the other normative texts within the canon of the Book of Concord.³⁵ Arand argues for a tension, a both/and move

Theological Monthly 29, no. 1 (1958): 1–24.

³³ Over the years, Arand changed the way of labeling each trajectory, but kept a similar description of them. In *Testing the Boundaries* (1995), they are defined as the “historical” and the “dogmatic/scriptural” approaches; in his article of 2002 (“Toward a Hermeneutics”), he speaks in terms of “extra-canonical” and “Book of Concord (canonical)” interpretations; and finally the co-authored book *The Lutheran Confessions* (2012) combines the previous sets of categories, contrasting the “historical” and the “canonical” interpretation. See, Arand, *Testing the Boundaries*, 87–149; Arand, “Toward a Hermeneutics,” 9–22; Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 16.

³⁴ Representatives of this trajectory are Theodore Tappert, David Fagerberg, Carl Braaten, John Tietjen, and Arthur Piepkorn.

³⁵ Representatives of this trajectory are C. F. W. Walther, Francis Pieper, August Vilmar, Hermann Sasse,

that excludes neither approach, while holding to a hierarchy between approaches, which gives the doctrinal dimension the upper hand vis-à-vis the historical dimension.³⁶

In a co-authored article on the future of confessional studies, Timothy Wengert and Robert Kolb also address the hermeneutical issue. The authors claim that the particularity of “the evils of twenty-first century life” confront current and future Lutheranism with a totally new context, and this, for them, “must lead to translation efforts that bring the lively power and freshness of Reformation insights into understandable form for those living in the complex and threatening world of today.”³⁷ After sentencing that “[a]ny simple re-pristination of an historical document, of course, results only in the mute speaking to the deaf,”³⁸ Wengert and Kolb make at least two positive suggestions regarding the pending task:

The proper use of the Lutheran confessions in the twenty-first century requires skills at translation ... [that is to say, it] demands work on the confessional hermeneutics. Such hermeneutical questions fall into at least two categories. First, Lutheran theologians must struggle to find the most effective ways to introduce in our own cultural settings the theological appraisal of who God is as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ and who we human creatures are, as rebellious creatures fashioned in the Creator’s image. Second, the development of the confessional hermeneutics for our time involves an assessment of the authority that the Confessional documents claim for themselves—not as legal dicta (which was the case in much of the Lutheran past) but as expressions of and witnesses to the Word of God.³⁹

Current Lack of Clear Definitions

Louvain Professor Georges De Schrijver, S.J., has pointed out that a peculiar side effect of postmodern deconstruction of any kind of certainty is a neo-orthodox or fundamentalist revival

Theodore Engelder, and Edmund Schlink.

³⁶ Consider, particularly, the conclusion of his 2002 article, “Toward a Hermeneutics,” 21–22.

³⁷ Timothy J. Wengert and Robert Kolb, “The Future of Lutheran Confessional Studies: Reflections in Historical Context,” *Dialog* 45, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 120.

³⁸ Wengert and Kolb, “The Future of Confessional Studies,” 124.

³⁹ Wengert and Kolb, “The Future of Confessional Studies,” 125.

that demands recuperating “a sense of firm anchorage” in order to “exorcise life’s insecurities.”⁴⁰ Since “under the dictates of the consumer market postmodern persons must necessarily choose, and they are never sure whether they have made a good choice,” “retrieving ‘the basics’” such as religious ceremonies and normative textbooks of old—ascertains De Schrijver—exonerates members of fundamentalist groups from the heavy burden of assuming the responsibility for their choices. Thus, postmodernism juxtaposes what Gene E. Veith calls a “spirituality without truth”⁴¹ that resists the normative claims of the Lutheran Confessions together with “the new tribalism”⁴² that makes the labeling of “confessional” alluring. This exacerbates the confused scene that Robert Preus described more than three decades ago: “A pietist, a Bultmannian, a synergist, a Barthian, a charismatic, a Marxist, a millennialist, a positivist may all claim to be Lutheran and faithful to the Book of Concord according to their understanding of it.”⁴³

This paradox that pervades our entire Western society, as well as our current Lutheran world, has a parallel situation in the scholarly guild of confessional studies. Jaroslav Pelikan has depicted the current state of affairs as one of a simultaneous discomfort with the Confessions’ halo of dogmatism and heteronomy⁴⁴ that coexists with the fact that our present time could be considered as “the golden age of a creedal and confessional research.”⁴⁵ This cannot help but

⁴⁰ Georges De Schrijver, SJ, “Postmodernity and the Withdrawal of the Divine: A Challenge for Theology,” in *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, ed. Lieven Boeve and Lambert Leijssen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 58.

⁴¹ Gene E. Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 191–207.

⁴² Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 143–56.

⁴³ Preus, “Can Confessions Have Any Meaning?” 253.

⁴⁴ The modern ascription of “heteronomy” to the creeds and confessions does not rest on a supposed imposition of these texts upon Christianity “from the outside” (i.e., from other communities), but on the fact that they were not produced by “us” (i.e., modern Christians) but by “them” (i.e., ancient or pre-modern Christians).

⁴⁵ Pelikan, *Credo*, 505.

produce the situation that systematic Professor Joel Okamoto acknowledges in his editorial introduction to an entire issue of *Concordia Journal* dedicated to confessionalism, where he says that “the notion of *confessionalism* is confused and confusing today,” since “even among Lutherans it can be hard to tell what we mean by the words *confessional* and *confessionalism*.”⁴⁶

From the perspective of Mainz Professor Irene Dingel, however, this state of affairs seems not to be a retrogression. In her article “*Bekennnis und Geschichte*” Dingel explores the development of two initial and basic functions that confessional writings were originally given. On the one hand, the Confessions were instruments of unity and consensus within Christendom, and on the other hand, they drew the demarcating line that helped to distinguish a particular community from the other confessions.⁴⁷ The author traces the “multi-faceted development” of the nature and function that the *Augustana* experienced along its first half century of existence, and infers that the question of the “function of the confessional documents of the Reformation defies any general conclusion.” Therefore, “no overall schema or a generalized program for interpreting them” can claim any kind of exclusivity.⁴⁸

The Lutheran Confessions in Latin America⁴⁹

Right from its painful beginnings of banishment and persecution,⁵⁰ all the way through the

⁴⁶ Joel P. Okamoto, “Introduction from the Chair,” *CJ* 41, no. 1 (2015): 5–6.

⁴⁷ Irene Dingel, “The Function and Historical Development of Reformation Confessions,” *LQ* 26, no. 3 (2012): 297.

⁴⁸ Dingel, “Function and Historical Development,” 305.

⁴⁹ This section initiates a long chain of citations (that traverses the entire dissertation) taken from a variety of sources published in Portuguese, Spanish, and German. The English version of these texts is the present author’s translation.

⁵⁰ Enrique Dussel, *Historia general de la iglesia en américa latina* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1983), 1:661–62; Roland Spliesgart, “Luteranos na América latina: A perspectiva histórica do cristianismo,” *Numen* 6, no. 1 (2003): 117–18.

present time, Lutheranism in Latin America has been by far a minority movement. Even though there have always been cases of Lutheran missionary enterprises that involved Latin American inculturation,⁵¹ the main church bodies that represent Lutheranism in Latin America still preserve basic traits of “transplant (or immigrant) churches.”⁵² German immigrants that came to Latin America brought their religious books (Bible, catechism, and prayerbooks) with them. However, they migrated to this land neither following after a religious cause nor seeking to establish a primordial religious society, but rather maintaining a society that would help them to preserve their ethno-cultural *Deushtum* (Germanness).⁵³ Religion served this cause, just as Vítor Westhelle puts it: “the church’s function [was] to preserve the ethnicity and to keep the cultural group united through the language, using the faith to bring a [particular] ideology.”⁵⁴

The way Professor Erico Sexauer has described IELA (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina) also seems to apply to most of Latin American Lutheranism: it represents a “church of confluence.”⁵⁵ On the basis of a review of the literature, this confluence can be described as

⁵¹ Spliesgart, “Luteranos na América latina,” 111–14.

⁵² Waldo L. Villalpando, ed., *Las iglesias de transplante: Protestantismo de inmigración en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios Cristianos, 1970); Vítor Westhelle, “Considerações sobre o etno-luteranismo latino-americano: Panfleto para debate,” *ET* 18, no. 2 (1978): 77–94.

⁵³ Joachim H. Fischer, “A Confissão de Augsburg—hoje,” *ET* 19, no. 1 (1979): 5; Roberto Huebner, “Obra y política misionarial del Sínodo de Misuri en América latina y el caribe [1995?]” (Colorado Springs, Concordia Seminary St. Louis, photocopy), 2; Walter O. Steyer, *Os imigrantes alemães no Rio Grande do Sul e o luteranismo* (Porto Alegre: Singular, 1999); René E. Gertz, “Os luteranos no Brasil,” *Revista de História Regional* 6, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 20; Spliesgart, “Luteranos na América latina,” 122–25; Ricardo W. Rieth, “The Lutheran Confessions and Popular Religiosity in Latin America,” *Dialog* 45, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 132.

⁵⁴ Westhelle, “Considerações sobre o etno-luteranismo latino-americano,” 84. René Gertz brings two instances that illustrates this. The first one is a comment of some German immigrants in Candelária, Rio Grande do Sul, who in 1899 put a limit on the pastors who were attempting to organize the church by saying: “We neither want to be commanded nor to receive any lesson (from our pastors). It is not for this reason that we came to Brazil! We could have received that in Germany! Here we are in a country of freedom! No one is in need of paying attention (to a pastor)!” The second detail comes from the first paragraph of the constitution of a Lutheran Church in Porto Alegre, that defines the community as “Evangelical, Protestant, of *religious freedom* [!].” Gertz, “Os luteranos no Brasil,” 17–18.

⁵⁵ Erico Sexauer, “La IELA, iglesia de confluencias: Visión histórico-social desde sus comienzos hasta el pasado reciente,” in *IELA: Noventa años de historia*, ed. Claudio L. Flor (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia,

four different traditions that have combined together as threads to form alternative ropes: (1) *Pietism* characterized both the lay German immigrants that came to the continent at the beginning of the nineteenth century (and that arguably still constitutes the main substance of the Lutheran churches in the Southern cone) and the first ordained pastors and missionaries that came from Germany to organize the informal house churches during the second half of the nineteenth century; (2) *orthodoxy*, which has always been identified as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s contribution (mainly during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, between its first entrance into the region and certain shifts that took place after the Second World War); (3) *liberal and liberation theology*, which by contrast usually has characterized that sector of Latin American Lutheranism that maintained a closer institutional relation to the church in Germany; and (4) an *evangelicalism* that exerts its influence at various levels, especially on the Missourian branch of Latin American Lutheranism.⁵⁶

Within this context, the history of the relation and acquaintance of this community (taken as a whole) with the Lutheran Confessions and of its stance toward the latter is unavoidably a complex and agonistic one. Ricardo W. Rieth describes the gradual way in which German

1995), 128–36.

⁵⁶ Vítor Westhelle, “O desencontro entre a teologia luterana e a teologia da libertação,” *ET* 26, no. 1 (1986): 37–58; Gottfried Brakemeier, “Desencontro entre a teologia luterana e a teologia da libertação?” *ET* 26, no. 3 (1986): 309–13; Robert T. Hoeferkamp, “The Viability of Luther Today: A Perspective from Latin America,” *Word & World* 7, no. 1 (1987): 32–42; Walter Altmann, “Wither Lutheranism?—Notes from a Latin American Perspective,” *Word & World* 11, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 269–75; Ricardo W. Rieth, “Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil: Uma abordagem histórica,” *IL* 55, no. 1 (1996): 42–62; Douglas L. Rutt, “La misión de la iglesia luterana en América latina: Análisis del pasado y perspectivas hacia el futuro” (paper presented at the ILC Regional Conference, Buenos Aires, September 26–28, 2000), [LutheranMissiology.org](http://www.lutheranmissiology.org), last modified March 1, 2009, <http://www.lutheranmissiology.org/lamisionenlatinoamerica.pdf>; Egon M. Seibert, “O que se pode afirmar sobre a identidade confessional nas Igrejas de tradição evangélico-luteranas no Brasil a partir de seu surgimento, e o que se aprende daí para a atual procura por identidade confessional?” *ET* 43, no. 1 (2003): 7–13; Joachim H. Fischer, “Identidade confessional: Lições da história,” *ET* 43, no. 1 (2003): 29–42; Rieth, “Lutheran Confessions and Popular Religiosity,” 133; Roberto E. Bustamante, “The Mission of Lutheranism in the Context of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina” (paper presented at the CTCR International Conference on Confessional Leadership in the 21st Century, Atlanta, Georgia, October 31–November 2, 2012).

immigrants got in touch with the confessional writings: (1) When they first entered Latin America (beginning of the nineteenth century), they only brought with them either Luther's Small Catechism or a Reformed one. (2) The *Augustana* was introduced (not without considerable resistance) by the ordained missionaries that came from Germany toward the end of the century. (3) It was not before Missouri came to Brazil (beginning of the twentieth century) that the entire Book of Concord was introduced among the minority that broke relations with the European church.⁵⁷ The Missouri Synod was rather stark in its demand of exclusive submission to the entirety of the confessional writings as a condition for beginning its work in the region.⁵⁸ Besides this "heteronomy factor" (that the Confessions were not part of the original belongings with which German immigrants entered Latin America, but part of later "religious transactions" with Missouri), another cause of estrangement with the Lutheran Confessions came along toward the middle of the twentieth century, namely, the "linguistic factor." Mixed marriages with the local *criollos*, and political and social pressures to stop using the German language, made access to the Lutheran Symbols more and more difficult. Even though Portuguese and Spanish versions of the Small Catechism were published during the first quarter of twentieth century, it was not until 1980 that the Brazilian churches had the entire *Livro de Concórdia* in Portuguese,⁵⁹ and 1989 that the rest of Latin America had the entire *Libro de Concordia* in Spanish.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Rieth, "Lutheran Confessions and Popular Religiosity," 132.

⁵⁸ Walter Steyer registers four "conditions for requesting affiliation to the Synod:" "(1) To confess the Holy Scripture as the Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice; (2) to accept all the confessional books of the Evangelical Church as a pure, clear, and right exposition of the Word of God; (3) to put a stop on any 'ecclesiastical promiscuity' with the false churches; and (4) to make an exclusive use of Lutheran literature." Steyer, *Os imigrantes alemães*, 111–12. The terms of the agreement with which the first Argentine community moved under the care of The Missouri Synod agrees to those same conditions: "The congregation joins the Brazilian District of The Missouri Synod [and] adheres to the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testament, and to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church [and] cancels anything in its [previously existing] constitution that is not in agreement with the Scriptures and the Confessions." Huebner, *Obra y política misionera*, 4.

⁵⁹ Arnaldo Schüller, ed., *Livro de Concórdia: As confissões da igreja evangélica luterana* (Porto Alegre: Concórdia, 1980).

⁶⁰ Andrés A. Meléndez, ed., *Libro de Concordia: Las confesiones de la iglesia evangélica luterana* (St. Louis:

All these struggles become evident in the variety of things that are said about the nature and function of the confessional writings in the literary production of the three main Lutheran church bodies in Latin America.⁶¹ There appear different combinations of the following six trajectories:

1. *Isagogics* of the texts of the Lutheran Confessions, usually with an additional consideration of their positive relevance for our context. IELB⁶² and IELA exhibit

Concordia, 1989).

⁶¹ I will take into consideration both the publication of books and the scholarly (or semi-scholarly) journals of the seminaries of the following three church bodies: Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil (IECLB), Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (IELB), and Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (IELA). IECLB and IELB have their respective publishing houses: Editora Sinodal and Editora Concórdia. The following are the theological journals that have been assessed: *Estudos Teológicos* (Escola Superior de Teologia, IECLB); *Igreja Luterana* (Seminário Concórdia, IELB); and *Revista Teológica* (Seminário Concórdia, IELA).

⁶² Books: Otto A. Goerl, *Cremos, por isso também falamos* (Porto Alegre: Concórdia, 1977); Otto A. Goerl, *Formula de Concórdia* (Porto Alegre: Concórdia, 1977); John T. Mueller and Mário L. Rehfeldt, *As confissões luteranas* (Porto Alegre: Concórdia, 1980); Leopoldo Heimann, ed., *Confissão da esperança* (Porto Alegre: Concórdia, 1980); Erní Seibert, *Introdução às confissões luteranas* (Porto Alegre: Concórdia, 2000).

Articles (*IL*): Werner K. Wadewitz, “Controvérsias doutrinárias na Fórmula Concórdia,” *IL* 20, no. 1 (1959): 18–29; Werner K. Wadewitz, “Origens e história da Fórmula Concórdia,” part 1–2, *IL* 20, no. 2 (1959): 63–71; 20, no. 3 (1959): 105–13; Paulo Flor, “O artigo VII da Fórmula Concórdia,” part 1, *IL* 20, no. 5 (1959): 205–07; Arnaldo Schüller, trans., “Prefácio à Fórmula de Concórdia e ao Livro de Concórdia (4º centenário da Fórmula de Concórdia),” *IL* 37, no. 2 (1977): 63–72; Hans-Lutz Poetsch, “A doutrina da igreja (segundo as confissões luteranas),” trans. Walter G. Kunsmann, *IL* 37, no. 2 (1977): 73–78; Paulo W. Buss, “O Credo Apostólico: Fiel testemunho da verdade,” *IL* 39, no. 2 (1979): 4–8; Martin Luther, “Introdução de Lutero ao Catecismo Menor,” trans. Arnaldo Schüller, *IL* 39, no. 2 (1979): 31–34; Berthold Weber, “‘Sou doutor, mas continuo aluno do catecismo,’” *IL* 39, no. 2 (1979): 35–38; Martim C. Warth, “O Terceiro uso da lei,” *IL* 40, no. 1 (1980): 42–50; Nestor L. Beck, “As confissões luteranas,” *IL* 40, no. 2 (1980): 25–34; Leopoldo Heimann, “Concórdia: Confissão cristã,” *IL* 40, no. 3 (1980): 1–3; Arnaldo Schüller, “Os três símbolos da igreja antiga,” *IL* 46, no. 1 (1987): 20–26; Martim C. Warth, “460 anos da Confissão de Augsburg,” *IL* 49, no. 2 (1990): 169–72; Nestor L. Beck, “O chamado ao ministério eclesiástico à luz do artigo XIV da Confissão de Augsburg,” *IL* 54, no. 2 (1995): 131–37; Martim C. Warth, “Os dois catecismos,” *IL* 56, no. 2 (1997): 203–14; Clóvis J. Prunzel, “A exortação de Lutero à santa ceia: Retórica a serviço da ética cristã,” *IL* 59, no. 2 (2000): 173–98; Guilherme A. Schmidt and Paulo M. Nerbas, “O *satis est* do artigo VII da Confissão de Augsburg e o movimento ecumênico,” *IL* 60, no. 2 (2001): 147–72; Charles Arand, “O clamor de batalha da fé: Exposição do pai nosso nos catecismos,” trans. Fábio Werner and Clóvis J. Prunzel, *IL* 65, no. 2 (2006): 31–56; Vilson Scholz, “Ele falou e está falando: Um estudo do Credo Apostólico como resumo da norma de fé,” *IL* 66, no. 1–2 (2007): 35–54; Clécio L. Schadech and Clóvis J. Prunzel, “Os catecismos de Lutero: A arte de ensinar a viver por fé,” *IL* 67, no. 2 (2008): 33–60; Ezequiel Blum, “Fórmula de Concórdia, Epítome (p. 529–531) e Declaração Sólida (p. 654–660) X: De praxes eclesiásticas chamadas *adiaphora* ou coisas indiferentes,” *IL* 69, no. 2 (2010): 29–36; Lucas A. Albrecht, “Lei, evangelho e prática,” *IL* 71, no. 1 (2012): 5–13; Paulo S. Albrecht, “Fórmula de Concórdia: Artigo XI—da eterna presciência e eleição de Deus,” *IL* 71, no. 1 (2012): 14–23; Edson R. Tressmann, “Resgatando o ensino sobre boas obras, Fórmula de Concórdia: Artigo IV—boas obras,” *IL* 71, no. 1 (2012): 24–30; Wilson P. Walder, “Da descida de Cristo ao inferno: Fórmula de Concórdia, artigo IX,” *IL* 71, no. 2 (2012): 13–20; Valci Sering, “De outras facções e seitas, que nunca abraçaram

this trajectory (mainly around the middle of the twentieth century),⁶³ though lately IECLB has also contributed in this regard.⁶⁴

2. *Constructive exploration* of the way the Lutheran Confessions can help to explain and approach reality. IELB has arguably become stronger in this regard⁶⁵ when

a Confissão de Augsburgo (anabatistas, schwenckfeldianos e antitrinitários),” *IL* 71, no. 2 (2012): 21–30; Cezar S. Schuquel, “Fórmula de Concórdia: Artigo I—do pecado original,” *IL* 73, no. 1 (2014): 5–11.

⁶³ Books: Guillermo Rautenberg, *Cuatro siglos de confesiones luteranas* (Buenos Aires: Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina, 1980); Eugene F. Klug and Otto F. Stahlke, *Historia y recopilación de la Fórmula de Concordia, incluyendo el Epítome*, trans. Andrés A. Meléndez, Juan Berndt, and Erico Sexauer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981).

Articles (*RT*): Friedrich Bente, “Introducción histórica a los libros simbólicos de la iglesia evangélica luterana,” part 1, trans. Andrés A. Meléndez, *RT* 1, no. 1 (1954): 1–10; 1, no. 2 (1954): 1–10; 1, no. 3 (1954): 1–10; 1, no. 4 (1954): 10–20; 2, no. 5 (1955): 1–9; 2, no. 6 (1955): 1–9; 2, no. 7 (1955): 1–10; 2, no. 8 (1955): 1–6; 3, no. 9 (1956): 1–6; 3, no. 10 (1956): 1–6; 3, no. 12 (1956): 1–6; 4, no. 13 (1957): 1–4; John T. Mueller, “Ningún *modus agendi* antes de la conversión,” trans. Alfred T. Kramer, *RT* 4, no. 15 (1957): 27–32; [Federico Lange?], “Las confesiones de la iglesia luterana,” *RT* 14, no. 54 (1967): 26–34; Federico Lange, “Los Artículos de Esmalcalda: Introducción,” *RT* 15, no. 58 (1968): 30–35; Manfred Roensch, “400 Años—la Fórmula de Concordia,” part 1, trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 24, no. 94 (1977): 33–36; Robert T. Hoeferkamp, “El 400 aniversario de la Fórmula de Concordia,” *RT* 24, no. 95 (1977): 1–9; Hans Kirsten and Gerhard Rost, “400 Años—la Fórmula de Concordia,” part 2, trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 24, no. 95 (1977): 27–33; Manfred Roensch, H. Hoffmann, and Gerhard Rost, “400 Años—la Fórmula de Concordia,” part 3, trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 24, no. 96 (1977): 14–23; Manfred Roensch and Gerhard Rost, “400 Años—la Fórmula de Concordia,” part 4, trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 25, no. 97 (1978): 32–39.

⁶⁴ Books: Günther Gassmann and Scott Hendrix, *As confissões luteranas: Introdução* (São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 2002).

Articles (*ET*): Kjell Nordstokke, “A Confissão de Augsburgo no contexto histórico, teológico e missionário,” *ET* 23, no. 3 (1983): 274–85.

⁶⁵ Books: Ralf Bohlmann, *Princípios de interpretação bíblica nas confissões luteranas*, trans. Mário L. Rehfeldt (Porto Alegre: Concórdia, 1970).

Articles (*IL*): Adalbert R. Kretzmann, “Lei e evangelio,” trans. Arnaldo Schüler, *IL* 25, no. 4 (1964): 121–69; Herbert J. Bouman, “A doutrina do ministério segundo Lutero e as confissões luteranas,” trans. Gastão Thomé, *IL* 27, no. 1 (1966): 1–30; LCMS, “Teologia da comunhão: Parecer da Comissão de Teologia da Igreja Luterana—Sínodo de Missúri,” trans. Gastão Thomé, *IL* 28, no. 1–2 (1967): 2–73; LCMS, “Die Lehre von der Kirche in den lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften,” *IL* 28, no. 1–2 (1967): 121–34; LCA and LCMS, “Exposição e declaração conjunta dos representantes da Igreja Luterana da América do Norte, da Igreja Luterana Sínodo de Missouri e do Sínodo de Igrejas Evangélicas Luteranas a sus respectivas corporações eclesíásticas,” trans. Gastão Thomé, *IL* 29, no. 1–2 (1968): 1–35; Elmer Reimnitz, “A Federação Luterana Mundial a luz da doutrina da igreja,” trans. Arnaldo Schüler, *IL* 29, no. 3 (1968): 107–23; Leopoldo Heimann, “A Fé Faz Falar,” *IL* 37, no. 1 (1977): 1–2; Johannes H. Rottmann, “Batismo de crianças,” *IL* 39, no. 1 (1979): 4–29; Rudi Zimmer, “Criacionismo ou evolucionismo?” *IL* 39, no. 3 (1979): 5–17; Ari Lange, “A teologia da libertação,” part 3, *IL* 43, no. 2 (1983): 30–37; IELB, “Concílio nacional,” *IL* 43, no. 3 (1983): 30–34; Johannes H. Rottmann, “O ministério,” *IL* 45, no. 1–2 (1985): 2–16; Vilson Scholz, “O ministro: Nomes, qualificações, atribuições e formação,” *IL* 45, no. 1–2 (1985): 17–52; Paulo W. Buss, “Relação e diferenciação entre as ordens, ‘igreja’ e ‘estado,’” *IL* 45, no. 1–2 (1985): 53–71; Martim C. Warth, “Filosofia da educação luterana,” *IL* 46, no. 1 (1987): 35–47; Martim C. Warth, “A responsabilidade dos pais na educação dos filhos,” *IL* 50, no. 1 (1991): 22–35; Elmer N. Flor, “A pregação do consolo na igreja de Deus,” *IL* 50,

compared to IELA.⁶⁶

3. *Apologetic vindication* of the confessional writings' normative authority in the

no. 2 (1991): 130–44; Vilson Scholz, “O papel hermenêutico do Catecismo Menor de Lutero,” *IL* 51, no. 1 (1992): 5–12; Werner N. Sonntag, “Direitos do pastor,” *IL* 52, no. 1 (1993): 16–41; Orlando N. Ott, “O ensino e a prática da confissão e absolvição individual: Uma retomada na IELB,” *IL* 57, no. 1 (1998): 38–46; Paulo G. Pietzsch, “Importância da música no culto divino,” *IL* 58, no. 1 (1999): 42–58; Rafael J. Nerbas and Orlando N. Ott, “Considerações da ética cristã quanto ao uso da fertilização *in vitro* como técnica de reprodução humana assistida,” *IL* 58, no. 2 (1999): 167–80; Gustavo H. Schmidt and Paulo M. Nerbas, “Pastor, equipador dos santos? O ministério pastoral à luz de Efésios 4.12,” *IL* 59, no. 1 (2000): 2–25; Martim C. Warth, “Fundamentos da práxis pedagógica na universidade confessional,” *IL* 59, no. 1 (2000): 26–28; Clóvis J. Prunzel, “Economia e manutenção do trabalho da igreja a partir de Lutero e das confissões luteranas,” *IL* 64, no. 2 (2005): 47–59; Anselmo E. Graff, “Ele falou e está falando: ‘A tua palavra é a verdade para a vida cristã,’” *IL* 66, no. 1–2 (2007): 55–86; Clóvis J. Prunzel, “A importância do Catecismo na identidade luterana: aspectos teológicos e práticos depois de 480 anos,” *IL* 68, no. 1 (2009): 103–17; Samuel R. Fuhrmann, “Cuidado pastoral ao alcoolista a partir da cruz: Desenvolvendo uma atitude acolhedora,” *IL* 69, no. 2 (2010): 5–28; Rosemir M. Benati, “A santa ceia como um evento escatológico,” *IL* 72, no. 1 (2013): 5–45; Lucas A. Albrecht, “Homilética luterana, pregação televisiva e o artigo VII da Confissão de Augsburg,” *IL* 75, no. 1 (2016): 62–80.

⁶⁶ Articles (*RT*): Erico Sexauer, “El sagrado ministerio público,” part 2, *RT* 2, no. 1 (1955): 1–10; John H. Fritz, “Ordenación,” trans. Alfred T. Kramer, *RT* 6, no. 21 (1959): 18–28; LCMS, “El momento de la presencia real en la cena del Señor,” trans. Edgar J. Keller, *RT* 11, no. 42 (1964): 30–33; Herbert J. Bouman, “La doctrina del ministerio según Lutero y las confesiones luteranas,” parts 1–2, trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 12, no. 45 (1965): 1–18; 12, no. 46 (1965): 19–36; Héctor Lazos, “Los principios básicos para la interpretación bíblica en la teología de Martín Lutero y las confesiones luteranas,” *RT* 14, no. 53 (1967): 1–10; Robert T. Hoeferkamp, “El concepto de la iglesia según los escritos confesionales luteranos en su delimitación frente a un malentendido ‘institucionalista’ de la iglesia,” *RT* 14, no. 56 (1967): 13–23; Hermann Sasse, “¿Qué es el sacramento del altar?” parts 1–2, trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 15, no. 59 (1968): 10–19; 15, no. 60 (1968): 19–30; Juan G. Berndt, “Bases mínimas,” *RT* 20, no. 79 (1973): 1–13; Federico Lange, “El llamado de Jesús y la ética social según el testimonio del Nuevo Testamento y las confesiones luteranas,” *RT* 23, no. 91 (1976): 8–17; Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “La iglesia luterana y el movimiento carismático,” trans. Juan G. Berndt, *RT* 24, no. 94 (1977): 1–20; Ricardo Weigum, “La Confesión de Augsburg y la Iglesia Católica Apostólica Romana en América latina,” *RT* 30, no. 121 (1985): 12–19; Georg Lanzestiel, “Pastores, ¿para qué?” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 31, no. 124 (1986): 16–22; Waldomiro Maili, “El oficio de las llaves,” *RT* 41, no. 154 (1996): 5–14; Hansfrieder Hellenschmidt, “La doctrina acerca de la justificación en el debate interconfesional,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 42, no. 156 (1997): 7–19; Jorge E. Groh, “La IELA y la doctrina de la justificación,” *RT* 43, no. 159 (1998): 5–6; Nestor L. Beck, “La doctrina acerca de la fe en los documentos luterano-católicos (1972–1983),” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 43, no. 159 (1998): 66–103; José A. Pfaffenzeller, “El sacerdocio universal de todos los creyentes,” *RT* 48, no. 166 (2008): 17–32; Antonio R. Schimpf, “La doctrina del llamado,” *RT* 48, no. 166 (2008): 41–61; Jorge Krüger, “El ministerio pastoral,” *RT* 48, no. 166 (2008): 62–74; Sergio A. Fritzler, “Confesionalidad y liturgia,” *RT* 50, no. 168 (2011): 67–87; Roberto E. Bustamante, “Confesionalidad e interpretación bíblica,” *RT* 50, no. 168 (2011): 89–105; Arturo E. Truenow, “Confesionalidad y catequesis,” *RT* 50, no. 168 (2011): 131–44; Gerson L. Linden, “Eclesiología luterana,” trans. Sergio A. Fritzler, *RT* 50, no. 169 (2011): 4–27; Sergio A. Fritzler, “La vocación cristiana,” *RT* 55, no. 172 (2015): 68–84; Milton Hofstetter, “Bases de una capellanía luterana,” *RT* 55, no. 172 (2015): 85–91.

church. This takes place both in IELB⁶⁷ and IELA⁶⁸ around the second third of the twentieth century.

4. *Challenge in opposition to the Confessions' claim of authoritative relevance.* This

⁶⁷ Books: Goerl, *Formula de Concórdia*.

Articles (*IL*): Herbert J. Bouman, “Was bedeutet Verpflichtung auf die lutherischen Bekenntnisse?” *IL* 22, no. 3 (1961): 137–50; Aulis Jalonen, “Kirche und Bekenntnis,” *IL* 24, no. 1 (1963): 48–53; LCMS, “O Sínodo de Missouri em Helsinki—Declaração oficial,” *IL* 24, no. 3 (1963): 183–84; Hermann Sasse, “Das Ende des Konfessionellen Zeitalters: Gedanken zur 450-Jahr-Feier der Reformation,” *IL* 29, no. 1–2 (1968): 36–55; VELKD, “Schrift, Bekenntnis, Lehrautorität,” *IL* 29, no. 4 (1968): 225–27; Hermann Sasse, “Igrejas confessionais no movimento ecumênico, com referência especial à Federação Luterana Mundial,” trans. Arnaldo Schüler, *IL* 30, no. 1–2 (1969): 1–42; Mário L. Rehfeldt, “A atualidade das confissões luteranas para a igreja do século XX: Teses elaboradas à base da aula inaugural, Seminário Concórdia, março de 1972,” *IL* 33, no. 1 (1972): 18–28; Leopoldo Heimann, “Suportar a sã doutrina,” *IL* 37, no. 2 (1977): 61–62; Vilson Scholz, “Em busca de identidade (2 Ts 2.13–17),” *IL* 37, no. 3 (1977): 143–46; Robert D. Preus, “Base para a concórdia,” trans. Paulo W. Buss, *IL* 38, no. 1–2 (1978): 3–18; Martim C. Warth, “Caminho para a concórdia,” trans. Vilson Scholz, *IL* 38, no. 1–2 (1978): 19–40; Ralph Bohlmann, “Celebração da concórdia,” trans. Gastão Thomé, *IL* 38, no. 1–2 (1978): 41–76; Leopoldo Heimann, “Apresentando,” *IL* 40, no. 1 (1980): 1; Nestor L. Beck, “Formação de liderança teológica na igreja,” *IL* 40, no. 4 (1980): 5–12; Nestor L. Beck, “O Senhor faz surgir e crescer a igreja,” *IL* 41, no. 1 (1981): 5–22; Carl F. Walther, “A verdadeira igreja visível,” trans. Emílio Schmidt, *IL* 42, no. 1 (1982): 23–27; Carl F. Walther, “Característica duma congregação evangélica luterana,” trans. Emílio Schmidt, *IL* 42, no. 1 (1982): 28–37; Curt Albrecht, “A doutrina da justificação pela fé no ensino de Jesus Cristo,” *IL* 49, no. 2 (1990): 173–76; Beck, “O chamado ao ministério;” David Karnopp, “A importância da música sacra na história da Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil,” *IL* 61, no. 2 (2002): 155–70; Horst R. Kuchenbecker, “Tratativas pastorais,” *IL* 63, no. 1 (2004): 24–73; Vilson Scholz, “Reflexões sobre a linguagem e a tradução do Catecismo Menor,” *IL* 63, no. 2 (2004): 5–14; Vilson Scholz, “Uma reflexão sobre o conteúdo da fé,” *IL* 65, no. 1 (2006): 5–6; Jobst Schöne, “Do que a igreja luterana jamais poderá abrir mão!” trans. Horst R. Kuchenbecker, *IL* 75, no. 1 (2016): 52–61.

⁶⁸ Articles (*RT*): Erico Sexauer, “El sagrado ministerio público,” part 1, *RT* 1, no. 4 (1954): 1–10; Federico Lange, “Un credo materialista,” *RT* 7, no. 28 (1960): 42–43; Herbert J. Bouman, “Qué implica firmar confesiones escritas,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 8, no. 31 (1961): 1–19; Federico Lange, “‘Concentración eclesiástica’ y ‘movimiento confesional,’” *RT* 15, no. 58 (1968): 15–21; Federico Lange, “Las confesiones y las iglesias jóvenes en el tiempo ecuménico,” parts 1–2. *RT* 16, no. 61 (1969): 27–33; 16, no. 62 (1969): 1–6; Robert D. Preus, “Cristo, no las controversias, es el centro de las siempre útiles confesiones luteranas,” trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 17, no. 67 (1970): 19–21; Robert D. Preus, “Se proclama la fe al mundo al suscribir los pastores las confesiones luteranas,” *RT* 17, no. 68 (1970): 5–8; Jobst Schöne, “El desafío de las confesiones en la actualidad,” parts 1–2, trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 18, no. 72 (1971): 1–10; 19, no. 73 (1972): 1–10; Federico Lange, “El significado permanente de las confesiones luteranas para la misión,” *RT* 19, no. 75 (1972): 31–39; William M. Oesch, “La lucha por la confesión en la Iglesia Luterana—Sínodo de Misuri,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 23, no. 90 (1976): 3–11; Robert T. Hoeferkamp, “Iglesia luterana y educación teológica en América latina del norte,” *RT* 29, no. 112 (1983): 4–25; Hansfrieder Hellenschmidt, “Evangelización y confesión hoy,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 40, no. 149 (1995): 18–30; Leopoldo Heimann, “La iglesia luterana y la educación,” trans. Olga Preiz, *RT* 41, no. 152 (1996): 3–5; Rudolf Mökel, “En primer lugar: ¡la verdad!—Reflexiones en torno del mensaje evangelístico,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 44, no. 160 (1999): 53–72; José A. Pfaffenzeller, “La confesionalidad como médula de la identidad pastoral,” *RT* 50, no. 168 (2011): 9–24; Carlos Schumann, “La confesionalidad como médula de la identidad pastoral (reacción),” *RT* 50, no. 168 (2011): 27–33; Edgardo Elseser, “Perspectiva histórica del relacionamiento del luteranismo con sus confesiones (reacción),” *RT* 50, no. 168 (2011): 55–62; Roberto E. Bustamante, “Confesionalidad y educación teológica,” *RT* 53, no. 170 (2013): 14–21.

trajectory only appears in IELA, and during a particularly specific span of time (during the eighties).⁶⁹

5. Periods of a silent *lack of consideration* of the contribution that the Lutheran Confessions can bring to relevant topics under discussion. This is characteristic in IECLB,⁷⁰ and becomes so in IELA also around the turn of the millennium.⁷¹
6. Explorative *quest on how to reassign a place* to the Confessions in a community that takes for granted that it will not submit to the former. This trend took place more recently in IECLB.⁷²

Assuming that official publications offer partial evidence for what is going on in each church body, this reconstruction of the main streams of Latin American Lutheranism exposes the struggles and hopes of these churches in relation to the Lutheran Confessions' authoritative role, positive and pragmatic contributions, and possible role and place within the life of the church. The literature exposes a remarkable lack of consideration and research dealing with these issues.

⁶⁹ Articles (*RT*): Carlos Nagel, "Preparando una campaña de evangelización," *RT* 26, no. 100 (1980): 2–13; Carlos Nagel, "¿Qué nos proponemos?" *RT* 26, no. 101 (1980): 1–2; Carlos Nagel, "Una IELA evangelizadora," *RT* 27, no. 104 (1981): 1–3; Carlos Nagel, "Identificándonos," *RT* 28, no. 109 (1982): 1–2; Carlos Nagel, "Educación teológica y mundo contemporáneo," *RT* 29, no. 111 (1983): 1–2; Carlos Nagel, "Soltando amarras," *RT* 29, no. 112 (1983): 1–3; Edgard Kroeger (Jr.), "Sentido y función de los símbolos luteranos en la actualidad," *RT* 29, no. 115 (1984): 20–37; Edgard Kroeger Sr., "La labor de un seminario confesional en un período ecuménico en un contexto latinoamericano," *RT* 31, no. 125 (1986): 27–33; Héctor Hoppe, "Espontaneidad vs. rigidez," *RT* 32, no. 130 (1987): 1–3; Héctor Hoppe, "Misión," *RT* 33, no. 131 (1988): 1–2; David Brondos, "Un estudio sobre la evangelización," *RT* 33, no. 132 (1988): 29–60; Carlos Nagel, "Catequesis," *RT* 34, no. 137 (1989): 3–7; Erní W. Seibert, "Perspectiva histórica del relacionamiento del luteranismo con sus confesiones," *RT* 50, no. 168 (2011): 35–52.

⁷⁰ The secondary role that the Lutheran Confessions have played in IECLB is in absolute coherence with the necessary lack of confessional definition of a merger church that brings together four previous church bodies, three of which are of basic Reformed extraction. See note 92 below.

⁷¹ This is an obvious consequence of an apparently successful challenge in opposition to the Confessions' claim of authoritative relevance, referred to in the previous paragraph. See previous note.

⁷² Articles (*ET*): Fischer, "A Confissão de Augsburgurgo—hoje;" Martin N. Dreher, "A Confissão de Augsburgurgo. A fé—A vida e a missão da IECLB," *ET* 20, no. 1 (1980): 41–56; Joachim Fischer, "A Confissão de Augsburgurgo como nosa carteira de identidade," *ET* 21, no. 1 (1981): 59–67; Martin Weingärtner, "A confessionalidade luterana e a questão carismática," *ET* 41, no. 3 (2001): 53–74; Fischer, "Identidade confessional;" Willhelm Wachholz, "'IECLB: caminhos de uma confessionalidade (diagnósticos e prognósticos)," *ET* 43, no. 1 (2003): 14–28.

The Thesis

Given the diversity of ways Lutheran theologians define confessional identity in the North Atlantic, this dissertation argues for an integrative models-based approach to confessional commitment that takes account of various elements involved in such commitment. Moreover, given the dearth of studies on confessional identity in the Global South, this work tests the productivity of this models-based approach for addressing case studies on confessional commitment in a South American context.

Purpose and Methodology

In connection with the North Atlantic discussion on confessionalism and confessional identity, the dissertation will contribute to two different quests already considered above. The first is the hermeneutical quest related to exploring possible translations of the confessional doctrine in terms of who God and His human creatures are. The second quest is the search for criteria that brings some clarity to the present state of confusion regarding confessional identity. In connection with the Global South discussion on confessionalism, this study will contribute to the evident necessity of finding a rationale that accounts for the usefulness and necessity of being committed to the Lutheran Confessions.

The dissertation will address these two fronts using the strategy of theological models, and this for two basic reasons: First, models facilitate a coherent organization of uneven and variegated information into a simplified typology of images, while preserving some sense of realism in that good models allow room for the incommensurable or fractionary character of the modeled reality. Second, the strategy of models has an explicit pragmatic orientation that seems to fit well with the requirements of the North Atlantic and Global South quests this dissertation addresses, for models provide a description of reality to find out possible solutions for the

challenges that that reality presents. The dissertation, then, will move from North to South, and then bring both fronts into conversation with one another.

The Notion of Confessional Commitment

One of the goals of the present work is to explore possible solutions to the terminological confusion around the notions of confessionalism and confessional identity. This work intends to contribute to this issue with specificity by advancing a technical definition of “confessional commitment,” and bringing it into conversation with the field of confessional studies.

During the last decade, Oberursel Professor Werner Klän has written two related articles that are relevant in their description of what is entailed under the notion of confessional commitment. Klän presented a paper in 2005 (published in English in 2006) that offers a confessional description of Lutheran identity. He takes Hermann Sasse’s contention that the Lutheran Church is “the confessional church *par excellence*” as his starting point, in order to affirm that the confession of the scriptural doctrine (what Klän defines as “the confessional disposition”) is “an unmistakable mark of Lutheran identity.”⁷³ Then, Klän advances a fundamental aspect of his definition: Lutheran identity is ecclesiastical and not merely personal or individualistic, for it is construed on the “consensus in faith, doctrine(s), and confession.”⁷⁴ The personal response of faith, proposes Klän, is “a response intended to enter into communication ... and the striving for a consensus” that is made possible through the Confessions’ contribution of opening up for us today “the Scriptural interpretation of the Holy

⁷³ Werner Klän, “Aspects of Lutheran Identity: A Confessional Perspective,” trans. Frederick S. Gardiner, *CJ* 32, no. 2 (April 2006): 133.

⁷⁴ Klän, “Aspects of Lutheran Identity,” 139.

Scriptures.”⁷⁵ This confessional focus on ecclesial consensus grounded in Scripture, infers the author, has fundamental implications for a church governance that safeguards the Lutheran identity of its organization. This church governance will function as a “self-regulation ... effected only by reverting to the Holy Scripture and—in a derivative manner—to the confession of faith as its proper interpretation, whereby both are authorities that are outside and beyond the sphere of all that which is within our discretion or at our disposal.”⁷⁶

Later, Klän rehearses these same concepts and applies them to his definition of “confessional commitment”⁷⁷ as the intentional configuration of a Christian community that defines its stance in accordance with the previously mentioned traits constituting Lutheran identity. In this explicit connection with the particular question of confessional commitment, Klän makes a constant reference to his 2005/2006 paper on “Aspects of Lutheran Identity.” But there is one paragraph that becomes particularly relevant for our purpose:

For Luther, it is of central importance to take seriously the existence of the church, or of “Christendom,” as he prefers to say, and the priority of the community of the faithful over one’s own belief. This commitment to the church precludes identifying oneself as an atomized individual with one’s own private belief and piety and includes seeing oneself within a community of faith which is always prior to oneself and of which God the Holy Spirit makes use for the accomplishment of His work.⁷⁸

That is to say, if Lutheran confessional commitment is embracing an ecclesiastical identity that is not established by us today, then that confessional commitment is the “self-regulatory” move that a particular community makes in order to let itself be configured and defined by the entire

⁷⁵ Klän, “Aspects of Lutheran Identity,” 140, 142.

⁷⁶ Klän, “Aspects of Lutheran Identity,” 144.

⁷⁷ Werner Klän, “Confessional Lutheran Commitment in the International Lutheran Council: A Conservative Contribution of Lutheranism to the Ecumenical Age,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 1–10, September 30, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1984>.

⁷⁸ Klän, “Confessional Commitment,” 3 (citing Klän, “Aspects of Lutheran Identity,” 136).

“Christendom,” by the *Una Sancta* that addressed (and still addresses) the community through the mediation of the Lutheran Confessions.

Besides these important contributions of the German systematician, the only other instances of an explicit Lutheran exploration of the specific notion of “confessional commitment” backtracks us a generation before. During the sixties and seventies, the terminology of “confessional commitment” functioned as a cipher for speaking to the frontier that post-war Lutheranism was supposed not to transgress in order to retain a rightful appeal to the label of “confessional.” Two different challenges are measured over against this confessional-commitment frontier. One of them is the ecumenical impulse toward church merging. In 1965, a series of three contested documents attempted to explore to what extent two North American church bodies were able to confess together without transgressing—but rather expressing—their shared commitment to the *sola gratia* of the Lutheran Confessions.⁷⁹ In a similar vein, the second challenge of the Historical Critical Method was assessed on the basis of the limits that a “confessional commitment” imposed on Lutheranism.⁸⁰

The term “confessional commitment” derivates from the notion of “religious commitment”

⁷⁹ Commissioners of ALC and LCMS issued three different essays between November 1964 and April 1965: “What Commitment to the ‘Sola Gratia’ of the Lutheran Confessions Involves,” “The Lutheran Confessions and ‘Sola Scriptura,’” and “The Doctrine of the Church in the Lutheran Confessions,” Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne Media Resources, accessed May 25, 2017, <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/LCMSALCEssays.pdf>. For critical reactions to the first of these documents, see Richard J. Schultz, “Creative Grace in the Essay ‘What Commitment to the ‘Sola Gratia’ of the Lutheran Confessions Involves,’” *The Springfielder* 33, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 3–6; and Erich H. Heintzen, “Commentary on the Essay: ‘What Commitment to the ‘Sola Gratia’ in the Lutheran Confessions Involves,’” *The Springfielder* 33, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 7–11.

⁸⁰ We find both positions expressed in the same terms. Whereas Peter Brunner affirms the historical-critical method as incompatible with “confessional commitment,” almost two decades later Edgar Krentz contends that John Tietjen’s defense of historical-criticism was in absolute coherence with “confessional commitment.” See Peter Brunner, “Commitment to the Lutheran Confessions—What Does it Mean Today?” trans. Wilhelm Torgerson, *The Springfielder* 33, no. 3 (December 1969): 4–14; Edgar Krentz, “Historical Criticism and Confessional Commitment,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 15, no. 1 (1988): 128–36; John H. Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile: Confessional Hope and Institutional Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990), 62–65.

with which the sociology of religion explores religious involvement and membership. Whereas John Finney recognizes that Charles Glock has established this field's theoretical basis,⁸¹ Barbara Payne and Kirk Elifson have blamed Glock for disconnecting this area of research from the broader theoretical conversation regarding the notion of "social commitment" that has taken place within the general guild of sociology.⁸² This complaint, voiced four decades ago, still resonates in more recent literature.⁸³ Be his influence evaluated as it may, much of the conversation over the years has centered around what Glock has defined as "dimensions of religious commitment." These dimensions, Glock contends, work together as a "conceptual framework for the systematic study of differential commitment to religion."⁸⁴ In his co-authored book *American Piety*, Glock offers a classic definition of his five dimensions:

1. The *belief* dimension comprises expectations that the religious person will hold a certain theological outlook, that he will acknowledge the truth of the tenets of the religion ...
2. Religious *practice* includes acts of worship and devotion, the things people *do* to carry out their religious commitment ...
3. The *experience* dimension takes into account the fact that all religions have certain expectations, however, imprecisely they may be stated, that the properly religious person will at some time or other achieve a direct, subjective knowledge of ultimate reality; that he will achieve some sense of contact, however fleeting, with a supernatural agency ...
4. The *knowledge* dimension refers to the expectation that religious persons will possess some minimum of information about the basic tenets of their faith and its rites, scriptures, and traditions ...
5. The *consequences* dimension of religious commitment differs from the other four. It identifies the effects of religious belief, practice, experience, and knowledge in persons' day-to-day lives.⁸⁵

⁸¹ John M. Finney, "A Theory of Religious Commitment," *Sociological Analysis* 39, no. 1 (1978): 20.

⁸² Barbara P. Payne and Kirk W. Elifson, "'Commitment' a Comment on Uses of the Concept," *Review of Religious Research* 17 (1976): 209.

⁸³ Inger Furseth and Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

⁸⁴ Charles Y. Glock, "On the Study of Religious Commitment," *Religious Education, Research Supplement* 42 (1962): 98.

⁸⁵ Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock, *American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 14–16.

For a long time, sociologists of religion have explored the extent and dynamics of religious commitment on the basis of Glock's multi-dimensional understanding of religiosity.⁸⁶ Other sociological approaches to the exploration of the notion of "commitment" have given an important role to social ties or the sense of belonging to a community.⁸⁷ On this basis, more recent proposals in the sociology of religion have integrated socialization and struggle with conflictive alliances as an important aspect of "religious commitment."⁸⁸

A final aspect to be considered is the line of research that initiated toward the end of the last century under the so-called "confessionalization thesis" that, according to Hans Hillerbrand, has become "the new orthodoxy in the field" of Reformation studies.⁸⁹ This line of research aims at elucidating how the socio-cultural dynamics that formed the different "confessions" (taken in the sense of "denominations") helped to bring about the early modern state and moved medieval Europe into modernity.⁹⁰ The relevance of this field is that it explores the multifaceted strategies for shaping a cultural alliance around a particular confession of faith. Just as Irene Dingel explores in several of her publications, in the case of the Lutheran brand of sixteenth century

⁸⁶ Finney, "Theory of Religious Commitment;" Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Toward a Theory of Religion: Religious Commitment," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19, no. 2 (1980): 114–28; Robert Wuthnow, "Surveying Religious Commitment: The Sociology of Charles Y. Glock," *Religious Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (January 1985): 23–26.

⁸⁷ Payne and Elifson, "Commitment," 211; William Kornhauser, "Social Bases of Political Commitment: A Study of Liberals and Radicals," in *Human Behavior and Social Processes: An Interactionist Approach*, ed. Arnold M. Rose (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), 321–39; Edward J. Lawler, Shane R. Thye, and Jeongkoo Yoon, *Social Commitments in a Depersonalized World* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 1–11.

⁸⁸ Stephen T. Mockabee, Joseph Quin Monson, and J. Tobin Grant, "Measuring Religious Commitment Among Catholics and Protestants: A New Approach," *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 4 (2001): 65–90.

⁸⁹ Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Was There a Reformation in the Sixteenth Century?" *Church History* 72, no. 3 (September 2003): 537.

⁹⁰ Thomas A. Brady Jr., "Confessionalization: The Career of a Concept," in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 1–20.

Reformation, the confessional writings came to play an important role in this formation of a cultural religious bond.⁹¹ The entire collection of essays published within this scholarly context under the volume *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*⁹² offers an entry point into the multi-dimensional aspects of cultivating a social community’s commitment to the Lutheran Confessions—an enterprise that involved a complex dynamic that interconnected the upper sphere of academic life,⁹³ the actual performance of public ecclesiastical acts,⁹⁴ and popular piety.⁹⁵

On the basis of these scholarly contributions, therefore, this study approaches the confessional discussion by using the notion of confessional commitment, under the following working definition: Confessional commitment is the solemn disposition of the community/person to be defined in her (1) socialization and alliance, (2) narrative and belief, (3) experience, and (4) action, by the One who deals with her by means of the Lutheran Confessions. That is to say, in committing to the Lutheran Confessions, then, the “I” (either a community or an individual

⁹¹ See, for example, Dingel, “Function and Historical Development;” Irene Dingel, “Pruning the Vines, Plowing Up the Vineyard: The Sixteenth-Century Culture of Controversy between Disputation and Polemic,” trans. Robert Kolb, in *The Reformation as Christianization: Essays on Scott Hendrix’s Christianization Thesis*, ed. Anna M. Johnson and John M. Maxfield (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 397–408; Irene Dingel, “Melancthon and the Establishment of Confessional Norms,” in *Philip Melancthon: Theologian in Classroom, Confession, and Controversy*, ed. Irene Dingel, Nicole Kuroпка, and Timothy J. Wengert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 161–79.

⁹² Robert Kolb, ed., *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition: A Series of Handbooks and Reference Works on the Intellectual and Religious Life of Europe 11, 500–1700 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁹³ See the chapters on “The Culture of Conflict in the Controversies Leading to the Formula of Concord (1548–1580)” and “Academic Life and Teaching in Post-Reformation Lutheranism” by Irene Dingel and Kenneth G. Appold respectively, in Kolb, *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture*, 15–116.

⁹⁴ See the chapters on “Preaching in Lutheran Pulpits in the Age of Confessionalization” and “Instruction of the Christian Faith by Lutherans after Luther” by Mary J. Haemig and Robert Kolb, and by Gerhard Bode respectively, in Kolb, *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture*, 117–204.

⁹⁵ See the chapters on “Devotional Life in Hymns, Liturgy, Music, and Prayer,” “The Pulpit and the Pew: Shaping Popular Piety in the Late Reformation,” and “The Social Impact of the Lutheran Reformation in Germany,” by Christopher B. Brown, Robert Christman, and Susan R. Boettcher respectively, in Kolb, *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture*, 205–360.

person) solemnly allows the “Thou” who addresses him through the mediation of these Lutheran Confessions to shape his identity in the four dimensions previously mentioned. In his commitment to the Lutheran Confessions, the person or the community is not only dealing with a neutral object, The Book of Concord, but also with the Trinitarian God and the broader community of the *Una Sancta* who speak the Word through the mediation of the confessional texts. In terms of the personalist philosophy of Martin Buber,⁹⁶ confessional commitment is never reduced to an I-it relation, but is always an I-Thou relation.⁹⁷ More specifically, when we speak about confessional commitment, we refer to the way the “I” of the confessionally committed person or ecclesial community is addressed and defined by the Trinitarian “Thou.”

The Strategy of a Models-Based Approach

Avery Cardinal Dulles, S. J., a pioneer in the theological use of models,⁹⁸ defines a “model” as “a relatively simple, artificially constructed case, which is found to be useful and illuminating

⁹⁶ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald G. Smith (New York: T&T Clark, 1986), part 1, Kindle.

⁹⁷ This is not to contradict the red flag that Jaroslav Pelikan raises (with which I am in absolute agreement) when he avers: “Faith and the confession of the faith must always be more than doctrine, of course ... but [confessing the faith] can never be less than doctrine ... [For when] in the interest of the authenticity of the ‘experience of Christ as my personal Savior’ or of some other such redefinition, faith is drained of its doctrinal content, neither the personal Christ experience nor its authenticity can long endure.” Pelikan, *Credo*, 65.

⁹⁸ Avery Dulles, S. J., has made extensive use of models in Christian theology. Not because Dulles may have been the first thinker in proposing the use of models, but because he has fully deployed this strategy by showing its productivity for theological reflection. Avery Dulles’ two books, *Models of the Church* and *Models of Revelation* have shaped a great part of the field. Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974); Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983). Following after Dulles’s pioneer work, a considerable number of theologians have used a models-based approach to theological reflection in a similar fashion. See, for instance, John F. O’Grady, *Models of Jesus* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981); Raymond F. Collins, *Models of Theological Reflection* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); Howard A. Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991); Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology. Faith and Cultures* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992); John Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., *Teología de la santificación: La espiritualidad del cristiano* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), and *Sculptor Spirit: Models of Sanctification from Spirit Christology* (Downers Grove, IL.: Intervarsity Press, 2019).

for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated.”⁹⁹ In *Models of the Church*, he explains that “[w]hen an image is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one’s theoretical understanding of a reality it becomes what is today called a ‘model.’”¹⁰⁰ Dulles proposes that models in theology have two basic uses or functions. On an *explanatory level*, models “serve to synthesize what we already know or at least are inclined to believe.”¹⁰¹ They help to organize and review the existing information and to produce typologies of different proposed interpretations of an object of study as particular and limited perspectives of it.¹⁰² Since “images are derived from the finite realities of experience, they are never adequate to represent the [totality of the] mystery of grace ... [therefore] no one [model] should be canonized as the measure of all the rest.”¹⁰³ Rather, they “are mutually complementary [and] should be made to interpenetrate and mutually qualify one another.”¹⁰⁴ In similar terms, philosopher Frederick

⁹⁹ Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 15.

¹⁰¹ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 17.

¹⁰² See James H. Kroeger, “The Theological Model’s Approach: Its Relevance Today,” *African Ecclesial Review* 43, no. 3 (Jun 2001): 86–98.

¹⁰³ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 24. This aspect, which in *Models of the Church* is still used in a more intuitive way, becomes a more robust methodological procedure called “symbolic mediation” in *Models of Revelation*. Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 131–53. Dulles contends that symbolic mediation aims at finding convergence of understanding among the diversity of models with which one approaches the object of study, and that this convergence of understanding moves us a step nearer to the ecumenical program followed and so expressed by Dulles: “My effort in the two books on models was to establish some kind of communication between partisans of different schools ... I contend that in spite of their explicit disagreements, Christian theologians have, or should have, some common orientations, based on the nature of revelation itself. These orientations are largely tacit and presystematic. Theologians should not so confine themselves to a single school or system that they overlook elements of truth or value that are more evident from a perspective other than their own. The persistent temptation of systematic theology is to become too self-enclosed.” Avery Dulles, S.J., “From Symbol to System: A Proposal for Theological Method,” *Pro Ecclesia* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 43. This raises the question regarding the way of defining valid limits for this “convergence of understanding” among the variables that are brought into dialogue. Ian Barbour contends that “[c]omplementarity provides *no justification for an uncritical acceptance of dichotomies*. It cannot be used to avoid dealing with inconsistencies or to veto the search for unity.” Thus, for Barbour, models should be called complementary only if they refer to “the same logical type *within* a given language,” and belong to “the same paradigm community.” Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper, 1976), 78. eBook on Religion on Line, chap. 5, accessed January 29, 2020,

Ferré, argues that models represent a scientific use of metaphorical language,¹⁰⁵ and, just as with metaphors, one of their function is to provide coherence and a unified picture where otherwise the scientist would just find a fragmentary view and disconnected data.¹⁰⁶

The second function that Dulles ascribes to models moves on an *exploratory or heuristic level* in that these—Dulles contends—“lead to new theological insights.”¹⁰⁷ Here the American Cardinal is not only touching on a common notion in the description of the heuristic fruitfulness of models in science (namely, that as with metaphors, models help considering reality in a new perspective),¹⁰⁸ but he is also drawing on the ideas of other theologians and philosophers of religious language who explore what is usually called “symbolic disclosure.”¹⁰⁹ The basic idea is that since God (and any other object of theological study) is a transcendental mystery, no human language is apt for this God talk. We can just speak in terms of “analogy” or “symbols,” taken as “a special type of sign to be distinguished from a mere indicator or a conventional cipher ... [and that is] pregnant with a plenitude of meaning which is evoked rather than explicitly stated.”¹¹⁰ Now, these analogies are the source for finding theological models that, as such, do more justice to the transcendental nature of the divine mystery.¹¹¹ However, and paradoxically because of this

<https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-5-complementary-models/>.

¹⁰⁵ Frederick Ferré. “Metaphors, Models, and Religion,” *Soundings* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 333.

¹⁰⁶ Ferré explains how it is that models produce such coherence: “Certain aspects of that referent are brought into prominence, certain other aspects are placed in the background, and perhaps some features of the situation are noticed in a way quite unlike that which would have been possible or likely without the model’s guidance.” Ferré, “Metaphors,” 334–35.

¹⁰⁷ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Ferré, “Metaphors,” 335.

¹⁰⁹ We refer to Ian Ramsey, Ewert Cousins, Paul Tillich, H. Richard Niebuhr, Karl Rahner, Paul Ricoeur, and others. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 3, 14–16; Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 131.

¹¹⁰ Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 132.

¹¹¹ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2.

respectfulness for the divine inaccessibility, the use of models “facilitate[s] the exploration of the *mysterion* ... [and] promote[s] a deeper and more fruitful encounter with the mystery itself—with God.”¹¹² Or, as Ian Ramsey puts it: models are “occasions of *divine self-disclosure*.”¹¹³ The present author disagrees with this position, which exhibits a simultaneous neo-Platonic skeptical treatment of language and a positivist stance regarding our human ability to stimulate “the divine” to reveal itself. These assumptions are in clear conflict with the way Luther’s *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross) rules out any possibility for us to access the hidden divine majesty (*Deus absconditus*) and, at the same time, rests in absolute certitude (*certitudo*) upon that particular place where God has made himself known (*Deus revelatus*).¹¹⁴

This work will not use the strategy of models as a heuristic instrument to further some kind of exploratory development of Christian doctrine. The understanding of Christian doctrine that is embraced here moves in diametrical opposition to the notion of “symbolic disclosure.” However, the present author does think that the strategy of models can contribute to a variety of tasks in Christian theology, such as organizing typologies of diverse theological proposals that do not cohere with each other, without attempting to solve their incommensurability. A models-based approach also commends diverse theological proposals as heuristic pictures that facilitate both unified and coherent appreciations of particular aspects of our experience of reality and strategies for exploring possible solutions to problems. The dissertation, then, will use the notion of models

¹¹² Kroeger, “Theological Model’s Approach,” 97.

¹¹³ Ian T. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 20.

¹¹⁴ A sample of the logical consequences of these trajectories can be found in the two extreme epistemological positions represented in the recent collection of essays edited by Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher, *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*. There we find articles that sustain either an illusory optimism regarding the human capability of acquiring comprehensive knowledge of the nature of ultimate realities, together with a thoroughgoing pessimistic attitude toward the possibility of going beyond a Feuerbachian view of religious knowledge. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher, ed., *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities* (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2013).

as a strategy to organize three distinctive types of contemporary proposals on confessional commitment that will be artificially constructed as simplified and comprehensive pictures in order to explore what it looks like to be committed to the Lutheran Confessions and to advance possible solutions to some of the problems Latin American Lutheranism raises.

This dissertation will proceed under the following working definition: A model is an artificial construct that proposes a simplified and comprehensive picture of reality in order to have a particular understanding of it and explore its challenges and possibilities for addressing some issues.

Outline of the Dissertation

Following this introductory chapter, the dissertation presents six other chapters. Chapter two (Three Models of Confessional Commitment) will articulate part of the current discussion on confessionalism under the following three models: (1) *Model One* (confessional commitment as divine conversation) will elaborate mainly on Kolb's notion of God as a conversational person; (2) *Model Two* (confessional commitment as a form of life in the world) will elaborate mainly on Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic proposal on church and doctrine; and (3) *Model Three* (confessional commitment as orthodox dynamics) will elaborate on our own re-appropriation of Pelikan's use of the traditional triad *credimus, docemus et confitemur* (we believe, teach, and confess).

Chapter three (Latin American Case Studies) will present six case studies that offer a sample of the theological reflection and struggles of Latin American Lutheranism. These case studies are assembled from two Latin American theological journals, namely, *Igreja Luterana* (published by Seminário Concórdia in São Leopoldo, Brazil) and *Revista Teológica* (published by Seminario Concordia in Buenos Aires, Argentina).

Chapter four (Testing Model One), five (Testing Model Two), and six (Testing Model Three), will test the productivity of our three models of confessional commitment to answer questions raised by three of the six case studies of Latin American Lutheranism. These three chapters represents the knot of this dissertation, since it is especially there that the thesis will be put to the test.

Chapter seven (Conclusion) will summarize and evaluate the findings of this dissertation, assess the viability of our thesis, point out some contributions that our dissertation brings to current theological scholarship, and make suggestions for further exploration in view of the limits of this work.

Expected Outcomes

As previously mentioned, the dissertation has two main foci of attention that are regionally informed and determined, and that establish the main questions that this work will address. How to deal with the complexities and difficulties that both North Atlantic and Global South confessional discussions are grappling with? How to address southern struggles, demands, and expectations regarding the Lutheran Confessions? How to enrich the broader conversation of “the household of faith” with the voice of Global South Lutheranism? How do we bring northern and southern confessional discussions into dialogue with one another?

The answer that our dissertation will bring to these main questions will make at least the following four general contributions:

1. It will supply the already populated trajectory of the theological use of models with a Lutheran version of its applicability as a strategy for organizing the content of doctrine and exploring its productivity for addressing issues of confessional identity and commitment—and approach that stands in contrast to the main tendency in the

field, which embraces the problematic notion of “symbolic disclosure.”¹¹⁵

2. It will contribute elaborate categories that may help in coping with the confused semantic field of “confessionalism” and “confessional identity,” such as our own articulation of “confessional commitment,” and with the implementation of the fitting strategy of models to deal with varied theological proposals.
3. It will broaden the possibilities and options for “the dialogue of the household of faith” connected with the Lutheran Confessions as it rotates the axis of conversation from its usual “horizontal” direction (North America-Europe) to a “vertical” one (North America-South America).¹¹⁶
4. It will contribute to a better appreciation of the pragmatic fruitfulness and ontological necessity of the church to embrace her Confessions and to let them shape its identity and performance.

¹¹⁵ In this regard, I build on the models-based approach used by Lutheran theologian Leopoldo Sánchez in his studies on sanctification, *Teología de la santificación* and *Sculptor Spirit*.

¹¹⁶ In a couple of articles, Leopoldo Sánchez has drawn attention to the need to account respectively for (1) a twofold axis (Latin American-European and Latin American-North American) for understanding U.S. Hispanic (Lutheran) identity, and (2) the theological questions raised by the Global South in the expression of a North American confessional Lutheran identity today. See Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., “Hispanic Is Not What You Think: Reimagining Hispanic Identity, Implications for an Increasingly Global Church,” *CJ* 42, no. 3 (2016): 223–35; and “The Global South Meets North America: Confessional Lutheran Identity In Light of Changing Christian Demographics,” *CJ* 37, no. 1 (2011): 39–56.

CHAPTER TWO

THREE MODELS OF CONFESSIONAL COMMITMENT

Introductory Comments

This present chapter will articulate a typology of three distinctive models of confessional commitment based on the writings of three prominent contemporary theologians. As a reminder, in the previous chapter was established the following working definitions of a model and confessional commitment:

- A *model* is an artificial construct that proposes a simplified and comprehensive picture of reality designed to facilitate a particular understanding of this reality and the exploration of its challenges and possibilities.
- *Confessional commitment* is the solemn disposition of the community/person to be defined in her (1) socialization and alliance, (2) narrative and belief, (3) experience, and (4) action, by the One who deals with her through the Lutheran Confessions.

The models that will be proposed here constitute a typology of the notion of confessional commitment. And this, not with the intention of bringing them into dialogue in order to assess either their complementarity or the superiority of one over against the others. These three models form a typology in the sense that they represent discrete proposals with which recent North American theologians have enriched the discussion on confessional Lutheranism.¹ As philosopher Frederick Ferré contends, a model is a scientific use of metaphorical language intended to “restructure our perceptions of its primary object by subtly diminishing the

¹ The most prominent of them are Robert Kolb, George A. Lindbeck, and Jaroslav Pelikan, each of whom will be taken as the main representative of one of the three models on confessional commitment.

importance of certain of its features and highlighting others.”² As a consequence of this, the actual position of the authors that are taken here as representatives of each model has been stylized or abstracted in one way or another, in order to produce a unified and simplified root metaphor that may function as the descriptive and heuristic tool a model is intended to be. However, since the models in this study intend to represent real conceptual proposals of current North American Lutheran scholars, a brief critical description of the main source of each model’s root metaphor will follow after the articulation of the corresponding model.

The articulation of the models will follow the structure provided by the four dimensions that constitute the heart of our working definition of confessional commitment. Since, as sociologist William Kornhauser asserts, “[t]o incur a commitment is to become more or less unavailable for alternative lines of action,”³ in the description of each of these four dimensions we will find a positive and a negative side, somewhat commensurable with the classical way of confessing the truth by affirming it (*affirmativa*) and rejecting the corresponding heresy (*negativa*).

A few preliminary comments regarding the description of the narrative dimension of each model are necessary. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, our definition of confessional commitment embraces a personalist approach to the notion of commitment. This is to say that confessional commitment does not involve a depersonalized relation between a committed “I” (i.e., a religious community or an individual person) and a committing “it” (i.e., the doctrine or the texts of the Lutheran Confessions). Rather, the “it” of the Lutheran Confessions (the documents together with the doctrine they confess) functions as an instrument that mediates a

² Ferré, “Metaphors,” 331.

³ Kornhauser, “Political Commitment,” 321.

personal “I-Thou” relation. Whereas the present work takes the “I” to be the committed part in this relation (the religious community or the individual person), the “Thou” is the One who addresses the “I” by means of the Lutheran Confessions as a faithful exposition of his Word in order to define her in the four dimensions that constitute our definition of confessional commitment. But, who is that “Thou?” Since each model has a distinctive story, there is a different “Thou” in each narrative.

This brings us to our second comment: This “I-Thou” relation is not a static one, but takes place—so to speak—within a drama that is intimately related to (or equivalent to) the salvation history of the committed “I.” In order to have a better (and more graphic) appreciation of the identity and function of each part in this relation, as well as of the basic semantic structure of the story that is involved in each model, structuralist Algirdas Greimas’s actantial model serves as an appropriate device.⁴ For Greimas, the basic units of a story are its “narrative statements” constituted by six types of actors and their main actions, related to one another along three different axes. In terms of Edgar McKnight’s summary (see Figure 1),

In the axis of communication, the *sender* determines that something (*object*) is to be communicated to someone else (*receiver*). The *sender* gives a mandate to a *subject*. On the axis of volition, the *subject* facilitates communication of the *object* by suppressing the obstacles which hinder it. On the axis of power, the *helper* is the power necessary for passage from desire to action. The *helper* may be qualities, information, knowledge, or inanimate objects as well as personages. The *opponent* is the power opposing the move to action.⁵

⁴ Algirdas J. Greimas, *Semántica estructural: Investigación metodológica*, trans. Alfredo de la Fuente (Madrid: Gredos, 1971), 263–93.

⁵ Edgar V. McKnight, *Meaning in Texts: The Historical Shaping of a Narrative Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 263.

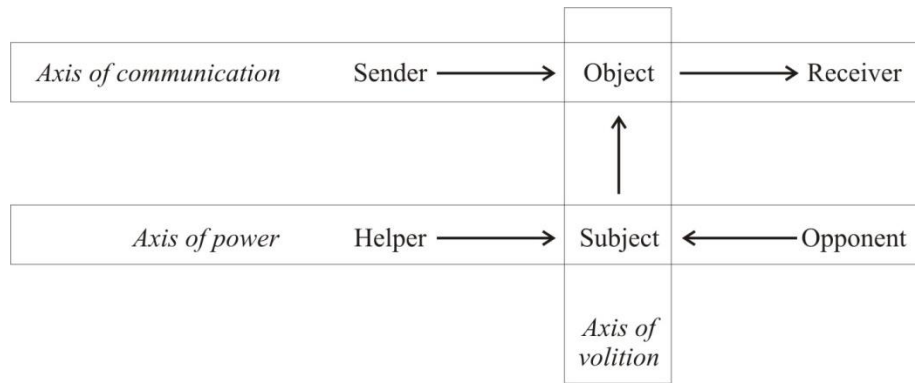


Figure 1. Greimas's actantial positions⁶

Finally, and back to the referent of “Thou,” the actantial positions in each narrative will suggest the plural character of the personal “Ye” who address the committed “I,” for they always are both the sender (as the mediate or ultimate “Thou”) and the subject (as the immediate “Thou” who functions as mask of the ultimate “Thou”). For instance, in model one, God the Father is the ultimate “Thou” who addresses his human creature (“I”) through the mediation of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (the immediate “Thou”). In spite of the distance that distinguishes one “Thou” from the other (that is, one of agency), these “Ye” address the committed “I” as an indivisible “Thou.”

Model One: Confessional Commitment as Divine Conversation

Model one harvests from the ancient motif of the Trinitarian God as a God of conversation, motif that was retaken by Martin Luther around his theological appreciation of the Word of God and of God as a relational and speaking God. Modern and postmodern theology, as it has been with philosophy, acquired a new interest in the linguistic issue, and this has produced a current

⁶ Greimas, *Semántica estructural*, 276.

renewed grasp of Luther's insights.⁷ The first model proposes to frame our appreciation of confessional commitment within this understanding of God as a God of conversation.

Articulation of Model One

The Son and the Holy Spirit bring the committed "I" into a relation of conversation and community with God the Father ("Thou"). The Lutheran Confessions function as the grammar and "form for teaching" or "method of speaking" in this divine conversation.⁸

First Dimension: Socialization and Alliance

God the Father ("Thou") brings his human creature ("I") into a relation of conversation and community through the agency of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This relation represents the defeat of Satan and the submission of any other partner under this primordial divine conversation.

Second Dimension: Narrative and Belief

God the Father subsists from all eternity in perpetual mutual relation with God the Son, his own Word, in the perfect bond of love of God the Spirit. The Father opened up the divine prerogative of a subsistence in community and conversation, when he decided to create the world through the agency of his Word and his Spirit. The Triune God designed his human creature to be his main conversational partner. In conversing with his human creatures, the Father gives

⁷ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 13–25; Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. Jeffrey Silcock and Mark Mattes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 94, 125–38, 175.

⁸ See SD, "Binding Summary," 10 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 529; Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. Jack A. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1989), 1:46; Martin Chemnitz, "Judgment on Certain Controversies Concerning Articles of the Augsburg Confession," in *Sources and Context of the Lutheran Confessions*, ed. Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 201.

himself with all his gifts to human beings, who respond in trust, thankful dependence, and receptiveness.

In order to destroy this divine-human conversation, Satan enticed the human person into a false and idolatrous counter-conversation. And the human being accepted this proposal that brought the destruction of his life-giving conversation with God. Therefore, the mutual self-giving of promise and trust of the primal divine conversation came to be substituted by a disruption of wrath and unbelief.

But God the Father, once again out of pure love, mandated God the Son, his own Word, and God the Holy Spirit to reestablish the initial conversation with his human creature. And this is what they did. The relation of divine wrath over against the human person was to be changed once again into a relation of grace and self-giving. And the Son accomplished this when he reconciled us back to the Father. The relation of human unbelief toward God was to be changed once again into a relation of fear, trust, and love. And the Holy Spirit accomplishes this by creating in us a believing heart. In order to give us his gifts, Christ initiates the conversation (*proto-logia*, “first word”) and addresses us with his word of promise (*traditio*, “what is given [to the I]”).⁹ Through this means, the Spirit creates in us the faith that appropriates the promise

⁹ Robert Kolb condenses this bold understanding of the confession of faith (as the act of confessing the faith that, at the same time, includes the confessional texts with which that act is performed) as included in the Lutheran notion of the proclaimed word of God, in these terms: “Scripture existed, as noted above, to enable faithful delivery of its message, particularly Christ’s benefits, to its hearers and readers. ‘Confession of the faith’ was but one expression in a large vocabulary field that Luther and his colleagues used for the active delivery of God’s Word to others. His concept of God’s creative speech led Luther to emphasize proclamation or confession of the biblical message as God’s instrument of salvation ... The confession of the faith carries out the God-assigned task of bringing that new reality to others ... Luther and Melancthon not only regarded ‘teaching,’ ‘proclamation,’ and ‘confession’ as involving human action; they served as instruments of God’s action of killing and making alive as well ... Luther used the term ‘confess’ for public delivery of the biblical message also in printed form.” Robert Kolb, “The Relationship between Scripture and the Confession of Faith in Luther’s Thought,” in *Kirkens bekjennelse I historisk og aktuelt perspektiv: Festskrift til Kjell Olav Sannes*, ed. Torleiv Austad, Tormad Engelviksen, and Lars Østnor (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2010), 58–59.

and gives back (*reditio*, “what the I gives back”) to the Lord the confession of that same truth (*homo-logia*, “same word [as the first]”).¹⁰

In technical structuralist terminology, the matter can be stated as follows. In the *axis of communication*, God the Father (sender) communicates to the human being (receiver) the power to participate in the divine conversation of promise and trust (object). In the *axis of volition*, God the Father (sender) mandates God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (subject) to suppress the obstacle of wrath and unbelief in order to transmit the object to the receiver. In the *axis of power*, the Son and the Holy Spirit (subject) use the instrument of the Confessions (helper) to neutralize Satan (opponent) by suppressing the obstacle (see Figure 2).

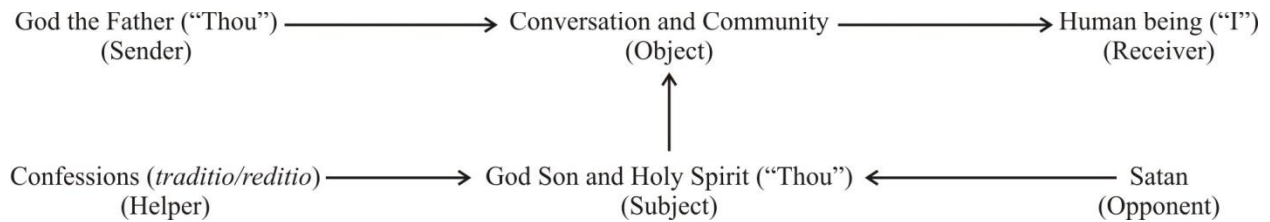


Figure 2. Actantial positions in the narrative of model one.

This narrative precludes two opposite lines of belief, each one having a diversity of versions. On the one hand, precluded is the transcendentalist tendency that locates God even beyond his ability or disposition to cross over the abyss that separates us from him. And

¹⁰ To locate the confession of faith within the context of God-human conversation in this way has a long and venerable tradition that goes back to the etymology of the Biblical use of *homologeîn*. Thus, after Hermann Sasse’s appropriation of Wilhelm Maurer’s analysis of Matthew 16:16–17, Norman Nagel typically rehearses this fundamental concept: “To confess is to say back to God what he has said and given [us first] (*homologeîn*).” Norman Nagel “Holy Baptism,” in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, ed. Fred Precht (St. Louis: Concordia, 1993), 282; see Hermann Sasse, *We Confess Jesus Christ*, We Confess Series, trans. Norman Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1984), 1:76; Wilhelm Maurer, *Bekennntnis und Sakrament: ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der christlichen Konfessionen* (Berlin: A. Topelmann, 1939).

consequently, both an Aristotelian God who cannot but converse with himself in order to be God, and the neo-platonic “the finite is not capable of the infinite” (*finitum non capax infiniti*) that produces the corresponding “the infinite is not capable of the finite” (*infinitum non capax finiti*) get ruled out. Ruled out is any of their modern versions that move in the direction of the atheism of Gotthold Lessing’s “ugly broad ditch” and Ludwig Feuerbach’s equation of theology with anthropology. Ruled out is also the modern skepticism which labels as positivist illusion any assertion of faith that in the face of God’s Word dares to claim “Thus saith the Lord” (*haec dixit Dominus*). On the other hand, precluded is also any form of theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*) that denies the reality of God’s hiddenness and humanity’s total inability to initiate a conversation with God by calling humans to explore their own ways of doing this. Rejected is also a theology of glory that denies the exclusiveness of Christ and his Spirit in breaking through the dividing wall between God and humans, opening that unique gap through which the divine partner in conversation with us is God the Father and thus cannot turn out to be an idol.

Third Dimension: Experience

This relational and narrative commitment is initiated by being addressed by He who comes to me not “as One unknown, without a name,”¹¹ but with an inescapable word of condemnation that puts me under his omnipotent wrath and that kills my independentist idolatry, as well as with the justifying word of absolution that puts me under his grace and makes me his living conversant partner. This takes place by means of an oral-written and sacramental speech act, and it is by means of the same experience of dying and being made alive again that this ongoing divine conversation is sustained.

¹¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 403.

Any attempt to converse with the Triune God bypassing this paschal/baptismal experience of dying and being raised again, which happens through God's own word of Law and Gospel, is a contradiction of terms and becomes mutually exclusive with that very divine conversation.

Forth Dimension: Action

Even though the Triune God alone can initiate and sustain my conversation with him, which gives me a fundamentally passive role, being his conversational partner confers me at the same time the most active possible role. He speaks a definite and purposeful word, and I am there to hear him and to answer him with the same purposefulness and definiteness. The way I correspond to his initial address (*proto-logia, traditio*) is by giving him back that same word (*homo-logia, reditio*). This takes place as I deplore my wretched condition as sinner, declare the whole truth of the Christian dogma to be mine, and praise and worship this conversational partner as my God. Repentance and belief that embrace both heart (First Commandment) and mouth (Second Commandment) are the fundamental and pregnant actions that constitute my proper acts of hearing and answering his condemning and forgiving word. These are the fundamental and pregnant actions, but not the only ones, for it is the entire newness of life lived out in any aspect of the restored human existence of repentance and trust that constitutes the boundless act of having a share in this divine conversation.

Rejected is my tendency either to deal with God as if he would not have spoken the first word (wanting neither to hear nor to respond to that first word), or to concede him the first word as long as it does not imply hearing and responding in repentance and belief. Precluded is also any attempt to compartmentalize one's own existence in order to limit the scope of the divine conversation by making room for other authoritative and life-norming independent conversations that replace the Triune God's conversation with us.

Main Source of the Root Metaphor: Robert Kolb's Depiction of Martin Luther's God as a Conversational Person

Besides other contributions,¹² model one will be construed upon Robert Kolb's characteristic depiction of Luther's understanding of God as a conversational God. His co-authored *The Genius of Luther's Theology* offers a classic description of this pregnant notion:

Luther insisted that God is a person, a person who speaks and enjoys conversation with the human creatures he fashioned to listen to him and talk with him. God created his human creatures to be his conversation partners. God claims to be our Father, and through his Word he claims our trust and obedience as his children. His first conversation with his human creatures continued as long as Adam and Eve trusted God and delighted in chatting with him. In our fallen world he addresses his human creatures throughout Scripture, confronting them, condemning their unfaithfulness to him, comforting and consoling them with his word from Christ's cross, commissioning them to bring his love into the world, conveying his love and caring for his world through them.¹³

His later article "Luther's Theology as a Foundation for Twenty-First Century Missiology" presents new instances of the same concept:

By his very nature, as Luther saw it revealed in Christ's suffering and death in behalf of sinners, God speaks, creates, and then cares for and is deeply concerned about his human creatures. This God of conversation and community has come personally as the Word made flesh to care for those who had missed the mark in fulfilling their humanity ... God is a God of conversation and community, and so the goal of his sending Christ into the world to save sinners is the restoration of the conversation he designed us to have in communion with him.¹⁴

This particular portrayal of God is a favorite starting point from which Kolb articulates different

¹² See above note 126. Oswald Bayer with his elaboration around the concept of *promissio* can also be considered a main figure under this model. See Oswald Bayer, *Promissio: Geschichte der reformatorischen Wende in Luthers Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971); Oswald Bayer, "God as Author of My Life-History," *LQ* 2, no. 4 (1988): 437–56; Oswald Bayer, "Poetological Theology: New Horizons for Systematic Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1, no. 2 (1999): 153–67; Oswald Bayer, "Poetological Doctrine of the Trinity," *LQ* 15, no. 1 (2001): 43–58; Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013); Oswald Bayer, "Reliable Word: Luther's Understanding of God, Humanity, and the World," *Logia* 23, no. 3 (2014): 5–10.

¹³ Robert Kolb and Charles Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 138.

¹⁴ Robert Kolb, "Luther's Theology as a Foundation for Twenty-First Century Missiology," *Missio Apostolica* 19, no. 2 (2011): 95, 98.

aspect of the Reformer's theological thinking, and has demonstrated to be comprehensive and coherent enough as not to leave it aside at least for an entire decade of fruitful scholarly production.¹⁵ This image helps Kolb integrate the whole spectrum of the subject matter of theology as defined by Luther himself: "The proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner."¹⁶ The image of God as a conversational person is so powerful a tool in Kolb's program for articulating Luther's thought precisely because Kolb harvests it out of the main insights that characterize the Reformer's singular stance. These are some of them:

1. The distinction between the two kinds of righteousness with which already "in 1518/1519 the Wittenberg professor had begun to experiment"¹⁷ and constitutes part of the core of Luther's fundamental reformational thinking.¹⁸ It is not our righteousness that avails before God, but the one that springs from the cross of Christ through the promise that bestows his passive righteousness. This distinction, affirms Kolb, defines how we relate to God (through the passive righteousness of faith) and to one another (through the active righteousness of love), and therefore, what it means to be human.¹⁹

¹⁵ I could not find an earlier instance of a clear articulation of this notion in Kolb than his article "Here We Stand: Confessing the Faith in Luther's Footsteps from Worms to Smalcald," *CJ* 32, no. 2 (2006): 175–88. This image becomes Kolb's prominent starting point in his most recent articulation of Luther's theology. See Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God: The Wittenberg School and Its Scripture-Centered Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 35–74.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, "Psalm 51, 1532," *LW* 12:311.

¹⁷ Kolb, "Here We Stand," 175–76.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation, 1518," *LW* 31:35–70; Martin Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness, 1519," *LW* 31:293–305; Martin Luther, "The Argument of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians," *LW* 26:4–12.

¹⁹ Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness: Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology," *LQ* 13, no. 4 (1999): 449–66; Kolb, "Here We Stand," 175–78; Kolb and Arand, *Genius*, 21–129.

2. God creates this relationship, to bring us from unbelief to faith, by means of his creative Word. Just as Luther puts it, “the Holy Spirit also has His own language and way of expression, namely, that God, by speaking, created all things and worked through the Word, and that all His works are some words of God, created by the uncreated Word.”²⁰ For His is “a word related to a real thing or action [*verbum reale*], not just a sound, as ours is.”²¹ Therefore, Kolb concludes: “His Word in all its forms actually conveys and performs his saving will. God designed his Word in these forms as instruments of his re-creating power which accomplish what they announce. More than performative speech, they are creative speech, parallel to God’s speaking in Genesis 1.”²²
3. Now, this Word addresses me in a personal and oral way as Christ’s own *viva vox*. “Luther’s concept of the ‘living voice of the gospel’ reminds us that this word that bestows life and salvation is a word that God addresses directly to His people.”²³ This implies for Luther that in the proclamation of the church there is a personally present God who communicates with us, just as Kolb and Arand illustrate it by quoting Luther: “It is God himself who is speaking when it is God’s Word which someone uses to comfort you, and if it is God’s Word, then God is acting here, so remember that God himself is doing it.”²⁴

²⁰ Martin Luther, “Lectures on Genesis, 1535,” *LW* 1:49.

²¹ Martin Luther, “Psalm 2, 1532,” *LW* 12:32.

²² Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 132.

²³ Kolb, “Here We Stand,” 180.

²⁴ Kolb and Arand, *Genius*, 179 (citing Martin Luther, “*Erste Predigt über die Taufe*, 1538,” *WA* 46:150.20–26).

4. But this relationship, monergistically created by the omnipotent Word of God, is one of *conversation*, one that expects and habilitates our response to his self-giving promise. And our way of conversing with God, of responding to this creative Word of promise, is by trusting in him. According to Luther, “these words are not spoken or preached to stone and wood but to those who hear them ... [therefore this Word] cannot be received except by faith.”²⁵ And this, Kolb repeats, is what it means to be human: “To be human means, first of all, to be in conversation with God, trusting him, obeying him, reveling in his gifts of our being his human children.”²⁶
5. This Word with which God comes to us to establish this relationship of self-giving father and trusting and obedient children, addresses us by condescending to our human constitution, never apart from the materiality of the multiform external word (*verbum externum*). “Luther treasured God’s sensitivity to the human condition by delivering his Word together with such material signs. In 1538 he exulted that God graciously addresses the five human senses. Through the hand and tongue of the minister of the gospel God is at work.”²⁷ Kolb and Arand argue that God does this to help us in our daily temptations. “God does not abandon his people to the fickle flow of their own inner thoughts and feelings. Instead, he nailed down his promise in the body of Christ on the cross and in the Word that comes from the cross in oral, written, and sacramental form.”²⁸

²⁵ LC, “Sacrament of the Altar,” 33–34 in Kolb and Wengert, 470.

²⁶ Kolb and Arand, *Genius*, 141. See also Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 60–63.

²⁷ Kolb, *Confessor of the Faith*, 136.

²⁸ Kolb and Arand, *Genius*, 178.

Kolb advances the proposal that this image of God is so representative of Luther's thought, that it in fact constitutes Luther's key reformatory answer to the late medieval question on how human beings can attain a proper relation to God. This reformatory answer, affirms Kolb, functioned as a reaction over against the two previous synergistic and distorting alternatives: (1) the popular belief that the relation to God and all the other supernatural powers was to be negotiated primarily by means of rituals of various kinds, which had a somewhat magical effect; and (2) the reformatory reactions to this idolatrous piety that "proposed a moralistic rather than ritualistic approach to God ... [and that] were anti-sacramental and therefore anti-clerical" in nature.²⁹ Instead, Luther's Reformation program established "God the Creator as the initiator and activator of all relationships between himself and his human creatures, as a person who engaged his people in conversation through his Word in its several forms."³⁰

Surprisingly enough, as far as the author of this work is aware, Kolb does not bring this comprehensively descriptive image of Luther's thought into an extended dialogue with his other great field of expertise, namely, the Lutheran Confessions. This author has found only two recent exceptions, namely, his essay "The Relationship between Scripture and the Confession of the Faith in Luther's Thought," and some brief comments in his recent, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God*. In a rather germinal way, Kolb locates the concept of *confessio* within Luther's notion of the oral proclamation of the Word.³¹ Kolb asserts: "Confession of the faith'

²⁹ More recently, Kolb articulated this in terms of four points according to which Luther found that "the mechanism of medieval religion diverged from the biblical way of interacting with God," namely (1) taking human performance as decisive; (2) substituting sacred works and religious activities (*ex opere operato*) for acts of love and service; (3) reducing God "to only the chief among the agents who helped to meet human needs;" and (4) "the belief that only the priest could perform the ritual actions through which God automatically dispensed grace." Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 35–36.

³⁰ Kolb, *Confessor of the Faith*, 131. See Kolb, "Relationship between Scripture and Confession," 53–54.

³¹ Kolb, "Relationship between Scripture and Confession," 53, 55.

was but one expression in a larger vocabulary field that Luther and his colleagues used for the active delivery of God's Word to others."³² Similar to Gerhard Forde's classic contention that theology is for proclamation,³³ Kolb qualifies this by quoting Hans-Martin Barth: "Pure teaching, helpful to human being, is [for Luther] not primarily conveyed in lectures on dogmatics but in proclamation."³⁴ The primarily oral nature of Luther's understanding of *confessio* does not work to the exclusion of the written form of a confession, but integrates it as an instrument for the "public delivery of the biblical message,"³⁵ just as the application of the name *confessio* to Luther's writing on the Lord's Supper (1528) and to the *Augustana* (1530) demonstrates.³⁶ Even though this remarkably fruitful image of God in Luther is connected here in a germinal way, Kolb does not deploy it further, in connection with his particular area of interest regarding the place and function that the Lutheran Confessions have in our experience as human beings in conversation with God. Even when quoting Luther's explicit recognition of the double audience of his act of confessing his faith "before God and the entire world,"³⁷ Kolb still moves in another direction. He does so by locating the Confessions only within the framework of the church's relation to the world (*coram mundo*), either in its socio-historical function connected with the early Modern European process of confessionalization, or in its missionary and ecumenical potentialities for helping the Lutheran church to convey the biblical message as one form in

³² Kolb, "Relationship between Scripture and Confession," 58. See also, Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 65.

³³ Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

³⁴ Kolb, "Relationship between Scripture and Confession," 58–59 (citing Hans-Martin Barth, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers. Eine kritische Würdigung* [Gütersloh: Gütersloh, 2009], 126).

³⁵ Kolb, "Relationship between Scripture and Confession," 59.

³⁶ Kolb, "Relationship between Scripture and Confession," 59–60.

³⁷ Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 65 (citing Martin Luther, "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper, 1528," WA 26:499.7; LW 37:360).

which the faith bears fruits of love.³⁸

Model Two: Confessional Commitment as a Form of Life in the World

The second generation or late Lutheran Reformation is characterized today by socio-historians as a period of “confessionalization.” Heinz Schilling defines it as a “fundamental process of society” that not only “embrac[ed] changes in the ecclesiastical, religious, and cultural spheres,” but also in the political and social ones.³⁹ One of the issues that was at stake in this process was the formation and legalization of newly separate “church bodies” (or *Konfessionen*) as well as the shaping and nurturing of the respective ecclesiastical cultures.⁴⁰ Particularly in the case of German Lutheranism, the Lutheran Confessions played a fundamental role in all this process. Irene Dingel says that

[t]he function and impact of these confessions generally fluctuated between two contrasting but complementary poles: the concern for integration through establishing unity and consensus within Christendom, on the one hand, and, on the other, the consolidation and unity of one’s own community of faith, demarcating it by means of its own confession.⁴¹

Ever since the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation, the written confessions “served not only as a symbol of the faith but also as a legal definition which regulated the church’s life and its place in society, particularly in relation to the government.”⁴² This regulative role that creeds and

³⁸ Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 64–65. See also, Kolb, *Confessing the Faith*; Robert Kolb, *Luther’s Heirs Define His Legacy: Studies on Lutheran Confessionalization* (Variorum: Aldershot, 1996); and Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*.

³⁹ Heinz Schilling, “Confessionalization: Historical and Scholarly Perspectives of a Comparative and Interdisciplinary Paradigm,” in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 26.

⁴⁰ Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 162; Robert Kolb, “Introduction,” in Kolb, *Ecclesiastical Culture*, 2–5.

⁴¹ Dingel, “Function and Historical Development,” 297.

⁴² Kolb, *Confessing the Faith*, 18.

confessions have in shaping the particular form of life of the church—a role that, as George Lindbeck points out, “is not novel” but “goes back to the earliest Christian centuries” with the notion of “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*) or “rule of truth” (*regula veritatis*)⁴³—constitutes the main focus of this model of confessional commitment.

Articulation of Model Two

The church is a heavenly reality in the world, a totally unique form of life in this world, for Christ the Lord rules her exclusively through the gospel. The Lutheran Confessions function as the church’s own “language game” that helps the church to construe her identity and regulate her stance in the world.

First Dimension: Socialization and Alliance

Christ the Lord (“Thou”) gives his church (“I”) her identity as a heavenly reality in this world, and rules her entirely with his gospel. This relation destroys the tyranny under which Satan seeks to confound and misguide the church.

Second Dimension: Narrative and Belief

The church is established as the result of the victorious irruption of Christ’s lordship over against the tyranny of Satan, who misguides and oppresses the human creature with a sinful, fleshly, and worldly existence. When Christ conquered our enemy and redeemed us, human beings, he established his church as a heavenly reality in this world.

That the church is a heavenly reality in this world, gives her a unique form of life. In the

⁴³ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 18–19. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, ANF 1:448–825; Tertullian, *The Prescriptions Against Heretics*, ANF 3:331–68; Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, ANF 3:872–920.

words of Christ the Lord, since the church is a heavenly reality, she is “not of the world” (οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου).⁴⁴ She is no longer defined and ruled in accordance with the law of sin, flesh, and the world with which Satan had previously confounded and misguided her. The new and exclusive language game with which the Lord rules the church is the word of the gospel as bestowed in preached and sacramental forms.⁴⁵ But, at the same time, the great act of redemption that lies at the basis of the church’s new heavenly existence did not pull her out of the world. As true as the fact that the church is not of the world, is that she is “in the world” (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ). Even when, strictly speaking, the church is “an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of persons,”⁴⁶ she is not a platonic republic (*Platonica civitas*).⁴⁷ The very outward character of the gospel that constitutes her most essential definition makes her, at the same time, “an association of external ties and rites,”⁴⁸ one among other creational orders, the ecclesiastical order (*ordo ecclesiasticum*), a “form of life” in this world.⁴⁹ Redemption and the transfer from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ does not spare the church from the ongoing conflict between both kingdoms. For, besides being “in the world,” the church is even sent “into the world” (εἰς τὸν κόσμον). The identity, regulation,⁵⁰ and mission that Christ gives the church

⁴⁴ In his high priestly prayer, as registered in John 17:11-18, Jesus brings together three prepositional phrases that describe the relation of the church to the world and that will be exploited here, in what follows in our consideration of model two: “not of the world” (οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου), “in the world” (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ), and “into the world” (εἰς τὸν κόσμον). For the Greek text from *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Revised Edition, eds. Barbara Aland et al. (Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

⁴⁵ Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, ed. Robert D. Preus and John R. Stephenson (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 1990), 203–08.

⁴⁶ Ap VII/VIII, 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 174.

⁴⁷ Ap VII/VIII, 20 in Kolb and Wengert, 177.

⁴⁸ Ap VII/VIII, 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 174.

⁴⁹ Hermann Sasse, *This is My Body: Luther’s Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 392.

⁵⁰ The notion of “regulation” here is not limited to the idea of an order or mandate (an imperative), what notwithstanding is included also, but rather functions as a synonym of “configuration” (of the church’s particular

through the gospel throws her into the midst of the conflict between Satan and Christ,⁵¹ where sin, flesh, and the world ceaselessly afflict the church with grave temptations that threaten with bringing her back into past forms of life of confusion and misguidance.

The same language game of the gospel which first establishes the church as Christ's kingdom on earth delivers her again and again from the temptations that sin, flesh, and the world inflict upon her. The Confession of faith shares in the gospel's function as language game. In confessing the heavenly truth in front of Satan's error, such confession helps the church in the midst of her temptations to retain the proclamation and sacramental administration of the gospel in its heavenly purity. It also assists the church to know how to establish and experience human external arrangements under the proper freedom of the gospel, and preserve her divinely given identity and regulation.

In terms of structuralism, in the *axis of communication*, Christ the Lord (sender) communicates his church (receiver) a new identity and regulation (object). In the *axis of volition*, Christ the Lord (sender) mandates the gospel (subject) in order to transmit the object to the receiver. In the *axis of power*, the gospel (subject) uses the instrument of the Confessions (helper) to subvert sin, flesh, and the world (opponent) in their attempts to reconstitute Satan's tyranny of confusion and misguidance in the church (see Figure 3).

form of life). The election of this term works under the influx of George Lindbeck's ascription of a *regulative role* to the church's creeds and confessions, an idea that he himself connects with the ancient label of "rule of faith" (*regula fidei*) and "rule of truth" (*regula veritatis*). See above note 159.

⁵¹ Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Bouman Herbert (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1961), 209–11.

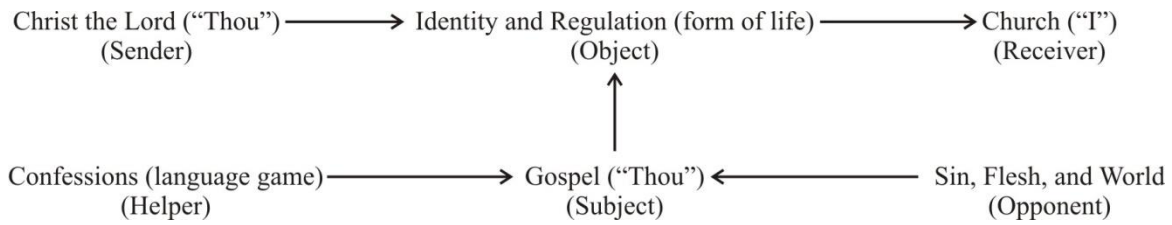


Figure 3. Actantial positions in the narrative of model two.

This narrative precludes a misconception of the church’s own language game that either excludes one of its components (i.e., gospel and Confessions),⁵² or that pits one of them against the other. This narrative also precludes an understanding of the church’s own form of life that excludes any of the prepositional phrases of his Lord’s high-priestly prayer (i.e., not of- / in- / into the world). This misunderstanding takes place (1) when, bringing into oblivion her distinctive heavenly nature, the church defines her own identity and regulates her performance in worldly terms, by way of the law (i.e., legalism); (2) when the church imagines that because of her heavenly nature she is beyond and apart from any earthly reality and constrain, thus eluding cross and temptation, or pretending to be able to function without any regulation (i.e., antinomianism);⁵³ and (3) when the church forgets that the same language game that makes her a

⁵² “For Lutherans the *concensus* required should always be regarded as the doctrinal content of the Book of Concord. For also the doctrinal decisions of the Formula of Concord concerning original sin and the will of man, Law and Gospel, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Person of Christ, Predestination and election are nothing but explanations and safeguards of the Article of Justification ... The question is constantly being asked, especially by all union churches, whether it is not enough that the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered, whereas the common confession does not necessarily belong to the essence of the church. Our answer must be that certainly not the confessional writings belong to the essentials of the church, but that the dogma which they contain must be preached, proclaimed to the world and confessed, not only by the individual Christian and pastor, but by the church body as a whole in church and school, in oral proclamation and in writing. It cannot be left to the individual pastor whether or not he wants to preach this or that doctrine. It is the duty of the church body to see that all congregations hear the true Gospel and receive Christ’s sacraments.” Hermann Sasse, “Theses on the Seventh Article of the Augsburg Confession,” *The Springfielder* 25, no. 3 (1961): 16–17.

⁵³ Kurt Marquart points out that the Lutheran Confessions put at bay not only the papal legalism that subjugates the church under human traditions, but also the radical Biblicism that oppresses the church with any kind of ceremonial regulation in Scriptures, distinct from the evangelical institutions with which the Lord governs his church. Over against both Roman and Reformed forms of legalism, the church’s confessional commitment locates

distinctive form of life in the world (i.e., gospel-Confessions) is not intended for sectarian concealment, but for missionary proclamation to the rest of the world.

Third Dimension: Experience

The sacramental life of the church is the fundamental structure of experience that initiates and sustains this confessional committed socialization and narrative. It is there, within the frame of the sacramental life, that the church and each of its members is baptized into Christ's death to the world, and into his resurrection for a new life in the midst of the world. This, in turn, shapes the church's self-identity and her understanding of reality from the very basis of human experience.

Within the frame of this sacramental ongoing experience, the church undergoes a variety of more or less formal instances of commitment to the dogmatic foundations, the normative texts, and the external regulations that configure the particularities of a Christian form of life in a specific context. Such instances of commitment include the rites of baptism, confirmation, and ordination, or an official endorsement of the community either to a particular church order or constitution (*Kirchenordnungen*), or a doctrinal statement or resolution, etc.

At the same time, these initiating and preserving experiences effect another set of experiences related to the proper tensions that characterizes a confessionally committed form of life. These include the proper tension between the heavenly and worldly constitution of the church, between freedom and order; as well as the proper distinction and correlation of faith and love, law and gospel, and the right and left hands of God.

her completely under the language game of the evangelical freedom. Marquart, *Church and Fellowship*, 219.

Fourth Dimension: Action

Since the sacramental life is not only an experience that the church receptively “suffers,” but at the same time constitutes her mission and responsibility in this world, that sacramental life is also the root action that initiates and sustains the confessionally committed socialization and narrative of this model.

Within the frame of this ongoing sacramental action, there are other particular actions that are promoted. They include (a) the church’s communal submission and regulation of her performance under the confessed dogma, (b) the embrace by faith of that same dogma as the foundation for each member’s worldview and vocational service to the world, and (c) the embrace in love of the church’s human regulations that are shaped by the gospel and functional to it. On the other hand, rejected are all those actions that move in line with any of the trajectories of precluded beliefs above described.

Main Source of the Root Metaphor: George A. Lindbeck’s Cultural-Linguistic Understanding of the Church

This second model of confessional commitment (as a form of life in the world) interacts with George A. Lindbeck’s “cultural-linguistic” understanding of the church. The name of this premier theologian has become almost a cipher for a postliberal theory on religion. Bernhard Eckerstorfer, O.S.B., points out that during the first years after the Second Vatican Council, in which Lindbeck acted as an ecumenical observer, he himself became active in promoting the idea that the church needs to be adjusted to the modern world. However, when Lindbeck noticed that this *aggiornamento* was taking shape in line with a “progressive *avant garde* [that] [was] basically the Catholic wing of contemporary Western liberalism,”⁵⁴ he began “to see in all

⁵⁴ George A. Lindbeck, “The Crisis in American Catholicism,” in *Our Common History as Christians: Essays*

churches, regardless of their traditions and institutional forms, a need for a postliberal ‘conversion’ as a means of becoming prepared for the future.”⁵⁵ This call to step forward beyond modern liberalism, though not by way of a mere repristination of preliberal options, was expressed for the first time during the seventies, but took a somewhat definite form in 1984 with Lindbeck’s famous book *The Nature of Doctrine*.⁵⁶

In this monograph, Lindbeck argues for the inadequacy of the existing conceptions of religion and religious doctrines for grappling with contemporary ecumenical challenges. “Doctrines, in other words, do not behave the way they should, given our customary suppositions about the kinds of things they are. We clearly need new and better ways of understanding their nature and function.”⁵⁷ For, whereas preliberal orthodoxy’s *cognitive-propositional* understanding of doctrine as a first order ontological statement makes reconciliation between opposing confessional positions impossible, a modern liberal *experiential-expressivist* view’s appeal to a common pre-linguistic religious experience makes it impossible to specify and articulate what the real commonalities and differences between the religious traditions in dialogue are.⁵⁸ Thus, Lindbeck attempts to find a theory that may provide a way out of this ecumenical impasse by promoting reconciliation without capitulation to each partner’s traditional identity.

Lindbeck finds in contemporary philosophers and theologians such as Ludwig

in Honor of Albert C. Outler, ed. John Deschner, Leroy T. Howe, and Klaus Penzel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 53.

⁵⁵ Bernhard A. Eckerstorfer, “The One Church in the Postmodern World: Reflections on the Life and Thought of George Lindbeck,” *Pro Ecclesia* 13, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 408.

⁵⁶ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*.

⁵⁷ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 7.

⁵⁸ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 16–17, 31–32, 47–52.

Wittgenstein, Clifford Geertz, Thomas Kuhn, and Hans Frei,⁵⁹ theoretical resources for constructing an alternative understanding of the church as a cultural-linguistic reality, and doctrine as a regulative intrasystematic grammar. Let us consider some of his own definitions:

[R]eligions resemble languages together with their correlative forms of life and are thus similar to cultures (insofar as these are understood semiotically as reality and value systems—that is, as idioms for the construing of reality and the living of life). The function of church doctrines that becomes most prominent in this perspective is their use, not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action.⁶⁰

Stated more technically, a religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought ... it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments ... Lastly, just as language (or ‘language game,’ to use Wittgenstein’s phrase) is correlated with a form of life, and just as a culture has both cognitive and behavioral dimensions, so it is also in the case of a religious tradition. Its doctrines, cosmic stories, or myths, and ethical directives are integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments or experiences it evokes, the actions it recommends, and the institutional forms it develops. All this is involved in comparing a religion to a cultural-linguistic system.⁶¹

To say that doctrines are rules is not to deny that they involve propositions ... These are, however, second-order rather than first order propositions and affirm nothing about extra-linguistic or extra-human reality. For a rule theory, in short, doctrines qua doctrines are not first-order propositions, but are to be construed as second-order ones: they make ... intrasystematic rather than ontological truth claims.⁶²

In any case, it is not lexicon but rather the grammar of the religion which church doctrines chiefly reflect ... Faithfulness to such doctrines does not necessarily mean repeating them; rather, it requires, in the making of any new formulations, adherence to the same directives that were involved in their first formulation.⁶³

That this groundbreaking proposal became a landmark in postmodern Christian theology

⁵⁹ PI; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd. ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1970); Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

⁶⁰ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 18.

⁶¹ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 33.

⁶² Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 80.

⁶³ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 81.

for opening a possible way beyond previous theoretical deadlock is a widely shared recognition among Western systematicians.⁶⁴ However, as expected, Lindbeck has received a variety of criticisms. Let us consider some of them. First, Lindbeck's appropriation of philosophical categories as the basis for his definition of ecclesiological questions raises some issues. The department of systematic theology of Concordia Theological Seminary at Fort Wayne, for instance, has pointed out that the actual implementation of Lindbeck's theory in the ecumenical Lutheran-Reformed dialogue meant, first of all, raising a particular philosophy to the level of dogma (or, rather, of a super-rule that regulates dogma itself), and secondly, dealing with doctrine under the operative principle of adiaphora.⁶⁵ On the other hand, speaking on behalf of the philosophical field, Baptist theologian Michael Nicholson considers Lindbeck's appropriation of Wittgenstein's categories to be a philosophical aberration, for in his understanding of language-game "Wittgenstein argues exactly the opposite point—namely, that it is not the rule that establishes the practice of games but the practice or use that establishes the rule."⁶⁶ Still within the sphere of philosophical discussion regarding religious epistemology, Robert Fossett exposes that "Lindbeck's account ultimately fails when it assumes the very foundationalism it is trying to transcend," for "he has merely reworked the experiential-expressivist position and pushed it head long into relativism."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Eckerstorfer, "The One Church in the Postmodern World," 419–23; Robert L. Fossett, *Upon this Rock: The Nature of Doctrine from Antifoundationalist Perspective* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 7–14.

⁶⁵ David P. Scaer et al., "A Review of 'A Common Calling,'" *CTQ* 57, no. 3 (July 1993): 198. See also David P. Scaer, "Formula of Concord X: A Revised, Enlarged, and Slightly Amended Edition," *Logia* 6, no. 4 (1997): 27–33.

⁶⁶ Michael W. Nicholson, "Abusing Wittgenstein: The Misuse of the Concept of Language Games in Contemporary Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 4 (December 1996): 623. See also, Dallas M. High, *Language, Persons, and Belief: Studies in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations and Religious Use of Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 82–86.

⁶⁷ Fossett, *Upon this Rock*, 65. Roland Ziegler has advanced a similar criticism against postfoundationalist theologians, affirming that "they use communitarian and pragmatic thought to evaluate the truth of Christianity:

A second commonly shared criticism is the one with which Methodist theologian Geoffrey Wainwright summarizes his assessment of Lindbeck's ecumenical import:

My evaluation of Lindbeck up to now has been predominantly critical. That is due to my concern for *things that he feels impelled to deny or diminish*. In fact, I share his positive appreciation of a cultural-linguistic approach to Christianity, provided it is not set over against cognitive realism or indeed (with caution!) experiential expressivism ... For me the tradition of Christianity embraces both the "framework and the medium" (this would be Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic system" and "doctrine as rules") and the knowledge and the experience.⁶⁸

His decision of pitting one model against the others, of thinking in terms of actual exclusive alternatives, renders Lindbeck's proposal problematic in several aspects. Thus, as it is the case with any typology, there is a whole array of criticism that would not apply had he not worked in these terms of mutual exclusion of alternatives. His virtual rejection of first-order propositional referentiality is one of the favorite objects of criticism from the very conservative camp Lindbeck attempts to do justice to through his reconciling program. Roland Ziegler, for example, contends that "when we say that God is triune . . . we are making an ontological statement, we are saying what God is like, we are not just telling people how they should talk about God or that this is the best way to cope with the obduracy of things."⁶⁹ Geoffrey Wainwright claims that first-order propositional referentiality is not a modern or premodern perversion of the creedal formulas, but that this was in fact the original intent of the ancient conciliar definitions: "Certainly the councils of Nicea and Chalcedon intended the real,

Christianity is true because it is the basis for the desired outcome. What is assumed is that this desired outcome is somehow a consensus among those who ask. This is of course a difficulty: is there a common interest, a common search for the good community? And if the answer is yes, does this become somehow the new foundation?" Roland Ziegler, "Culture and Vocation of the Theologian," *CTQ* 80, no. 3-4 (July-October 2016): 303.

⁶⁸ Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecumenical Dimensions of Lindbeck's 'Nature of Doctrine,'" *Modern Theology* 4, no. 2 (January 1988): 128 (emphasis added).

⁶⁹ Ziegler, "Culture and Vocation," 307.

substantial affirmation that it was God the Son that became human in Jesus Christ.”⁷⁰ In the same vein, Robert Fossett asks: “if doctrine cannot make a first-order claim about God or the world, how is our talk about God, well, *not just talk about ourselves?*”⁷¹

This excluding character of Lindbeck’s proposal responds to the pragmatism that drives his theorization on religion and religious doctrine. As mentioned before, what Lindbeck is really after is to elaborate a useful conceptualization that may fit the agenda of an ecumenical movement that had already for a long time considered the requirement of doctrinal agreement a stumbling block on its way.⁷² But since Lindbeck is looking for “doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation,”⁷³ and the traditional understanding of doctrine is the stumbling block, then he needs to do away with that *traditional understanding* of doctrine without capitulating the *use of the notion* of “doctrine.” However, beyond the fact that—as Dewi Phillips averts—⁷⁴ this is no solution to the problem of capitulation at all, this move brings Lindbeck’s consensualist and pragmatist theory of doctrinal truth⁷⁵ into conflict with the essentially doctrinal or confessional character of the Lutheran tradition he claims to represent in the ecumenical dialogue. For this doctrinal or confessional character still requires the capitulation to propositional errors as a

⁷⁰ Wainwright, “Ecumenical Dimensions,” 126.

⁷¹ Fossett, *Upon this Rock*, 60.

⁷² Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 7–19; Eckerstorfer, “The One Church in the Postmodern World,” 402. Hermann Sasse laments how the LWF abandoned the concern for doctrine that its predecessor, the Lutheran World Convention, previously had. Hermann Sasse, “The Crisis of Lutheranism,” in *The Lonely Way*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison et al. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), 2:278–83.

⁷³ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 16–18.

⁷⁴ Dewi Z. Phillips, “Lindbeck’s Audience,” *Modern Theology* 4, no. 2 (January 1988): 146.

⁷⁵ “As actually lived, a religion may be pictured as a single gigantic proposition. It is a true proposition to the extent that its objectivities are interiorized and exercised by groups and individuals in such a way as to conform them in some measure in the various dimensions of their existence to the ultimate reality and goodness that lies at the heart of things. It is a false proposition to the extent that this does not happen.” Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 51.

requirement for unity.⁷⁶ The fact that Lindbeck sacrifices the historical understanding of doctrine (in its first-order propositional dimension) to fit the demands of the current ecumenical movement makes the excluding character of his proposal even more questionable. It also brings to the fore the necessity of rethinking the cultural-linguistic character of the church and of the regulative function of doctrine, though this time not under the control and excluding requirements of the ecumenical movement. From a Lutheran confessional perspective, the following question should be considered: How would the positive aspects of Lindbeck’s proposal look like under the ecumenical agenda of *Augstana VII*?

This is what second model of confessional commitment attempts to do: To explore a positive appropriation of George Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic understanding of the church and the notion of the regulative function of doctrine as intrasystematic grammar. This work does so without following the capitulation to those aspects of the nature of the church and its doctrine that Lindbeck feels compelled to sacrifice at the altar of the ecumenical movement’s way of attaining reconciliation. Therefore, this model borrows these two pieces from Lindbeck’s language game, and inserts them into a different game with a different agenda. It uses this Wittgensteinian-Geertzian cluster metaphor in a way that accounts for the regulative or grammatical function with which the Lutheran Confessions make up and determine the church’s particular form of life in this world. This author is aware that this move reduces effectiveness

⁷⁶ “It is the plain teaching of the New Testament that the true unity of the church is *unity in the truth*. And it is the painful experience of church history, particularly during the last century, that whenever attempts have been made to unite churches without inquiring about pure doctrine—that is, without establishing what truth is, and what error, in Christianity—unity has not been achieved ... The unity of the historical church is not achieved through conformity in rites and ceremonies, nor through identical organization and life patterns, nor even through uniformity in theological thought-forms and opinions. Such unity is only achieved when, in the joyful assurance of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we are one in our understanding of what His saving Gospel is, and one in our understanding of what He gives us in His Sacraments. ‘For the true unity of the church, it is enough,’ the Augsburg Confession states. It is, indeed, enough. But it is also necessary.” Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith*, trans. Theodore G. Robert (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House), 186–87.

and disfigures Lindbeck's original ecumenical program. However, this path is taken in response to the challenge posed by some of the conservative critiques previously considered. Finally, taking the Lutheran Confessions in their regulative function is anything but a new contribution to the confessional discussion. However, the Wittgensteinian-Geertzian metaphor opens up a different path for thinking about the Confessions' normative authority that otherwise seems to get conceptually entangled with a Marxist-like paradigm of class struggle (or a Nietzschean one of will to power) that ultimately cannot help but lead to the conclusion that a serious submission to the authority of the Book of Concord represents a legalistic tyranny contrary to the freedom of the gospel.⁷⁷ Instead, addressing this issue from a cultural-linguistic perspective allows us to visualize that a norm or rule, instead of coercing and prohibiting under a narrative of oppression, habituates and enables the experiences and actions that constitute a particular form of life. Under this imaginative context, the Lutheran Confessions do not inhibit but make possible the performance of things. And such performance, under the perspective of the third use of the law, far from being oppressive, constitutes the recovery of true human freedom that God intended for his creatures.

Model Three: Confessional Commitment as Orthodox Dynamics

As referred in the previous chapter,⁷⁸ Oberursel systematician Werner Klän points out that, for Luther, each generation, each local church, and even each individual believer, deals with (and

⁷⁷ This understanding, which Theodore Schmauk and C. Theodore Benze point out was already held by Andreas Osiander in 1552, is a dominant perspective in current Lutheranism. Theodore E. Schmauk, and C. Theodore Benze, *The Confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, trans. Theodore Kolde (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), lxxxvii–viii. See also, Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, 38–40, 51. This demonstrates that neither Marx nor Nietzsche are the source of this rebellious idea, but that it may be the result of good-old-fashioned antinomianism with its “Epicurean delusion” already condemned in Ep IV, 18; SD IV, 31 in Kolb and Wengert, 499, 579.

⁷⁸ See above section “The Notion of Confessional Commitment,” p. 21–27.

is committed to) the entire Christendom of all times and places. Our sixteenth century forefathers seem to have paid particular attention to this communal stance at the solemn hour of confessing their faith. This is the way the concordists concluded their confession in 1577: “it is our intent to give witness before God and all Christendom, among those who are alive today and those who will come after us, that the explanation here set forth ... is our teaching, faith, and confession.”⁷⁹

Just as it happened with the suffering first readers of the epistle to the Hebrews, being aware of the fact that one enters the “lonely way” of the confession of faith “surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1), has always been a great source of comfort for the fearing little flock. This is the comfort Hermann Sasse distills from the confession of the *Una Sancta*:

In this situation what does the *confession* of our church mean for us pastors? It means, among other things, that out of the great isolation ever and again we are placed in the *fellowship* of the church of Christ of all times and places ... As the horizon of the confession stretches to the ends of the earth, it also encompasses all times of the church’s history. For the confession of the correct faith will indeed always be made in view of the entire church, before [in the sight of] the apostles and prophets, the martyrs and the confessors of the past, and before those “who will come after us,” as it states at the conclusion of the Formula of Concord.⁸⁰

But at the same time, and as Sasse also acknowledges somewhere else, the communal priority over against individualities represents a great challenge in a time of individualism and indifferentism as ours:

And even if it were the case that in our day only a few Lutherans remain, they would yet be standing in that “great consensus.” Those who are united in that consensus of what is believed, taught, and confessed in the true church are united not only with those confessing along with them today, but also with all those who before us confessed the truth, and with those not yet born who will in their day confess the same confession. The more profoundly aware we are of this confessional communion, the more keenly we will be alert for that consensus among those now living, a consensus surely greater than we are bold to ask or think. And even if this were not so, a task remains for those who with heart and mouth confess the doctrine

⁷⁹ SD XII, 40 in Kolb and Wengert, 660.

⁸⁰ Hermann Sasse, “Circular Letter 3 to Westphalian Pastors,” in *The Lonely Way*, 2:146–47.

... confessed in the Lutheran Reformation. That is the task to confess to all Christians everywhere of every confession what by the grace of God has been given to the Lutheran Church to confess ... [for whatever] the Lord has entrusted to our church truly to confess belongs to all Christians.⁸¹

It is this communal dimension that becomes the main focus of the third model of confessional commitment.

Articulation of Model Three

Each generation of believers is brought into into the orthodox dynamics of the *Una Sancta*. The Lutheran Confessions play a key role in making this participation possible, for they are the Spirit-wrought confession of pure doctrine that establishes it.

First Dimension: Socialization and Alliance

The Holy Spirit (“Thou”) gives each particular church (“I”) participation into the orthodox dynamics enjoyed by the *Una Sancta*. This unifying relation among churches works in opposition to our human tendency toward schism and communion with heresy.

Second Dimension: Narrative and Belief

After the Fall, each new generation of human beings is born in rebellion against the divine truth. Heresy and schism (heterodoxy) configure our stance by default. Over against this unsurpassable reality, the Holy Spirit creates faith in the hearts, and thereby establishes the *Una Sancta* that enjoys the privilege of orthodoxy, that is to say, the privilege of believing what is to be believed, and of living out her public and private actions in a corresponding way.

This restored relation of belief and action constitutes part of the dynamic character of the

⁸¹ Hermann Sasse, “Preface to *Vom Sakrament des Altars*,” in *The Lonely Way*, 2:16.

Una Sancta's orthodoxy. Such character exhibits a *cyclic or synchronic movement* of interaction among (1) what is confessed (“we confess,” *confitemur*) as the official dogma of the church, (2) what is taught (“we teach,” *docemus*) in the actual public acts of a particular church, and (3) what is believed (“we believe,” *credimus*) in the private realm of each individual member’s piety.⁸² There is a double dynamics of descent and ascent among these three components, for the higher levels of the hierarchy (1 and 2) regulate, configure, and make sense of the lower levels (2 and 3); and the latter (2 and 3) express, enshrine, and even shape the former (1 and 2), and are assumed by them (see Figure 4).

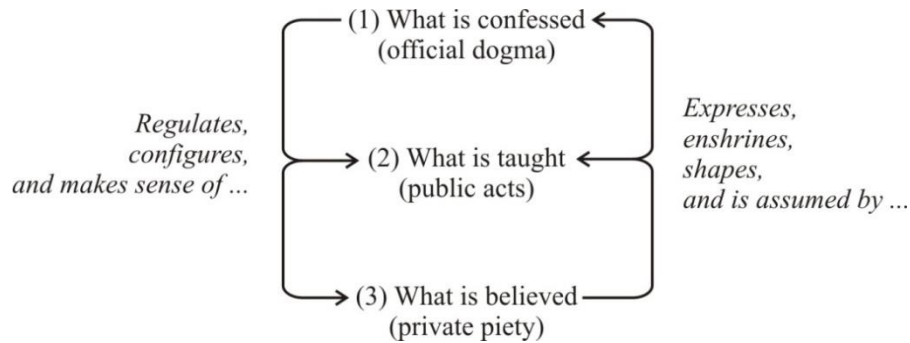


Figure 4. Cyclic or synchronic movement of orthodox dynamics.

Since this represents a real challenge to our natural heterodoxy, the disruption of the cyclic movement of the orthodox dynamics has always attempted to put a break between the particular church in question and the *Una Sancta*. Throughout the history of Christianity, this cyclic movement has gone through deep crises that could not have been settled except by means of new epoch-making formal sanctions of the great Christian dogmas. Such sanctions have in turn helped to reestablish and protect orthodoxy in the church. These epoch-making dogmatizations

⁸² See Ep, “Binding Summary,” 1. BSLK, 1217:8.

of the revealed truth (together with the corresponding condemnation of heresy) have been crystallized in the three ecumenical creeds and the Reformation confessional documents that make up the Book of Concord. All of them function as landmarks that signal new chapters in the story of disruption and restoration of the cyclic movement that in turn constitutes yet another movement of orthodox dynamics, namely, the *linear or diachronic* one (see Figure 5).⁸³

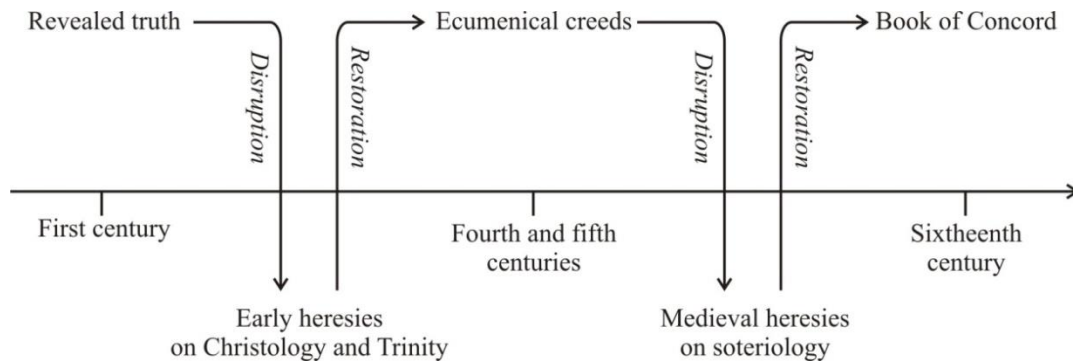


Figure 5. Linear or diachronic movement of orthodox dynamics.

Each particular church is always confronted by the *Una Sancta*, which challenges her to leave aside her natural heterodoxy and make the Confessions her own, in order to have a share in the *Una Sancta*'s orthodox dynamics.

Put in structuralist terminology: In the *axis of communication*, the Holy Spirit (sender) communicates to each particular church (receiver) the possibility of participating in the *Una Sancta*'s orthodox dynamics (object). In the *axis of volition*, the Holy Spirit (sender) mandates

⁸³ In fact, the relation cause-effect does not move in just one direction between the cyclic and the linear movements, but in mutual reciprocity. It is because the Lutheran Confessions were able to recover the proper cyclic movement of orthodoxy that they came to occupy the place they hold in the linear movement. In a corresponding way, it is precisely because the Lutheran Confessions occupy such a place in the linear movement that they have the authority to hold the position and function they have in the cyclic movement. The place that the Lutheran Confessions hold in one movement, therefore, determines and supports the place they have in the other movement that constitutes the orthodoxy dynamics.

the *Una Sancta* (subject) to suppress the obstacle of heresy and schism (heterodoxy) in order to transmit the object to the receiver. In the *axis of power*, the *Una Sancta* (subject) uses the instrument of the Confessions (helper) to suppress heterodoxy (opponent) (see Figure 6).

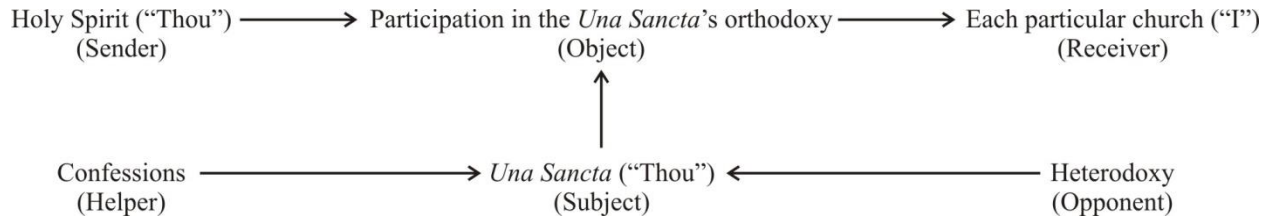


Figure 6. Actantial positions in the narrative of model three.

This narrative precludes a series of beliefs that work against the grain of each of the movements of orthodoxy. In connection with the cyclic or synchronic movement, there are at least two trajectories that are precluded: (1) The dislocation of the triad (i.e., “what is confessed,” “what is taught,” and “what is believed”) that takes each component as an independent notion, which neither should nor can affect or interfere in the sphere of the other two. Thus, for instance, that what happens at the level of the formal dogma (“what is confessed”) has no direct bearing on the liturgical practices of the church, or on the way a particular church configures its outreach in mission; or that what happens at the level of the daily struggle of the individual members of the church (“what is believed”) is neither assumed nor integrated into the liturgical life of that church (“what is taught”). (2) Precluded here is also the disruption of the proper hierarchical *taxis* that defines the dynamic interaction among the three levels of the orthodox triad. We refer here to any situation in which an insurgent form either of “what is taught” or “what is believed” takes on normative priority above the higher components (“what is confessed” or “what is taught” respectively) in establishing what is considered in a particular church as “orthodoxy.”

In connection with the linear or diachronic movement, precluded is the denial of the

historicity of the dogma. This Gnosticizing tendency that has problems in reconciling historicity and truth is manifested at least in two different forms: (1) When a new generation assumes the task of producing its own new form of doctrine, as if there were no preceding history of confession and distinction between truth and error; and (2) when the historical context and circumstances of the dogma are neglected or denied for whatever reason (e.g., as a strategy for affirming its eternal character and divine authority).

Third Dimension: Experience

In the public teaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments, the committed “I” is inserted and regularly sustained in the orthodox dynamics of the *Una Sancta*. For it is in the actual and public practices of each particular church (either at a local or regional level), where everything that is included in “what is taught” and “what is believed” is effectively shaped under the great consensus (*magno consensus*) of the *Una Sancta*. This, in turn, prevents the church and its members both from falling back again and again into communion with heresy and from getting isolated from the *Una Sancta* in a schismatic self-standing autonomy.

Forth Dimension: Action

The baptismal pattern after which this model’s orthodox dynamics operates determines the double action of renouncing and rejecting one’s own tendency toward heresy and schism, and of formally embracing and subscribing to the *Una Sancta*’s confession as one’s own. Such pattern also embraces the intentional, honest, and regular assessment of “what is taught” and “what is believed” under the normative scrutiny of “what is confessed.”

Main Source of the Root Metaphor: Jaroslav Pelikan's Articulation of the History of Christian Doctrine

Premier American historian of dogma Jaroslav Pelikan opens his monumental *The Christian Tradition* with a programmatic sentence that announces the categories that will provide structure to his understanding of the history and nature of Christian doctrine. There he says: "What the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of God: this is Christian doctrine."⁸⁴ It is evident that Pelikan takes these categories from the traditional way the church has introduced the content of her doctrinal decisions, just as, for instance, they are used in the *Formula of Concord* (especially the Epitome) with its traditional "we believe, teach, and confess" (*credimus, docemus et confitemur*) statements.⁸⁵

Some pages later, Pelikan unpacks what he is speaking about:

Without setting rigid boundaries, we shall identify what is "believed" as the form of Christian doctrine present in the modalities of devotion, spirituality, and worship; what is "taught" as the content of the word of God extracted by exegesis from the witness of the Bible and communicated to the people of the church through proclamation, instruction, and churchly theology; and what is "confessed" as the testimony of the church, both against false teaching from within and against attacks from without, articulated in polemic and in apologetics, in creed and in dogma.⁸⁶

These three "modalities" or components of Christian doctrine, brought to the table by Pelikan in order to clarify the distinction of scope between his work and other narrower approaches (such as the history of dogma or the history of theology),⁸⁷ function as a working tool with which Pelikan visualizes the dynamics "on the way doctrine has continued to develop back and forth between

⁸⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975–89), 1:1.

⁸⁵ Pelikan is not drawing on the *Formula* itself, but he finds this traditional vocabulary helpful for articulating his own working definition of "doctrine."

⁸⁶ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1:4.

⁸⁷ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1:4–5.

believing, teaching, and confessing.”⁸⁸ The Yale historian finds that these three components of Christian doctrine exhibit a rich and crucial interrelation between them. At times, he describes such interrelation in diachronic terms, tracing a sequence from the time what was believed by the common people entered the public teaching of the Church, to finally attaining official sanction as the confessed dogma. Thus, “what the church believes and teaches” constitutes an important “commentary on creed and dogma,” and can be traced back “from what was confessed” in the official dogmatic decisions.⁸⁹ In his volume *Credo*, Pelikan affirms that what is “taught” functions as the necessary link between the subjectivity of the faith of the heart and the objectivity of the confession of the mouth.⁹⁰ He notes that “Implicit in the use of the term *teaching* in association with *believing* and *confessing* is such a distinction between the private opinion of the teacher and the public doctrine of the church.”⁹¹ Thus, in more synchronic terms, these three components also ideally exhibit a perichoretic relation “of close bond” that, for instance, “has been an especially powerful force in the life and thought of the East.”⁹² They also exhibit a necessary hierarchical taxis that ascribes a normative priority to the confessed dogma upon the public practices of the Church, which in turn shape people’s private piety. The sixteenth-century Reformation became paradigmatic in pointing out this hierarchical distinction.⁹³ Therefore, for Pelikan, the corruption of any of these two synchronic relations (i.e., of perichoresis and hierarchy) represents a doctrinal crisis for Christian orthodoxy, as the one

⁸⁸ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1:5.

⁸⁹ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1:4–5.

⁹⁰ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 3:4.

⁹¹ Pelikan, *Credo*, 68.

⁹² Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1:341.

⁹³ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 4:4–5.

paradigmatically experienced in modern times.⁹⁴

This descriptive device with which Jaroslav Pelikan articulates his understanding of the history of Christian doctrine is adopted here as the basic structure of the third model of confessional commitment. However, this does not happen without at least two basic reorientations. First, the triad “we believe, teach, and confess” (*credimus, docemus et confitemur*) is not used here to describe the objective reality of Christian doctrine *per se* (i.e., the divinely revealed truth), but rather the church’s subjective appropriation of it (i.e., its official formulation and actual implementation in public ecclesiastical acts and private piety). The expression “orthodox dynamics” (or simply “orthodoxy”) is used here, in model three, with reference to the ideal situation in which a particular church adjusts the entire triad to pure doctrine, even when this triad includes, for instance, aspects of private piety. Second, the contents that belong to each component in the triad are redistributed. Taking into consideration the way the *Solid Declaration* in its section “Binding Summary, Rule, and Guiding Principle” establishes a hierarchy of three different types of ecclesial speech acts (i.e., Scriptures, Confessions, and any other ecclesial written or oral discourse),⁹⁵ This dissertation keeps the first

⁹⁴ Pelikan describes this crisis in the following terms: “The dichotomy between the authenticity of this private ‘theology of the heart’ and the artificiality of the public and political confessional theology of the churches, [quote from: Johann Semler] between ‘private’ and ‘public’ religion, which applied to all the churches ‘in all sorts of ways,’ was an epitome of the crisis of orthodoxy ... The indifference of a theology of the heart to the particulars of doctrinal distinction among the several confessions seemed to substitute experience for Scripture, implying a rejection of the orthodox obligation [quote from: Gottlieb Wernsdorf] ‘to confess both privately and publicly the necessary dogmas of the catholic church’ ... and it represented nothing short of a reversal of the relation between ‘teaching’ and ‘confessing’ (not to mention ‘believing’) in the very definition of doctrine.” Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 5:122.

⁹⁵ This is the distinction that the *Formula of Concord* avers: (1) the scriptural writings “which alone is the one true guiding principle [*regula*], according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated [*iudicare oportet*];” (2) the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran Confessions that constitute the “reliable form for teaching [*certainque formam doctrinae*] to which all our churches commonly pledge themselves” and according to which “all other writings ... to be approved and accepted shall be judged and evaluated [*secundum quam ... omnia alia scripta iudicare et accommodare oportet*];” and (3) “the other good, useful, pure books [*alia utilia et sincera scripta*] that interpret Holy Scripture, refute errors, and explain the articles of faith.” SD, “Binding Summary,” 3, 10

order component of “what is confessed” (*confitemur*) for the normative text of the Lutheran Confessions alone. Any other kind of public action and speech-act of a particular congregation or church body (e.g., its public proclamation, its administration of the sacraments, Christian instruction, and official theological education and publications, etc.) is placed under the second order component of “what is taught” (*docemus*). Finally, the third order component, “what is believed” (*credimus*), refers to private Christian piety, to the actual way—to use Luther’s description—baptized man and woman, young and old, believe, live, pray, suffer, and die.⁹⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has articulated a typology of three models of confessional commitment based on the writings of recent North American Lutheran theologians, namely, confessional commitment as divine conversation (Kolb), as a form of life in the world (Lindbeck), and as orthodox dynamics (Pelikan). To articulate this description, we have used four dimensions that shape our working definition of confessional commitment: (1) socialization and alliance, (2) narrative and belief, (3) experience, and (4) action.

In next chapter I will introduce six case studies of Latin American Lutheran discussion, and then, chapters four, five, and six, will put to test the models of confessional commitment that were articulated here, as they will be applied to the Latin American discussions.

in Kolb and Wengert, 527, 529.

⁹⁶ Martin Luther, “Dr. Martin Luther’s Warning to His Dear German People, 1531,” *LW* 47:52.

CHAPTER THREE

LATIN AMERICAN CASE STUDIES

The present chapter articulates six case studies that describe actual discussions and struggles in Latin American Lutheranism. These studies are drawn from a detailed analysis of the contents of two South American journals of theology, which pays close attention to issues raised by a range of articles dealing with confessional issues. Then, in the next three chapters, these case studies will help us to test the productivity, usefulness, and performance of the models of confessional commitment for addressing the issues they raise.

Sources of Latin American Lutheranism

The following study takes two of the three largest Lutheran church bodies in South America as representative cases of Latin American Lutheranism: the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (IELB) and the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (IELA). According to their respective constitutions, both church bodies are explicitly confessional communities.¹ Both of them were founded by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the beginning of the twentieth century.² This took place under the Missourian impulse of *innere Mission im Ausland* (inner missions in a foreign land).³ Consequently, both IELB and IELA were initially constituted as

¹ IELA, *Estatutos de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina, 2007), art. II; Carlos Nagel, “Bienvenidos,” Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina, accessed November 27, 2017, http://www.iela.org.ar/?page_id=2; IELB, “Quem somos,” Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil, accessed November 27, 2017, <http://www.ielb.org.br/a-ielb/>; Rieth, “Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil,” 47.

² IELB was founded as an LCMS District in June 1904, and one year later, IELA was integrated to the Brazilian District, and became an LCMS District in its own right in 1920. Ricardo W. Rieth, “Raízes históricas e identidade da Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (IELB),” *ET* 49, no. 2 (2009): 214–15; Sexauer, “La IELA,” 130; Samuel H. Beckmann, “El Departamento de Misión (*Missionskommission*) y su área de actividades,” in *IELA: Noventa años de historia*, ed. Claudio L. Flor (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 1995), 16–17.

³ “[T]he term *Innere Mission im Ausland*—inner missions in a foreign land. It implied the gathering and preserving in orthodox Lutheranism of German immigrants in Brazil, Argentina (Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela), England, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as the continued support of the tiny pocket of Lutheran

LCMS districts that eventually became independent churches during the eighties.⁴ Both churches, IELB and IELA, have their own theological seminaries in order to instruct candidates for the sacred ministry: Seminário Concórdia in São Leopoldo (IELB)⁵ and Seminario Concordia in Buenos Aires (IELA).⁶ In that capacity, these theological institutions hold a clear relation of reciprocity with their respective church bodies, both in terms of representing and sustaining the church's theological perspective, as well as in terms of shaping and challenging it. Taking into consideration the reciprocity of this complex relation between church body and seminary, this dissertation assumes that the theological journals published by these seminaries constitute a valid representative voice of the struggles and expectations of their respective church bodies. Upon this basis, the case studies of this dissertation are construed by putting together representative conversations that have traversed the decades-long publications of these seminaries' theological journals: *Igreja Luterana* (IELB) and *Revista Teológica* (IELA).⁷

Igreja Luterana

Igreja Luterana (*IL*) is the theological journal of the IELB that Seminário Concórdia in São Leopoldo has published since 1940.⁸ Its intended readership is the pastors and school teachers of

Free Church adherents in Germany and Denmark.” Dean Lueking, *Mission in the Making* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 175.

⁴ Whereas IELB was constituted as an independent church body in January 1980, the same with IELA happened in February 1986. LCMS and IELB, “Documento de independência administrativa da igreja,” *IL* 40, no. 2 (1980): 22–24; Erico Sexauer, “Iglesia hermana,” *RT* 31, no. 123 (1986): 1–2.

⁵ This seminary has had different locations: Bom Jesus (1903–1905), Porto Alegre (1907–1984) and São Leopoldo (1984 to the present). Between 1983 and 2002, IELB had a second seminary in the city of São Paulo.

⁶ Founded in 1942.

⁷ As will be specified below, these journals have published mainly in their respective languages, Portuguese and Spanish, and also in German. All citations from these sources are the present author's translation.

⁸ This sums up a total number of 76 years of publication, 258 numbers, 1,968 articles, and 17,110 pages. The entire publication can be accessed at Igreja Luterana Google Drive, accessed December 4, 2019, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Z7ZW446hWNVQ2ndPj0skzSAxPFx6puUJ>.

the IELB. During the seventies and eighties lay “adults in Christ” were also explicitly included.⁹ This inclusion coincided with the time in which the journal ceased to be bilingual (Portuguese and German)¹⁰ and began to publish only in the vernacular.¹¹ Such a wide readership prompted a varied spectrum of content organized in eight different types of articles.¹² Among these, articles on the Bible had a clear predominance,¹³ whereas editorial, dogmatic, and practical articles virtually shared a secondary position of interest.¹⁴

Throughout the seventy-six years of publication that this dissertation takes into consideration,¹⁵ *IL* has had ten different editors,¹⁶ and has exhibited a variety of shifts that suggests four periods that will be characterized in relation to their particular main focus of interest (years are approximate):

⁹ Throughout the years, *IL* has presented six different subtitles that expressed the nuanced shifts of intended readers and of the journal’s character and nature: (1) “Theological-pedagogical technical magazine (for pastors and teachers of the church)” (1940–1954), (2) “Theological journal of the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil” (1954–1973), (3) “A magazine for adults in Christ” (1974–1984), (4) “Pastoral theological journal of the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil” (1984–1985), and (5) “Biannual journal of theology” (1987–2016).

¹⁰ Though German articles had appeared during the first year (1940), there was an interruption of German publications until 1947, in clear connection with Brazilian governmental antagonism with Germany. The last article in German was published in 1973: Hans Kirsten, “Kirche und Homosexualität,” *IL* 34, no. 1–4 (1973): 62–64.

¹¹ Three recent articles (2015) in Spanish are the only exception.

¹² Eight types of articles: (1) editorial (including news, and opinion-forming articles); (2) Bible (both exegetical and homiletical resources); (3) dogmatics (locus-oriented articles); (4) confessions; (5) church history; (6) practical theology; (7) Brazilian culture and context; and (8) book reviews.

¹³ From the total number of published articles (1,968), 33% (659) belong to this category. This percentage increases if we consider the total number of published pages (17,110), since those 659 articles on the Bible represent 7,870 pages (46%).

¹⁴ In terms of total number of published articles, editorial articles represent 25%, dogmatic articles 14%, and practical articles 11%. In terms of total number of published pages, editorial articles represent 12%, dogmatic articles 15%, and practical articles 13%.

¹⁵ 2016 is registered as year 75 and not 76. There have been two incidents with the counting of the year of publication: on the one hand, *IL* did not issue any number in 1986, and on the other, two different years were counted as the thirty-fifth: 1974 and 1975.

¹⁶ Paulo W. Schelp (1940–1954), Otto A. Goerl (1943–1954, 1960–1965), Hans-Gerhard Rottmann (1954–1973), Mário L. Rehfeldt (1966–1969), Martim C. Warth (1970–1973), Leopoldo Heimann (1974–1990), Acir Raymann (1990–2002), Paulo W. Buss (2003–2010), Paulo P. Weirich (2009, 2011–2014), and Gerson L. Linden (2015–2016).

1. *Grounding period (1940–1950)*: *IL* responded to two basic necessities, namely, cultivating the theological identity of the readers as Lutheran ministers and school teachers, and getting them (usually foreign people) acquainted with the culture, history, and legislation of Brazil.¹⁷
2. *Ecumenical period (1950–1975)*: The end of the war triggered a great move of renewal in Europe—for instance the foundation of the LWF (1947) and the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965)—and reopened the dialogue with North Atlantic conversations. Thus, liberal theology and historical criticism, Rome’s dogmatic developments, and the ecumenical challenge populated this period of the journal with a critical assessment that finally ended with the solidification of a conservative confessional stance. The rejection of the Leuenberg Concord (1973) brought this period to an end.¹⁸

¹⁷ During the first decade (1940–1949), two types of articles had a clear priority: Bible (148 articles [29%], 702 pages [32%]) and editorials (140 articles [28%], 436 pages [20%]). Even though context articles occupied the fourth position (58 articles [11%], 234 pages [11%]), after dogmatic articles (65 articles [13%], 320 pages [16%]), the former never reached again such an importance. During this time, a considerable number of articles on the history of Brazil, Portuguese grammar, relevant Brazilian legislation, religious context, and formal education on secular matters (such as gymnastics or mathematics) were published. This made *IL* during this initial period to be a hybrid journal, just as the initial subtitle announced it (see above note 220).

¹⁸ Throughout the decades covered by this second period, the Biblical type of articles retained its supremacy (between 27% and 33% of the articles), editorial articles retained the same percentage of articles (between 18% and 22%), and the dogmatic articles reached their historical peak (between 22% and 26% of the articles). The following decades would register a decrease in editorial and dogmatic articles, and an exponential increase in Biblical articles.

Ecclesiology and church fellowship, the inspiration of Scriptures, their historical reliability, the infallibility of the pope, and Mariology, were some of the doctrines repeatedly considered during this time. The ecumenical dialogue LCMS held with the rest of American Lutheranism, and particularly in front of the challenge posed by the rapidly evolving LWF was a major topic during this time. An interesting parallelism appeared between what was taking place in the North hemisphere between LCMS and the LWF, and what happened in Brazil between the IELB and the new born IECLB (founded in 1949): An initial number of articles that gave a critical consideration to the ecumenical proposals of both LWF and IECLB, gave way to another number of apologetic articles that gave account of LCMS’s decision not to join the LWF, and of IELB’s decision not to merge with IECLB.

The Leuenberg Concord received just two but lapidary intensive considerations that coincided with the closure of the ecumenical discussion: See Gerhard Rost, “Leuenberg Konkordie: Gemeinsames Verständnis des Evangeliums?” *IL* 33, no. 1–4 (1972): 120–31; Johannes H. Rottmann and Martim C. Warth, “Documentos,” *IL* 34, no. 1–4 (1973): 92–118.

3. *Introspective period (1975–1995)*: After these two initial periods, *IL* reoriented its focus of attention toward the IELB itself, and this happened in two different senses. On the one hand, there was a repeated vindication and reaffirmation of the church’s historical heritage on account of the celebration of a series of anniversaries (1977–1983) and of IELB’s independence from the LCMS (1980).¹⁹ On the other hand, certain anxiety and self-criticism regarding the effectiveness with which the church and especially its ministers were performing their task, together with the exploration of possible or required solutions, received special attention (eighties and nineties).²⁰

¹⁹ Besides the classical Lutheran anniversaries (400th anniversary of the Formula of Concord in 1977, 450th anniversary of Luther's Catechisms in 1979, 450th anniversary of the Augustana and 400th anniversary of the Book of Concord in 1980, and 500th anniversary of Luther’s birth in 1983), in 1979 IELB celebrated its own 75th anniversary. One year later (1980), IELB became an independent church. See LCMS and IELB, “Documento de independência,” 22–24. Both of these two last particular local events were explicitly connected with the necessity of renewing IELB’s commitment with the Lutheran identity that had been received as a treasured inheritance; just as the editor invited the readers when he opened the anniversary year of 1979: “As we live in a time in which a cheap religious syncretism increasingly seeks to sacrifice the ‘sound doctrine’ in favor of ‘profane genealogies and myths of old wives,’ it is fit that the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil, particularly this year of the 75th anniversary of its foundation, may reaffirm the Lutheran Confessions’ ‘we believe, teach, confess and condemn.’” Heimann, “Apresentando,” 1; See also Rieth, “Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil,” 58. As is to be expected, the outcome of this was that two types of articles with low frequency reached their peak during this period: articles on the Lutheran Confessions and on church history.

²⁰ From what transpires from *IL*, two councils that brought together the entire *ministerium* of IELB seemed to have been important turning points in producing this self-centered focus of attention (May 1983 and June 1989). Whereas the first council in 1983 made a general evaluation of the performance of IELB’s pastors (in their relations with God, the church, and the world), the second council in 1989 proposed each participant a self-assessment under such a list of questions as this: “Who am I? How do I do as a teacher and minister? Am I a proud or a humble person? Am I lazy or faithful and responsible? What is, at the end of the day, my own identity? What is my self-image?” Leopoldo Heimann, “O concílio nacional da igreja,” *IL* 48, no. 1 (1989): 2; See Leopoldo Heimann, “Concílio nacional de obreiros da igreja,” *IL* 43, no. 1 (1983): 1–4; IELB, “O concílio da igreja,” *IL* 43, no. 3 (1983): 1–4; IELB, “Obreiros da igreja, exemplo dos fiéis,” *IL* 48, no. 2 (1989): 103–04; Dieter J. Jagnow, “Perfil do pastor brasileiro,” *IL* 48, no. 2 (1989): 109–10; Johannes H. Rottmann et al., “Comentários,” *IL* 48, no. 2 (1989): 111–15.

This self-revisionist move reoriented the tendencies of the journal and reconfigured its profile in a direction that would continue during the last period. Types that had been important during the previous periods, such as editorial and dogmatic articles (during the previous decades always represented an average of 20% of the pages), now were facing their slope (toward the end of this period come to represent 3% and 5% of the pages). Inversely, practical type of articles moved from 8% (both in number of articles and of pages) during the seventies, to 20% of articles (17% of pages) during the nineties. Even though Biblical type of articles was persistently *IL*’s “queen,” during this period received a further preponderance that would continue in ascendancy during the following period:

4. *Constructive period (1995–2016)*: The last two decades taken into consideration exposed the effects of a readjustment in the church’s performance and of a positive appreciation of the doctrinal heritage which characterized the previous period. During this more recent period, a constructive exploration of the positive implications and contributions that the wealth of a robust Lutheran perspective can bring to the table to address a variety of contemporary conversations became a characteristic trait of the journal.²¹

Coming home to our focus of interest in the Lutheran Confessions, *IL* exhibits in general terms a remarkably positive stance toward them. And this is so even when, from a statistical point of view, articles on the Lutheran Confessions consistently count among the least represented types of articles in the journal.²² In fact, there are no less than thirty years (out of the seventy-six years of publication) in which *IL* registers no single article that explicitly deals with the Lutheran Confessions.²³ But these figures become relative when we consider the role that the

During previous decades (1940–1959), Biblical articles represented between 25% and 29% of the articles (between 27% and 32% of pages), during this period (1970–1999) they represented between 31% and 34% of articles (33% and 64% of pages), and during the next period (2000–2016) they represented 35% of articles (between 67% and 75% of pages). This remarkable increase of Biblical type of articles—particularly in terms of invested pages ever since the beginning of the nineties—was not due to any sudden increase in technical exegetical articles, but primordially to a notable and intentional reinforcement of *IL*’s contribution to improve the homiletical performance of pastors in the pulpit. Thus, the absolute priority that Biblical type of articles reached toward the end is arguably relatable to the anxiety for a better ministerial performance.

²¹ As mentioned in the previous note, Biblical type of articles reached a climax during this period, representing 35% of the articles and 67% (2000–2009) and 75% (2010–2016) of the published pages. What became more characteristic of this period was the increase of dogmatic articles (having declined during the previous period, now they reached their peak of 23% of the articles which represents 11% in terms of pages) and of those that dealt with the Confessions (after reaching their lowest rate during the eighties and nineties, now they ascended to 7% of articles in 2000–2009 and 14% in 2010–2016, which still represents a low-rate of 5% and 3% of the pages respectively).

²² In general terms, articles on the Lutheran Confessions represent 4% both in number of articles (105 out of 1,968) and in number of pages (835 out of 17,110). The other two categories that exhibit a low-rate general average are context articles (3% of the articles and 5% of the published pages) and book reviews (2% of the articles and 6% of the published pages).

²³ The following years published no single article that explicitly deals with the Lutheran Confessions: 1945, 1951, 1952, 1954, 1956, 1960, 1962, 1965, 1969, 1970, 1973–1976, 1981–1985, 1988–1989, 1991, 1993–1994,

Lutheran Confessions are given in articles that deal with other topics and not with the Confessions *per se*. If, for instance, we take into consideration articles on dogmatics and practical theology (two categories with stronger presence throughout the journal,²⁴ intended to shape the readers' point of view or praxis, but not always offering an explicit confessional perspective), the role that the Lutheran Confessions play is not as peripheral as suggested before.²⁵

Within the group of articles that do take the Lutheran Confessions as their main topic (or as part of it) five subtypes can be recognized: (1) isagogic (36%), (2) constructive or exploratory (29%), (3) apologetic (24%), (4) text-focused (11%), and (5) those posing a challenge to the Confessions (0%).²⁶ The trajectory of the type of article that deals with the Lutheran Confessions

1998–1999, 2002–2003, 2011, and 2013.

²⁴ Whereas dogmatic and practical types of articles exhibit a correspondingly inverted curve along the decades (when one ascended, the other descended in importance), both of them represent important types of articles in *IL*. See Appendix One—Tables 2 and 3.

²⁵ I took as sample cases articles on dogmatics and on practical theology that may not simultaneously belong to the category of articles on the Lutheran Confessions, as would be the case with the following ones: Nestor L. Beck, “O chamado ao ministério” (which belongs to the categories of dogmatic and of Confessions articles) or Clécio L. Schadech and Clóvis J. Prunzel, “Os catecismos de Lutero: a arte de ensinar a viver por fé,” *IL* 67, no. 2 (2008): 33–60 (which belongs to the categories of practical theology and of Confessions articles). This represents 323 articles on dogmatics (out of a total of 328) and 265 articles on practical theology (out of a total of 272). If we assess the type of role the Lutheran Confessions are given in these articles (that do not explicitly deal with the Confessions), the following data results:

Out of the total number of dogmatic articles under consideration (323), (1) 161 use the Confessions as argumentative authority, (2) 161 do not use the Confessions (even when the perspective they represent is arguably consistent with the Confessions), and 1 does not use the Confessions and demonstrates to sustain a perspective in arguable opposition to them.

Out of the total number of practical articles under consideration (265), (1) 121 use the Confessions as argumentative authority, (2) 142 do not use the Confessions (even when the perspective they represent is arguably consistent with the Confessions), and 2 do not use the Confessions and demonstrate to sustain a perspective in arguable opposition to them.

²⁶ Isagogic articles explore the historical background of particular documents of the Confessions or of the Book of Concord in general, constructive or exploratory are those that expose how the Lutheran Confessions help explain or approach human or ecclesiastical reality, apologetic articles are those that defend and affirm the continuous validity of the Lutheran Confessions in face of a conspicuous challenging context, text-focused articles either reproduce or explain a portion of the text of the Lutheran Confessions, and articles in challenge to the Confessions are those that would put the Lutheran Confessions into question in any respect. I decided to include this last category

also registers variations along the years. There are three peak times of interest in the Confessions (1940–1944, 1977–1980, and 2012–2016)²⁷ that enclose periods of relative interest and others of virtual or total silence.²⁸ All in all, the general figures on the five subtypes of articles on the Lutheran Confessions mentioned above portray the stance that *IL* holds in relation to its symbols. It is a stance of clear affirmation and defense of their normative role, and of consequent cultivation of a readership acquainted with them (with their text, doctrine, and history) and with their actual usefulness.

Revista Teológica

Revista Teológica (RT),²⁹ the second source of Latin American Lutheranism, is a theological journal published by Seminario Concordia in Buenos Aires since 1954.³⁰ *RT* exhibits a clear intentionality in addressing the perceived necessities of the national church (IELA) in order to move its readership (both pastors and lay leaders) in a particular direction. This second

because its very inexistence seems to be remarkable. See Appendix One—Tables 4 and 5.

²⁷ These three short periods that sum up just 12 of the 76 years of publication gather together 70 articles (out of a total of 138—51% of the type) that cover 305 pages (out of a total of 892—34% of the type). The discrimination of the five subtypes of articles on the Lutheran Confessions explained in the previous note allows to distinguish the particularities of these three peaks: whereas the initial period (1940–1944) presented a considerable representation of four of the subtypes (isagogic and constructive/exploratory predominated above text-focused and apologetic), the second peak (1977–1980) had apologetic articles far above the rest (with isagogics above text-focused and constructive/exploratory articles), and the last period (2012–2016) had constructive/exploratory and isagogics as their only high-rate subtypes. Notice how these priorities cohere with the corresponding description of the four great periods of *IL* that we offered before (i.e., the grounding period in 1940–1950, the introspective period in 1975–1995, and the constructive period in 1995–2016).

²⁸ A comparison with the average rate publication of each period will exhibit the decline experienced in between the peaks: The first peak (1940–1944) presents an average of 3 articles and 13 pages per year, the first intermezzo (1945–1976) an average of 1,5 articles and 11.5 pages per year, the second peak (1977–1980) an average of 6 articles and 40 pages per year, the second intermezzo (1981–2011) an average of 0.5 articles and 8.5 pages per year, and the third peak (2012–2016) an average of 6.5 articles and 24 pages per year.

²⁹ The original name of this journal was *Voz Luterana*, but soon (already with its seventh number in 1955) it adopted its definite name.

³⁰ This sums up a total number of 54 years of publication, 172 numbers, 1,043 articles, and 8,649 pages. Almost the entire publication can be accessed at Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne Media Resources, accessed December 4, 2019, <http://media.ctsfw.edu/Issue?PeriodicalId=23>.

journal also presents a wide variety of articles.³¹ In general terms, preeminence belongs to articles on the Bible (mainly homiletics) and practical theology.³² In general, dogmatic and editorial articles hold a second order of priority in terms of number.³³

Through the years, *RT* has had nine different editors,³⁴ and has gone through significant changes in its theological stance, as well as through evident crises that produced periods of discontinuation.³⁵ Four different periods can be recognized (years are approximate):

1. *Taking root* (1950s–1970s): At this initial stage, *RT* provided pastors in the parish with resources and theological deliberation intended to anchor their performance in the inherited tradition.³⁶ Additionally, the journal gave this distant mission district a

³¹ *RT* includes basically the same kind of articles as *IL*, with the only exception that it does not publish articles on Argentine culture and history. Thus, on account of this similarity and for practical reasons, we will use the same categories of types of articles as with *IL*, excepted articles on context: (1) editorial (including news, and opinion-forming articles); (2) Bible (both exegetical and mainly homiletical resources); (3) dogmatics (locus-oriented articles); (4) confessions; (5) church history; (6) practical theology; (7) book reviews.

³² Taking into consideration the entire publication in general terms, Biblical articles represent 28% of the articles (383) and 29% of the pages (3,435), and practical articles represent 24% of the articles (323) and 27% of the pages (3,145). However, if we consider what happened along the decades, Bible and practical articles rotated their position of priority around the eighties. This signals a shift in the main focus of interest of the journal, from the pulpit to the broader scope of the church's activities.

³³ Taking into consideration the entire publication in general terms, dogmatic articles represent 14% of the articles (194) and 18% of the pages (2,050), and editorials represent 17% of the articles (233) and 9% of the pages (1,105).

³⁴ Federico Lange (1954–1978), Carlos Nagel (1980–1983), Héctor Hoppe (1983–1985 and 1987–1989), Erico Sexauer (1985–1986), Edgar A. Kroeger Sr. (1990–1994 and 1997), Claudio L. Flor (1995–1997), Jorge E. Groh (1998–1999), Antonio R. Schimpf (2000), and José A. Pfaffensteller (2006–2015).

³⁵ There were eight years in which *RT* was not able to appear (1979, 2001–2005, 2012, and 2016). Thus, *RT* exhibits 54 actual years of publication. 2015, the last year of publication taken into consideration, was notwithstanding registered as year 55. This is due to two mistakes in counting: On the one hand, the 1984 issues retain the same year number as 1983 (year 29). On the other hand, last resumption in 2013 should have continued the sequence of publication years with year 51, but instead counted as year 53. Another effect of these interruptions in publication was the irregular number of annual issues: Whereas *RT* began as a quarterly, between 1990 and 2000 it published either 1, 2, 3, or 4 issues per year, and since 2006 it published only 1 annual issue, with the exception of 2011. All in all, these figures reflect the difficulty for the Seminario Concordia to publish its theological journal and obviously cohere with a considerable reduction in the statistics, as the following figures demonstrate: 1950s: 148 articles, 1,260 pages; 1960s: 245 articles, 1,920 pages; 1970s: 209 articles, 1,664 pages; 1980s: 242 articles, 1,609 pages; 1990s: 117 articles, 1,205 pages; 2000s: 31 articles, 437 pages; 2010s: 51 articles, 554 pages.

³⁶ This initial period was characterized by a preeminence that Biblical articles (31% of the articles and 38% of the pages) would later transfer to practical articles. As noted before (see above note 244), this priority of Biblical

participation in the struggles and positions adopted by the rest of the LCMS, of which it was a part, before the challenges posed by liberal theology and the ecumenical movement.³⁷

2. *Independentism* (1980s): Under a new *Zeitgeist* of independence and freedom,³⁸ *RT* exhibited a change in character. It became a tool in promotion of the idea that the IELA had to attain a state of maturity and independence, and this not only in terms of administration, but especially in terms of theological stance.³⁹ Thus, an

articles was due to the initial interest that *RT* may help pastors in their preaching. Interest in other ministerial responsibilities, such as the liturgy, pastoral counseling, and parish organization, granted practical articles a growing position during this period (from an initial 16% of the articles and 18% of the pages to a later 25% of the articles and 25% of the pages).

³⁷ Toward the end of this period, there were a series of articles that either contended for the doctrinal basis of a genuine church fellowship in the context of the ecumenical movement (1969–1974), or that supported and explained the stance of LCMS over against liberal theology (1972–1977).

On the liberal challenge, see Jacob A. Preus II, “Enviados para reconciliar,” trans. Juan G. Berndt, *RT* 18, no. 71 (1971): 20–34; Jobst Schöne, “Las Confesiones en la actualidad;” Federico Lange, “¿Qué significa para ti el Sínodo?” part 1, *RT* 19, no. 74 (1972): 1–9; Federico Lange, “¿Qué significa para ti el Sínodo?” part 2, *RT* 19, no. 75 (1972): 1–11; Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “Evangelio y escritura,” *RT* 21, no. 83 (1974): 1–14; Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “La creación en la perspectiva bíblica,” part 1, trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 22, no. 85 (1975): 24–35; Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “La creación en la perspectiva bíblica,” part 2, trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 22, no. 86 (1975): 1–19; David P. Scaer, “Gnosis en la iglesia de hoy,” trans. Juan G. Berndt, *RT* 22, no. 87 (1975): 1–17; Oesch, “La lucha por la confesión;” LCMS, “Caminando juntos,” trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 23, no. 92 (1976): 21–37; Gottfried Hoffmann, “La sagrada Escritura, la palabra de Dios—la confesión, la respuesta de la iglesia,” *RT* 24, no. 94 (1977): 36–40.

On the ecumenical challenge, see Lange, “Las confesiones en el tiempo ecuménico;” Preus, “Se proclama la fe al mundo;” Federico Lange, “La cooperación interluterana en el Río de la Plata,” *RT* 17, no. 68 (1970): 13–18; Anonymous, “La declaración de Frankfurt,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 18, no. 72 (1971): 18–26; Gerhard Rost, “¿Significa la ‘Concordia de Leuenberg’ una comprensión común del evangelio?” trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 19, no. 76 (1972): 23–34; Anonymous, “Declaración de Berlín,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 21, no. 84 (1974): 21–22; Hans-Lutz Poetsch, “Lausanne 1974: el congreso internacional pro evangelización mundial,” trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 21, no. 84 (1974): 28–30.

³⁸ The beginning of this new period roughly coincided with three events that imprinted on *RT* an unprecedented enthusiasm for renewal: (1) In January 1979, the founding editor, Federico Lange, passed away. The two succeeding editors, Carlos Nagel and Héctor Hoppe, made an explicitly strategic use of the journal to persuade the readership to implement a series of changes in the direction of the entire national church. (2) In December 1983, an oppressive military dictatorship came to an end and gave way to a deeply expected time of democracy. (3) Finally, in February 1986, the Argentine District became an independent “sister church” of LCMS, in accordance with the “Master Plan” with which, one decade before, the LCMS had proposed that its Argentine District should work to reach the ideal of the “three selves” (self-support, self-government, and self-extension).

³⁹ Nagel, “¿Qué nos proponemos?” Carlos Nagel, “Una IELA educadora,” *RT* 26, no. 102 (1980): 1–2; Carlos Nagel, “Catequesis y evangelización,” *RT* 27, no. 103 (1981): 1–2; Nagel, “Una IELA evangelizadora;” Carlos

exhaustive and critical revision of doctrine and practice⁴⁰ and even a frontal challenge to the normative role of the Confessions⁴¹ characterized this entire stage.

3. *Fixation and recalculation* (1990s–2000s): The previous ebullition passed by, but it

Nagel, “Una IELA peregrina,” *RT* 27, no. 105 (1981): 1–2; Carlos Nagel, “Una IELA inversora,” *RT* 27, no. 106 (1981): 1–2; Carlos Nagel, “¡Vamos todavía!” *RT* 28, no. 107 (1982): 1–2; Carlos Nagel, “¿Iglesia (IELA) argentina?” *RT* 28, no. 108 (1982): 1–2; Nagel, “Identificándonos;” Nagel, “Educación teológica;” Carlos Nagel, “Soltando amarras,” *RT* 29, no. 112 (1983): 1–3; Héctor Hoppe, “Ofreciendo nuestro producto,” *RT* 29, no. 114 (1983): 1; Héctor Hoppe, “Formándonos,” *RT* 29, no. 115 (1984): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “Un paso más,” *RT* 29, no. 116 (1984): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “Liberación auténtica,” *RT* 29, no. 117 (1984): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “Solidez,” *RT* 29, no. 118 (1984): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “Crecer,” *RT* 30, no. 119 (1985): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “Editorial,” *RT* 30, no. 120 (1985): 1–2; Hoppe, “Espontaneidad;” Héctor Hoppe, “Misión,” *RT* 33, no. 131 (1988): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “¿Tenemos fe en nuestra fe?” *RT* 33, no. 132 (1988): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “La teología ayer y la teología hoy,” *RT* 33, no. 133 (1988): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “Caminemos hacia la madurez,” *RT* 34, no. 135 (1989): 1–2; Héctor Hoppe, “Educación teológica,” *RT* 34, no. 137 (1989): 1–2.

⁴⁰ Carlos Nagel, “Campaña de evangelización;” Leonardo E. Stahlke, “La iglesia de Jesucristo: pueblo de Dios,” *RT* 27, no. 104 (1981): 4–32; Jorge E. Groh et al., “¿Cuál es el mayor problema con el que debe enfrentarse ahora, y en el próximo futuro la IELA?” *RT* 27, no. 104 (1981): 1–3; Hugo Berger, “Catequesis—la escuela dominical: Su importancia,” *RT* 28, no. 109 (1982): 34–36; Hoferkamp, “Educación en América latina;” Héctor Hoppe, “IELA: Una respuesta integral a la actual situación del hombre,” *RT* 29, no. 117 (1984): 13–22; Hugo Kaeding, “¿Qué clase de pastor necesitamos?” trans. Jorge Berger, *RT* 29, no. 118 (1984): 31–32; Anonymous, “El pensamiento de Roland Allen,” *RT* 30, no. 121 (1985): 3–11; J. E. Herrmann, “Sacerdocio universal de todos los creyentes,” trans. Edgar A. Kroeger Sr., *RT* 30, no. 122 (1985): 11–16; Carlos Drachenberg et al., “Documento: Informe comité de reflexiones,” *RT* 31, no. 123 (1986): 31–35; Lanzenstiel, “Pastores, ¿para qué?” Joel D. Heck, “Evangelismo: Palabras que crean barreras,” *RT* 31, no. 124 (1986): 30–32; Kroeger, “La labor de un seminario;” Donald Hoferkamp, “Para la mesa de trabajo: ‘Evangelio’ es...” *RT* 31, no. 125 (1986): 54–55; Guillermo L. Wonderly, “¿El vaso o el agua?” *RT* 31, no. 126 (1986): 11–15; Frederick Pankow, “Reportaje: Reunión de los pastores para discutir modelos para ministerios hispanos,” *RT* 31, no. 126 (1986): 46–48; Antonio R. Schimpf, “Evangelio y evangelización,” *RT* 32, no. 127 (1987): 3–9; Olivia M. Kroeger, “Diaconía: El amor de Dios puesto en acción,” *RT* 32, no. 127 (1987): 10–32; Digno Rosin, “La confirmación,” *RT* 32, no. 128 (1987): 12–20; Daniel E. Tomasini, “¿Cómo ser creyente en una iglesia con pastor?” *RT* 32, no. 129 (1987): 24–35; Pablo Wahler, “El culto y la presencia del Espíritu Santo,” *RT* 32, no. 130 (1987): 12–20; Waldo J. Wernig, “La fe en marcha,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 33, no. 132 (1988): 3–28; Brondos, “Evangelización;” Waldo J. Wernig, “Nuevos pasos hacia la seguridad y la dicha,” trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 33, no. 134 (1988): 3–26; Jorge E. Groh, “Enfoquémonos para ser iglesia misionera,” *RT* 33, no. 134 (1988): 31–36; Luciano Jaramillo, “Misterio y dinamismo de la vocación cristiana,” *RT* 34, no. 135 (1989): 27–34.

⁴¹ Carlos Nagel gave expression to this position in one of his editorials in 1983: “I think that [our] financial dependence [from LCMS] is conditioned by another much greater dependence, from which the first results. It will not be possible to get rid of one, without having first abandoned the other. I’m speaking about the second condition [of a real state of maturity] stated before [i.e., thinking by ourselves]. I think that IELA is totally dependent, or almost so, from the theological reflection of other people from other latitudes, and from other times ... Reading the Bible with alien eyes, thinking with alien brains, living the Gospel with alien experiences, facing reality with alien solutions (or trying to fly from it), annuls and stunts one’s own abilities, and creates an artificial existence.” Nagel, “Soltando amarras,” 3. Some years later, the same author proposed, “[s]hould we not review this syllabus [i.e., Luther’s Small Catechism], that was suggested in another epoch and under specific necessities? For instance, should we not reread the biblical doctrine of the ministry (or better, of the ministries), and reformulate the Fifth Principal Part [of Luther’s Catechism]? Are there not in it strong residues of Roman clericalism?” Nagel, “Catequesis,” 6.

left behind a new period signaled by four instances of a necessary official definition of the doctrine and practice of IELA (1993, 1997, 1999, and 2008)⁴² that enclosed the journal's longest interruption (2001–2005).⁴³ A second trait of this period was the way of doing theology, marked by a critical revisionism of past practices,⁴⁴ a remarkable disuse of the Lutheran Confessions,⁴⁵ and the persistent insistence that every member of the church had to assume his missionary responsibilities.⁴⁶

⁴² Entire numbers of the journal were dedicated to each of these four official definitions of doctrine and practice: (1) *RT* 38, no. 144 (1993) published a series of documents that brought to an end the main discussion of the previous period, giving official sanction to the contention of the editors of *RT*; (2) *RT* 43, no. 159 (1998) published a series of documents that assessed and expressed IELA's official rejection of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* that the LWF and Rome were about to sign up in the following year; (3) *RT* 44, no. 161 (1999) published the presentations of a national theological "council" (or conference) celebrated to decide on a dispute concerning the role of women in the church; and finally, (4) *RT* 48, no. 166 (2008) published the lectures presented in a new national theological "council" (or conference) celebrated to reconsider previous definitions of the doctrine of church and ministry.

⁴³ What happened with *RT* is a faithful representation of a state of crisis and deterioration that Seminario Concordia went through during this time. Damián J. Fischer, "Revista Teológica: Algunos cambios," *Boletín Informativo* (Seminario Concordia, Buenos Aires, 2001, mimeographed): 6.

⁴⁴ Jorge E. Groh, "El sacerdocio universal de todos los creyentes," *RT* 38, no. 144 (1993): 2–8; Héctor Hoppe, "La capacitación de los dones dados a los creyentes," *RT* 38, no. 144 (1993): 9–19; José A. Pfaffenzeller, "Misión y educación en la iglesia," *RT* 38, no. 144 (1993): 30–43; Daniel Helbig and Jorge E. Groh, "Ministerios y educación teológica," *RT* 38, no. 144 (1993): 44–51; Arturo E. Truenow, "Disciplina en la iglesia," *RT* 38, no. 145 (1993): 3–30; Jorge E. Groh, "Una visión histórico-crítica de la IELA en sus nueve decenios de servicio," *RT* 40, no. 151 (1995): 20–46; Mario Rusch, "¿Asociados o disociados con nuestro contexto social?" *RT* 41, no. 152 (1996): 38–42; Roberto E. Bustamante, "La labor educativa de la IELA," *RT* 41, no. 153 (1996): 20–39; Cristian E. Rautenberg, "La efectividad de la confirmación," *RT* 41, no. 153 (1996): 40–47; Edgardo Kroeger Jr., "El liderazgo activo y comprometido en la comunidad de los creyentes," *RT* 42, no. 157 (1997): 19–24; David Coles, "Las instituciones teológicas frente al desafío del nuevo milenio," *RT* 44, no. 160 (1999): 7–26; Jorge E. Groh, "Estrategias misionales de las iglesias nacionales frente al desafío del nuevo milenio," *RT* 44, no. 160 (1999): 27–52; Sergio Schelske, "La confirmación en la iglesia luterana: Una perspectiva educativa de la práctica," *RT* 45, no. 163 (2000): 7–114.

⁴⁵ As the following paragraph exposes, this is a remarkable trait that characterized this entire period: the virtual, and even absolute lack of interest and use of the Lutheran Confessions. During the nineties, there was only 1 out of 154 articles (4 out of 1,629 pages) that took the text of the Lutheran Confessions as its topic of interest: Rubén G. Klenovsky, "Apología del catecismo: Una propuesta de enseñanza," *RT* 41, no. 153 (1996): 48–51. This became even worse in the following decade, in which no single article on the Confessions was published.

⁴⁶ Jorge E. Groh, "Cultura y comunicación: Un punto de atención para el misionero sensitivo," *RT* 35, no. 139 (1990): 10–15; Antonio R. Schimpf, "Usa tu don para el servicio al Señor," *RT* 38, no. 144 (1993): 20–29; Edgar A. Kroeger Sr., "Somos miembros del cuerpo," *RT* 38, no. 145 (1993): 1–2; "El privilegio de anunciar el mensaje," *RT* 38, no. 146 (1993): 1–2; Jorge E. Groh, "La santa cena y la misión de la iglesia," *RT* 38, no. 146 (1993): 3–8; Rubén G. Klenovsky, "La misión según Romanos 10:8–17," *RT* 39, no. 148 (1994): 3–14; Valeria A. Bustamante, "Iglesia en misión: ¿Palabra o acción?" *RT* 39, no. 148 (1994): 15–24; Carlos Monzón, "La misión para la sociedad actual," *RT* 39, no. 148 (1994): 25–36; Kroeger Jr., "El liderazgo activo;" Schelske, "La confirmación."

4. *Retrieval and conflict* (2010s): In keeping with one of the tendencies of the previous stage, during this last and shortened period *RT* became a place of choice for publishing a diversity of essays presented somewhere else.⁴⁷ Two main phenomena took place during this time: a retrieval of interest in the Lutheran Confessions,⁴⁸ and an increasing tension that finally evolved into an overt conflict and a new period of discontinuity.⁴⁹

In connection with the Lutheran Confessions, *RT* has an ambiguous stance, to say the least. On the one hand, there is a remarkable lack of consideration for them. Thirty-two out of fifty-four years of actual publication present no single article on the Confessions. There are periods of time, for instance the one between 1987 and 2010,⁵⁰ that exhibit just one article on the topic. On the other hand, if—as with *IL*—other types of articles are taken into account (such as dogmatic and practical articles that do not simultaneously belong to Confessions articles)⁵¹ in order to explore the role given to the Confessions, the general data not only confirms this tendency, but

⁴⁷ Besides lectures presented in a diversity of events by the Seminary professors, there are three main sets of articles produced for special events that take entire numbers of the journal: (1) *RT* 50, no. 168 (2011) published all the lectures presented at a national council of pastors that met in 2010 to reconsider the role of the Lutheran Confessions in shaping pastoral practice; (2) *RT* 53, no. 170 (2013) was a special issue that celebrated the seventieth anniversary of Seminario Concordia with a series of articles on the topic of theological education; and (3) *RT* 54, no. 171 (2014) published all the lectures presented in a meeting of the theological faculties of Buenos Aires and São Leopoldo.

⁴⁸ Here articles on the Confessions reached their uncontested peak. After having comprised between 4% and 8% of the articles published per decade during the first period (1950s–1970s), then this type of article became virtually nonexistent (1980s–2000s). However, during this final stage (2010s) articles on the Confessions represented 14% in terms of articles and 17% in terms of pages.

⁴⁹ A sense of tension traversed the entire period. However, it became an overt conflict particularly in the articles published in 2014. After *RT* 55, no. 172 (2015), the journal entered once again into its fifth period of interruption.

⁵⁰ No less than 24 years (!), though a period with only 18 years of actual publication.

⁵¹ As explained before, this excludes articles like these: Hoferkamp, “Concepto de iglesia” (that belongs to the categories of dogmatics and Confessions articles), or Truenow, “Catequesis” (that belongs to the categories of practical and Confessions articles). This represents 173 articles (out of a total of 194) and 1,883 pages (out of a total of 2,050) on dogmatics, and 313 articles (out of a total of 323) and 3,006 pages (out of a total of 3,145) on practical theology.

even exposes a considerable antagonism to the normative character of the Confessions (see Table 1).⁵²

Table 1. *Revista Teológica*—the role of the Confessions in other types of articles

	Argue from the Confessions	Do not argue from the Confessions	Argue in opposition to the Confessions	TOTAL
Dogmatic articles	67 art. (39%) 820 pp. (43%)	95 art. (55%) 917 pp. (49%)	11 art. (6%) 146 pp. (8%)	173 art. 1,883 pp.
Practical articles	42 art. (13%) 468 pp. (16%)	224 art. (72%) 1,968 pp. (65%)	47 art. (15%) 570 pp. (19%)	313 art. 3,006 pp.

Within the group of articles that do take the Lutheran Confessions as their main topic (or as part of it) five subtypes can be recognized: (1) constructive or exploratory (33%), (2) apologetic (24%), (3) text-focused (22%), (4) isagogic (20%), and (5) presenting a challenge to the Confessions (1%).⁵³ Through the years, the preeminence of one subtype has interchanged with the others, representing in this way the thrust of each period’s interest in and general conflict concerning the Confessions: isagogic articles dominated at the beginning (1950s), exploratory

⁵² Just a few samples to have an appreciation of this tendency: In 1986, the president of the seminary speculated with the possibility that the Lutheran Confessions could “become an obstacle for evangelization [if,] instead of helping us to confess our faith ... they disable us to speak our contemporaneous [people] in an understandable way.” Kroeger, “La labor de un seminario,” 28. In the following year, the editor blamed AC VII for imprinting a rigid conception of the church that represented “a serious hindrance that inhibits the efficient growth and development of the body of Christ.” The author proposes to substitute this understanding of a church based upon the public administration of the means of grace with the charismatic view advanced by Free Methodist Howard A. Snyder in his *Community of the King*. Hoppe, “Espontaneidad,” 1–2. In 1989, Professor Carlos Nagel invited the reader to ponder the possibility of purging Luther’s Small Catechism of a purported vestige of Romanism: “Should we not review this syllabus [i.e., the Small Catechism], that was suggested in another epoch and under specific necessities? For instance, should we not reread the biblical doctrine of the ministry (or better, of the ministries), and reformulate the Fifth Principal Part [of Luther’s Catechism]? Are there not strong residues of Roman clericalism in it?” Nagel, “Catequesis,” 6.

⁵³ As explained before, isagogic articles explore the historical background of particular documents of the Confessions or of the Book of Concord in general, constructive or exploratory are those that expose how the Lutheran Confessions help explain or approach human or ecclesiastical reality, apologetic articles are those that defend and affirm the continuous validity of the Lutheran Confessions in face of a conspicuous challenging context, text-focused articles that either reproduce or explain a portion of the text of the Lutheran Confessions, and articles in challenge to the Confessions are those that would put the Lutheran Confessions into question in any respect. For further details, see Appendix One—Tables 8 and 9.

and apologetic articles followed (1960s), text-focused attained prominence in the 1970s, and exploratory and apologetic articles reappeared toward the end (2010s).

Latin American Case Studies

Since models are not construed for the sole purpose of organizing a variety of positions, but also as heuristic tools to aid in understanding reality and to explore its possibilities, this work articulates six real case studies from an analysis of *IL* and *RT*, gathering from their contents six different issues Latin American Lutheranism has raised and discussed. Even though each case study is a construct proposed by the present author, it is assembled out of the actual concepts and issues advanced in articles published in these journals, under the following criteria: (1) recurrence of the topic throughout a considerable span of time; (2) lack of closure (remains an open question to be solved in some respect); and (3) viability of the issue as raw material to be explored with a confessional commitment model.

Case study one, *Eclipse of fides quae? (IL)*, discusses the importance of the locutionary content of the Christian faith. Case study two, *Contextual demand of translating the faith (RT)*, proposes the necessity to translate the Lutheran witness into a more contextual language. Case study three, *How to revitalize pastoral counseling (IL)*, discusses the scope and definition of pastoral counseling and possible approaches to its actual performance. Case study four, *In search of the proper place of the priesthood (RT)*, considers the necessity of expanding the sphere of action of the priesthood and its proper limits. Case study five, *The menace of local independentism (IL)*, denounces the menace of local independentism and explores possible ways of preserving the church's unity and the practice of a mutual accountability. Case study six, *Theory and praxis in tension (RT)*, presents an assessment of Christian education that takes the duality of theory-practice as its evaluative criteria.

Case Study One: Eclipse of *Fides Quae*?

A common dilemma that went through the entire spectrum of modern Christian denominations has been the dilution of the content of the Christian faith, its loss of dogmatic substance. Even though a few initial articles in *IL* addressed this problem as if it belonged to other too-distant church bodies, as time went on, it begins to be denounced as affecting the IELB and as in need of active confrontation.

The first references to this phenomenon occurred with Otto A. Goerl, who regarded this problem from a distance, as belonging to and affecting other types of Lutheranism and Protestantism. So, for instance, in 1947 Goerl commemorated the first centennial of the Missouri Synod with an article that celebrated that the Synod had always held the Christian Church's double mission "of upbuilding the souls in the sound doctrine of the incorruptible Word of God, and of fighting for the defense and preservation of the truth that was revealed in Holy Scriptures."⁵⁴ And this had been so, rejoiced Goerl, not only one century before, but also in his own time, as demonstrated in the way president John W. Behnken had recently defended the centrality of doctrine in front of the unionistic tendency of the American Lutheran Conference.⁵⁵ Goerl exclaimed, "*Deus seja louvado!*" (God be praised).⁵⁶

One year later, Professor Goerl came back to the same topic with an apologetic tone in front of the accusation that the rest of Protestantism raised against Lutheranism for its purported "dogmatism" and "intolerance."⁵⁷ Goerl exposed the reasons behind each position. Whereas modern theology deplores Christian dogma and its propositional formulations because of its

⁵⁴ Otto A. Goerl, "Cem anos de abençoada luta em tórno da verdade," part 1, *IL* 8, no. 4 (1947): 49.

⁵⁵ Goerl, "Cem anos," 50–52.

⁵⁶ Goerl, "Cem anos," 52.

⁵⁷ Otto A. Goerl, "Fórmulas vivas—apesar de tudo," *IL* 9, no. 3–4 (1948): 25–30.

indifferentism and rationalistic reductionism, orthodox Lutheranism embraces them for being “living formulas,” “our God’s own doctrines,” and “blessed formulas” “able to save your souls” (James 1:21).⁵⁸

The distance from the problem that Professor Goerl had secured during the forties disappeared two decades later, when Mário Rehfeldt published a translation of St. Louis Professor Paul M. Bretscher’s theses on Christian doctrine.⁵⁹ This text together with an article by Professor Martim Warth⁶⁰ made clear that the loss of doctrinal substance was no longer a problem of “other” people, for it was a characteristic mark of the modern culture in which both LCMS and the IELB inhabited. Paul Bretscher warned against the increasing tendency to reduce both doctrine and faith to their subjective side, as a mere kind of “communication *process*” and an “I-Thou” personal relation enthusiastically emptied of any objective content.⁶¹ Martim Warth, on his part, pointed out that contemporary “secularization demonstrates to aim at transforming [Christian] theology into an ideology without ‘religion,’” transformation that demanded a reinterpretation of theology “with the concepts of deep psychology, philosophical existentialism, sociology, and other secular categories.”⁶² During this same period, *IL* published two essays in which Hermann Sasse, besides deploring and refuting it, exposed that Rudolph Bultmann’s program of demythologization of Scriptures was symptomatic of a much broader Western Christian malady: its flight from dogma and the end of the confessional era.⁶³

⁵⁸ Goerl, “Fórmulas vivas,” 29–30.

⁵⁹ Paul M. Bretscher, “‘Tende cuidado da doutrina,’” parts 1–4, trans. Mário L. Rehfeldt, *IL* 21, no. 3 (1960): 97–105; 21, no. 4 (1960): 145–50; 21, no. 5–6 (1960): 195–202; 22, no. 1 (1961): 1–8.

⁶⁰ Martim C. Warth, “A mensagem da Reforma para o século XX,” *IL* 29, no. 4 (1968): 143–64.

⁶¹ Bretscher, “‘Tende cuidado,’” part 3, 195–96.

⁶² Warth, “A mensagem da Reforma,” 144.

⁶³ *IL* published both articles in the original German: Hermann Sasse, “Flucht vor dem Dogma,” *IL* 25, no. 3–4

We have to wait one and two more decades to find in *IL* tangential references to the fact that this emptying of the doctrinal substance of Christian proclamation was in fact a grass that had already grown up within the sphere of Missourian Lutheranism. This time Otto Goerl wrote,

Weeds still are [sown] among the wheat. Our mother church [i.e., LCMS] has gone through hard struggles during the last years. And pitifully, ever since a short time, everything announces that shadows are also descending upon our dear IELB. We notice in our midst ... characteristic traits of an enthusiast spirit, confused notions about what it is to be a true believer, and all this connected with a spiritual pride that, maybe unconsciously, looks down on the Confessions and the scriptural hermeneutical principles that the Lutheran fathers conquered after extended doctrinal struggles.⁶⁴

A decade later, Professor Vilson Scholz expressed a similar denunciation.⁶⁵

After the turn of the millennium, *IL* exhibited two distinct reactions to dissipate the “descended shadow.” The first one was the categorical assertion that the dogmatic character of Christian faith was irreducible and unrenounceable. The main representative of this strategy was Professor Vilson Scholz. In 2006, Scholz wrote a brief article that functioned as a “manifesto” against the popular promotion of an “implicit faith” (*fides implicita*) that he identified with the famous anecdote about the faith of the collier (*fides carbonaria*):

When inquired about the content of his faith, a certain medieval collier answered: “I believe that what the church believes.” “And what is it that the church believes?” was the following question. And his answer was this: “The church believes that what I believe.” (People say that, when the theologian who interviewed the collier was being tormented with doubts at the hour of his death, he said: “I believe that what the collier believed!”).⁶⁶

“Christ’s Easter resurrection”—advanced Scholz—“does not allow us to coexist with a faith

(1964): 170–90; Sasse, “Das Ende des Konfessionellen Zeitalters.”

⁶⁴ Otto A. Goerl, “Tem cuidado de ti mesmo e da doutrina,” *IL* 39, no. 1 (1979): 59–61

⁶⁵ Vilson Scholz, “A teologia como empreendimento hermenêutico,” *IL* 49, no. 2 (1990): 146.

⁶⁶ Vilson Scholz, “Fórum,” *IL* 65, no. 1 (2006): 6.

without content, an empty faith ... Let us hold fast the confession of our hope.”⁶⁷ The following year, Scholz repeated the same arguments in order to propose the *Apostolicum* (The Apostles’ Creed), with its defined articles, as the proper content of the Christian faith.⁶⁸ God did speak in Scriptures “things that are true and that have [a particular] content (dogmaticians would later speak about the matter of Scriptures—letters and words—and its form—its divine meaning, sense and concepts—).”⁶⁹ Scholz continued,

And what is it that God spoke and speaks in this book, his Word? He tells us what we are to believe. He teaches us to say “I believe” ... Yes, creeds express what we believe. And more important, they are a summary of the Bible, a summary of that what we believe from the Bible.⁷⁰

There were other authors who moved along the lines.⁷¹ One of them, Professor Paulo Weirich, approached the problem of dubiousness or inadequacy with any God-talk as raised by modern linguistic science, by considering Luther’s understanding of the Word of God in his first sermon on the Gospel of St. John.⁷² The basic proposition of the article was that there is a relation of identity between God’s innermost thoughts and essence and his actual revelation in Christ, in Scripture, and in Christian sound proclamation.⁷³ “That identification all the more makes the commitment of faith and faithfulness to the revealed word a serious issue.”⁷⁴ And that

⁶⁷ Scholz, “Fórum,” 6.

⁶⁸ Scholz, “Ele falou.”

⁶⁹ Scholz, “Ele falou,” 36–37.

⁷⁰ Scholz, “Ele falou,” 42.

⁷¹ Buss, “Credo Apostólico;” Ely Prieto, “Princípios bíblicos de evangelismo,” *IL* 59, no. 2 (2000): 149–58; Schöne, “Jamais poderá abrir mão!”

⁷² Paulo P. Weirich, “Sentido e conteúdo na proclamação cristã: Subsídios para uma reflexão a partir da leitura em Lutero no capítulo 1o do Evangelho de João,” *IL* 61, no. 1 (2002): 35–54; Martin Luther, “Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, 1537,” *LW* 22:5–26.

⁷³ Weirich, “Sentido e conteúdo,” 40–47.

⁷⁴ Weirich, “Sentido e conteúdo,” 51.

faithfulness “is manifested ... when the sense [i.e., meaning] that is in the text becomes the sense [of Christian proclamation] both for the one who speaks and for the one who hears.”⁷⁵ That is to say, our flesh and reason are to submit to the way the language of faith speaks in Scripture about things divine.⁷⁶ However, whereas Weirich started with a seeming equation between “sense” (*sentido*) and “content” (*conteúdo*), toward the end of the article he stopped using “content,” and reduced his definition of “sense” to the performative or perlocutionary aspect of the “effect that it [i.e., the Word] produces.”⁷⁷ Faithfulness to the sense of the word, then, is doing in proclamation what the divine revelation intends to do. What this implied with respect to the locutionary aspect (the objective doctrinal content) of the word, was left unsaid.

Finally, the second reaction to the dissolution of the doctrinal content of Christian faith was a reinforcement of the normative texts and doctrines by way of exploring how they effectively work as a hermeneutical frame “to understand both the Word of God and the meaning of Christian life,”⁷⁸ or “to lead us into the Scriptures and into the reality in which we are inserted.”⁷⁹ Vilson Scholz translated Adolf Köberle, who made an appeal to evangelical theologians to extend the scope of interest even beyond the borders of theology. Köberle challenged by asking,

Would it not be possible to explain and format the entire reality of the world out of the evangelical faith? Why is it that only the Kremlin, the Vatican, and the Goetheanum can propose a view of the universal world, whereas in the evangelical church [people] are left under the care of whatever thinking orientation they may follow after?⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Weirich, “Sentido e conteúdo,” 53.

⁷⁶ Weirich, “Sentido e conteúdo,” 54.

⁷⁷ Weirich, “Sentido e conteúdo,” 53.

⁷⁸ Scholz, “O papel hermenêutico,” 5.

⁷⁹ Prunzel, “A importância do Catecismo,” 104.

⁸⁰ Adolf Köberle, “Pensar como cristão,” trans. Vilson Scholz, *IL* 68, no. 2 (2009): 7.

Thus, the author proposed, “it is necessary that we also attempt to enter non-theological realms with the evangelical faith, to perform a responsible intellectual contribution.”⁸¹

Case Study Two: Contextual Demand of Translating the Faith

During the eighties, *RT* published a considerable number of articles claiming that the average Argentine audience could no longer understand the traditional Lutheran language of faith, and therefore, it insistently demanded that IELA had to learn to “translate” its witness to reach its evangelizing goals.

However, this was not the first instance *RT* published on the issue of translation. Three decades before, young Pastor Edgar Kroeger wrote on the candent issue of shifting the official language of IELA,

What language should the church use? Is it German or Spanish? ... We find in our congregations those who advocate for German language, whereas other attempt with the same tenacity to introduce Spanish. The former say: “We must preserve our fatherly inheritance ... *Deutschtum* [Germanness] is genuine *Luthertum* [Lutheranism] ... If we lose German language, we will also deviate from good habits and from German uses, and will accept false doctrine ... [for] to adopt Spanish is to adopt Catholicism” ... The later say: “The future is ours only if we use people’s language ... Youngsters speak Spanish and if we don’t want to keep losing them, we must preach in the language they understand ... [Besides,] it is our duty to evangelize native people ... [Therefore,] it is indispensable to introduce Spanish language.”⁸²

Of course, Pastor Kroeger was here speaking about a different kind of translation, but his discussion was thoroughly commensurable and relevant for the coming conversations. He proposed to search the answer for this intrigue in the example left by the apostles and the Missourian forefathers.⁸³ All of them moved into a new language (from Hebrew to Greek, and

⁸¹ Köberle, “Pensar como cristão,” 8.

⁸² Edgar A. Kroeger Sr., “La iglesia apostólica como ejemplo en el uso del idioma,” part 1, *RT* 2, no. 7 (1955): 17–18.

⁸³ Some years later, *RT* published a series of articles on C. F. W. Walther’s missionary thrust. Part 3 of the series exposed the way Walther changed his attitude toward the use of English language, from an initial reticence

from German to English) because they found that this transition was an intrinsic part of the dominical missionary mandate.⁸⁴ Now, with respect to the risk of distorting the content of the Gospel and introducing false doctrine, Kroeger found that this was not a necessity of fact, but certainly was a possibility. Therefore, “the church is always to watch over so that the word may be taught in all purity in her midst,”⁸⁵ but she was to ultimately follow the example of the apostle Paul, who “became a Jewish with Jewish people, and a Greek with Greek people ... and spoke to them the language that they better understood in order to teach them the good news of salvation.”⁸⁶

Back to the eighties, two young Professors, Carlos Nagel and Héctor Hoppe, blew the trumpet of the topic of this case study. Nagel proposed that

[t]ruths that were produced for an alien theological reflection constitute a valuable treasure that has to be retained, and from which there is much to learn; however misplacement in time and space can easily turn truths into errors, paradoxical as it may sound. Therefore, the same Gospel can be easily reduced to a formula that can be didactically transmitted, but that has no content. There is no biblical promise for such a Gospel that the Spirit will operate through it.⁸⁷

Therefore—Nagel had contended in the previous editorial—“it is necessary that we learn to extract the nucleus of the Gospel, to distinguish substance from accident, in order that [this Gospel] may keep being the power of God for salvation [also] for our contemporaneous

based on his concern for the preservation of doctrinal purity (mainly during 1840s) to a later promotion of the English mission and the adoption of the local language (mainly during the last three decades of his life). Part 4, on its stead, made it clear that this was not a shift of interest from doctrine to mission, for these were not opposite terms in Walther’s theological understanding. Hermann H. Koppelman, “Walter y la misión,” parts 3–4, trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 16, no. 63 (1969): 16–21; 16, no. 64 (1969): 14–15.

⁸⁴ Kroeger, “La iglesia apostólica,” part 1, 26.

⁸⁵ Kroeger, “La iglesia apostólica,” part 1, 28.

⁸⁶ Edgar A. Kroeger Sr., “La iglesia apostólica como ejemplo en el uso del idioma,” part 2, *RT* 2, no. 8 (1955): 16.

⁸⁷ Nagel, “Soltando amarras,” 3.

people.”⁸⁸ Asking contemporary people to read Scriptures “with the eyes of previous days [i.e., the creeds], amounts to prohibit them to read.”⁸⁹

At the end of the same year, Professor Héctor Hoppe challenged the readers saying,

Telling a man from the pulpit that he is a sinner may not be a novelty. Probably it is too common—excessively common, I would say—to be considered ... If we pastors in IELA keep using ancient formulas out of fear of producing disorder in the liturgy or of replacing the biblical phraseology, we barely will be able to reach men’s hearts and demonstrate them our Lord’s riches. I firmly believe that we have to preach Law and Gospel in a vigorous and eloquent way; however, [I propose] the Law not to be summarized only in terms of sins, and the Gospel in terms of salvation. If we are to be the church of the present and of the future ... we have to preach with simple words, with “our own” words, and to avoid using those learnt by heart and mechanical formulas that most of the members of our church have heard Sunday after Sunday from [their] childhood.⁹⁰

Two years later, Hoppe rehearsed similar notions: “Our modern world’s requirements make many things to become out of fashion, obsolete, or simply useless. This [modern] time demands us to constantly renovate things in order to retain their usefulness and effectiveness.”⁹¹ In modern times, people is suffering new and different kinds of afflictions, therefore, “they expect a renewed message [that may fit] their [particular] situation.”⁹² The author ended challenging once again,

Is the church of the Lord trying to renovate its methods, to update its language, and to find new ways in order to penetrate the suffering and disconsolate hearts? [For] this is the great task of the body of Christ: to find out the way to adjust the Gospel to the demands of people [who walk] in darkness.⁹³

Next year, three articles seemed to develop on the same basis, and spelt out the kind of

⁸⁸ Nagel, “Educación teológica,” 2.

⁸⁹ Nagel, “Mundo contemporáneo,” 2.

⁹⁰ Hoppe, “Nuestro producto,” 2.

⁹¹ Héctor Hoppe, “El mismo evangelio de siempre,” *RT* 30, no. 121 (1985): 1.

⁹² Hoppe, “El mismo evangelio,” 2.

⁹³ Hoppe, “El mismo evangelio,” 2.

language modern people was no longer able to grasp. Joel Heck argued that Christian people tended to share their faith with a language that, “instead of bringing clarity, confounds [the audience].”⁹⁴ Therefore, the author suggested that “there are four word categories that Christian people should avoid:” (1) technicalities (e.g., sanctified, redeemed, saved, righteousness, or reconciliation); (2) words that produce a distance with the hearer (e.g., judgment, repentance, conversion); (3) confusing words (e.g., justification and believing); and (4) cliché or metaphorical words (e.g., “commit your life to Christ”).⁹⁵ In another article, Edgar Kroeger contended that it was necessary to redefine the way we use the Lutheran Confessions, for quoting them could not only “represent a mere repetition of empty formulas ... (like a nut with no kernel: a mere shell).”⁹⁶ The Lutheran Confessions could even “become an obstacle for evangelization [if,] instead of helping us to confess our faith ... they disable us to speak our contemporaneous [people] in an understandable way.”⁹⁷ In a similar trend of thought, Donaldo Hoferkamp stoke against our usual attempts to “insert the Gospel into a mold.”⁹⁸ The author offered some examples he was thinking about:

One of these molds is the mechanical repetition, the idea that we have to use the “correct” words in a changeless and stereotyped way, in whatever occasion may be. “Jesus died for our sins.” [This] is a biblical declaration and, there is no doubt, it is Gospel. However, the Gospel is broader than any ready-made phrase that we can recite like robots ... Some people hold that it is not possible to speak the Gospel unless you include a specific and explicit reference to the fact that Jesus Christ shed his blood in order to obtain the redemption of the world.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Heck, “Evangelismo,” 30.

⁹⁵ Heck, “Evangelismo,” 31.

⁹⁶ Kroeger, “La labor de un seminario,” 30.

⁹⁷ Kroeger, “La labor de un seminario,” 28.

⁹⁸ Hoferkamp, “Evangelio,” 54.

⁹⁹ Hoferkamp, “Evangelio,” 54.

During that same time, there appeared two articles that promoted the new Bible translation for common people, *Dios habla hoy*.¹⁰⁰ The superiority of this version over the traditional literalist *Reina Valera* was explained in terms of modern linguistic theory of translation. One of these articles asserted that “[a]ny message in human language, even the Bible’s [message], has its proper linguistic form ... that serves as a vehicle or a ‘container’ to communicate its content, that is, its meaning. What really matters is the content.”¹⁰¹ The other article explained that what was important for those who worked on the new version “is to translate the content, the implicit idea under the original text, and not simply the words ... [therefore, in the new translation] there are changes in form, but no ‘extra’ meaning added.”¹⁰²

This basic challenge and the scholarly paradigm stimulated some proposals of contextual translation of the message. Thus, for example, candidate Antonio Schimpf published his final major paper on the proper content of the Gospel.¹⁰³ Schimpf argued that “not any effort of the church to increase its membership is evangelization ... [but] there will be evangelization only if that what is communicated ... is the Gospel [*evangelio*].”¹⁰⁴ For it is “in the definition of the Gospel where the quintessence of evangelization lies.”¹⁰⁵ Then, the author followed two Baptist Latin American theologians, leading promoters of the so-called “holistic” or “integral mission,” to establish his definition of the proper content of the Gospel.¹⁰⁶ “The Gospel is more than a

¹⁰⁰ Wonderly, “¿El vaso?” 11–15; Arturo Truenow, “Dios habla hoy,” *RT* 32, no. 128 (1987): 3–6.

¹⁰¹ Wonderly, “¿El vaso?” 11.

¹⁰² Truenow, “Dios habla hoy,” 4.

¹⁰³ Schimpf, “Evangelio,” 3–9.

¹⁰⁴ Schimpf, “Evangelio,” 3.

¹⁰⁵ Schimpf, “Evangelio,” 4.

¹⁰⁶ Orlando Costas, *La iglesia y su misión evangelizadora* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1971); Orlando Costas, *Hacia una teología de la evangelización* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1973); René Padilla, *El evangelio hoy* (Buenos Aires: Certeza, 1975).

formula to get to heaven,” argued Schimpf. “It is more than an applicable recipe for socio-political problems. The Gospel is God’s action in Christ intended to put the estranged human being under a dignified condition of life, both in terms of the present reality and of a future perspective.”¹⁰⁷ It is “a proposal of life for a humanity that, if left alone, works toward death ... it is a proposal to live under the new order established with the [first] coming of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁸

The following year, *RT* published an essay by David Brondos that rehearsed similar concepts: The traditional and doctrinaire way of formulating the Gospel “employs a terminology that people do not understand,”¹⁰⁹ and is even contrary to the core biblical message of love. Brondos asked: “Why is it that God cannot forgive us apart from Christ’s sacrifice? Why could he not forgive the entire world? This concept of divine ‘righteousness,’ that forces him to condemn the guilty, is not a biblical concept.”¹¹⁰ The author, then, advanced a positive proposal of translation:

Instead of speaking about sin, we shall speak about our selfishness and lack of love ... Instead of speaking about “lack of fulfillment of the law,” we shall speak about “not having loved perfectly” ... Instead of speaking about condemnation and hell, we shall speak about separation from God ... Instead of speaking about forgiveness of sins, we shall speak about restoration of the communion ... Instead of saying that “salvation is not by works,” we shall say that “we cannot come back to the communion with God by our own strengths” ... Instead of speaking about salvation by faith, we shall speak about entering in communion with God ... Instead of speaking about going to heaven when we die, we shall speak about living in a constant communion with God.¹¹¹

Even though the echo of these same notions in *RT* never stops,¹¹² during the second half of

¹⁰⁷ Schimpf, “Evangelio,” 5.

¹⁰⁸ Schimpf, “Evangelio,” 5.

¹⁰⁹ Brondos, “Evangelización,” 38.

¹¹⁰ Brondos, “Evangelización,” 56.

¹¹¹ Brondos, “Evangelización,” 51.

¹¹² Sergio A. Fritzler, “Contextualización de la liturgia,” *RT* 46, no. 164 (2006): 10–16; Seibert, “Perspectiva histórica;” Carlos Nagel, “La educación teológica superior,” *RT* 53, no. 170 (2013): 4–8.

the nineties, Professor Erico Sexauer brought into the conversation the translation of two articles with a critical insight to this position. In one of them, Pastor Hans-Lutz Poetsch responded to the demand of *aggiornamento* launched not only upon post-Vatican Catholicism, but also upon every confessional churches.¹¹³ Poetsch challenged the hypothesis that the changes that mediate between the Reformation and us were as fundamental as to render the Lutheran Confessions' answers invalid for our modern society, and their message under the need of such an adaptation.¹¹⁴ Instead, the author said that "the requirement that the churches will need to be more open to such *aggiornamento* aims at the recognition of man as *the* real authority even in the realm of faith and religion."¹¹⁵ Therefore, it is still true that

if the message is to reach them [i.e., the nations], the previous requirement is that those who want to transmit it need to use the proper language and to take into consideration the prevailing specific conditions of life. [However] this missionary process of integration (see 1 Corinthians 9:18ff) in no way consists in adjusting the message established by Christ to the particularities of the audience, but in seeking to transmit the unalterable will of God expressed in the law and the Gospel in such a way that the hearer may capture it.¹¹⁶

The other article that Professor Sexauer translated was written by Rudolf Mökel, who put to test the contemporary consensus that "the evangelistic discourse needs to be colorful, graphic, shocking, and positive, if it wants to 'reach' the audience,"¹¹⁷ by reviewing the example of the apostolic proclamation as registered in the book of Acts. Mökel concluded that there was one thing the apostles never did: "They never adjusted their discourse to the liking of their occasional

¹¹³ Hans-Lutz Poetsch, "Aggiornamento de la iglesia: ¿Solución o ilusión?" trans. Erico Sexauer, *RT* 39, no. 147 (1994): 4.

¹¹⁴ Poetsch, "Aggiornamento," 4.

¹¹⁵ Poetsch, "Aggiornamento," 11.

¹¹⁶ Poetsch, "Aggiornamento," 12.

¹¹⁷ Mökel, "¡La verdad!" 53.

audience ... They never adapted the Gospel to the presumed necessities of their hearers.”¹¹⁸
Instead, “invariably the apostles placed God’s truth at the top of their discourses. Their primordial concern was remaining faithful to the truth in every respect.”¹¹⁹

Case Study Three: How to Revitalize Pastoral Counseling

An ongoing discussion regarding the scope and definition of pastoral counseling, its proper and auxiliary tools, and the best possible approach to its actual performance, traverses the entire publication of *IL*.

During the first three decades (1940–1970), a standard definition of pastoral counseling controlled the stage. In 1946, Professor Werner K. Wadewitz proposed at the Convention of the Brazilian District a series of theses with which he nailed down that confession and absolution is a transaction between a man who recognizes his guilt in front of God, and a God that forgives and subjectively applies the penitent the objective justification by means of the human mediation of the confessor.¹²⁰ “Absolution rests upon God’s grace revealed in the Gospel, and not upon men’s state of heart.”¹²¹ It is a descending reality that comes from God himself,

[for] the one who hears absolution [pronounced] through the minister’s mouth as [coming] from God himself shall not doubt at all, but is to firmly believe that his sins are truly forgiven by God himself in heaven ... Remission of his sins is put in his ears, and thence is to descend into his heart.¹²²

In the same year, Jorge Miller asserted that pastors were there for preaching the Gospel to all creatures, and that pastoral visitation was the way they were to fulfill this principal responsibility

¹¹⁸ Mökel, “¡La verdad!” 57.

¹¹⁹ Mökel, “¡La verdad!” 70.

¹²⁰ Werner K. Wadewitz, “Confissão e absolvição,” parts 1–2, *IL* 7, no. 1 (1946): 1–8; 7, no. 2 (1946): 17–24.

¹²¹ Wadewitz, “Confissão e absolvição,” part 2, 20.

¹²² Wadewitz, “Confissão e absolvição,” part 2, 21–22.

in a particular or private sphere, as “the *Seelsorger* who is to take care of the souls of the entire flock of God.”¹²³ Therefore, “pastoral visits are not social visits. They have a religious character,”¹²⁴ and their main purpose is to help the pastor to “diagnose” the spiritual stance of his members in order to know how to “apply God’s word with greater profit.”¹²⁵

During the last decade of this initial stage, two authors sustained that pastors were to imitate the example of the apostle Paul and of Christ himself as paradigms of pastoral counseling. In 1949, director Paulo Schelp asked his hearers/readers: “Will we, pastors, be able to deploy a care of souls with such a mentality [as Christ exhibits in Mark 10]?”¹²⁶ There we find Christ’s loving concern for man’s eternal destiny, and the remarkable combination of a thorough anthropological pessimism with the greatest divine optimism “in view of what God has done and is still doing.”¹²⁷ In the same vein, Pastor Wilhelm Doege opened his article establishing what is at stake in *Privatseelsorge*: “The private pastoral care has to do with the salvation of people.”¹²⁸ Christ and the apostle Paul were the highest examples of it, but “how far behind the apostle are we today?”

A second stage (1970–1995) was characterized by an increasing dissatisfaction with the

¹²³ Jorge L. Miller, “*Visitas pastorais*,” *IL* 7, no. 3–4 (1946): 41.

¹²⁴ Miller, “*Visitas pastorais*,” 41.

¹²⁵ Miller, “*Visitas pastorais*,” 45.

¹²⁶ Paulo W. Schelp, “*Christus, ein vorbildlicher Seelsorger*,” part 1, *IL* 10, no. 11–12 (1949): 241.

¹²⁷ This last phrase is registered in the Portuguese translation of the same sermon published four decades later. Paulo W. Schelp, “*Cristo, o modelo do cura d'almas*,” *IL* 52, no. 2 (1993): 148. Some years later, Paulo Schelp once again rehearsed the same parallelism between Christ and his ministers, but this time in order to affirm the irreplaceable character of Christian proclamation: “Today, all the world is afraid: afraid about the future, afraid of hunger and shortage, of poverty and misery, of wars and revolutions, about the eternal consequences of our faults, fear of death. Long conferences of great diplomats, the counseling of psychologists and psychiatrists, cannot dispel it. There is one only means: proclaiming the eternal salvation for Christ’s sake. Let us follow, then, the example of Christ, and be good comforters.” Paulo W. Schelp, “*O ministério de Cristo e o nosso ministério*,” *IL* 26, no. 1 (1965): 37–38.

¹²⁸ Wilhelm F. Doege, “*Privatseelsorge*,” *IL* 21, no. 2 (1960): 63.

performance of the pastoral office in general terms, and with the traditional strategy of pastoral counseling in particular. Retired Pastor Benjamin César, for instance, raised a hard criticism against his colleagues, pointing out a list of vices that counted from “A” through “Z” (!).¹²⁹ The general sense of dissatisfaction seemed to increase along the years, to the point of moving the national church to organize two councils of church workers during the eighties¹³⁰ in order to revisit the understanding of the ministry and to readjust its actual performance.¹³¹ The renewal of pastoral counseling in particular tended to be thought in terms of adopting the paradigm of a psychological therapist. It is Pastor Elmer Flor who set the stage for the first time in 1970. Pastor Flor proposed,

a right application of the theological principles and psychological methods that regulate pastoral counseling will make more and more efficient our pastoral ministry. The result will be a marvelous perception that this [more scientific approach] is one of the aspects of the modern pastor’s multidimensional activity that enriches the ministry with the most pleasing experiences in life.¹³²

The author contended that

a pastoral counseling that deserves such a name cannot be limited to the traditional situations either of a particular confession and absolution, or of a mere instruction and guidance. Rather, it consists in the implementation of modern methods for treating personality, in order to have a vital participation and a responsible and conscious

¹²⁹ Benjamim César, “Pastores,” *IL* 35 [36], no. 1–2 (1975): 29–30. See Conferência sobre Responsabilidade Social Cristã na América Latina, “A conseqüência da urbanização no desenvolvimento do ministério social da igreja,” *IL* 30, no. 3–4 (1969): 168–70; Arquidiocese de Vitória, “A igreja que a gente quer (Documento 63 da Arquidiocese de Vitória, ES),” *IL* 35 [36], no. 3 (1975): 49–53.

¹³⁰ These two important national events took place in 1983 and 1989. Heimann, “Concílio de obreiros;” IELB, “O concílio;” IELB, “Concílio nacional;” Rottmann, “O ministério;” Scholz, “O ministro;” Buss, “Igreja e estado;” Heimann, “O concílio nacional;” IELB, “Obreiros da igreja.”

¹³¹ Irmo Wagner, “Os sofrimentos do apóstolo Paulo,” *IL* 44, no. 3–4 (1984): 61–70; Paulo M. Nerbas, “O ‘burnout’ do pastor,” *IL* 44, no. 3–4 (1984): 71–78; Leopoldo Heimann, “A igreja precisa de Tíquicos,” *IL* 46, no. 1 (1987): 3–19; Elmer N. Flor, “A consola do povo de Deus: o profeta Isaías reestudado na IELB,” *IL* 49, no. 2 (1990): 149–68; Martim C. Warth, “Código de ética do pastor,” *IL* 50, no. 1 (1991): 14–21; Flor, “A pregação do consolo;” Gerhard Grasel, “‘Paraklesia’—consolação na cura de almas,” *IL* 50, no. 2 (1991): 145–69; Christiano J. Steyer, “O pastor preparado para consolar,” *IL* 50, no. 2 (1991): 170–81; Sonntag, “Direitos do pastor;” Gerhard Grasel, “A leitura do tempo: desafios para a igreja brasileira num contexto secularizado,” *IL* 53, no. 1 (1994): 3–33.

¹³² Elmer N. Flor, “Aconselhamento pastoral: A psicologia pastoral a serviço da igreja,” *IL* 31, no. 1–4 (1970): 95.

integration into the life of other people, so that the Holy Spirit may turn the latter into new creatures in Christ.¹³³

Pastor Flor suggested adopting the so-called “client-centered” method, which “entrusts the patient with the capacity of finding a solution by his own.”¹³⁴ There were at least two aspects that pastors as counselors were to adopt from psychology: a set of attitudes and the procedural techniques. With respect to the first aspect, the counselor was to accept the client as he was, to develop a feeling of empathy, and to help the client to reflect on his own possibilities.¹³⁵ “The pastor’s presence is justified for the only reason of being a friendly and confident person who has expressed too much love for others.”¹³⁶ Therefore, he was to be a preeminent “listener,”¹³⁷ put there to help the counselee finding his cure “from the inside out.”¹³⁸ With respect to procedure, therefore, the patient was to reach two crucial instances: the “complete emotional discharge” (or catharsis)¹³⁹ and the “resolutions to be taken in terms of actions.”¹⁴⁰

There was a third stage (1995–2015) in which a call for recovering the *proprium* of the pastoral ministry was heard. In 1997, Professor Ely Prieto wrote an article that best represents

¹³³ Flor, “Aconselhamento pastoral,” 107.

¹³⁴ Flor, “Aconselhamento pastoral,” 111. See Carl R. Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy* (Cambridge: Riverside, 1951); John W. Drakeford, *Counseling for Church Leaders* (Nashville: Broadman, 1961).

¹³⁵ Willi Redel, “Conversação pastoral na cura de almas,” *IL* 36, no. 1 (1976): 19–26.

¹³⁶ Redel, “Conversação pastoral,” 26.

¹³⁷ “The best pastors of all times are those who know how to listen.” Flor, “Aconselhamento pastoral,” 112 (citing William E. Hulme, *Counseling and Theology* [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1956], 24).

¹³⁸ Néelson Kissler, “Aconselhamento e assistência a enlutados,” *IL* 44, no. 3–4 (1984): 14–20.

¹³⁹ “Confession is defined in Psychology as ‘catharsis.’ Catharsis is the process of liberation of ideas, conflicts, tensions, and anguish, through the method of an emotional recital of past incidents that allows discerning (insight) the causes [that lie] behind those difficulties.” Flor, “Aconselhamento pastoral,” 112.

¹⁴⁰ Flor, “Aconselhamento pastoral,” 114. “In the dialog, the pastor listens attentively and introduces useful information, asks pertinent questions, stimulates the counselee’s reflection, and uses all the available resources in order to assist him in his walk, so that he can reach a better understanding of his problem and of his possible solutions. In other words, the dialogical function of the pastor is to be a facilitator of the process and not the source of every solution and answer.” Dieter J. Jagnow, “Elementos de comunicação no aconselhamento pastoral,” *IL* 53, no. 1 (1994): 38.

this appeal. Prieto threw his challenge by asking, “[f]or how long will we keep adopting secular models of soul care?”¹⁴¹ Instead, “the minister needs to recognize his function as *Seelsorger* instead of taking psychosocial sciences as [his] paradigm.”¹⁴² Benefiting from Wilhelm Loehe’s insights, the author not only affirmed that liturgy had a central role, but that “liturgy is care of souls itself.”¹⁴³ Therefore, Prieto advanced,

the great task of a pastor is the *Seelsorge*, and whatever he is for venture to do, is to serve this purpose. Indeed, what people need from a pastor is not psychological assistance, but rather guidance toward confession, absolution, and a total participation in the sacramental life of the church. In a time in which lots of mental health services (i.e., psychologists and psychiatrists) are accessible, what would move a person to look for a pastor? Certainly it would not be his ability as a psychologist or a professional counselor ... the ordained minister, the *cura*, has a particular function, a number of exclusive credentials, a peculiar responsibility: caring for and building up the Christian community that was entrusted under his care.¹⁴⁴

Two years before, Professor Christiano Steyer made a similar appeal to recover the proper role of private confession and absolution. It is there, “with confession, that the rest of the pastor’s goals in counseling have their [proper] source.”¹⁴⁵ In the same train of thought, Professor Orlando Ott took private confession as “the most sublime and urgent task that falls upon the pastoral ministry.”¹⁴⁶ Therefore, concludes Ott, this practice “needs to be defended in the Christian church, particularly in the confessional Lutheran church, for it itself is a continual defense and proclamation of the Gospel in its entire fullness.”¹⁴⁷ This appeal, in fact, was part of a broader and late conversation in *IL*, connected with the recuperation of the *proprium* of the ministry as a

¹⁴¹ Ely Prieto, “Liturgia e cura d’almas,” *IL* 56, no. 1 (1997): 35.

¹⁴² Prieto, “Liturgia,” 27.

¹⁴³ Prieto, “Liturgia,” 34.

¹⁴⁴ Prieto, “Liturgia,” 33–34.

¹⁴⁵ Christiano J. Steyer, “Reflexões sobre aconselhamento pastoral,” *IL* 54, no. 1 (1995): 12.

¹⁴⁶ Ott, “O ensino e a prática,” 38.

¹⁴⁷ Ott, “O ensino e a prática,” 46.

whole.¹⁴⁸ In 1996, Professor Vilson Scholz translated a lecture in which Edward Schroeder used Claus Westermann's description of three kinds of relations the human being was created for (R1: our relation with others; R2: our relation with ourselves; and R3: our relation with God), in order to distinguish psychotherapy from Christian proclamation.¹⁴⁹ Schroeder contends,

Secular “Gospels” cannot strike the plights at level R3 because they doubt about its existence or reality. And if the existence of the problem is admitted, it is transferred to level R2 and regarded—who knows?—as an illusion or a neurosis ... In fact, therapy helps at the levels of R1 and R2, but not at the level of R3.¹⁵⁰

Case Study Four: In Search of the Proper Place of the Priesthood

Whereas during the first decades, the treatment of the topic of church and ministry in *RT* reflected the standard position of Missouri,¹⁵¹ post-War revisionary tendency made its appearance during the seventies. A dissatisfaction with the results of traditional missionary efforts moved Pastor Erhard Beckmann to ask himself, “Why does it happen that we have such a small progress in our congregations and in the mission field? ... Are we not preaching the message that we were given to preach? Are we not teaching in a right way? Are we not taking care of the tasks that we

¹⁴⁸ Beck, “O chamado ao ministério,” 131–37; Gerson L. Linden, “Estudo exegético de 2 Coríntios 6.1–10 e aplicação ao ministério da igreja hoje,” *IL* 56, no. 2 (1997): 165–96; David P. Scaer, “O caráter cristológico do ministério,” trans. Gerson L. Linden, *IL* 57, no. 2 (1998): 153–60; Schmidt and Nerbas, “Pastor, equipador dos santos?” John W. Kleinig, “Como se forma um teólogo: *Oratio, meditatio, tentatio*,” trans. Vilson Scholz, *IL* 61, no. 1 (2002): 5–19; Norberto E. Heine, “Teologia e psicologia na perspectiva da misericórdia de Deus,” *IL* 65, no. 1 (2006): 7–18; Vilson Scholz, “Breves reflexões sobre o ministério no Novo Testamento,” *IL* 74, no. 1 (2015): 39–43; Sérgio Reichert, “Como um membro da igreja vê o seu pastor?” *IL* 74, no. 1 (2015): 93–96.

¹⁴⁹ Edward H. Schroeder, “O desafio do pluralismo à missão cristã: Por que, afinal, Jesus? Pistas para uma resposta a partir da teologia econômica de Paulo,” trans. Vilson Scholz, *IL* 55, no. 2 (1996): 182–83.

¹⁵⁰ Schroeder, “O desafio do pluralismo,” 183–84.

¹⁵¹ G. C. Schramm, “El pastor como administrador,” trans. Herber Berndt, *RT* 5, no. 18 (1958): 22–27; E. C. Kieszling, “La relación entre la doctrina y la obra universal de la iglesia,” parts 1–2, *RT* 6, no. 21 (1959): 1–12; 6, no. 22 (1959): 23–28; Anonymous, “El uso de obreros laicos en la iglesia a la luz de la doctrina del ministerio,” *RT* 6, no. 23 (1959): 21–32; Teodoro Gross, “Empleo de laicos en la iglesia,” *RT* 13, no. 50 (1966): 18–24; Federico Lange, “El ministerio en el contexto del sacerdocio universal de todos los creyentes,” *RT* 16, no. 61 (1969): 1–7; Koppelman, “Walter y la misión;” Hermann H. Koppelman, “El cristiano en la vida pública,” trans. Federico Lange, *RT* 16, no. 63 (1969): 32–36.

were trusted with?”¹⁵² A lay leader, Aníbal Felhauer, invited to lecture in a national convention of the church, also noted,

[Statistics demonstrate] that ours is not a stagnant [or] a stationary church. No. It rather is a decadent church that decreases for not even being able to retain those who are born within its circle ... 9,528 baptized and 6,605 confirmed that have left our church between 1948 and 1968 is an eloquent enough evidence of the poor efficiency of our work.¹⁵³

The basic diagnosis was that the IELA had misunderstood the pastoral office in terms of a “one man orchestra” that—according to Pastor Gerhard Zeuch—was in direct correlation with “the ‘sponge-layman’ (or we may call him a ‘parasite-layman’).”¹⁵⁴ Felhauer complained, “[t]his must not be so: That the pastor is the one who makes all the office work in the parish ... the one who makes all the phone-calls ... the one who necessarily has to be present in every meeting.”¹⁵⁵ The author suggested, “[w]e must move from the [model of a] pastor that performs all the functions within the parish into the [model of a] ‘congregation orchestra.’”¹⁵⁶ Felhauer stepped forward and demanded that “[w]e, laypeople, have plenty opportunities to bear fruit for the Lord Jesus in our daily life; but, what is the point of depriving laypeople from the multiple possibilities of bearing fruit in a direct service within the church?”¹⁵⁷

The recuperation of a place for the laity within the work of the church was consistently supported with an appeal to the doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers.”¹⁵⁸ Thus, at the end of

¹⁵² Erhard Beckmann, “El obrero laico,” *RT* 17, no. 68 (1970): 17.

¹⁵³ Aníbal Fehlaue, “La participación de los laicos en asuntos de la iglesia,” part 2, *RT* 21, no. 82 (1974): 20, 24.

¹⁵⁴ Gerardo Zeuch, “La participación de los laicos en asuntos de la iglesia,” part 1, *RT* 21, no. 82 (1974): 6.

¹⁵⁵ Fehlaue, “Participación de laicos,” 26.

¹⁵⁶ Fehlaue, “Participación de laicos,” 24.

¹⁵⁷ Fehlaue, “Participación de laicos,” 27.

¹⁵⁸ Zeuch, “Participación de laicos,” 4; Fehlaue, “Participación de laicos,” 25, 29.

the day, what was at stake was the recovery of a full-fleshed practice of this very biblical and Lutheran doctrine. As a consequence, this doctrinal and practical recovery came to be taken as the real key to solve the missionary and ministerial problems of IELA.¹⁵⁹ Now, the great question came to be one of location: where to look at in order to expand the necessary room for the priesthood to be properly lived out? The answers to this question moved in two different directions. The first direction, which controlled the discussion for almost four decades (from 1970s through 2000s), moved in a centripetal way, along the line of the same dilemma that first opened up the discussion: How to make room for the priesthood *within* the inner institutional structure of the church? Therefore, the discussion came to revolve around the churchly public actions a layman was allowed to perform or not. The previously mentioned joint lectures of lay leader Aníbal Felhauer and his Pastor Gerhard Zeuch in 1974 represented an initial exploration of the permitted limits, and received, according to the record of the minutes, the following warning from the convention plenary:

With respect to the problem of whether the layman should also publicly preach the Gospel, it was emphasized in the discussion that we are not to forget the right distinction between the priesthood of all believers and the ministry of the Word. On this issue, we confess with the Augsburg Confession XIV that “no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called (*rite vocatus*).” If we want to put this article of our Confession without effect, first we must demonstrate that it is incompatible with the Sacred Scriptures.¹⁶⁰

This very challenge of putting the *Augustana* XIV’s scriptural character to the test was

¹⁵⁹ Raymond S. Rosales, “Ministerio amplio de la palabra por parte de los laicos en la iglesia luterana,” *RT* 23, no. 89 (1976): 11–22; Stahlke, “La iglesia de Jesucristo;” Drachenberg, “Comité de reflexiones;” Groh, “El sacerdocio universal;” Bustamante, “Iglesia en misión;” Kroeger, “El liderazgo activo;” Schelske, “La confirmación;” Sergio Schelske, “La misión de la iglesia como marco integrador del ministerio pastoral y el sacerdocio universal,” *RT* 48, no. 166 (2008): 74–88; José A. Pfaffenzeller, “El concepto de laicado en la iglesia luterana,” *RT* 54, no. 171 (2014): 45–53.

¹⁶⁰ [Erico Sexauer?], “Resumen de la discusión habida en la convención, según las actas de la asamblea,” *RT* 21, no. 82 (1974), 39.

taken up during the following two decades that populated *RT* with articles that tried to demonstrate that the distinction between clergy and laity was a medieval perversion of the structure of a church that had initially been founded as a charismatic lay movement. Thus, for instance, in 1981 Leonardo Stahlke gave expression to this argument:

In its origins, Christianity was an eminently lay movement ... those who militate today for a renewal of the church, unanimously agree that the hope of a true renewal “rests upon the laity.” If there is to come a true renewal of the church in our days, we will need a de-clericalization [of it], in order to attain the power of the body of Christ as church.¹⁶¹

Some authors were willing to pit the Confessions over against Scriptures. Thus, Professor Carlos Nagel asked,

Should we not review this syllabus [i.e., Luther’s Small Catechism], that was suggested in another epoch and under specific necessities? For instance, should we not reread the biblical doctrine of the ministry (or better, of the ministries) and reformulate the Fifth Principal Part [of Luther’s Catechism]? Are there not strong residues of Roman clericalism in it?¹⁶²

In other instances, we find the Reformers on the same side of the line, together with the primeval ideal of a lay church:

Though it is true that during the sixteenth century the reformers rescued the doctrines [sic.] of the church and of the universal priesthood of all believers that had been corrupted, in practice, even today the organization of our parishes and the theological education is still more under the influx of [the inherited medieval] history and tradition than under the teaching of the New Testament.¹⁶³

All in all, in 1987 Olivia Kroeger celebrated that “during these last years there have taken place a number of positive changes ... the drowsy mechanism [i.e., the organization] of the

¹⁶¹ Stahlke, “La iglesia de Jesucristo,” 24. See also Zeuch, “Participación de laicos,” 1–3; Fehlauer, “Participación de laicos,” 30; Rosales, “Ministerio amplio;” Edgar A. Kroeger Sr., “Planificación de la educación teológica en América latina,” *RT* 30, no. 120 (1985): 11; Drachenberg, “Comité de reflexiones,” 32; Tomasini, “¿Cómo ser creyente?” 30–31; Hoppe, “Capacitación de los dones,” 17–18; Pfaffenzeller, “Misión y educación,” 36–37.

¹⁶² Nagel, “Catequesis,” 6. See also Hoppe, “Espontaneidad,” 1–3.

¹⁶³ Hoppe, “Capacitación de los dones,” 17.

machine [i.e., IELA] has set on, and its gears are assuming their respective places [i.e., change of mind].”¹⁶⁴ Thus, in 1993, a special task commission published an official document that declared the equation of the “priesthood of all believers,” the “mission of the church,” and the “holy ministry,” as having “its roots in the historical understanding of the Confessions and of the different dogmatics that appeared over time.”¹⁶⁵

A second answer to the quest for the proper place of the priesthood moved in a centrifugal direction, in terms of the sacred understanding with which every baptized was to live out the “holy order” of his walk of life in the world. Professor José Pfaffenzeller asserted,

As a church body, we have lost in a certain way the appreciation of the mission [as performed] through all the members in their daily occupations ... Christian priesthood does not imply a specific service, but a daily one ... It is necessary that we fully recuperate this doctrine and its entailed practice as connected with the Christian doctrine of vocation, that is to say: that each Christian is a servant and a witness of Christ in every sphere of life.¹⁶⁶

In the following years, Professor Sergio Fritzler embraced this trajectory as his own. In 2011 he brought a translation of Brazilian Professor Gerson Linden, who depicted the situation of Lutheranism in Latin America:

At the present, I perceive an increasing conscience that [laypeople’s] involvement has to be directed in view of the church’s reason to exist, that is to say, to proclaim the Gospel. Even so, [laity’s involvement] is mainly restricted to the inner sphere of the [institutional] church. This is not too bad, as far as the church focuses its organization in doing mission. However, I think that the main potential of the church is being

¹⁶⁴ Kroeger, “Diaconía,” 18.

¹⁶⁵ Comité *ad hoc*, “Documento: Puntos fundamentales acerca del sagrado ministerio de la iglesia,” *RT* 38, no. 144 (1993): 52. Even though “Documento” makes reference only to John T. Mueller’s *Christian Doctrine*, we assume that the expression “the different dogmatics that appeared over time” refers to the entire orthodox dogmatic tradition. This is how the argument goes: The “holy ministry of the church or mission of the church is objectively executed in the ministry of the word.” “Any action in the church that contributes to a good performance and to the expansion of the ministry of the church is also part of its holy ministry. Therefore, we denominate holy ministry of the church to the total aggregate of ministries (either public or private) with which the Christian church is increased and strengthened.” “We conclude, therefore, that the ‘holy priesthood’ of believers is the ‘holy ministry’ of the church.”

¹⁶⁶ Pfaffenzeller, “El sacerdocio universal,” 28.

neglected, to know: [our] people's daily life in touch with other people, there where they work, study, have fun, etc.¹⁶⁷

In 2013, Fritzier reviewed the history of the seminary's contribution to the theological training of lay people, and he advanced the thesis that this part of the story had been based on a wrong identification between "priesthood of believers" and "holy ministry," that in fact was a perversion of the scriptural and confessional doctrine introduced with Pietism.¹⁶⁸ In the next year, Professor Fritzier discussed the doctrine of the church in Scriptures, Luther, and the Lutheran Confessions, and came to the conclusion that "the priesthood is not included in the ministry, as many times certain [theologians] intend to use the abstract view of the ministry on account of their struggle for power and authority."¹⁶⁹ Finally, in 2015, the same author elaborated around the doctrine of Christian vocation, and located it within two conceptual frames articulated by Martin Luther:¹⁷⁰ (1) the double relation into which the Christian is placed (with Christ through faith and with his neighbor through love),¹⁷¹ and (2) the three orders or states of creation established by God (church, family, and state).¹⁷² After explaining that the Lutheran Confessions bind the loving service to the neighbor with each one's particular walk of life,¹⁷³ Fritzier concluded that, even though the different spheres that Luther articulates (Christ-neighbor and church-family-state) are not to be mixed up, they do exhibit a clear dynamic relation:

¹⁶⁷ Linden, "Eclesiología luterana," 25.

¹⁶⁸ Sergio A. Fritzier, "El Seminario Concordia y la educación teológica del sacerdocio universal," *RT* 53, no. 170 (2013): 53–54.

¹⁶⁹ Sergio A. Fritzier, "La iglesia vista desde la perspectiva del ministerio," *RT* 54, no. 171 (2014): 93.

¹⁷⁰ Fritzier, "La vocación."

¹⁷¹ See Martin Luther, "The Freedom of the Christian, 1520," *LW* 31:333–77.

¹⁷² See Martin Luther, "Confession concerning Christ's Supper, 1528," *LW* 37:364–65.

¹⁷³ Fritzier, "Vocación," 79–80. The author quotes the following passages: AC XXVI, 9; XXVII, 48; Ap IV, 192; VII, 174; XXVII, 27.

Everything related to faith comes to the Christian from outside in ... through the means of grace. And then, the same Gospel mobilizes and throws the believers from inside out, into their vocations. This takes place under a weekly rhythm: Sunday worship (the divine service) and six days of labor.

In front of this reality, we need to reflect what is going on in many of our Lutheran congregations: The movement is the other way around! That what takes place within the church is promoted as virtually the only service to God ... Then, from this perspective, [only] that believer who participates in [formal] activities of evangelism, is a member of one of the committees in the parish, sings in the choir, or reads the Scriptures in public, performs a higher or more spiritual service than the mother who cares for her children at home, or than the Christian who faithfully works in a factory from Monday through Saturday.¹⁷⁴

Case Study Five: The Menace of Local Independentism

There were at least three instances in the history of *IL* that raised a resonant warning against the menace of local independentism and that brought some important suggestions to preserve the church's unity and the practice of a mutual accountability.

The earliest voice of warning came from an essay written in Germany by Johann F. Kunstmann under the title of "*Unionismus—Separatismus*."¹⁷⁵ *IL*'s editor, Walter Kunstmann, suggested that, "*mutatis mutandis*, there is no doubt that we can derive too much from this text for the present of our ecclesiastical circumstances."¹⁷⁶ The author argued,

In addition to the main danger with which the Antichrist threatens the Church of Christ—for he has seated himself in the temple of God as a God and pretends to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4)—there are two other great dangers that siege the Christian Church at all times: the danger of unionism (i.e., false union between false gods and God) and the danger of separatism (i.e., false separation of God from God).¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Fritzler, "Vocación," 81–82.

¹⁷⁵ Johann F. Kunstmann, "Unionismus—Separatismus," *IL* 16, no. 3–4 (1955): 71–81.

¹⁷⁶ This was in fact the case, as the articles with which Hans-Gerhard Rottmann explained the decision of the Synod not to accept union proposals both in the States and in Brazil bear witness. See Hans-Gerhard Rottmann, "Einheitsfront aller Lutheraner Brasiliens," *IL* 15, no. 9–10 (1954): 181–92; Hans-Gerhard Rottmann, "Konversion um des Mammons willen?" *IL* 16, no. 11–12 (1955): 275–78; Hans-Gerhard Rottmann, "Zum 'status quo' der Ev.-Luth. Synodalkonferenz," *IL* 21, no. 5–6 (1960): 220–28.

¹⁷⁷ Kunstmann, "Separatismus," 71–72.

The Lutheran Confessions, eminently the *Augustana* VII with its “it is enough” (*satis est*) and “[i]t is not necessary” (*nec necesse est*),¹⁷⁸ give voice to the scriptural guidance with which God preserves the Church from falling into either extreme of construing a humanly devised and false unity, or of “disregard[ing] and disparag[ing] the ‘unity of the Spirit’ that he wrought.”¹⁷⁹

Therefore, the author advanced,

[j]ust as Christians are not allowed to remain in the community of those who teach false doctrine, so much they are forbidden to avoid fellowship with those who profess the right doctrine by rejecting the false doctrine ... there where the command of the apostle “go out from their midst, and be separate from them [2 Cor. 6:17]” does not apply, surely the other one does: “Be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit [Eph. 4:3]” *Tertium non datur* (there is no third option)!¹⁸⁰

“How easily it happens,” Kunstmann recognized, “that, in a supposed zeal for the truth, the heat of the fight goes too far ... and now, at the expense of love, it separates even what God has put together.”¹⁸¹ Therefore, the author called for a clear distinction between separatism and separation: “Both have to do with division, with ecclesiastical rupture, but in different ways: Separatism takes place upon unjust and obscure bases, separation [takes place] in a correct and scriptural manner.”¹⁸²

A quarter century later, in a totally different context that once again brought to the fore the issue of the unity of the church (i.e., the time of IELB’s independence from LCMS),¹⁸³ Professor

¹⁷⁸ AC VII, 1–2 in Kolb and Wengert, 43; BSLK, 103:8–9.

¹⁷⁹ Kunstmann, “Separatismus,” 79.

¹⁸⁰ Kunstmann, “Separatismus,” 79–80.

¹⁸¹ Kunstmann, “Separatismus,” 71.

¹⁸² Kunstmann, “Separatismus,” 77.

¹⁸³ IELB ceased to be a LCMS District in January 1980. The “Documento de independéncia” opened with these words: “Thankful to God for 75 years of joint work as District and Synod, the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (IELB) and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) joyfully initiate a formal association as two ecclesiastical bodies that, though separate, still are interdependent.” LCMS and IELB, “Documento de independéncia,” 22. At the same convention, Professor Mário Rehfeldt offered a lecture that revisited the history of IELB and located it within the context of the entire salvation history. Toward the end, Rehfeldt warned against

Nestor Beck argued for the necessity of a theological graduate program in Brazil by disavowing any isolationist illusion:

We are a church with less than 300,000 members. Shall we ignore the 70,000,000 Lutherans scattered across all the continents? Shall we disown the work of so many Lutheran Churches that, in all the continents and in hundreds of tongues, profess with us the faith that is confessed in the *Augustana*? Of course not ... For different reasons, we are in danger of getting isolated in this corner of the world, far away from the great trends of theological information. Isolation brings with it cultural retardation. The more isolated, the less stimulation we will receive from people and institutions that deal with issues of our interest. The more isolated, the less we will contribute to the international dialogue and the common conquest of the only truth in Christ.¹⁸⁴

In the next two years, Nestor Beck move the focus of his criticism against isolation from the broader discussion of church bodies relationship, to the narrower scope of what was going on within IELB itself.¹⁸⁵ Beck pointed out that, whereas IELB's constitution required the national and district authorities to supervise and control the doctrine and practices in the parishes, the schools, and the seminary of the church, this was not happening in fact.¹⁸⁶ The author attributed this situation to a general uncertainty regarding the legitimate basis of the authorities "to act as supervisors of [other] ministers, churches, schools, and institutions,"¹⁸⁷ and denounced a "regime of 'congregational autonomy' [of] those who make out of the [local] pastor a pope."¹⁸⁸ Professor

assuming the new ecclesiastical situation of IELB with any kind of selfishness: "But the present time in which our church reaches a state of administrative independence is also a time to look to the future, when our responsibilities will increase, for decisions regarding our future will no longer be taken in other lands, but right here. May the Lord of the church illuminate us so that we can take those decisions that may best serve the church's task, and not our own personal interests or—who knows?—our envies ... May the Lord deliver us from this and keep us faithful in true doctrine, in unwavering hope, and in sincere fraternal love." Mário L. Rehfeldt, "Deus age através da igreja na história," *IL* 41, no. 2 (1981): 25.

¹⁸⁴ Beck, "Formação de liderança," 10.

¹⁸⁵ Nestor L. Beck, "O papel dos supervisores na igreja," parts 1–2, *IL* 41, no. 3 (1981): 18–28; 42, no. 4 (1982): 6–28.

¹⁸⁶ Beck, "O papel dos supervisores," part 2, 6–7.

¹⁸⁷ Beck, "O papel dos supervisores," part 2, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Beck, "O papel dos supervisores," part 1, 23.

Beck complained, “What a damage has come upon the IELB for supervisors not paying proper attention to ‘how one teaches, believes, loves, how one lives a Christian life, how to care for the poor, how one comforts the weak’!”¹⁸⁹

More than two decades later, Professor Paulo Nerbas wrote an article that is paradigmatic of this case study.¹⁹⁰ Nerbas warned against the spell of the concept of autonomy:

The word “autonomy” has everything to sound pleasurable in people’s ears, for it brings with it an entailment that addresses one of the greatest human desires: we like to imagine a situation in which it is possible for us to govern ourselves, to enjoy the right of self-regulation through our own laws, with no necessity of submitting ourselves under foreign intervention, determination and decisions ... Notwithstanding, let us take care that the euphoria with the nude and raw concept may not obfuscate and prevent us to have a clear vision regarding—among other things—[the following issues:] what is the scope, the reason, and the limit for us to be autonomous?¹⁹¹

Nerbas advanced and inquiring about the nature of the church, in order to establish the proper frame for thinking its autonomy:

What is the church? Is it just a voluntary association of people that affiliate or get out from it according to each one’s pleasure? Is it merely a group that governs itself in accordance with that what it judges to be certain or convenient, without submitting its decisions under the examination of the one who has ascendancy over it? What, then, is the church?¹⁹²

The author answered, “[i]t is the body of Christ,” and as such, it has “a head that delights in conducting its members so that they enjoy freedom and safety without running the risk of losing themselves.”¹⁹³ Therefore,

a rightly understood and applied autonomy does not rule out obedience. Within the body, the members answer in obedience to the head, Christ. It is not the result of any kind of coercion that imposes a certain way of doing things. On the contrary, it

¹⁸⁹ Beck, “O papel dos supervisores,” part 2, 11 (citing Martin Luther, “Preface to Instructions for Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony, 1528,” *LW* 40:270).

¹⁹⁰ Paulo M. Nerbas, “A autonomia da congregação,” *IL* 63, no. 1 (2004): 74–84.

¹⁹¹ Nerbas, “Autonomia,” 74–75.

¹⁹² Nerbas, “Autonomia,” 76.

¹⁹³ Nerbas, “Autonomia,” 77.

always is a voluntary choice of the heart that believes and loves ... Moved by God's grace, then, a [particular] congregation will decide in accordance with the "law" of love in the exercise of its autonomy, seeking that what may be most useful and edifying for God's congregation, avoiding any levity and offense, and taking especial care of the weak in faith.¹⁹⁴

These considerations brought Nerbas to the point of his positive proposal: the recovery of the initial vision that moved both LCMS and IELB to adopt a synodical organization. According to a famous presidential address of C. F. W. Walther, a proper synodical organization ascribes Christ's word its unique authority, "in front of which both the synod and the congregations, that is to say, the church in its entirety, bow down." Upon this basis, Nerbas concluded,

[t]here will be no room for the synod to demand from the congregations a procedure in contradiction to the Word. And, in the same way, there will be no room for one or more congregations to arrogate for them any adherence to a [particular] "truth" not confessed by the rest of the members of the synod (body), in accordance to the Word.¹⁹⁵

A similar denunciation and proposition was repeated several times during the following years.¹⁹⁶ Horst Kuchenbecker went a step further in proposing to supplement this recovery of a

¹⁹⁴ Nerbas, "Autonomia," 79–80.

¹⁹⁵ Nerbas, "Autonomia," 81.

¹⁹⁶ In 2008, Professor Anselmo Graff translated an article by Joel Biermann that confronted several abuses that break the proper mutual accountability of the church: "While congregational autonomy may be ensconced in the documents and the hearts of the LCMS, it has deleterious effects in the life of Christ's church when claimed as a right. Both pastors and congregations need to recognize and cherish the interdependence and unity that exists between them and all other pastors and congregations ... We are bound to one another and must not ignore one another in our desire to walk faithfully in the ways of our Lord. If nothing else, circuits and districts serve as stubborn reminders of our mutuality and responsibility for one another. There is no place for the Lone Ranger, and there is no place for shunning or disdainning the brother or brothers who appear to be out of step in our walking together as a synod." Joel D. Biermann, "Aproxime-se do altar: Uma reflexão sobre a teologia e prática da santa ceia," trans. Anselmo E. Graff, *IL* 67, no. 2 (2008): 73; originally published as Joel D. Biermann, "Step Up to the Altar: Thinking about the Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper," *CTQ* 72, no. 2 (2008): 161–62.

Two years later, Ezequiel Blum construed much of his exploration of the relevance of *Formula of Concord* article X upon an article in which Charles Arand proposed that current controversies and disagreements tend to revolve around issues related to practice and that, in this middle ground area, "the solution is neither to claim that if something is an adiaphora we may do whatever we want as long as it does not involve false doctrine nor to turn every debated practice into a matter of confession (*in casu confessionis*). In order to allow us to move forward together, it seeks to identify some of the principles that guided our Lutheran confessors and forebearers that allowed them to recognize each other as Lutheran in practices as well as in theology. In this way, we may continue to stand

synodical understanding of the church that would move in line with the Missourian tradition, with the recuperation of a strengthened implementation of the episcopal responsibility of church authorities, in line with an alternative paradigm exhibited by the SELK.¹⁹⁷ Kuchenbecker referred the reader back to the contributions that two decades before Professor Nestor Beck had made on the neglected role of church supervisors previously considered.

Case Study Six: Theory and Praxis in Tension

Between 1959 and 1961, *RT* published the translation of a lecture by American Professor E. C. Kieszling.¹⁹⁸ The way Professor Kieszling opened his lecture summarizes the entire discussion that traverses the journal:

In his famous *The City of God*, Saint Augustine speaks about three different types of lives: contemplative, active, and compound life—that is the combination of the previous types. Contemplative life—the life of wise men—is in essence a search for truth, and active life is identified with the faithful accomplishment of duty. This Augustinian division can also be applied to our topic: Here, the truth is pure doctrine, and the accomplishment of duty is the church’s task that encompasses the entire world. If pure doctrine and the task with universal scope come together—what is an indispensable condition for compound or integral life—tensions will appear. And these tensions have to be considered, for they are the root of all our problems.¹⁹⁹

Tension between theory and practice, and the challenge of executing the right chemistry that may

on their shoulders as we confess the faith, in word and practice, before the world in our day.” Blum, “*Adiaphora*,” 34 (citing Charles P. Arand, “Not All *adiaphora* Are Created Equal,” *CJ* 30, no. 3 [2004]: 164).

Even recently, Gerson Linden also appropriated Jeffrey Kloha’s contention that “The current conception of synod that many seem to have today, that it is a voluntary association—and nothing more—cannot be supported from the NT. By ignoring the NT understanding of the trans-congregational nature of the church we have weakened the bonds of fellowship, mutual concern and support, and unity in doctrine and practice which should inform and indeed define our life together as church.” Gerson L. Linden, “Reação: Breves reflexões sobre a igreja no Novo Testamento,” *IL* 74, no. 1 (2015): 37 (citing Jeffrey Kloha, “The Trans-Congregational Church in the New Testament,” *CJ* 34, no. 3 [2008]: 187).

¹⁹⁷ Kuchenbecker, “Tratativas pastorais,” 46–49. The paradigm of SELK’s reinstatement of the episcopal office had already been considered even before the foundation of this church body. Hans Kirsten, “Das Amt des Bischofs in der Kirche von Heute,” *IL* 32, no. 1–4 (1971): 152–55.

¹⁹⁸ The translation of this lecture is published in eight parts. Kieszling, “Doctrina y obra,” parts 1–8.

¹⁹⁹ Kieszling, “Doctrina y obra,” part 1, 1 (referring to St. Augustine, *The City of God* XIX.19, *NPNF* 2:591).

produce the ideal blend stimulated a long-standing conversation on the issue of Christian or theological education in the church.

There was a conversation that considered this issue in broad terms, referring to the general teaching responsibility of the church. In 1980, new Professor Carlos Nagel affirmed,

[i]f the church limits Bible school classes, catechesis, or other [teaching] instances, to the mere transmission of certain contents (such as Bible stories, and texts to be learnt by heart) probably she is just giving instruction. But her responsibility goes much further. Besides this, it is expected that she educate and form [by training actual practices].²⁰⁰

Several years later, Pastor José Pfaffenzeller contended for a clear sequential and hierarchical priority of practice or mission over doctrine:

Only being in mission [i.e., being actually involved in missionary activities] we will be able to mature as Christians ... If we really understand that God sends us and put this into practice, our church will be transformed into a church in mission ... In this way we will also come to understand that theology is more than doctrine, for mission is more than doctrine.²⁰¹

In 1996, the author of this dissertation summarized the findings of a poll on the issue of theological education.²⁰² One of the results was that “there exists a tension between what the church knows to be her goal (i.e., to do mission among real Argentine people) and her deepest desire and intention of preserving its [self-enclosed] religious-cultural system.”²⁰³

In more specific terms, a series of articles dealt particularly with the catechetical process connected with the rite of confirmation (or first communion). In 1982, Pastor Hugo Berger affirmed that the church needed to adapt its catechetical system to new educational theories. Berger argued,

²⁰⁰ Nagel, “IELA educadora,” 1–2.

²⁰¹ Pfaffenzeller, “Misión y educación,” 41, 43.

²⁰² Bustamante, “La labor educativa,” 20–39.

²⁰³ Bustamante, “La labor educativa,” 27.

[w]e learn by doing. No one will contend this principle. The problem is how to apply this to our lives. For instance: We learn to pray by praying ... We have to give our students [practical] tasks to be performed, goals to be reached, challenges to be conquered. Giving the student participation is not only to give him the opportunity to speak, but also [the opportunity] to practice that what he is being taught: “We learn better what we use.”²⁰⁴

In a similar vein, *RT* published candidate Sergio Schelske’s major paper on this same particular.²⁰⁵ Schelske concluded that the contents of Christian catechesis “are to be practical, to take into consideration the entire person [of the catechumen], and to integrate [the later] into activities of a participatory and relational nature.”²⁰⁶ Some years before, Professor Carlos Nagel had taken this trajectory to an extreme in questioning,

[i]s it even possible to teach and to learn the faith? What has indoctrination to do—if anything at all—with the faith given by the Holy Spirit? Are not there, in our catechesis, evidences that we intend to base faith upon arguments that belong to the sphere of reason, and not [to the sphere] of faith?²⁰⁷

Another series of articles that narrowed down the discussion, dealt with higher theological education for the ecclesiastical ministry. During an entire decade (1983–1993) the traditional system of residential theological education received a severe criticism. In 1983, *RT* published an essay in which Robert T. Hoferkamp, LCMS missionary in Mexico, argued that the residential model was inadequate for Latin America, since it was imperialistic and too expensive.²⁰⁸ Some years later, Professor Héctor Hoppe supported the discontinuation of the model of residential seminaries on the four following bases: (1) it is too selective; (2) it is too expensive; (3) it alienates the student from his natural context; and (4) it distances theology from the reality of the

²⁰⁴ Berger, “Catequesis,” 36–37.

²⁰⁵ Schelske, “La confirmación.”

²⁰⁶ Schelske, “La confirmación,” 85.

²⁰⁷ Nagel, “Catequesis,” 6.

²⁰⁸ Hoferkamp, “Educación en América latina,” 10–16.

church.²⁰⁹ All in all, in connection with the topic of this case study, the traditional system was blamed of falling on the side of theoretical abstraction; just as former professors, as they remembered past experiences and explorations in 2013, put it: Héctor Hoppe asked, “How are we to teach spirituality to our students? There seems to be a dichotomy between a theoretical kind of theology and the student’s spirituality that at the end of the day will make the difference in the practical or pastoral work.”²¹⁰ Therefore, he argued, “all theology has to be practical (pastoral), has to ‘touch the ground,’ and has to affect people’s lives.”²¹¹ His former colleague, Carlos Nagel, sentenced, in his turn,

I don’t think it to be useful for the church, for God, and for the world, to have scholars who live within a crystal bell, at a distance from the daily tough realities people in and outside the church have to struggle with. I refer to those who have all the answers for questions nobody pose, and who fly so high that can no longer hear the [real] questions with which the folks wallow about.²¹²

Therefore, a decentralized model of theological education such as theological education by extension came to be identified with the opposite and preferable option to provide a practical training. Seminary director Edgar Kroeger envisioned this ideal with certain romanticism:

[T]he apostles neither learned their theology of mission by studying other people’s books or theories, nor by sustaining intellectual debates with one another. They rather learned their theology out of praxis. They learned from the Holy Spirit who led them in the performance of the missionary task.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Hoppe, “Educación teológica,” 1. In a lecture presented at the International Lutheran Conference—Latin American Region, David Coles singled out similar contentions against the traditional residential system: it was considered (1) as part of an “innovation of Enlightenment and Schleiermacher,” (2) as deficient for grappling with Latin American proper challenges, as liberation theology and the Pentecostal explosion, (3) as lacking contextualization to the missionary task in the region, and (4) as too expensive. Coles, “Las instituciones teológicas,” 7–8.

²¹⁰ Héctor Hoppe, “Educación teológica y pastoral,” *RT* 53, no. 170 (2013): 9.

²¹¹ Hoppe, “Educación teológica,” 12.

²¹² Nagel, “Educación superior,” 7–8.

²¹³ Kroeger, “Planificación de la educación,” 6.

This idyllic vision became an actual proposal and quasi-official decision in 1993. Former Professor Héctor Hoppe announced the arrival of a new epoch:

Up to now, theological education was centered around a residential seminary. But theological education of all the [spiritual] gifts will demand a decentralized organization so that each one of the possessors of the divine *charismata* may access [this] training ... Training the gifts of leadership does not only mean providing information on Bible and theology, but includes all what is necessary for molding a patient, humble, loving, and responsible character.²¹⁴

The same number of *RT* published a study presented at the national convention of 1993 that substituted each local congregation for the seminary in Buenos Aires as *the* official *locus* of theological education in IELA.²¹⁵ This went hand in hand with the fact that lay people were launched into the performance of pastoral acts without ordination.²¹⁶ Under this proposal, the seminary by residence “keeps being a valid, but not an exclusive alternative” for theological education.²¹⁷

Three years later, *RT* published a lecture by Brazilian Professor Leopoldo Heimann, who vindicated the centrality of a residential seminary, but nailed down the proper tension of its double responsibility that “not only makes the seminary to be a school that provides a good academic training, but also a community of faith and Christian life.”²¹⁸

Finally, two more authors advanced the same basic proposal to solve the problem of keeping theory and practice in tandem. Both of them affirmed that one aspect was not to be pitted against the other. In 1999, David Coles wrote that “there has to be a balance between

²¹⁴ Hoppe, “Capacitación de los dones,” 17–18.

²¹⁵ Helbig and Groh, “Ministerios,” 46.

²¹⁶ Helbig and Groh, “Ministerios,” 48–49.

²¹⁷ Helbig and Groh, “Ministerios,” 50.

²¹⁸ Heimann, “La iglesia luterana,” 4.

theological reflection and missionary practice. In spite of the urgency for reaching out and evangelizing [people], it is also more necessary than ever [before] to reflect in theological terms.”²¹⁹ Pastor Sergio Schelske, in his turn, criticized the fallacy of exalting practice over against theory: “It is not valid to think that practice defines itself in its [mere] implementation ... On the contrary, we claim that every practice and every experience find their support in some kind of theory.”²²⁰ Therefore—both authors claimed—it is necessary to transcend the classical dichotomy by finding a third surpassing or synthesizing category that may hold theory and practice in tandem. They claimed that the notion of *missio Dei* was such a category. Coles found that this proposal, first advanced by Eugene Bunkowske,²²¹ provided with the surpassing “know why” of theological education that integrated the more basic “know what” of theory with practice’s “know how.”²²² Schelske presented a similar argumentation. Taking Martin Kähler’s famous axiom that “mission is the mother of all theology” as his starting point,²²³ Schelske assumed that if we locate theological education “within the frame of the mission of God assumed by the church,” then “an equilibrium between what we call theory and practice” would follow as a necessary matter of fact.²²⁴ Finally and most interestingly, both authors (Coles and Schelske) seemed not to be able to escape from falling back into the very dichotomy they were trying to transcend, since they ended identifying their notion of “mission” with the “practical” side of the

²¹⁹ Coles, “Las instituciones teológicas,” 26.

²²⁰ Sergio Schelske, “La educación teológica en el marco de la misión,” *RT* 53, no. 170 (2013): 26.

²²¹ Coles, “Las instituciones teológicas,” 9–10 (referring to Eugene W. Bunkowske, “Educação teológica e missão,” trans. Raúl Blum, *Simpósio internacional sobre missão: A missão de Deus diante de um novo milênio* [São Paulo: Instituto Concordia de São Paulo, 1998], 1–11).

²²² Coles, “Las instituciones teológicas,” 15.

²²³ Schelske, “Educación teológica,” 28–29 (citing Martin Kähler, *Schriften zu Christologie und Mission: Gesmtausgabe der Schriften zur Mission Mit einer Bibliographie*, ed. H. Frohnes [Munich: Kaiser, 1971], 190); See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 15–16.

²²⁴ Schelske, “Educación teológica,” 30.

polarity. Whereas Coles concluded by affirming the necessary “balance between theological reflection and missionary practice” that was mentioned before,²²⁵ Schelske also concluded with a similar move and affirmed that “the relation between theology and practice is not established when we put one above the other, but [when we allow] that one give identity and shape to the other.”²²⁶ In both cases, “theology and mission” were terms that expressed the same tension between “theory and practice,” and the priority ascribed to mission finally brought the purported equilibrium.

Conclusion

This chapter has articulated six case studies that represent part of the discussions and struggles in Latin American Lutheranism: (1) Eclipse of *fides quae*?, (2) Contextual demand of translating the faith, (3) How to revitalize pastoral counseling, (4) In search of the proper place of the priesthood, (5) The menace of local independentism, and (6) Theory and praxis in tension. These case studies have been put together from actual contributions and extended conversations registered in the theological journals of two of the three main Lutheran church bodies in South America: *Igreja Luterana* (published by the Seminário Concórdia in São Leopoldo) and *Revista Teológica* (published by the Seminario Concordia in Buenos Aires). Three of these Latin American case studies will serve us in the following chapters of this dissertation, as they pose real problems and discussions to be addressed with the models of confessional commitment. This will allow us to see how the models perform as descriptive and heuristic tools.

²²⁵ Coles, “Las instituciones teológicas,” 26.

²²⁶ Schelske, “Educación teológica,” 29.

CHAPTER FOUR
**TESTING MODEL ONE: CONFESSIONAL COMMITMENT AS DIVINE
CONVERSATION**

General Introductory Comments on Chapters Four through Six

The present chapter will begin to test the performance of the three models of confessional commitment articulated in chapter two. This assessment will take the attention of this and the following two chapters. In order to test the way each model performs its proper functions, Latin American case studies described in the previous chapter will function as the raw material of study and the context to address with the models working in their capacity as descriptive and heuristic tools. Otherwise stated, chapters four, five, and six, will put the models to work. After doing this, chapter seven will present the actual evaluative conclusions of the models' performance.

Chapters four, five, and six exhibit a similar structure: in order to test each model, a brief summary and scholarly context of the discussion of the chosen case study will be presented, and then an explorative description of what the model of confessional commitment under test does with the chosen case study will follow. Since the three models of confessional commitment naturally give the Lutheran Confessions a central role,¹ an invariable aspect among the models' contributions to the Latin American case studies will be the way the models allow the Confessions to illuminate each discussion.

In order to maintain this research within certain limits, all three models will be put to test, but with just one case study per model. Therefore, in the present chapter, model one

¹ See, for instance, that in our Structuralist analysis of each model's narrative, the Lutheran Confessions always take the actantial position of "helper."

(Confessional Commitment as Divine Conversation) will address case study two (Contextual Demand of Translating the Faith); in chapter five, model two (Confessional Commitment as a Form of Life in the World) will be applied to case study three (How to Revitalize Pastoral Counseling); and in chapter six, model three (Confessional Commitment as Orthodox Dynamics) will work on case study six (Theory and Praxis in Tension). Even though each model has been matched with a particular case study in an intuitive way, on the basis of their possible thematic commensurability, this is done under the presupposition that any model could be tested with any case study. If the Lutheran symbolical books are the confession of the scriptural eternal doctrine, then their validity and usefulness transcends any context and particular situation. If, additionally and in an anticipated way, it is assumed that all three models are valid representations of the nature and function of the Lutheran Confessions, then it can be conceded (at least for mere exploratory reasons) that all the models participate in the Confessions' trans-contextual scope. Another criterion that was considered in matching models with case studies is that both Latin American theological journals (i.e., *Igreja Luterana* and *Revista Teológica*) should have their place in this testing experiment. Thus case studies two and six are taken from *Revista Teológica* and case study three from *Igreja Luterana*.

Introductory Comments on Chapter Four

This chapter will put to test how model one (confessional commitment as divine conversation) functions when applied to Latin American case study two (Contextual Demand of Translating the Faith).² For analytical purposes, and based on a review of the literature of Latin American journals, it is possible to identify four different profiles pertaining to the conversation

² See above pp. 93–100.

in case study two:

1. Initial *untranslated proclamation*³ that is criticized.⁴
2. *Criticism and demand* of translating the message.⁵
3. Positive *experiments* of translation.⁶
4. Final *warning* against a distorting translation.⁷

Since case study two enters the field of traductology, and in fact its main triggering profiles (2 and 3) base their case on the dominant translation theory of the day, it is necessary to take into consideration some aspects of the scholarly discussion on the issue. We will focus on three theoretical contributions: (1) a categorical definition of the discussion of case study two, (2) a general overview of current translation theoretical discussion, and (3) some theoretical aspects that may bring clarity to our own discussion.

Categorical Definition of the Discussion of Case Study Two

First of all, we need to establish where the discussion on translation raised by case study two fits within the structure or topology of this field of study. Russian linguist Roman Jakobson defines translation in terms of “interpretation,” and establishes his classical typology:

We distinguish three ways of interpreting a verbal sign ... (1) Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of another signs of the same language. (2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. (3) Intersemiotic translation or

³ As discussed immediately below, here I am using the term “translation” in a rather broad and metaphorical sense.

⁴ The average members of IELA that are criticized during the eighties represent profile one.

⁵ Carlos Nagel, Héctor Hoppe, Joel Heck, Edgar Kroeger Sr., and Donaldo Hoeferkamp represent profile two.

⁶ Antonio Schimpf and David Brondos represent profile three.

⁷ Erico Sexauer, Hans-Lutz Poetsch, and Rudolf Mökel represent profile four.

transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign system.⁸

The discussion of case study two is located, as it is clear, within Jakobson's first category of translation. Umberto Eco, however, takes issue with this classical typology, arguing that Jakobson promotes a confusing equation between translation and interpretation.⁹ Consequently, Eco advances a different typology¹⁰ that technically defines case study two not as a discussion on translation, but on interpretation through rewording. Notwithstanding, Eco himself warns against "the risk of caging into definite types an activity that ... is disposed along a *continuum*."¹¹ Therefore, even though case study two does not bring to the table a discussion on translation proper, the label of "translation" is retained here in a broad sense, just as other theorists use the term,¹² and that the theoretical discussion of traductology can still give us relevant tools to

⁸ Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Brower (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 233.

⁹ Eco affirms the intimate connection between both concepts, but challenges saying that "whereas it is true that any translation is an interpretation, notwithstanding the contrary is not valid." Umberto Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo: Experiencias de traducción*, trans. Helena Lozano Miralles (Montevideo: Lumen, 2008), 298 note 2.

¹⁰ Eco articulates his typology substituting interpretation for translation as his main category. Translation proper is but one instance (3.1.1) of the broader category of interpretation. The discussion of case study two (rewording), on its turn, belongs in category 2.1 (as intrasystemic interpretation). This is Eco's typology:

1. Interpretation by transcription
2. Intrasystemic interpretation
 - 2.1. Intralinguistic, within the same natural language
 - 2.2. Intrasemiotic, within other semiotic systems
 - 2.3. Performance
3. Intersystemic interpretation
 - 3.1. With marked variation in the substance
 - 3.1.1. Interlinguistic, or translation between natural languages
 - 3.1.2. Rewriting
 - 3.1.3. Translation between other semiotic systems
 - 3.2. With mutation of continuum
 - 3.2.1. Parasyonymy
 - 3.2.2. Adaptation or transmutation

Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 306–17; See Umberto Eco, *Experiences in Translation*, trans. Alastair McEwen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 99–128.

¹¹ Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 306.

¹² George Steiner, for instance, defines a variety of "transformational process[es]" by means of which the

analyze our case study.

General Overview of Current Translation Theoretical Discussion

This brief consideration of current theoretical trajectories in the field will follow American translation scholar Edwin Gentzler's lead. In his *Contemporary Translation Theories*,¹³ Gentzler limits his assessment to five theoretical trajectories: (1) *North American translation workshop*, that explores the possibility of an un-theoretical and virginal approach to the practice of translation, with a total dependence on the literary features of the source text;¹⁴ (2) *the "science" of translation*, that adopts Noam Chomsky's structuralist theory of syntax and generative grammar in order to provide the practice of translation with an objective scientific basis;¹⁵ (3) *early translation studies*, that reacts against the positivist pretense of scientificism of previous trajectories, and moves the discussion from prescriptive and abstract theorization into an analytical description of the act of translation itself;¹⁶ (4) *polysystem theory*, that explores how the social norms and pressure and the literary conventions of the target text govern translation

distancing barriers between a source-language and a receptor-language are transcended "so that the message 'gets through.'" George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 28.

¹³ Edwin Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, Topics in Translation 21 (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001), eBooks on EBSCOhost.

¹⁴ See Ivor A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929); Ezra Pound, *Translations* (New York: New Directions, 1963); Ezra Pound, *Antologia Poética de Ezra Pound*, trans. Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, et al. (Lisbon: Ulisséia, 1968); Frederic Will, *Literature Inside Out* (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1966); Lawrence Venuti, ed., *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1992); Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995).

¹⁵ See Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957); Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: MIT, 1965); Eugene A. Nida, *Message and Mission: The Communication of Christian Faith* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1960); Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translation, With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964); Worfram Wills, *The Science of Translation: Problems and Methods*, Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik (Tübingen: Narr, 1982).

¹⁶ See André Lefevere, *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint* (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1975); James S. Holmes, *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988).

decisions;¹⁷ and (5) *deconstructionism*, that takes translation as the best instance in which the elusive and ambiguous nature of *différance* becomes visible.¹⁸

This sample of theories sufficiently expose the complexities of the contemporary discussion. Moving far beyond pre-modern and modern disputes about the best principles and methods to reach the original intention—either the intention of the work (*intentio operis*) or of the author (*intentio auctoris*)—and its best equivalent through a process of decoding and recoding (either on formal, material, or pragmatic bases), postmodern and postcolonial theories have focused their attention on the interests and agendas that determine the real decisions in the process of translation (translation studies), as well as on the philosophical implications of the impossibility of translation (deconstructionism). Thus the scholarly consensus tended to move from a positivist optimism regarding the possibility of a perfect (or right) translation, toward a realistic and even joyful pessimism; from the ideal of sameness, toward the embracement of difference; from the goal of adjusting translation either to the source text or to the receiving culture, toward the exultation of the disruptive phenomenon of translation.

From the point of view of modern trajectories in translation theories, case study two presents a discussion that can be identified as the natural tension between a pre-modern and a modern stance toward translation, both optimistic regarding the resulting effect of an untranslated proclamation (profile one) or of the process and acceptability of the properly translated message (profiles two, three, and four). With the last three profiles, conscious of the

¹⁷ See Itamar Even-Zohar, *Papers in Historical Poetics* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1978); Gideon Toury, *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (Tel Aviv: The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1980).

¹⁸ See Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

necessity of some kind of translation process, the main bone of contention reproduces the discussion that Eugene Nida brought to the table concerning Bible translation and the study of translation in general: Can we take communication for granted? Can we just stick to the source text and ignore the receiving culture in delivering our message? Are deep and surface structures independent entities to the point of being able to have significant formal changes in translation, “but no ‘extra’ meaning added?”¹⁹ What are the actual transformational rules that operate in the process of establishing literal or functional equivalence between source and target formulations of the message? Is the receiving culture to determine the shape and content of the purported “core message” of the source text?

However, as expected in a discussion between pre-modern and modern profiles, the entire discussion in case study two lacks that which postmodern trajectories brought to the table: realism (if not pessimism) regarding the clairvoyance of the translator, acquaintance with the high-rate possibility (or rather inevitability) of losses, and the consequent necessity of establishing explicit rules that help compensate and cope with the two previous aspects.

Some Further Theoretical Aspects

Once again, the contribution of translation theorists may help here. Umberto Eco, for instance, takes the notion that losses are inevitable²⁰ (though normally relative and partial) in translation and function together with compensations.²¹ Therefore, for Eco, translation is

¹⁹ Truenow, “Dios habla hoy,” 4.

²⁰ Following Hans-Georg Gadamer’s proposal that the translator always needs to suppress one aspect of the original in order to bring to the fore the other aspect of his election, Eco concludes that “translating always means ‘smoothing’ some of the implications of the original term. In this sense, when we translate, we never say the same.” Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 118–19.

²¹ Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 120–78.

intrinsically a process of negotiation that the translator has to assume with a stern sense of ethical responsibility, “a process in which to obtain one thing you renounce to another thing, [but] in such a way that the involved parties should ultimately leave with a sense of reasonable and reciprocal satisfaction, in view of the golden principle that it is not possible to have it all.”²² Even when this notion of translation as negotiation came to be so important for this Italian linguist,²³ he presents no clear suggestion on how the translator should lead this process. The only thing that Eco nails down in this respect is that the translator “is to formulate an interpretative hypothesis regarding the intended effect that the original is supposed to have in view,” intended effect that Eco particularly identifies with the *intentio operis*.²⁴ And then, upon this interpretative hypothesis, the translator is to construct a list of the items in negotiation, in order to establish which of them are non-negotiable and which are negotiable.²⁵

In his essay “The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation,” Gideon Toury advances more specific suggestions regarding the way the translator is to lead this process. Toury affirms,

Translation activities should rather be regarded as having cultural significance. Consequently, “translatorship” amounts first and foremost to being able to *play a social role*, i.e., to fulfil a function allotted by a community—to the activity, its practitioners and/or their products—in a way which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference. The acquisition of a set of norms for determining the suitability of that kind of behaviour, and for manoeuvring between all the factors which may

²² Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 25.

²³ Eco recognizes that he definitely developed his understanding of translation as negotiation with the Weidenfeld Lectures he delivered in 2002. Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 16–17.

²⁴ Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 101–02.

²⁵ This last aspect of the process (the list of negotiated items) is referred to by Eco as he narrates his own struggle with the poetry of Blaise Cendrars. Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 362. Now, what these items in negotiation are is not articulated by the author, most certainly because of his understanding that much ad-hoc-ness is involved in this. Perhaps the parties involved come near possible traces on this. Eco enlists the following parties: source text, the empirical author, source culture, target text and its culture, expectations system of probable readers. Eco, *Decir casi lo mismo*, 25.

constrain it, is therefore a prerequisite for becoming a translator within a cultural environment.²⁶

Toury then elaborates on the regulative system of translation, distinguishing three main categories in play along a normative *continuum*:

In terms of their potency, socio-cultural constraints have been described along a scale anchored between two extremes: general, relatively absolute *rules*, on the one hand and pure *idiosyncrasies* on the other. Between these two poles lies a vast middle-ground occupied by inter subjective factors commonly designated *norms*. The norms themselves form a graded continuum along the scale: some are stronger, and hence more rule-like, others are weaker, and hence almost idiosyncratic. The borderlines between the various types of constraints are thus diffuse ... Sociologists and social psychologists have long regarded norms as the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community—as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate—into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension.²⁷

Within the category of *norm*, Toury still makes a distinction between *preliminary norms* that deal with basic translation policies, and *operational norms* that direct the actual decisions in the process of translation.²⁸ The present dissertation proposes that this space of negotiation is a thoroughly critical notion for any discussion on translation, and that it is precisely here, within the terrain of negotiation in the process of translating the Christian message, that the Lutheran Confessions have a fundamental guiding and normative role to play.

²⁶ Gideon Toury, “The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation,” in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 198.

²⁷ Toury, “Norms in Translation,” 199. Toury refers this last idea to the so-called “square of normativity” that delimits an area between four corners: (1) what has to be said (obligation); (2) what must not be said (prohibition); (3) what may be said (non-prohibition); and (4) what does not have to be said (non-obligation). See Dirk De Geest, “The Notion of ‘System: Its Theoretical Importance and Its Methodological Implications for a Functionalist Translation Theory,” in *Geschichte, System, Literarische Übersetzung / Histories, Systems, Literary Translations*, ed. Harold Kittel (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1992), 38–40.

²⁸ Toury, “Norms in Translation,” 202–04.

What Model One Does with the Case Study in Question

In addressing case study two, confessional commitment model one produces at least four different things: It (1) exhibits the relevance of the discussion, (2) stretches the boundaries of the discussion, (3) illuminates the place and role of the Lutheran Confessions in the process of translation, and (4) allows the Confessions to illuminate the discussion.

Relevance of the Discussion

Model one of confessional commitment provides a theological conceptual framework to think through the discussion on the contextual demand of translating the faith, as advanced in case study two. Model one does this by proposing the metaphor of divine conversation in which the Trinitarian God brings his human creature into a relation of conversation and community by means of his word of promise that elicits our response in faith. This is a fit metaphor to ponder on the issue of translating the Christian message. In fact, Robert Kolb—arguably the main representative of this model—has incorporated into his proposal of thinking God as a conversational person the notion suggested by Yale missiologist Lamin Sanneh, namely, that from its inception “Christianity was a translated religion,”²⁹ and that “[t]ranslation is the original language of religion in Christianity,”³⁰ “its birthmark.”³¹ Kolb steps back from Sanneh’s depiction of Christianity (vis-à-vis Islam) into a more foundational discussion regarding the nature of God himself. Kolb then ascribes the centrality of translation that Sanneh considers the main trait of the Christian religion to his definition of God:

In Christianity God has translated himself into human flesh; the gospels translate almost all that Jesus said into Greek from his native tongue; and missionaries

²⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 104.

³⁰ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 110.

³¹ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 49.

immediately set to translating Scripture and other books into native languages when they begin a new mission. Luther recognized that the never-changing, always-moving Creator depicted in the Old Testament is deeply involved in the flow of human history and that on Pentecost he addresses a host of tribes and nations in their own tongues ... Luther thoroughly appreciated this aspect of God's person, who falls into conversation with his human creatures within every cultural context that springs from his creative hand, taking seriously the grand variety of human cultures that reflect not only Babel's fall but also his own ultimate complexity. Therefore, while he stood fast on the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone, he was able to express it in a host of ways, applying and formulating the gospel for specific situations as he encountered them.³²

For Kolb, therefore, to say that God is a conversational person is tantamount to saying that "God is a self-translating God."³³ His very act of conversing with us, and the fact that he does it by condescending to our human language and our human bodily constitution, is of one piece with God's own primal act of translating himself for us. Put in negative terms: Apart from translation, there is no divine conversation with us. Therefore, the very first thing that model one does with this case study is to establish the importance of its discussion for Christian confession and mission.

Boundaries of the Discussion

When the discussion of case study two is brought under the light of model one, the narrowness of its boundaries gets challenged and stretched at least in two different respects. First of all, model one expands the roster of characters (*dramatis personae*) in consideration. For it unveils that translating the Christian message is not only an activity in which the Christian church (or her individual members) mediates between two objects: the source text and the receiving culture. Translating the message is rather part of a story that involves no less than the six actantial

³² Robert Kolb, "Luther's Truth, Then and Now," Concordia Theology, May 6, 2015, <https://concordiatheology.org/2015/05/luthers-truths-then-and-now/>.

³³ Robert Kolb, e-mail message to author, March 23, 2014.

positions that populate model one's narrative.³⁴ In fact, translation is a crucial function in the bidirectional conversation of promise and faith between the Triune God and his human creature, over against the active opposition of Satan. God the Father, through the divine agency of the Son and the Spirit, is the primordial translator who condescends to his human creature to let him receive in his own language and terms "[w]hat no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1Co 2:9). This does not mean that God is the only translator on stage. We human beings also translate the message. And we do it first of all by responding to the initial word of the divine promise. Our first act of translation consists in giving back to God the same word that he first utters to us. It could be said that the basic translating move that we have between the "source text" of the divine *protologia* (the "first word" with which God addresses us) and the "target text" of our *homologia* (the "same word" of the confession of faith with which we make our own the word that God addresses us) consists in shifting pronouns: from the promising "for you," to the *Heilsegoismus* ("salvation egoism") of the faith's "for me."³⁵

But how does the missiological discussion of case study two fit in here? How does this frame of reference help us to ponder on the particular situation in which the church is the one who speaks to an unbelieving human audience in order to proclaim them the word of God? Model one assigns this translating role to the divine agents of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (the actantial position of the subject). This, of course, does not spare the church from her

³⁴ See p. 40, Figure 2. Actantial positions in the narrative of model one.

³⁵ Werner Elert applies the label of "salvation egoism" (*Heilsegoismus*) to the appropriation of the Gospel that is constitutive of Luther's evangelical understanding of faith. Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism: The Theology and Philosophy of Life of Lutheranism, Especially in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1962), 69.

evangelistic responsibility at all. However, model one does thereby an important thing: it locates the church, with her inescapable evangelistic responsibility, within and under the sphere of action of someone else (i.e., the Son and the Holy Spirit). Put in another way: In translating the divine message intended for a human receiving culture, the church acts as a mask of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (*larva dei*), the real agents of translation. This, of course, represents an ineffable honor and a comforting promise for the church in mission, but at the same time this constitutes a thorough deprivation of the leeway for idiosyncratic decisions in negotiating a translation that belongs to someone else (i.e., the Son and the Holy Spirit). The frame of reference contributed by model one, then, makes it clear that no decision the church will take in translating the message will do, but only that which is functional to the foreign translating agency of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The expansion of characters (*dramatis personae*) on stage represents, at the same time, a second aspect in which model one expands the boundaries of discussion, now in terms of *types of relation* the church assumes in the act of translating the message. Going back to the categories of Martin Buber that were already introduced, model one challenges the tendency of case study two to limit the discussion within the confines of an I-it relation. Instead, model one brings to the fore the preeminence of a broader (or deeper) I-Thou type of encounter that exposes what really happens in the translation of the Christian message. The church that finds herself in between a source message and a target audience does not deal with mere things or objects, such as signs, texts, concepts, hermeneutical hypotheses, theories, strategies of persuasion, or propagandistic products. Of course, there is a whole I-it dimension to all of this process, but all the neutral objects or things the church has to handle here are far from exhausting the type of relation that really defines the translation of the Christian message. According to model one, the church does

not deal with an absence behind a written sign on the side of the translation input, but with a present God who utters his word of promise in order to give himself to his creature.³⁶ On the side of the translation output, the church does not merely deal with her own product (i.e., the translated message), but with those real human beings God invites into conversation with him.

Now, this expanded and preeminently personalist framework has at least two basic implications for our discussion. First of all, since an I-Thou relation constitutes an encounter between two subjects—and not between a subject that controls and uses raw material for his own benefit—the act of translation of the Christian message always represents a mutually challenging engagement (if not an agonistic duel), and thus not a unidirectional manipulation of an object. Therefore, the translating church needs to struggle with the unavoidable temptation to objectify any side of the translating process (either the speaking God or the human addressee). The church falls into this temptation when, for instance, she approaches her missionary task under what Lamin Sanneh calls the paradigm of *diffusion* that imposes both on God and on the addressee the missionary's culture.³⁷ In this way—neglecting the conversational and self-translating nature of God and the still-existent creational dignity of the receiving culture—the church substitutes her translating missionary responsibility with a false confidence in the mechanics of a kind of magical incantation with which she attempts to control God and the human audience. On the other extreme, the translating church also objectifies both parts in the conversation (God and the human audience) when she attempts to domesticate the scandal inherent to Christian

³⁶ Model one functions here in diametric opposition to Jacques Derrida's thesis of *différance*. See Derrida, "La différence," in *Margins of Philosophy*, 3–27.

³⁷ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 33. Sanneh identifies the paradigm of mission *by diffusion* with Islam's approach, over against the proper Christian paradigm of mission *by translation*.

proclamation,³⁸ in order to control that what goes “further than the ear.”³⁹ When the translating responsibility makes the church jump into this position of deciding what is palatable and what is not in the divine word, and of manipulating the audience in order to ensure a particular response, she has already objectified her personal interlocutors.⁴⁰ The church is to translate in a way that lets God be God, and the human being human.

A second implication of this personalist expansion of the frame of reference is that, besides a mutual challenge, an I-Thou encounter represents an ongoing relation of mutual self-giving and trust.⁴¹ When God addresses us as a Thou, he does it as a Father who embraces us as his sons not just for a casual dealing, but for giving us an entrance into his endless communion. In spite of the eschatological urgency that fuels the missionary enterprise, translation of the Christian message does not take place under the desperation of getting it right at once, as if it were something like the decoding work of the Turing machine during the Second World War. Rather, the personalist framework suggests that translation of the Christian message takes place in a way analogous to the relation of a mother with her newborn baby.⁴² They may not elucidate with intellectual

³⁸ Interestingly enough, translation theorist Lawrence Venuti warns against the extreme of adjusting the source text to the imperialistic constraints of the receiving culture that for him represents a domestication of the text that deprives the receptor from the benefit of a challenging text. Venuti, then, goes as far as to promote a “foreignizing translation” that preserves enough strangeness as to allow the source text to effect a cultural change in the receiving culture. Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility*, 148–86.

³⁹ Robert Kolb uses this expression to argue the other side of the coin: “Luther was realistic about the hearers whom he and his students would be addressing. He claimed that the preacher could not press further than the ear, but he also recognized that what reached the ear connected to the mind, the will, and the emotions, and thus he devoted much energy to the use of his rhetorical skills, intending to drive Christ home to hearers. He strove to inform and to persuade, to teach and exhort. His sermons reflect his conviction that the sermon is a conversation between God and his people, between the preacher and his hearer.” Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 231.

⁴⁰ For a warning against the temptation against using “the world’s techniques for manipulating a crowd” of our modern missionary zeal, see Hermann Sasse, “On the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors (1957–1969)*, trans. Mathew C. Harrison et al. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2015), 3:203.

⁴¹ “Between you and it there is mutual giving: you say *Thou* to it and give yourself to it, it says *Thou* to you and gives itself to you.” Buber, *I and Thou*, part I, Kindle.

⁴² Robert Kolb finds that this notion of the role of trust as the core of human identity, explored by psychologist Erik Erikson, exhibits remarkable consistencies with Luther’s theological anthropology. Kolb, *Confessor of the*

precision what the other part is saying, but they come to understand each other in an incomparable way because they are present for each other in a relation that cultivates mutual self-giving and trust, and that compensates thereby even serious “noises” in terms of linguistic communication. Of course, this does not deter the mother and her baby from striving to achieve a right communication at a propositional level. But this endeavor, which necessitates time, is only possible when mother and son are present for each other. Consequently, translation of the Christian message is not to take place in a churchless vacuum, deprived from its proper personal sustaining structure of the communal life (i.e., the church’s public proclamation, sacramental liturgy, pastoral care, catechetical instruction, mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters, etc.).⁴³ Now, much of the discussion in case study two exposes some kind of limitation with regard to these issues considered here under the expanded personalist frame of reference provided by model one.

Faith, 12; Kolb, “Twenty-First Century Missiology,” 98; Kolb, “Luther’s Truth.” See Erik Erikson, *Child and Society* (New York: Norton, 1950); Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964); Erik Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968); Erik Erikson, *Life History and the Historical Moment* (New York: Norton, 1975).

⁴³ Explaining the implications of *Augustana V*, Hermann Sasse touches on this same personalist frame of the missionary proclamation: “But they [the confessors] also know that Jesus Christ did not leave behind a holy book in the same way Muhammad left behind the Qur’an, rather that he left behind the ministry of teaching the Gospel, the charge to proclaim his Gospel to all peoples and all generations of world history... If the Word of God were identical with the Bible, it would suffice to send the Bible in their own language to the people concerned. But because the Bible and the Word of God are not identical, there is sent to every people one or more preachers of the Word.” Hermann Sasse, “The Church and the Word of God: Toward a Doctrine of the Word of God,” in *The Lonely Way*, 1:156.

In a different trend of thought, missiologist Lamin Sanneh also points out the broader personal context that sustains and makes sense of the translated message: “Language participates willy-nilly in human fallenness, so that scriptural translation is not a bid for innocence. Done well or badly, Bible translation demonstrates that limitation ... [Therefore,] translation, being necessarily tendentious, needs to be accompanied by explanation.” Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 109–10. Translation of the Christian message, either in written or kerygmatic form, is but one instance within a broader frame in which “explanation” (i.e., regular ongoing public proclamation and catechesis) is both a real necessity and the natural context in which the Christian church has always delivered its message. Consider, for instance, the complexity and gradualness that characterizes catechesis as implemented by Cyril of Jerusalem, *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, NPNF² 7:2–298.

Place and Role of the Lutheran Confessions

The role that confessional commitment model one ascribes to the Lutheran Confessions in the divine conversation suggests a central position for them in the process of translating the Christian message. In the scene depicted by model one, the Lutheran Confessions are the human response of faith—and, as such, our primal act of translation (“what we give back,” *reditio*)—as well as the church’s proclamation of the Christian faith integrated into the very sphere of the word with which God translates himself in addressing his human creature (“what we were given first,” *traditio*).⁴⁴

In order to ascribe the church’s confession such a central place in this story, model one takes the notion of sameness between God’s revelation (*protologia*) and the church’s confession (*homologia*) as its starting point.⁴⁵ St. Louis Professors Charles Arand and James Voelz explain this concept as follows,

A confession speaks about the Word of God incarnate (Christ) in harmony with the words of God enfleshed (Scripture). And so in its innermost nature a confession restates what has been heard and received by the confessor, whether it be an individual or the church. A confession repeats what God says, and as such, it involves a speaking that is congruent with the Scriptures, which are God’s Word. To say that it is congruent does not mean that it simply either parrots or repristinates, but rather that its content corresponds to the content of Scripture and in no way does violence to the total thought. Anything less than complete congruence constitutes denial. Therefore the Scriptures never use the word “confessing” to denote any speaking that lacks such congruence. As there is no middle ground between faith and unbelief, so no neutral

⁴⁴ This takes place in the same way in which the symbol of faith functioned around the administration of Baptism in the ancient church: the same confession with which the candidate was addressed as an initiating *protologia* toward the end of the catechetical process was used by the candidate as his own *homologia* at the very hour of the baptismal rite. See Ambrose, *Epistle XX: To Marcellina as to the Arian Party*, 4, *NPNF*² 10:617; Augustine, *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, *NPNF*¹ 3:379–423; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XVIII, 22, *NPNF*² 7:272.

⁴⁵ Edwin Gentzler, points out that the disjunctive between taking the notion of incommensurability or difference and taking the idea of sameness as one’s starting point “is the crux of the theoretical debate within current translation theory.” Gentzler, *Contemporary Theories*, 130. The fundamental correlation that confessional commitment model one establishes between *protologia* and *homologia* makes it to address the issue of translation from a clear embracement of the notion of sameness as its starting point.

ground exists between confession and denial. Denial says something other than what God has said.⁴⁶

Here Arand and Voelz condense some important points: (1) the fundamental affirmation of congruence and sameness that characterize the divine conversation; (2) the fact that this sameness does not represent an impediment for variations, but rather presupposes them; and (3) the direction in which sameness is established and difference enabled. Drawing on a previous contribution by Robert Preus, the authors explain this last aspect by saying that the Confessions “show themselves to be ‘primarily concept oriented rather than word oriented’ (the approach taken, for example, by a lexicon). They are not simply interested in surface agreement between the terms, but in congruence of ideas and concepts.”⁴⁷ Therefore, if the Lutheran Confessions claim the sameness with the *protologia* (the first word of God’s revelation) that belongs to *homologia* (the same word of confession), it is because they are “primarily expositions of Scripture, more particularly a summary presentation of the whole of Scripture, that is, a witness to the heart of Scripture, a witness to the saving Gospel”⁴⁸ of which Scriptures themselves are “servants.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Charles P. Arand and James W. Voelz, “The Lutheran Confessions as Normative Guides for Reading Scripture,” *CJ* 21, no. 4 (1995): 366. In a similar vein, Edmund Schlink asserts: “Confessions in their proper sense will never be taken seriously until they are taken seriously as exposition of the Scriptures, to be specific, as the church’s exposition of the Scriptures. Confessions are not free-lancing theological opinions; they are statements of doctrine that must be understood even to their last detail in terms of that exposition of Scripture which is the church’s responsibility, entrusted to it in and with the responsibility of proclamation.” Schlink, *Lutheran Confessions*, xvi.

⁴⁷ Arand and Voelz, “Normative Guides,” 377 (citing Robert D. Preus, “The Hermeneutics of the Formula of Concord,” in *No Other Gospel: Essays in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Formula of Concord 1580–1980*, ed. Arnold J. Koelpin [Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1980], 326).

⁴⁸ Schlink, *Lutheran Confessions*, xvi.

⁴⁹ “[41] The Scriptures must be understood in favor of Christ, not against him. For that reason they must either refer to him or must not be held to be true Scriptures . . . [49] Therefore, if the adversaries press the Scriptures against Christ, we urge Christ against the Scriptures. [50] We have the Lord, they the servants [*Nos dominum habemus, illi servos*]; we have the Head, they the feet or members, over which the Head necessarily dominates and takes precedence.” Martin Luther, “Theses Concerning Faith and Law, 1535,” *LW* 34:112.

This is what the Formula of Concord elaborates upon in its section entitled “Concerning the Binding Summary, Basis, Rule, and Guiding Principle.” The concordists begin by establishing that the Old and New Testaments are “the pure, clear fountain [*Brunnen; fons*] of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle [*Richtschnur; regulam*], according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated [*zu richten und zu urteilen sein; iudicare*].”⁵⁰ Then, they proceed to assert that, just as it was with the ancient creeds, the new writings taken as a confession of faith “in these last times” are also a teaching “drawn from and in accord with the Word of God ... summarized in the articles and chief parts ... taken from God’s Word and ... firmly and solidly grounded in it.”⁵¹ The doctrine they defend is “supported with clear, irrefutable testimonies from Holy Scripture.”⁵² Luther’s Catechisms in particular “summarize Christian teaching from God’s Word for the simple laity in the most correct and simple, yet sufficiently explicit fashion,”⁵³ and therefore they function “as a Bible of the Laity, in which everything is summarized that is treated in detail in Holy Scripture and that is necessary for a Christian to know for salvation.”⁵⁴ Since these confessional writings exhibit such a conceptual or doctrinal sameness with Holy Scriptures,

they should be regarded and used as helpful interpretations and explanations [*nützliche auslegungen und erklerungen; explicationes atque declarationes utiles*]. Speaking of this summary of our Christian teaching [*Summa unser Christlichen Leer; compendiarial hypotyposi sanae doctrinae*] in this way only indicates that there is a unanimously and commonly held, reliable form for teaching [*form der Lere; formam doctrinae*] to which all our churches commonly pledge themselves. The extent to which all other writings are to be approved and accepted shall be judged and evaluated [*probiren und anzunemen, geurteilt und regulirt; iudicare et*

⁵⁰ SD, “Binding Summary,” 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 527; BSLK, 1310:7–9, 1311:7–9.

⁵¹ SD, “Binding Summary,” 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 527.

⁵² SD, “Binding Summary,” 6 in Kolb and Wengert, 528.

⁵³ SD, “Binding Summary,” 8 in Kolb and Wengert, 528.

⁵⁴ Ep, “Binding Summary,” 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 527.

accommodare] on the basis of and according to this form, for it is taken from God's Word.⁵⁵

This makes the Lutheran Confessions to be a most venerable and paradigmatic instance of translation of the Christian message that we can treasure from our past history. But even more, they are a reliable guide and norm to regulate the process of negotiation in our own instances of translation. This, it is clear, challenges some of the positions represented in case study two, and brings to the table of discussion some relevant implications: the church in mission cannot go through the translation process of negotiation (1) in dereliction of the Lutheran Confessions,⁵⁶ even less, (2) in explicit opposition to them,⁵⁷ but rather, (3) the translation of Christian message is to be done after the "pattern" of the Lutheran Confessions (as paradigm of translation), and (4) its negotiations need to be regulated by them (as norm of translation).

The Lutheran Confessions Illuminating the Discussion

We have just arrived to two basic functions that model one ascribes the Lutheran Confessions for translating the Christian message: the confessional texts are paradigm and norm of translation. This is what will be taken into consideration in this final section of the assessment of model one's performance. We will begin by exploring how the Lutheran Confessions offer

⁵⁵ SD, "Binding Summary," 10 in Kolb and Wengert, 529; BSLK, 1314:13–19, 1315:12–19. Edmund Schlink explains the designation of the Lutheran Confessions as "form and pattern" (*forma et typus; Begriff und Form*) as follows: "The word *forma* is probably to be understood in terms of the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition, even though the Formula of Concord does not use it in a philosophically precise sense but rather with a denatured meaning. In that case this term implies two things: As the 'form' is an object's substantial nature, lifted out of its manifold modes of appearance and grasped conceptually, so the Confession is the *ousia* of the scriptural witness, lifted out of the multiplicity of that witness and 'comprehended' in the *doctrina evangelii*. And as the Aristotelian-scholastic *forma* is the entelechy which, as forming principle, actively operates in things, so the Confession is at once the formative and shaping *energeia* for all present and future preaching in the church." Schlink, *Lutheran Confessions*, 26.

⁵⁶ This is, in fact, the case in one of the samples that represent the profile three in case study two, when, for instance, Antonio Schimpf struggles with the real content of "evangelio" (Gospel), but overtly ignores the relevant discussion of this issue in the Lutheran Confessions (see above pp. 97–98).

⁵⁷ This is the basic stance of profile two (see p. 126).

themselves in their normative capacity by identifying five basic translation norms—(1) securing the honor of Christ, (2) bringing consolation to the consciences, (3) keeping the *sensus literalis* (literal meaning), (4) keeping the *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith), and (5) embracing rhetorical intentionality—and then, we will proceed to consider their function as paradigm of translation by exploring how Luther’s Small Catechism executes its translation of the Christian message under these same norms.

The Lutheran Confessions as Norm in the Negotiation Process

Taking each instance of Christian proclamation as one of translation and working upon Gideon Toury’s notion of a regulative system of norms that guides the translator’s manoeuvrings in the negotiation process, five propositions in the Lutheran Confessions that work as ruling principles for Christian proclamation will be singled out. Far from pretending to exhaust the Confessions’ normative resourcefulness, this set of rules represents an explorative sample of how the Confessions can help the church to norm her task of translating the Christian message.

I will start with a pair of norms that function together in a remarkable capacity to provide the ultimate ground of argumentation in central discussions for the Lutheran Reformation, namely, the doctrine of justification and the distinction of law and gospel.⁵⁸ Note the following classic instances of their use in Apology IV and Formula V:

We are debating about an important matter, namely, about *the honor of Christ* and the source from which the faithful might seek a sure and *certain consolation*—whether we should place our confidence in Christ or in our own works. But if we put it in our works, Christ will be robbed of his honor as our mediator and propitiator. And, faced

⁵⁸ Henry Hamann has labeled “the central Reformation concerns.” Henry P. Hamann, “Article V. Law and Gospel,” in *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord*, ed. Robert D. Preus and Wilbert H. Rosin (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), 172.

with God’s judgment, we will discover that such confidence was futile, and consciences will then plunge into despair.⁵⁹

This distinction between law and gospel is a particularly glorious light. It serves to divide God’s Word properly [see 2 Tim. 2:15] and to explain correctly and make understandable the writings of the holy prophets and apostles. Therefore, we must diligently preserve this distinction, so as not to mix these two teachings together and make the gospel into a law. For this *obscures the merit of Christ* and robs *troubled consciences of the comfort* that they otherwise have in the holy gospel when it is preached clearly and purely.⁶⁰

First, translation of the Christian message is to *secure Christ the honor that belongs to him*.

And this represents, for the Lutheran Confessions, the acknowledgment of his work and office as redeemer, mediator, and propitiator.⁶¹ “This is the highest way to worship Christ: ... [to] seek the forgiveness of sins from him.”⁶² Consequently, the first criterion with which the church is to take her translation decisions is not to eclipse in any respect, but rather to enhance as far as possible, the fact that “he is the man to whom it all applies, every bit of it,”⁶³ that “he alone is ‘the Lamb of God’ ... [that] ‘There is no other name ... given among mortals by which we must be saved.’”⁶⁴ Any translation of the Christian message that diverts the focus of expectation and hope away from Christ alone and from his redemptive work and gift and puts us and our things in any kind of competition with him is to be discarded.

Second, translation of the Christian message is to *bring consolation to the troubled*

⁵⁹ Ap IV, 156–57 in Kolb and Wengert, 145 (emphasis added). This double principle traverses the entire article. For other representative instances, See Ap IV, 45–46, 51, 60, 62, 79–80, 85, 101, 117–18, 146, 164, 172, 203–04, 224, 239, 247, 375 in Kolb and Wengert, 127–128, 130, 133, 135, 137, 139, 143, 148–49, 151, 153, 156–58, 172.

⁶⁰ SD V, 1 in Kolb and Wengert, 581 (emphasis added); see also SD V, 27 in Kolb and Wengert, 586.

⁶¹ See Ap IV, 46; XV, 9; XXIV, 72; Tr 44; Ep III, 10; SD III, 30 in Kolb and Wengert, 127, 224, 271, 338, 496, 467.

⁶² Ap IV, 154 in Kolb and Wengert, 144.

⁶³ Martin Luther, “Preface to the Old Testament, 1545,” *LW* 35:247.

⁶⁴ SA II, 1, 2, 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 301.

consciences. Just as the translator does not deal with raw neutral data on the side of the translation input but with the self-giving Christ himself, so he does not merely deal with the artifact of his own production of translation on the side of the output. On this side of the process, the church deals with real flesh-and-bone people, or better, with individual persons who are not addressed from any reductive perspective, but under the consideration that they are whole subjectivities with consciousness.⁶⁵ Indeed, they are persons with consciences in trouble. Since the Reformers do not take *conscientia* primarily as an inner anthropological function, but as the person's entire and actual relationship with God,⁶⁶ this second translation norm does not promote any strategy for silencing or searing the conscience at all. Rather, translation of the Christian message is to take serious account of the real state of affairs between the human being and God, in order not to take the shortcut of bringing a fictitious emotional equilibrium to the person, but the actual "victory over the terrors of sin and death"⁶⁷ that Christ has won for us. And this, paradoxical as it may sound, cannot take place unless the translation follows the scriptural longer road of first letting the law drive the hearers "into terror and despair,"⁶⁸ "turn[ing] them into

⁶⁵ See John R. Searle, *Mind: A Brief Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 107–58.

⁶⁶ The Lutheran Confessions demonstrate to hold with Luther a relational and theological view of "conscience" (instead of a psychological one): "More than simply an inner referee determining good and evil, 'conscience' for Luther embraces the entire relationship with God." Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 67. Notice how, for instance, in his Great Commentary on Galatians of 1535, Luther equates "conscience" with "heaven" (as our stance in relation to God) as opposed to "earth" (as our stance in relation to creation): "The Law will remain outside heaven, that is, outside the heart and the conscience; and, on the other hand, the freedom of the Gospel will remain outside the earth, that is, outside the body and its members. And just as soon as the Law and sin come into heaven, that is, into the conscience, they should be promptly ejected. For then the conscience should know nothing about the Law and sin but should know only about Christ." Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians, 1535," *LW* 26:116. See Robert W. Jenson, *On Thinking the Human: Resolutions of Difficult Notions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), chap. 3, sec. 4 and 5, Kindle.

⁶⁷ Ap IV, 291, Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 152. Kolb and Wengert do not register this paragraph, since they follow the octavo edition that omits paragraphs 285–303. Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 164 note 203.

⁶⁸ SA III, 3, 2 in Kolb and Wengert, 312.

sinner,”⁶⁹ so that the gospel forgives their sins and lets them know

that the Son of God, our Lord Christ, has taken upon himself the curse of the law and borne it, atoned and paid for all our sins; that through him alone we are restored to God’s grace, obtain the forgiveness of sins through faith, and are delivered from death and all the punishments of our sins and are saved eternally.⁷⁰

The complementary directions in which these two most important norms move provide the trajectories along which other confessional norms of translation can be located. For in line with the tendency of the first norm (the honor of Christ), norms three (*sensus literalis*) and four (*analogia fidei*) move in a source- and concept-direction; and in line with the second norm (consolation of the consciences), norm five (rhetorical intentionality) has a clear receptor- and functional-orientation.

Third, translation of the Christian message is to be *of one piece with the sensus literalis of the biblical text*. “We must only believe and cling to the Word,” even when what it teaches cannot be thoroughly grasped “with reason and the five senses.”⁷¹ For the “prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments” are “the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle.”⁷² With these categorical words the Confessions defend the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* over against their opponents who “corrupt many passages, because they read into them their own opinions rather than deriving the meaning from the texts themselves.”⁷³ Luther goes to the heart of the problem when he asserts,

In these matters, which concern the spoken, external Word, it must be firmly maintained that God gives no one his Spirit or grace apart from the external Word which goes before. We say this to protect ourselves from the enthusiasts, that is, the

⁶⁹ SA III, 3, 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 313.

⁷⁰ SD V, 20 in Kolb and Wengert, 585.

⁷¹ SD IX, 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 635.

⁷² SD, “Binding Summary,” 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 527.

⁷³ Ap IV, 224 in Kolb and Wengert, 153.

“spirits,” who boast that they have the Spirit apart from and before contact with the Word. On this basis, they judge, interpret, and twist the Scripture or oral Word according to their pleasure ... enthusiasm clings to Adam and his children from the beginning to the end of the world—fed and spread among them as poison by the old dragon. It is the source, power, and might of all the heresies, even that of papacy and Mohammed. Therefore we should and must insist that God does not want to deal with us human beings, except by means of his external Word and sacrament. Everything that boasts of being from the Spirit apart from such a Word and sacrament is of the devil.⁷⁴

Robert Preus has pointed out that the Lutheran Confessions sustain this principle even to the point of subjugating the temptation to solve the paradoxes in the scriptural witness by way of a “rational synthesis.”⁷⁵ Any translation of the Christian message needs to grapple with this very natural tendency.

Fourth, translation of the Christian message is to be *of one piece with the analogia fidei*. The Christ any translation of the Christian message is to exalt as the great agent of solution for our dilemmas is not a cypher for whatever imposed meaning may occur to us. Not any of the countless “faces” that have been ascribed to Jesus of Nazareth throughout the centuries would do it,⁷⁶ nor any of the innumerable meta-narratives of human plight and solution would work, but only that which has demonstrated its apostolic and scriptural character. Irenaeus of Lyons points in the direction of the creed as the indispensable *regula veritatis* that, in fact, the Valentinian

⁷⁴ SA III, 8, 3, 9 in Kolb and Wengert, 322–23.

⁷⁵ Preus takes the example of the way the Solid Declaration VIII handles the apparent contradictory data in the biblical text with respect to the natures of Christ: “In this article all the biblical passages pertaining to the person of Christ are arrayed and the exegetical conclusions drawn from all the biblical evidence summarized. But the summary defies all rational synthesis. Therefore the Formula of Concord simply lists in all their paradoxicalness the conclusions drawn from the Scriptures.” Preus, “Hermeneutics of the Formula,” 323. Another classical example of this is the way SD XI confesses all the apparently contradictory biblical data regarding the divine grace (i.e., *sola gratia, gratia universalis, seria, et efficax*) over against the rational syntheses of Calvinism, synergism, and enthusiasm. See Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. John T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia, 1951), 2:18–34; Robert D. Preus, “Article XI. Predestination and Election,” in *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord*, ed. Robert D. Preus and Wilbert H. Rosin (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), 276.

⁷⁶ See Mark A. Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

heretics lack when they put together their own reformulation of the Christian message.⁷⁷ The concordists include with the ancient symbols the rest of the confessional writings as “summary” (*Summa; compendiariorum*) of the entire scriptural teaching.⁷⁸ Martin Franzmann has proposed that the great gift of the Lutheran reformers was the ability “to see the *res* of the Bible with charismatic clarity and to see it in its relation to the Biblical *verba*.”⁷⁹ This they did when they recognized that the doctrine of justification by faith is the *cantus firmus*, “the correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and [that it] alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible.”⁸⁰ Charles Arand and James Voelz articulate the Lutheran Confessions’ promotion of the *analogia fidei* principle under the notion of “coherence:”

This aspect of the coherence principle often found expression in what the Reformers referred to as the *corpus doctrinae*. This reflected their perception that God’s Word

⁷⁷ “Such, then, is their system [*hypothesis*], which neither the prophets announced, nor the Lord taught, nor the apostles delivered, but of which they boast that beyond all others they have a perfect knowledge. They gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures; and, to use a common proverb, they strive to weave ropes of sand, while they endeavour to adapt with an air of probability to their own peculiar assertions the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles, in order that their scheme [*plasma*] may not seem altogether without support. In doing so, however, they disregard the order [*taxis*] and the connection [*heirmos*] of the Scriptures, and so far as in them lies, dismember and destroy the truth. By transferring passages, and dressing them up anew, and making one thing out of another, they succeed in deluding many through their wicked art in adapting the oracles of the Lord to their opinions [*fantasia*]. Their manner of acting is just as if one, when a beautiful image of a king has been constructed by some skilful artist out of precious jewels, should then take this likeness of the man all to pieces, should rearrange the gems, and so fit them together as to make them into the form of a dog or of a fox, and even that but poorly executed; and should then maintain and declare that *this* was the beautiful image of the king which the skilful artist constructed, pointing to the jewels which had been admirably fitted together by the first artist to form the image of the king, but have been with bad effect transferred by the latter one to the shape of a dog, and by thus exhibiting the jewels, should deceive the ignorant who had no conception what a king’s form was like, and persuade them that that miserable likeness of the fox was, in fact, the beautiful image of the king. In like manner do these persons patch together old wives’ fables, and then endeavour, by violently drawing away from their proper connection, words, expressions, and parables whenever found, to adapt the oracles of God to their baseless fictions [*mythoi*].” Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I, 8, 1, ANF 1:465–66.

⁷⁸ SD, “Binding Summary” in Kolb and Wengert, 526–29; BSLK, 1314:14, 1315:15.

⁷⁹ Martin H. Franzmann, “Seven Theses on Reformation Hermeneutics,” *CJ* 36, no. 2 (2010): 121. Toward the end of his article, Franzmann does a great work in showing how the confessional *res* is coherent with a whole sweep of scriptural data (thesis V), and makes better sense of it when contrasted with other competing *res* (thesis VI). Franzmann, “Seven Theses,” 124–30.

⁸⁰ Ap IV, 2 (German text) in Kolb and Wengert, 121 note 49.

was of one piece, a whole ... The confessions, accordingly, seek to set forth the relationship and coordination of the various parts (*partes*) and joints (*articuli*) to one another within the entire *corpus doctrinae*. It integrated each article of faith into the entire *corpus doctrinae* so as neither to compromise the *Hauptartikel* [of the doctrine of justification by faith] nor distort the integrity of any given article around the *Hauptartikel* or its relation to the *Hauptartikel*. In this way they focused theological reflection on the *Hauptartikel* in a way that keeps the *Hauptartikel* *Haupt*. In this way the head of the body directs and controls all the members. The *Hauptartikel* thus supplied the key for integrating all the articles of faith into a coherent whole.⁸¹

Therefore, any translation of the Christian message needs to tell the same biblical story that is confessed with the ancient Trinitarian creeds and the other paradigmatic summaries of the “body of doctrine” that the Lutheran Confessions supply, such as the six principal parts of Luther’s Small Catechism or the first section of the *Augustana*.⁸²

And finally, translation of the Christian message is to *embrace a clear rhetorical intentionality*. “God gives no one his Spirit or grace apart from the external Word which goes before” (*per Verbum et cum verbo externo et praecedente*).⁸³ And this verbal dealing of God with his human creatures does not function “simply *ex opere operato*, that is, by the mere act of doing” and hearing the speech act, “from the mere act of hearing lessons that they do not understand.”⁸⁴ This is the contention of Apology XXIV, where the Reformers defend the use of the vernacular in the Mass:

The opponents include a long harangue about the use of Latin in the Mass, in which they childishly quibble about how it benefits hearers who are ignorant of the church’s faith to hear a Mass that they do not understand [*nicht verstehe; non intellectam*]. Apparently, they imagine that the mere act of hearing itself is a useful act of worship even where there is no understanding [*wenn ich kein wort höre odder verstehe; sine intellectu*] ... Ceremonies should be observed both so that people may learn the Scriptures and so that, admonished by the Word, they might experience faith and fear and finally even pray. For these are the purpose of the ceremonies. We keep the Latin

⁸¹ Arand and Voelz, “Normative Guides,” 379.

⁸² We refer to AC I–XXI, section grouped under the title “Chief Articles of Faith.”

⁸³ SA III, 8, 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 322; BSLK, 771:11–12.

⁸⁴ Ap XXIV, 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 258.

for the sake of those who learn and understand it [*die Lateinisch können; discunt atque intelligunt*]. We also use German hymns in order that the [common] people might have something to learn, something that will arouse their faith and fear [*lerne und zu Gottesforcht und erkenntnus unterricht werde; quod discat et quo excitet fidem et timorem*].⁸⁵

Thus, God’s verbal dealing with us functions on the basis of the utterance and hearing of an understandable and learnable proclamation. Accordingly, after establishing with the strongest possible emphasis that everything in spiritual and divine matters has to be ascribed “*in solidum* (that is, completely and totally) to divine activity and to the Holy Spirit alone”⁸⁶ (divine monergism), the Confessions still affirm a place that belongs to rhetoric by right.⁸⁷ We are speaking of all the activity of human communication that Solid Declaration II summarizes as “preaching and hearing his Word.”⁸⁸ The rest of the section of this article illustrates the referent of these two terms: Under “preaching” comes the church’s responsibility of keeping a “public proclamation”⁸⁹ that presents God’s Word “purely and clearly according to God’s command and will.”⁹⁰ And under “hearing” come the person’s external decision of “go[ing] to church and listen[ing] or not listen[ing] to the sermon,”⁹¹ as well as the act of “meditating upon it.”⁹² All this belongs in the sphere distinguished from “the spiritual and divine matters” right from the beginning of Article II.⁹³ that of “external matters,” where “people have a free will to a certain

⁸⁵ Ap XXIV, 2–3 in Kolb and Wengert, 258; BSLK, 616:9–17, 617:8–17.

⁸⁶ SD II, 25 in Kolb and Wengert, 549.

⁸⁷ This author has first heard this notion from Professor Glenn Nielsen, at his doctoral intensive class on Theology of Preaching, P-833 (Concordia Seminary, August 1999).

⁸⁸ SD II, 54 in Kolb and Wengert, 554.

⁸⁹ SD II, 50 in Kolb and Wengert, 553.

⁹⁰ SD II, 55 in Kolb and Wengert, 554.

⁹¹ SD II, 53 in Kolb and Wengert, 554.

⁹² SD II, 54 in Kolb and Wengert, 554.

⁹³ See SD II, 1–5 in Kolb and Wengert, 543–44.

extent even after the fall.”⁹⁴

Therefore, Luther’s “in a purely passive way” (*pure passive*) with which the concordists eliminate the human factor from the causes of conversion⁹⁵ does not represent the removal of these “external matters” from the hands of the Holy Spirit, as if conversion would take place “apart from the proclamation and hearing of God’s Word,”⁹⁶ but certainly affirms their distinctive place, so that these human factors may neither be considered a cause in conversion, nor disregarded as part of the agenda that the translating church needs to assume. “Conversion is not just in part, but totally and completely a product, gift, present, and activity of the Holy Spirit alone.” But God accomplishes and effects this “through the Word in the mind, will, and heart of the human being ... not like a picture being etched in stone or a seal being pressed in wax[, for] these things do not know or feel or will anything.”⁹⁷ Consequently, under the consciousness that “the planting and watering of the preacher and the activity and desire of the hearer would be in vain ... if the power and action of the Holy Spirit were not added to them,”⁹⁸ any translation of the Christian message is to strive as much as possible to address the receiving audience with an understandable and learnable proclamation and with the intention to effectively function as “the Holy Spirit’s tool.”⁹⁹

Even when the aforementioned five norms do not intend to exhaust our topic, they still

⁹⁴ SD II, 53 in Kolb and Wengert, 554.

⁹⁵ SD II, 89–90 does this, over against the notion that Philip Melancthon introduced into later editions of his *Loci* (1543 and 1559) that besides the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, “the will of man that assents and does not resist the Word of God” functions as the third (material) cause of conversion. CR 21, 658. See Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 100.

⁹⁶ SD II, 89 in Kolb and Wengert, 561.

⁹⁷ SD II, 89 in Kolb and Wengert, 561.

⁹⁸ SD II, 55 in Kolb and Wengert, 554.

⁹⁹ SD II, 52 in Kolb and Wengert, 554.

exemplify how the Lutheran Confessions can contribute with useful norms for translating the Christian message.

The Lutheran Confessions as Paradigm of Translation

To explore the other role of the Lutheran Confessions, as a paradigm of translation, this section will take Luther's Small Catechism (arguably the best instance of translation of the Christian message among the documents that constitute the Book of Concord)¹⁰⁰ as a sample case, and will briefly point out the way the Small Catechism puts the five translation norms previously rehearsed into work.

(1) *Securing the honor of Christ*. Charles Arand has pointed out that Luther's restructuring of the three traditional parts constituting Christian catechesis from antiquity is not meaningless. By bringing the Ten Commandments from the end to the beginning, Luther replaces the Augustinian rationale that takes faith as an initial virtue to be surpassed by the higher virtues of hope and love—what moves us, human beings, to the center of the stage—with an understanding of the catechism that puts Christ's work and gifts at the center. Luther explains,¹⁰¹

[t]hus the commandments teach a man to recognize his sickness so that he may know and understand what he can and cannot do, what he ought to do and ought not to do. In this way he comes to recognize that he is an evil and sinful man. After this, the creed shows and teaches him where he can find the medicine or the remedy that he needs, that is, the grace which will help him become a righteous man so that he may keep the commandments and which shows him God and the righteousness which he reveals and offers to us in Christ. Thirdly, the Lord's Prayer teaches him how he should desire, get, and appropriate this grace for himself, namely through regular,

¹⁰⁰ "As eager as he was to find linguistic equivalents, he was just as intent on registering the historic witness of the faith in a culturally specific form. One of the best examples of Luther's achievement at this level [of the cultural translation Lamen Sanneh speaks about] is the Small Catechism. Along with the Bible translations, it was a key document in what became in Protestantism a larger effort to move the altar from the church into the kitchen, bringing home the witness of the Christian faith at the family table." James A. Nestingen, "Luther's Cultural Translation of the Catechism," *LQ* 15, no. 4 (2001): 440–52.

¹⁰¹ Charles P. Arand, *That I May Be his Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 125.

humble, consoling prayer. This is the way in which he is given the grace and thus is saved through fulfilling the commandments of God. These are the three chief things in all the Scriptures.¹⁰²

In this way, catechesis locates each part in its proper position in this relation between a God that presents himself as the “unconstrained giver” and us, the “absolute receiver.”¹⁰³ Even when contending against any isolation of the Second Article from its proper Trinitarian structure, Albrecht Peters cannot reject what he calls the *communis opinio* which perceives that Christ, his work, and his benefits are at the very center of Luther’s Catechism.¹⁰⁴

(2) *Bringing consolation to the consciences.* “Praise be to God—it has come to pass that man and woman, young and old, know the catechism; they know how to believe, to live, to pray, to suffer, and to die. Consciences are well instructed about how to be Christians and how to recognize Christ.”¹⁰⁵ With this eschatological joy Luther describes the impact of Lutheran catechesis that Charles Arand labels as “the art of living by faith” (*ars vivendi fide*) and contrasts with the medieval anxiety around the so-called “art of dying” (*ars moriendi*).¹⁰⁶ The unmistakable dynamics of law and gospel that the previously considered rationale imprints in the entire Catechism¹⁰⁷ constitutes the fundamental strategy for bringing “the old creature in us” into

¹⁰² Martin Luther, “*Eyn kurz form der zehen gepott. D. M. L. Eyn kurz form des Glaubens. Eyn kurz form dess Vatter vnszers*, 1520,” WA 7:204–29 (English translation by Arand, *That I May Be his Own*, 130–31).

¹⁰³ Kolb and Arand, *Genius*, 37.

¹⁰⁴ Albrecht Peters, *Creed*, Commentary on Luther's Catechisms (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 2:47–48.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Luther, “Warning to Dear German People” LW 47:52–53.

¹⁰⁶ Arand quotes Luther’s Roman contemporary Dietrich Kolde’s *Der Christenspiegel*: “There are three things I know to be true that frequently make my heart heavy. The first troubles my spirit, because I have to die. The second troubles my heart more, because I do not know when. The third troubles me above all. *I do not know where I will go.*” Arand, *That I May Be his Own*, 149 (citing Dietrich Kolde, “Fruitful Mirror for a Christian Man,” in Denis Janz, *Three Reformation Catechism: Catholic, Anabaptist, Lutheran*, Texts and Studies in Religion 13 [Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1982], 182).

¹⁰⁷ By “the previously considered rationale” I refer to the way Luther understands the function of the three traditional principal parts of Christian catechesis around the image of sickness (Commandments), medicine (Creed), and appropriating desire for grace (Lord’s Prayer), and that I have mentined in the previous section (# 1, *Securing*

“daily contrition and repentance,” so that “daily a new person” may “come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”¹⁰⁸ The following principal part that instructs in how to cultivate this daily practice of the “significance” of the baptismal way of life is clearly in favor of stressing the ultimate importance of bringing consolation through the practice of confession.¹⁰⁹ Each principal part leaves the catechumen with a clear note of confidence and joyful conscience.¹¹⁰

the honor of Christ).

¹⁰⁸ SC, “Baptism,” 12 in Kolb and Wengert, 360.

¹⁰⁹ The final paragraphs of this section make this ultimate interest crystal clear: “Thereupon the confessor is to say: ‘God be gracious to you and strengthen your faith. Amen.’ Let the confessor say [further]: ‘Do you also believe that my forgiveness is God’s forgiveness?’ [Answer:] ‘Yes, dear sir.’ Thereupon he may say: ‘Let it be done for you according to your faith. And I by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ forgive you your sin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Go in peace.’ A confessor, by using additional passages of Scripture, will in fact be able to comfort and encourage to faith those whose consciences are heavily burdened or who are distress and under attack.” SC, “Baptism,” 26–29 in Kolb and Wengert, 361–62.

¹¹⁰ The first principal part ends with the epilogue: “God promises grace and every good thing to all those who keep these commandments. Therefore we also are to love and trust him and gladly act according to his command.” SC, “Ten Commandments,” 22 in Kolb and Wengert, 354. The second principal part is traversed by the appropriation in faith of all the creational and redemptive gifts, just as the summary of the Creed in the Large Catechism represents it in a graphic way, when the Trinitarian persons encapsulate the confessing “*Ich*”: “*Ich glaube—an Gott Vater,—der mich—geschaffen hat. Ich glaube—an Gott den Son,—der mich erlöset hat. Ich glaube an den heiligen Geist,—der mich heilig machet.*” LC, “Creed,” 7; BSLK 1048:28–30, 1050:1. The third principal part configures the entire life of prayer with Luther’s explanation of invoked name: “With these words God wants to entice us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father.” SC, “Lord’s Prayer,” 2 in Kolb and Wengert, 356. The forgiveness of sins, traverses the sacramental principal parts: Baptism “brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare.” SC, “Baptism,” 5–6 in Kolb and Wengert, 359; “Confessions consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins. The other is that we receive the absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the confessor as from God himself and by no means doubt but firmly believes that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.” SC, “Baptism,” 16 in Kolb and Wengert, 360; and “The words ‘given for you’ and ‘shed for you for the forgiveness of sins’ show us that forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament through these words, because where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.” SC, “Sacrament of the Altar,” 5–6 in Kolb and Wengert, 362. Finally, the appendixes on daily prayer and on vocation transpire the eschatological joy and self-giving love that only the freedom of conscience can produce: “After singing a hymn perhaps (for example, one on the Ten Commandments) or whatever else may serve your devotion, you are to go to your work joyfully.” SC, “Blessing,” 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 363; “Then you are to go to sleep quickly and cheerfully.” SC, “Blessing,” 6 in Kolb and Wengert, 364; “Comment: ‘Delight’ means that all animals receive enough to eat to make them joyful and of good cheer, because worry and greed prevent such delight.” SC, “Blessing,” 8 in Kolb and Wengert, 364; “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious and his goodness endures forever.” SC, “Blessing,” 10 in Kolb and Wengert, 364; “Let all their lessons learn with care, so that the household well may fare.” SC, “Household Chart,” 15 in Kolb and Wengert, 367.

(3) *Keeping the sensus literalis*. The scriptural content of the Small Catechism arguably goes beyond a mere issue of confessional propaganda. In the preface, Luther makes explicit the way he intends his Catechism to be used in laying out a “study plan” in three stages that end up introducing catechized people into the vast content of the Bible (by “adduc[ing] many examples from the Scriptures where God either punished or blessed such people”).¹¹¹ In fact, the contents that constitute each part of the Catechism is either the scriptural *verba* itself followed by an explanation,¹¹² the scriptural doctrine unfailingly followed by its corresponding *sedes doctrinae* (seats of doctrine),¹¹³ or simply the raw Biblical texts with no explanation at all.¹¹⁴ However, as mentioned above, the Lutheran radical embrace of the *sola scriptura* principle is seen when scriptural paradox is left to stand on its own with no attempt to resolve it. And this is what happens, for instance, when Luther affirms the absolute goodness of God’s *creatio continua* in the face of the empirical contradiction,¹¹⁵ or when he teaches us to ascribe the sacramental elements “such great things” on account of God’s Word.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ SC, “Preface,” 18 in Kolb and Wengert, 349.

¹¹² First (“Ten Commandments”) and third (“Lord’s Prayer”) principal parts.

¹¹³ Forth (“Baptism”) and fifth (“Sacrament of the Altar”) principal parts. The fact that the second principal part (“Creed”) that also belongs in this category does not include any scriptural basis in the same fashion as the other two principal parts (with questions such as “What then is this Word of God?” or “Where is this written?”) evidences that for the Church of the Reformation the text of the Creed needs as much Biblical warrant as that of the Lord’s Prayer.

¹¹⁴ SC, “Household Chart.”

¹¹⁵ “[A]ny access whatever to the knowledge of the Creator is to be found under the cross ... When the church teaches every Christian to confess: ‘I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind, together with food and clothing, etc.,’ it in fact expects every Christian daily to take up the cross of Jesus Christ. For we must not understand the explanation of the first article to mean that everybody can omit what does not suit him, but everyone is to say, ‘I believe this,’ be he sick or well, poor or rich, insecure or secure. The cripple is to believe that God has given him all limbs and still preserves them; the psychopath, that he has received all still receives from God reason and all senses; the beggar, that he lacks nothing. And, in the words of the first article, we may and should believe this, just as under the cross of Christ we may and should believe in his divine sonship and his glory ... To be asked to believe in the Creator is as offensive as to believe in the cross of Christ.” Schlink, *Lutheran Confessions*, 58–59.

¹¹⁶ The considerations under questions such as “How can water do such great thing?” (SC, “Baptism,” 9 in Kolb and Wengert, 359), “Do you also believe that my forgiveness is God’s forgiveness?” (SC, “Baptism,” 27 in

(4) *Keeping the analogia fidei*. As previously intimated, Albrecht Peters argues that

the center of the catechisms for Luther is not the Second Article of the Creed, in a narrowly focused and isolated sense, though one might assume that to be the case merely by looking at the wording in the Small Catechism; instead, the center is in the entirety of the way God turns toward us as our Father through the Son by means of the Holy Spirit. This revelation of self and this gifting of self on the part of the triune God must always be envisioned as one whole activity, from the point of view of the way He turns toward us.¹¹⁷

In the same vein, other classical Lutheran frames of reference for speaking about the *analogia fidei* will work with Luther's Catechism. Charles Arand, for instance, says that whereas "[f]rom God's side it [i.e., the structure of the Catechism] proceeds from his work as Creator-Redeemer-Sanctifier", [f]rom the human side it proceeds from our experience of God's work as Law-Gospel-New Life."¹¹⁸ But, how about the chief article (*Hauptartikel*) of the doctrine of justification by faith? James Nestingen takes precisely this issue as an exemplary case of the Catechism's cultural translation. Even when conceding Paul Althaus' contention that "both the language and the conceptuality of justification are completely missing in both catechisms,"¹¹⁹ Nestingen embraces Robert Jenson's proposal that "the doctrine of justification is for Luther a 'meta-linguistic principle' or better, a grammar for the declaration of the gospel." Consequently, it certainly informs the entire rendition of the gospel in the Small Catechism.¹²⁰ Not without reason the late Reformation regarded it as "a Bible of the Laity."¹²¹

Kolb and Wengert, 361), or "How can bodily eating and drinking do such a great things?" (SC, "Sacrament of the Altar," 7 in Kolb and Wengert, 362) evidence this acceptance of the paradoxicalness of the *sensus literalis scripturae*.

¹¹⁷ Peters, *Creed*, 54–55.

¹¹⁸ Arand, *That I May Be his Own*, 136–37.

¹¹⁹ Nestingen, "Luther's Cultural Translation," 445. See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Shultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 225.

¹²⁰ Nestingen, "Luther's Cultural Translation," 446; See Robert W. Jenson and Eric W. Gritsch, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 41–42.

¹²¹ Ep, "Binding Summary," 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 487.

For just as the alchemists draw the best juice from a plant through the process of distilling, and call it the quintessential, that is, the very best power and juice, so it is with this juice that is drawn from the Holy Scripture. For if you would put the entire Holy Scripture under the wine press, or melt it into a nugget, you would not be able to press more out of it than these six chief parts.¹²²

(5) *Embracing rhetorical intentionality*. If a proficient practice of rhetorical skills in translating the Christian message means “driv[ing] Christ home to hearers,”¹²³ the Small Catechism is exemplary in different respects. First, Luther demonstrates his genius as translator in his ability to substitute down-to-earth language for abstract conceptualization.¹²⁴ Second, Luther’s pedagogical and rhetorical strategy for teaching God’s children the faith demonstrated its effectiveness right from the beginning. Its appearance, Robert Kolb contends, “launched a revolution in popular piety,”¹²⁵ for it helped illiterate children to learn the basics of Christian life even in the way little toddlers start to discover the world around them—asking “What is this?”¹²⁶

¹²² Robert Kolb, “Late Reformation Lutherans on Mission and Confession,” *LQ* 20, no. 1 (2006): 38–39 (citing Jakob Andreae, *Drey vnd dreissig Predigten Von den fu[e]rnehmsten Spaltungen in der Christlichen Religion/so sich zwischen den Ba[e]pstischen/Lutherischen/Zwinglischen/Schwenckfeldern vnd Widerteuffern halten* [Tübingen 1580], A1b-A2b).

¹²³ Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 231 (after Martin Luther’s famous dictum, “All the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach and inculcate [*treiben*] Christ.” Martin Luther, “Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude, 1546,” *LW* 35:396).

¹²⁴ Charles Arand comments on his aspect: “Because images linger in the memory, oral speech often employs concrete terms rather than abstract concepts, that is, words that can be pictured in the mind. Oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human-life world. As a rule, very few generalizations can be found throughout Luther’s explanations. Instead, Luther refers to the everyday activities of his readers and employs many down-to-earth expressions that would be familiar to the people of his day. Luther could have used a more abstract term like ‘family,’ he writes ‘wife and child.’ Instead of writing ‘economic livelihood,’ he speaks of fields and cattle. Instead of referring to shelter, he has house and home, clothing and shoes. In other words, Luther uses readily understood examples from daily life in order to convey the catechism’s teaching. Luther’s explanation might be called *Kleinmalerei*, that is, vivid miniature word paintings.” Arand, *That I May Be his Own*, 105.

¹²⁵ Robert Kolb, “‘God Lets the Light of his Holy Gospel and Saving Word Shine:’ An Introduction to the Book of Concord,” in Robert Kolb with Charles P. Arand, *The Way of Concord: From Historic Text to Contemporary Witness* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2017), 33.

¹²⁶ Charles P. Arand and Robert Kolb, “13- The Nature of Baptism,” in *Conversations on the Catechism*, January 26, 2008, video, <https://scholar.csl.edu/concate/13/>. In his introduction to Johann Agricola’s precedent *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions*, Timothy Wengert points out that this is precisely one of the aspects in which Luther’s Catechism was in contrast with Agricola’s attempt: “Complex questions and answers are replaced by the simple ‘What is this?’ and most biblical proof texting disappears.” Timothy J. Wengert, “One Hundred Thirty

And third, the Catechism both encounters the pupil in his daily life experience in order to bring him into the Christian narrative of salvation, and sends him back into his daily life of vocational service and struggles. Just as the very pedagogical strategy “creates just such a scene: the pious family gathered around this digest of biblical teaching, praying and studying it together in preparation for daily service to God,”¹²⁷ so its theological content does exactly the same thing: “In each instance, Luther begins at the point where people encounter and experience life with its demands and gifts, its disappointments and joys,”¹²⁸ and it is precisely there where it sends us once and again, for “doctrine does not consist in words and sermons, but in life.”¹²⁹

Conclusion

The present chapter has put to work model one of confessional commitment (divine conversation) by using it to address Latin American case study two (contextual demand of translating the faith). First of all, some of the theoretical contributions of the current study of traductology were brought to the table. This allowed us to classify the nature of the discussion in case study two, and to identify the great challenge any translation process faces, namely, having norms that properly regulate the translating negotiation process. Next, case study two was placed under the scrutiny of confessional commitment model one. In doing this, model one did the following four things for case study two: It (1) exhibited the relevance of its discussion, (2)

Common Questions—Introduction,” in *Sources and Contexts of The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 14. For Luther’s pedagogical strategy, see SC, “Preface,” 6–18; Arand, *That I May Be his Own*, 97; Schadech and Prunzel, “Os catechismos de Lutero.”

¹²⁷ Robert Kolb, “The Layman’s Bible: The Use of Luther’s Catechisms in the German Late Reformation,” in *Luther’s Catechisms-450 Years: Essays Commemorating the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther*, ed. David P. Scaer and Robert D. Preus (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1979), 22.

¹²⁸ Arand, *That I May Be his Own*, 114.

¹²⁹ Martin Luther, “Eine Predigt D. Martini Lutheri über die Epistel am I. Sontag des Advents. Rom. XIII, 1530,” WA 32:210.

stretched the boundaries of the perspective taken into consideration by the profiles in conversation in case study two, (3) suggested the Lutheran Confessions as paradigm and norm of translation, and (4) gave the Confessions room to illuminate the discussion in case study two.

The following two chapters will proceed in a similar way by testing confessional commitment models two and three as applied to case studies three and six.

CHAPTER FIVE

TESTING MODEL TWO: CONFESSIONAL COMMITMENT AS A FORM OF LIFE IN THE WORLD

Introductory Comments to Chapter Five

This chapter will put to test model two of confessional commitment, which deals with the regulating function of the Lutheran Confessions as the church's "language game." We will check how model two helps to address Latin American case study three, which discusses the way to revitalize private care of souls (*Privatseelsorge*).¹ Once again, the different profiles that move ahead the discussion of this case study will be summarized:

1. Initial *standard definition of private care of souls* as focused on the individual's relation with God (*coram deo*) and on the forgiveness of sins bestowed upon the individual by means of confession and absolution.²
2. *Dissatisfaction* with the performance of this aspect of the ministry, *demand of renewal*, and *finding a new solution* with the paradigm of psychological therapy.³
3. Reaction against profile two and call to search this renewal of private care of souls by way of *retrieving to the church's proprium* (her particular task and strategy).⁴

Case Study Three in Context

As mentioned in chapter three, case study three focuses only on one aspect of pastoral responsibility, even when it responds to a broader crisis of identity in the entire understanding of

¹ See above pp. 100–05.

² Representatives of profile one: Werner K. Wadewitz, Jorge Miller, Paulo Schelp, and Wilhelm Doege.

³ Representatives of profile two: Benjamin César, Elmer Flor, Gerhard Grasel, Willi Redel, Nélon Kissler, and Dieter J. Jagnow.

⁴ Representatives of profile three: Ely Prieto, Christiano Steyer, Orlando Ott, and Vilson Scholz (Edward Schroeder).

the ministry and of the nature and *raison d'être* of the Christian church in modern times.⁵ The breadth of the theological crisis reflected in case study three reaches far beyond the *ministerium* of IELB in the late twentieth century. Hermann Sasse refers to this broader context in 1968 with these words:

This crisis is manifest everywhere from the office of the pope in Rome to the last priest in the Roman Church. If the cardinal archbishop of Montreal resigns from this archdiocese to spend the rest of his life with the lepers of central Africa, if priests and nuns marry and the question of the abolition of the law of celibacy is discussed everywhere, the crisis becomes an object of discussion even outside the church. It is a crisis which is worldwide and present in all denominations. The decrease of vocations to the Catholic ministry as well as to the ministry in the Protestant churches presents a most serious problem to all Christendom.⁶

Sasse expands even further the horizon of this problem, coming home to the very “nature of our office”⁷ that makes this crisis a permanent fact, for there is a “constant tension between a divine commission that must be carried out and the inability of man to carry it out. . . . Sinners are sent to sinners to call them to repentance and to proclaim the forgiveness of their sins. In this seeming contradiction, the perpetual crisis of the ministry is rooted.”⁸ Thus, Sasse contends, there always have been particular crises. But what characterizes the crisis that modern Christendom is going through is “the loss of a living faith, the decay of the doctrinal substance which can be observed in all denominations.” “The faith of the fathers is dying”—advances Sasse—“and is being replaced by philosophical speculations of socio-political ideologies . . . all this is indicative of a process of disintegration . . . [that, l]ike most of the great tragedies in the history of mankind, it is

⁵ See above p. 77.

⁶ Hermann Sasse, “The Crisis of the Christian Ministry,” in *The Lonely Way*, 2:369.

⁷ Sasse, “The Crisis of the Ministry,” 356.

⁸ Sasse, “The Crisis of the Ministry,” 358.

accompanied by a strange euphoria which accompanies certain lethal diseases.”⁹

This is in fact what happened on a worldwide scale with the struggle for redefining Christian pastoral care. John Pless describes the problem in the North American context as follows,

The twentieth century witnessed significant shifts in pastoral care away from a theological discipline to a psychological orientation ... In our most recent past, theology was made subservient to the social sciences. Therapeutic concerns dominated theological realities. Pastors were shaped according to a clinical model, and more often than not, the rich pastoral wisdom of the past was viewed as suspiciously premodern.¹⁰

In her doctoral dissertation, Susan Myers Shirk rehearses the different stages American Protestantism went through in adopting a clinical model for the private care of souls.¹¹ This story moves (1) from an application of clinical strategies, in which the pastor aims at functioning as a professional psychiatrist in order to exert his moral authority upon the members of the church (mainly between the two World Wars);¹² (2) to a rejection of the ministerial authority that redefines the pastoral office now as counselor of an autonomous counselee (after Second World War);¹³ (3) and finally to an acceptance of the ideal of a caregiver that combines some retrieved religious responsibilities with a more limited clinical competence.¹⁴ By means of these metamorphoses, what initially was part of a liberal Protestant fascination with social sciences

⁹ Sasse, “The Crisis of the Ministry,” 369.

¹⁰ John T. Pless, *Martin Luther, Preacher of the Cross: A Study of Luther’s Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 13.

¹¹ Susan E. Myers Shirk, “Helping God Heal: Protestant ministers, psychotherapeutic culture, and the transformation of moral authority, 1925–1965” (Ph.D. diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 1994).

¹² Myers Shirk, “Helping God Heal,” 27–91.

¹³ Myers Shirk, “Helping God Heal,” 92–152.

¹⁴ Myers Shirk, “Helping God Heal,” 211–47.

came to be a commonly accepted trait of any type of American Protestantism.¹⁵

Whereas Methodist professor of pastoral counseling Howard Clinebell, for instance, considers this move toward a psychological methodology to represent a “renaissance” and “the powerful force for renewal” of the ministry,¹⁶ psychologist Orval Mowrer asks, “Has evangelical religion sold its birthright for a mess of psychological pottage?”¹⁷ Lutheran theologian Oswald Bayer even advances the thesis that the increasing inability to distinguish the religion discourse from the catalyst conversation of a psychological self-discovery is one of the trajectories with which modern theology has secularized religion,¹⁸ the same trajectory with which Friedrich Schleiermacher attempts to make room for Christianity¹⁹ and Ludwig Feuerbach argues for its illusory and pathological nature.²⁰ In similar terms, another German theologian, Reinhard Slenczka, exposes the secular exclusion of God in our understanding of “soul,” for even though “throughout both the Old and New Testaments it [i.e., the notion of ‘soul’] is about the relationship between God and man,” we have adopted a modern psychological understanding in which “soul is almost exclusively equated with consciousness and subconsciousness; that is, that which moves man in his reasoning, feeling, and desiring. Consequently, satisfaction and self-

¹⁵ Myers Shirk, “Helping God Heal,” 213; John T. Pless, “Your Pastor is Not Your Therapist: Private Confession—The Ministry of Repentance and Faith,” *Logia* 10, no. 2 (2001): 21; Walther J. Koehler, *Counseling and Confession: The Role of Confession and Absolution in Pastoral Counseling*, ed. Rick W. Marrs (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2011), 23–32.

¹⁶ Howard J. Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 16.

¹⁷ Orval H. Mowrer, *The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1961), 60.

¹⁸ Bayer identifies three forms in which modern theology has secularized Christianity, by way of making an absolute out of its ethical dimension (after Immanuel Kant), its theoretical element (after Friedrich Hegel), or its existential and expressive aspect (after Friedrich Schleiermacher). Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 139–71.

¹⁹ Schleiermacher reduces the essence of religion to a prelinguistic “feeling of absolute dependence.” Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. and ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Steard (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 78 (§ 15).

²⁰ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. Marian Evans (London: John Chapman, 1854).

consciousness are goals of such care and counseling.”²¹

Therefore, beyond the immediate topic of the congruence between psychology and pastoral care of souls, case study three also brings to the fore deeper and more complex issues such as the identity definition of the pastoral office’s *proprium*, the Christian church in its relation to the world around it, the constitution of human being as *homo religious*, and the possibility and mode of the divine dealing for and among us, human beings.

Now, the fact that case study three depicts a discussion shared by such a broad spectrum of voices in western Christendom does not disqualify it as a representative discussion of Latin American Lutheranism. For even when the “imported nature” of the discussion and the North American origin of its transmission line are demonstrable,²² the discussion in case study three and the broader issues it entails represent real struggles for the Latin American church. The different contributions in *Igreja Luterana* that make up case study three do not speak about a foreign problem, but about the way IELB would configure its own *ministerium* and the way private care of souls should be performed in the Brazilian context.²³

²¹ Reinhard Slenczka, “Luther’s Care of Souls for our Times,” *CTQ* 67, no. 1 (2003): 34.

²² Beyond the natural influence that LCMS has had upon IELB (and the other “daughter churches” around the region), the proposal of adopting a psychological paradigm seems not to break this pattern, since, interestingly enough, the two main spokesmen in profile two, Elmer Flor and Dieter Jagnow, received their graduate studies (STM) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. Martim C. Warth, ed., “Aconselhamento pastoral: A psicologia pastoral a serviço da igreja,” *IL* 31, no. 1–4 (1970): 95 (editor’s note); Acir Raymann, ed., “Elementos de comunicação no aconselhamento pastoral,” *IL* 53, no. 1 (1994): 34 (editor’s note).

²³ German historian Roland Spliesgart assesses IELB and IECLB as case studies of “acculturation.” Spliesgart takes the notion of polycentrism as his starting point, over against the classical Eurocentric perspective that criticizes the so called “transplant churches” because of their deficiency in representing their third world context. Spliesgart contends this classical perspective fails in approaching what the history of the churches in the periphery (i.e., the new world) from the perspective and dilemmas of the center (i.e., the old world). Thus, he proposes to adopt a polycentric understanding of the churches around the world that allows taking any expression and experience of a local church (even those experience that have an antecedent in the North Atlantic) in its own terms, and not in its genealogical relation to the old world. Spliesgart, “Luteranos na América latina,” 106–09.

What Model Two Does with the Case Study in Question

In addressing case study three, model two of confessional commitment brings at least three different contributions: It (1) contributes with categories to discern the issues under discussion, (2) places the Lutheran Confessions at center stage and points out their crucial function for the church, and (3) allows the Confessions to illuminate the discussion.

Categories to Discern the Issues under Discussion

Model two of confessional commitment contributes at least with two relevant sets of categories for discussing some of the “deeper and more complex issues” that have just been referred to, as related to the challenge of the modern secularization of Christian theology.

The first set of categories are the prepositional phrases with which Christ the Lord configures the nature and stance of the church in relation to the world. As a heavenly reality, the *ecclesia proprie dicta* (church strictly speaking) is “not of the world” (οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου), for she has been delivered from that sphere of existence under the tyranny of Satan and constituted as an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of persons. But, at the same time, the church is not taken out of the world, but she is left and lives her heavenly reality “in the [midst of the] world” (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ). Her creaturely and sacramental identity makes her to be simultaneously one particular association in the world among others (*ecclesia late dicta*, church broadly speaking). And third, the very Christological and sacramental configuration of this paradoxical stance in relation to the world (not of- / in-) is of one piece with the fact that the church is even sent “into the world” (εἰς τὸν κόσμον).

The first contribution that this set of categories renders is that it lets us appreciate the complexities that define both the nature and stance of the church in the world. As Edmund Schlink puts it, the complex nature of the church that makes necessary to diversify our ways of

speaking about her (e.g., *proprie et late dicta*) locates the conflict between church and world, Christ and the devil, not in the outside borders of the church but in her midst:

The conflict between the devil's kingdom and Christ's kingdom is waged not only between church and nonchurch, but always also within the external fellowship of the church ... Thus the boundary line between Christ's kingdom and the devil's kingdom does not run between the outward fellowship of the church and the masses of the unbaptized, but it cuts through the number of the baptized.²⁴

The appreciation of this fact, in turn, justifies the consideration of case study three and precludes any aprioristic exclusion of strategies for renewing private care of souls that are proposed in case study three, even when each of them may seem to neglect one or the other prepositional phrases of the Lord's configuration (not of- / in- / into the world).²⁵

Besides exposing the complex reality of the church, these prepositional phrases form a continuum that moves between two rejected extremes: the one of assimilation to the world (not of-), and the other of isolation from it (in- / into the world). The church is to navigate her earthly existence between Scylla and Charybdis, just as case study three exemplifies it. With these prepositional phrases, model two of confessional commitment provides a cartographic reference that helps the church recognize where not to sail. This, in fact, seems to be enough, but does not suffice to establish with clarity some of the questions discussed in the present case study. Is the church not to be swallowed up by the Charybdis of assimilation to the world with those who embrace the psychological paradigm with such an apparent naiveté (profile two)? Or, is the church not to crash against the rocky Scylla of isolation from the world with those who seem to disregard any contribution from modern science (profile three)? As will be considered below,

²⁴ Schlink, *Lutheran Confessions*, 209–10.

²⁵ Whereas profile one and three may seem to be suspicious of betraying the last two prepositional phrases (in- / into the world), profile two may seem to disregard the first one (not of-).

model two supplements this deficiency by proposing that the Lutheran Confessions are the precise navigational instrument that helps the church not only to avoid falling into the fearful extremes, but also to keep the three prepositional phrases that configure the church in her otherworldly particularity (not of the world), her sacramental and earthly realism (in the world), and her missionary extroversion (into the world), in reciprocal qualification.

The second relevant set of categories that model two of confessional commitment contributes to the discussion of case study three is the classic language of the late Ludwig Wittgenstein, namely, “form of life” and “language game,” as appropriated and reinterpreted by Yale theologian George Lindbeck in his “cultural-linguistic” understanding of the church and her doctrine.²⁶ In fact, model two makes a further adaptation of Lindbeck’s use of these categories, and locates them in an entirely new context, in a way that establishes a tight correlation among the church’s particularism, her worldview and actual practices, and the normative discourse that shapes her identity and actions. So over against Wittgenstein’s understanding of the direction of fit among his characteristic categories, model two works on the presupposition that a particular “form of life” corresponds to a peculiar “language game,” and they both function in accordance to specific and definite “rules.”²⁷ If you change one of them, you change the others. Thus the

²⁶ As mentioned in chapter two, Lindbeck’s use of Wittgenstein’s categories represents, in some senses, an actual distortion of the Cambridge philosopher’s position (see above p. 58). In a similar vein, we must acknowledge that our own appropriation of Lindbeck’s proposal also represents an actual distortion of the Yale theologian’s ecumenical program, in the previously announced direction (see pp. 60–61).

²⁷ Wittgenstein does not agree with this tight one-to-one correlation. His proposition, “to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life” (PI § 19), argues for the inseparableness of the “whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven” (PI § 7), with the consequence that we cannot imagine a language without a form of life. With this, notwithstanding, Wittgenstein is not moving in the same direction as model two, in posing the idea that to each form of life corresponds a particular language game and vice versa. Additionally, as referred before, Wittgenstein explicitly challenges the idea of fixity and antecedence of rules that control the act of playing or of using a language: “Doesn’t the analogy between language and games throw light here? We can easily imagine people amusing themselves in a field by playing with a ball so as to start various existing games, but playing many without finishing them and in between throwing the ball aimlessly into the air, chasing one another with the ball and bombarding one another for a joke and so on. And now someone says: The whole time they are playing a ball-game and following definite rules at every throw. And is there not also the case where we play and—make up rules as we

church as a special form of life in the world cannot perform her actions (language game) the way other forms of life execute their own peculiar activities, without running the risk of becoming a different form of life. This assertion is similar to the argument with which second century father Tertullian denies his Gnostic opponents the right of using scriptural bases to establish their case. Tertullian's argument goes like this: Since heretics do not use the proper hermeneutical *rule* of faith, they are not part of the particular *form of life* of the apostolic church ("to whom belongs the possession of the Scriptures"); therefore, they cannot play the *language game* of using the Scriptures.²⁸ Form of life, language game, and grammatical rule belong together.

The incommensurability and lack of porosity between one form of life and the other that this picture of reality suggests leaves a very limited room—if any at all—for a cross-fertilization such as the one suggested by profile two in this case study. Within this scheme, psychological science seems to have little to do with the pastoral care of souls. However, in an article that explores the possibilities of a non-foundational post-liberal theology that may not fall into fideism, Roman Catholic Professor Terrence Tilley contends that "the fact that traditions may be incommensurable does not prohibit practices, beliefs, symbols, and actions from one tradition to be adapted by and to reshape another tradition."²⁹ Tilley considers that this in fact is what happened with Christianity throughout the ages:

[W]hat Christian concepts and practices meant was *not* determined solely by a paradigm impermeable to other concepts. A Christian conceptual framework or semiotic system was not formed in a situation of 'normal discourse,' but in the context of 'abnormal discourse.' The meaning of its concepts and practices were

go along? And there is even one where we alter them—as we go along" (PI § 83).

²⁸ Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heresies* XV-XX, ANF 3:344–47.

²⁹ Terrence W. Tilley, "Incommensurability, Intertextuality, and Fideism," *Modern Theology* 5, no. 2 (January 1989): 92.

fluid, and were substantially affected by concepts from other discourse families and semiotic systems.³⁰

The author offers two historical examples to sustain his argument.³¹ One of them, taken from New Testament scholar Wayne Meeks, is the amalgamation of the incommensurable figures of Greek cynic beggars and Old Testament prophets into the figure of missionary Christian asceticism.³² The other example, taken from Lindbeck himself, is the way both Christianity and Buddhism had to make room for the “warrior passions of barbarian Teutons and Japanese,” and consequently reshaped previous traditions to create the figures of Zen samurai and Christian knights respectively.³³ On this basis, Tilley contends that

[t]he fact that one tradition’s practices can be adapted by members of another tradition for their own use or that analogous practices can be discerned in various traditions does not imply that the traditions are commensurable or that the practices are “the same.”³⁴

Another example of Christian adoption of foreign elements that could be added to the list is that what happened with two festive days of equinox that had previously formed part of pagan religions celebrations.³⁵ The Christological celebrations of Jesus’ and John the Baptist’s nativities came to replace the “birthday of the conquering sun” (*natalis solis invicti*) of solar oriental cults (December 25)³⁶ and the Germanic solstice celebration of Litha respectively (June 25).³⁷

³⁰ Tilley, “Incommensurability,” 92.

³¹ Tilley, “Incommensurability,” 91–93.

³² Wayne Meeks, *The Moral World of the Early Christians*, The Library of Early Christianity 6 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 107.

³³ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 33.

³⁴ Tilley, “Incommensurability,” 92.

³⁵ Timothy H. Maschke, *Gathered Guests: A Guide to Worship in the Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003), 63–64.

³⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Historia de las creencias y las ideas religiosas* (Buenos Aires, México: Paidós, 1999), 2:477.

³⁷ Faith Wallis, trans., *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, Translated Texts for Historians 29 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 53–54.

Interestingly enough, these two festivals form part of what Martin Luther suggests to retain in the midst of his astringent criticism against “the wretched accretions which corrupt” the Christian liturgical life.³⁸ Since “God’s Word has been silenced [by] such a host of un-Christian fables and lies, in legends, hymns, and sermons,” “[a]ll the festivals of saints are to be discontinued.” But not all of them. The Nativity and John the Baptist festivals—among others—are to be retained.³⁹ This moves along the lines of Luther’s preservation of so many of the human additions to Christ’s original institution that he himself defines as “ours ... and not prescribed by God.”⁴⁰ The critical reform of worship that Luther exerted becomes relevant for the discussion here, since it not only responds to the question regarding the viability of a scrupulous cross-fertilization between different forms of life, but also to the quest of criteria for this to happen without destroying the church’s particularity. Hermann Sasse comments,

It belongs to the greatness of Luther that he had the gift of discernment. He was brought up in the liturgy and lived in it. He desired to maintain whatever of it could be retained. And he never gave up any of it frivolously, and he often hesitated long before he finally made a decision. Luther had the gift of discernment. He had this great gift of the Holy Spirit, without which the church cannot exist, because he had the Word and Sacrament, to which the Spirit of God has bound himself in the church. He could judge liturgy because he possessed the measure on which it alone can be judged: the holy Gospel, the saving message of the justification of the sinner by faith alone, the article from which nothing can be granted even if heaven and earth should fall and nothing remain. On this article depends not only our salvation, but also the church and the liturgy of the true church.⁴¹

This is precisely a crucial role that both Sasse and model two of confessional commitment ascribe to the Lutheran Confessions, namely, supplying the church with the proper criteria for

³⁸ Martin Luther, “An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg, 1523,” *LW* 53:20.

³⁹ Martin Luther, “Concerning the Order of Public Worship, 1523,” *LW* 53:11, 14; “An Order of Mass,” 22–25.

⁴⁰ Luther, “An Order of Mass,” 25.

⁴¹ Hermann Sasse, “Liturgy and Confession: A Brotherly Warning Against the ‘High Church’ Danger,” in *The Lonely Way*, 2:314–15.

discerning situations of cross-fertilization (if she should adopt an element of a different form of life, and how to do it) in a way that will allow her to retain her particular form of life and language game.

Finally, a second contribution that model two's appropriation of the Wittgensteinian "cultural-linguistic" categories brings is that they expand our perspective regarding the notion of a rule, allowing us to go beyond a Marxist-like paradigm of class struggle (or a Nietzschean-like one of will to power) that ultimately cannot help but lead to the conclusion that a serious submission to the authority of the Book of Concord represents a legalistic tyranny contrary to the freedom of the gospel.⁴² Instead, addressing this issue from a cultural-linguistic perspective enables us to visualize that, instead of coercing and prohibiting under a narrative of oppression, a norm or a rule habituates and enables the experiences and actions that constitute a particular form of life. Under this imaginative context, the Lutheran Confessions do not primarily inhibit, but they make possible the performance of one's own proper actions.

Central Position and Function of the Lutheran Confessions

Model two of confessional commitment locates the Lutheran Confessions at the center of the church's experience in the world. This happens because the Confessions are taken to be of one piece with the gospel with which the Lord establishes, sustains, and rules the church. Just as the *axis of power* in the actantial positions of model two makes it clear, far from being pitted over against the gospel (the subject), the Lutheran Confessions are brought into a most intimate

⁴² This understanding, which Theodore Schmauk and C. Theodore Benze point out was already held by Andreas Osiander in 1552, is a dominant perspective in current Lutheranism. Schmauk and Benze, *The Confessional Principle*, lxxxvii–viii. See also, Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, 38–40, 51. This demonstrates that neither Marx nor Nietzsche are the source of this rebellious idea, but that it may be the result of good-old-fashioned antinomianism with its "Epicurean delusion" already condemned in Ep IV, 18; SD IV, 31 in Kolb and Wengert, 499, 579.

connection with it as—in structuralist parlance—the subject’s helper.⁴³ We have just referred to this crucial role of the Confessions as helping the church to keep her otherworldly particularity (“not of the world”), her sacramental and earthly realism (“in the world”), and her missionary extroversion (“into the world”), in proper reciprocal qualification. How is it that the Lutheran Confessions do this? They help in this capacity by exerting two ruling functions: a critical and an enabling function.

The Lutheran Confessions’ Critical Function

First of all, the Lutheran Confessions exert a critical function that helps the church to make crucial distinctions between her own form of life and that of others (i.e., what is church and what is not church), and between her own language game and that of others (i.e., what is truth and what is not truth). These are not two separate things because of the doctrinal core that constitutes and defines the Christian church in her true nature. The Augsburg Confession puts it in the most simple and clear terms: “The church is the assembly of saints [*congregation sanctorum*] in which the gospel is taught purely [*Evangelium recte docetur*] and the sacraments are administered rightly [*et recte administrantur Sacramenta*].”⁴⁴ Therefore, just as the consensus in truth brings about the unity that constitutes the church (same language game, same form of life),⁴⁵ other discourses and practices produce and demand separation (different language games, different forms of life).

Two kinds of distinctions are implied here. The first and more basic or fundamental

⁴³ See p. 53, Figure 3. Actantial positions in the narrative of model two.

⁴⁴ AC VII, 1 in Kolb and Wengert, 43; BSLK, 103:6–7.

⁴⁵ This is how the *Augustana* continues: “And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments” (AC VII, 2 in Kolb and Wengert, 43).

distinction is that between two orders of existence in the world that *Augustana* XIV and XVI put in parallel contrast as “church order (or regiment)” and “political order (or regiment).”⁴⁶ Article

XXVIII develops on the language game connections of these two separate forms of life:

[I]nasmuch as the power of the church or of the bishops bestows eternal benefits and is used and exercised only through the office of preaching, it does not interfere at all with public order and secular authority. For secular authority deals with matters altogether different from the gospel. Secular power does not protect the soul but, using the sword and physical penalties, it protects the body and goods against external violence. That is why one should not mix or confuse the two authorities, the spiritual and the secular. For spiritual power has its command to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments.⁴⁷

One’s language game is the gospel, as preached in its oral form and administered in its sacramental form, which bestows a passive righteousness before God (*coram deo*). The other’s language game is the law, as articulated in whatever form (political, moral, ceremonial, etc.), that demands an active righteousness before the world (*coram mundo*).⁴⁸ “Christ’s church and ministry are Gospel-wrought through and through. They are gracious, evangelical, salvatory gifts and institutions of God, not legal ones, nor Law/Gospel hybrids,”⁴⁹ contends Kurt Marquart, following after the Large Catechism’s description of the church’s form of life:

[E]verything in this Christian community is so ordered that everyone may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and signs appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth. Although we have sin, the

⁴⁶ Kurt Marquart points out that the parallelism between AC XIV—“Concerning Church Government” (*Vom Kirchenregiment*) or “Church Order” (*De ordine ecclesiastico*)—and AC XVI—“Concerning Public Order and Secular Government” (*Von Polizei und weltlichem Regiment*) or “Civic Affairs” (*De rebus civilibus*)—is brought to complete correlation in the titles of the Apology—“Church Order” (*Vom Kirchenregiment—De ordine ecclesiastico*) for Ap XIV, and “Political Order” (*Vom weltlichen Regiment—De ordine politico*) for Ap XVI. Marquart, *Church and Fellowship*, 204 note 23.

⁴⁷ AC XXVIII, 10–12 in Kolb and Wengert, 92.

⁴⁸ In his introductory writing to his great lectures on Galatians, Martin Luther expresses this distinction in a thoroughly characteristic way: “This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active and the 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 limits.” Martin Luther, “The Argument of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, 1535,” *LW* 26:7.

⁴⁹ Marquart, *Church and Fellowship*, 178.

Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are a part of this Christian community. Here there is full forgiveness of sins, both in that God forgives us and that we forgive, bear with, and aid one another. Outside this Christian community, however, where there is no gospel, there is also no forgiveness, and hence there also can be no holiness. Therefore, all who would seek to merit holiness through their works rather than through the gospel and the forgiveness of sin have expelled and separated themselves from this community.⁵⁰

The second distinction implied in *Augustana VII* is that between two forms of life that—in terms of C. F. W. Walther—properly and improperly speaking bear the name “church.”⁵¹ This is the distinction between the true visible church and “those visible companies of men who have united under the confession of a falsified faith” (“Altenburg Thesis III”), and from other “heterodox companies” (“Altenburg Thesis IV”). Here the discernment of truth from error and of true church from false church belong together. This is why the apostle Paul concedes the quarrelling Corinthians that “there must be factions among you (αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν) in order that those who are genuine (δόκιμοι) among you may be recognized” (1Cor. 11:19). This is also why, according to one of the introductory sections of the Solid Declaration, the concordists needed to exploit the common trait of all symbolical books of

set[ting] forth and explain[ing] our faith and confession in regard to each specific controversy clearly, straightforwardly, and unequivocally, in theses and antitheses (that is, as correct teaching and its opposite), so that the foundation of the divine truth in all these articles may be made obvious—to the exclusion of all incorrect, dubious, suspicious, and condemned teachings, no matter where or in what books they may be found, or who may have written or wanted to accept them.⁵²

That is to say, the Lutheran Confessions function as a demarcation line between truth and error, between her own language game and that of other communities, and consequently, as a dividing

⁵⁰ LC, “Creed,” 55–56 in Kolb and Wengert, 438.

⁵¹ Carl F. W. Walther, “Theses for the ‘Altenburg Debate’ (1841),” in Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 523–25.

⁵² SD, “Antitheses,” 19 in Kolb and Wengert, 530.

frontier between proper and improper associations, between her own form of life and others. In terms of Hermann Sasse, participation in sacred things (*communicatio in sacris*) and excommunication of heretics (*excommunicatio haereticorum*) “belong together as two sides of one and the same thing.”⁵³

The same introductory section of the Solid Declaration just quoted above explains that, in order to fulfill this discerning function, the Confessions establish two basic distinctions: A rather basic distinction between unnecessary and necessary discussions (thereby focusing the church’s attention on those issues that really belong to her form of life); and a more complex distinction (within the necessary discussions) between truth and error:

[W]e must steadfastly maintain the distinction between unnecessary, useless quarrels and disputes that are necessary. The former should not be permitted to confuse the church since they tear down rather than edify. The latter, when they occur, concern the articles of faith or the chief parts of Christian teaching; to preserve the truth, false teaching, which is contrary to these articles, must be repudiated.⁵⁴

That which is left aside does not belong to the proper language game of the church. And she becomes able to recognize those alien language games either because the Confessions do not even name them (in the case of unnecessary discussions) or because the Confessions explicitly contrast them with the truth (in the case of false teachings). As becomes evident from this passage of the Formula, the starting point for this double discrimination is the clear, straightforward, and unequivocal articulation of the content and structure of the pure doctrine. For just as Luther does it in the Smalcald Articles, in identifying the chief or “head” article (*Hauptartikel*) of the doctrine and its relation to the entire body of doctrine (*corpus doctrinae*)

⁵³ Hermann Sasse, “Selective Fellowship,” in *The Lonely Way*, 2:258.

⁵⁴ SD, “Antitheses,” 15 in Kolb and Wengert, 530.

that belongs to it,⁵⁵ it is also possible to establish the character of other language games (i.e., if they represent necessary discussions or not, and if they sustain the truth or not).

Their anchorage into “the pure, clear fountain of Israel”⁵⁶ encourages the Lutheran Confessions to frame this first critical function within the baptismal and eschatological structure of a profession of the embraced truth that goes together with the renunciation to the condemned error.⁵⁷ Thus, just as in the Nicene Creed, the introductory formula “we believe” (πιστεύομεν) works together with the later “the Catholic and apostolic church condemns” (ἀναθεματίζει ἡ καθολικὴ καὶ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία),⁵⁸ the *Augustana* pairs the positive “teaches” (*docet*) with the negative “they condemn” (*damnant*),⁵⁹ and the Formula of Concord brings the double condemnation “we reject and condemn” (*reiiimus et damnamus*)⁶⁰ as the logical consequence and necessary complement of the affirmative formulation of the truth under the classical “we believe, teach, and confess” (*credimus docemus confitemur*).⁶¹

The Lutheran Confessions’ Enabling Function

Second, the Lutheran Confessions exert an enabling function, inasmuch as they assist the

⁵⁵ See above note 519.

⁵⁶ SD, “Binding Summary,” 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 527.

⁵⁷ The ancient baptismal rite practiced on Easter Eve began with these two initial ceremonies: the renunciation to the devil and all his works (facing toward the dark region of the West), and the profession of faith that associated the candidate with Christ (facing toward the East). Edwin H. Gifford, “Introduction (to *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril*),” *NPNF*² 7:27.

⁵⁸ John N. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Continuum, 1972), 215–16.

⁵⁹ E.g., AC XVI, 3–4; BSLK, 113:4–8. AC X, 2 substitutes the antithetic *damnant* with *improbant*, and AC XII, 7 complements it with *reiiuntur*. BSLK, 105:10, 107:13.

⁶⁰ E.g., Ep I, 11; SD VII, 107; BSLK, 1223:24, 1499:14.

⁶¹ The Formula demonstrates to understand the antithetical section of each article as an inferential consequence of the positive formulation of the scriptural truth. To express this understanding, the second section of each article is introduced with any of the following conjunctions: *ergo* (“therefore,” Ep I, 11; BSLK, 1223:24), *igitur* (“therefore,” Ep II, 7; BSLK, 1231:14), *atque* (“also,” Ep IV, 19; BSLK, 1247:8), and *quare* (“wherefore,” DS VII, 107; BSLK, 1499:14).

church not in terms of what she is not (her otherness before the world), but in terms of what she certainly is and stands for (her selfhood and particularity in the world). Here the Lutheran Confessions display for the church all that it means to be a heavenly reality in the world and help her to live out her actual existence as the particular form of life she is. This enabling function has at least three aspects to it.

First of all, the Lutheran Confessions help the church (and her individual members) to think and perform those things that belong to her essential being (*esse*).⁶² Accordingly, as considered above, the Lutheran Confessions articulate the scriptural doctrine so that the church is able to embrace her proper “grammar” of the gospel. Besides this, they make the fundamental provisions so that the necessary functions to deliver the gospel can be executed with that purity that is constitutive of the true church in the world, and Christian life can be lived out in accordance with the divine ordinance.⁶³ This regulative function of the church’s (and her ministers’ and individual members’) required belief and performance arguably represents the main bulk of the lists of proposed functions in modern discussions regarding the Confessions’ usefulness and authority.⁶⁴

Notwithstanding, the Confessions do not regulate every detail of the church’s performance.

⁶² This would roughly correspond to what is defined from an anthropological perspective as an ecclesiastical culture. See Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 8, 32–41. Clifford Geertz defines culture as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life,” and religion as “(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.” Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 89–90. For a critical rejection of this kind of definition of the church as a culture, see Ziegler, “Culture and Vocation,” 290.

⁶³ AC XIV; Ap XIII, 3–17; XV, 43; XXIV, 16–19; SC, “Holy Baptism,” 15–29; “Morning Blessing;” “Evening Blessing;” SD VII, 74–86.

⁶⁴ See above section “Shifts in the Discussion Regarding the Lutheran Confessions” in chapter one, pp. 4–7.

They bind where the gospel binds, and because they bind on account of the gospel, it is on account of the gospel that they also make room for and protect a sphere of freedom for the church. This, in fact, is not mere revolutionary rhetoric. The Lutheran Confessions take the church's freedom with absolute seriousness because what is at stake is the eschatological freedom of the gospel. Consequently, a second aspect of this enabling function of the Confessions consists in that they provide the evangelical criterion so that each local church can institute the necessary and beneficial regulations that her specific situation demands (*bene esse*) in a way that secures the freedom and purity of the gospel.⁶⁵ Thus the Confessions concede and even support the existence of humanly instituted regulations within the church "on account of their usefulness for the body, so that people may know at what time they should assemble, so that they may have an example of how all things in the church might be done decently and in order, and finally, so that the common people may receive some instruction."⁶⁶ However, the church and their officials

do not have the power to institute or establish something contrary to the gospel ... Now it is patently contrary to God's command and Word to make laws out of opinions or to require that by observing them a person makes satisfaction for sin and obtains grace. For the honor of Christ's merit is slandered when we take it upon ourselves to earn grace through such ordinances. It is also obvious that, because of this notion [promoted by Rome], human ordinances have multiplied beyond calculation while the teaching concerning faith and the righteousness of faith have been almost completely suppressed ... Therefore, it follows that it is not lawful for bishops to institute such acts of worship or require them as necessary, because ordinances that are instituted as necessary or with the intention of merit justification

⁶⁵ See Bernard J. Verkamp, "The Limits upon Adiaphoristic Freedom: Luther and Melancthon," *Theological Studies* 36, no. 1 (1975): 52–76; Arand, "Not All Adiaphora;" John T. Pless, "The Relationship of Adiaphora and Liturgy in the Lutheran Confessions," in *Let Every Tongue Confess: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Gerald S. Krispin and Jon D. Vieker (Dearborn, MI: Nagel Festschrift Committee, 1990), 195–210.

⁶⁶ Ap XV, 20 in Kolb and Wengert, 226.

conflict with the gospel. For it is necessary to retain the teaching concerning Christian freedom in the churches.⁶⁷

In this way, besides establishing and protecting the proper divine language of the church, the Lutheran Confessions leave large space so that each local church establishes her own “dialect,” as it were. The Confessions, however, do not conceive that space apart from accountability to the gospel and the church. They make the necessary provisions so that the true freedom and purity of the gospel are preserved,⁶⁸ and mutual subjection in love toward one another is cultivated.⁶⁹

Finally, a third aspect in the Lutheran Confessions’ enabling function is one that focuses the church out of herself toward her relation with other forms of life, but this time not primarily to separate her from the rest but to help the church positively relate to the world around. First of all, this happens in the church’s own terms of a missionary approach to the secular world that surrounds her. For even when the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments mark the church as a totally different form of life from the rest of the world, they were not given in order to produce isolation, but rather, so that the Holy Spirit places us, human beings, into the church’s lap, “were he preaches to us and brings us to Christ,” for “[n]either you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe in him and receive him as Lord, unless

⁶⁷ AC XXVIII, 34–37, 50–51 in Kolb and Wengert, 96, 99.

⁶⁸ In his doctoral dissertation on sixteenth century “church orders” (*Kirchenordnungen*), Jeffrey P. Jaynes demonstrates that, far from representing a betrayal of Christian freedom, this type of legal regulations were the proper way in which left hand authorities protected and “provided the opportunity for genuine liberty to emerge.” For the persistent concern that lays behind these legal regulations is the protection of the pure doctrine to be preached from the pulpit and of the right administration of the sacraments. Jeffrey P. Jaynes, “*Ordo et Libertas: Church Discipline and the Makers of Church Order in Sixteenth Century North Germany*” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1993), 58. See also Anneliese Sprengler-Ruppenthal, “Zu den theologischen Grundlagen reformatorischen Kirchenrechts: Studie an einigen Beispielen,” *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte*, 85 (1987): 83–84.

⁶⁹ This is precisely the way in which Luther himself applies the paradoxical reality of the Christian freedom to the discussion around the reform of worship in his *Exhortation to the Livonians* of 1525: “from the viewpoint of faith, the external orders are free and can without scruples be changed by anyone at any time, yet from the viewpoint of love, you are not free to use this liberty, but bound to consider the edification of the common people.” Martin Luther, “A Christian Exhortation to the Livonians Concerning Public Worship and Concord, 1525,” *LW* 53:47.

these were offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the gospel by the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁰ This is the reason the Lord has this “unique community in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God,”⁷¹ for “everything in this Christian community is so ordered that everyone may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and signs appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth.”⁷² Therefore, in assisting the church to proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments in conformity with the divine Word, the Confessions not only regulate a self-service activity, but rather the church’s mission and *raison d’etre* of her being in the world.⁷³ Kurt Marquart challenges us to embrace the commitment that “Lutheran congregations and synods must learn again to treasure the Book of Concord as their best and most authentic ‘mission statement,’ and to implement its doctrinal and sacramental substance full-strength in the actual shaping of their church-life.”⁷⁴

Second, “[a]s the means of grace must be administered here in this world, by living persons among living persons,”⁷⁵ the church is also an external association or organization that forms part of the human society. Consequently, she also needs to articulate her institutional existence in the legal terms of the public square. So just as the Nicene Creed played a critical role in the partisan

⁷⁰ LC, “Creed,” 38 in Kolb and Wengert, 436.

⁷¹ LC, “Creed,” 42 in Kolb and Wengert, 436.

⁷² LC, “Creed,” 55 in Kolb and Wengert, 438.

⁷³ Kolb, *Confessing the Faith*, 132–40; Robert Kolb, “Luther’s Smalcald Articles: Agenda for Testimony and Confession,” *CJ* 14, no. 2 (1988): 115–37; Kolb, “Late Reformation Lutherans;” Kolb, “Here We Stand;” Robert D. Preus, “The Confessions and the Mission of the Church,” in *Doctrine is Life*, 213–35; Klaus D. Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology for Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 49–73; Jukka A. Kääriäinen, “*Missio* Shaped by *Promissio*: Lutheran Missiology Confronts the Challenge of Religious Pluralism” (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 2010), 51–95; Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 6–9.

⁷⁴ Marquart, *Church and Fellowship*, 185 note 30.

⁷⁵ Sasse, “Seventh Article,” 13–14.

struggles of the Roman Empire in the fourth century,⁷⁶ the Lutheran Confessions of the sixteenth century also were originally crafted to play a key role in the public political arena in order to help the Lutheran church establish her legal status within the Holy Roman Empire. Critical instances of this were the evangelical princes' public declaration (*protestamur*) of the *Confessio Augustana* in front of Charles V (1530),⁷⁷ as well as the complex negotiations that came after 1555, aimed at establishing the contours of the religious association (*Konfession*) that could have a claim on the legal status conferred by the Peace of Augsburg—negotiations that were brought to an end with the massive subscription to the Formula of Concord (1577).⁷⁸

Third, the Lutheran Confessions also equip the true visible church to relate to other Christian communions. For as Hermann Sasse contends, since the truth of the gospel and the unity of the church belong together (“there where is the truth, there is unity,” *ubi veritas, ibi unitas*), the symbolical writings provide the church with the proper ecumenical program:⁷⁹ “[I]t is

⁷⁶ See Kelly, *Early Creeds*, 263–331; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 85–272.

⁷⁷ Johann M. Reu, *The Augsburg Confession* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1930); Kolb, *Confessing the Faith*, 38–42; Gunther Gassmann and Scott Hendrix, *Fortress Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 1–32. Whereas most of recent scholar discussion move in precisely this direction, even to the risk of eclipsing the import and relevance of the Confessions in terms of salvation history, other authors seem to move in the opposite direction. See, for instance, Steven D. Paulson, “What Kind of Confession is the Augsburg Confession?” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 56, no. 1 (2014): 12–34.

⁷⁸ Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 161–89, 255–80; Dingel, “Function and Historical Development,” 309–15.

⁷⁹ Hermann Sasse usually deplores that the ecumenical movement lost its initial track, expressed by Bishop Edwin J. Palmer of Bombay in his opening address to the Lausanne conference: “This is a Conference about truth, not about reunion ... agreement about truth would be one of the firmest foundations for unity.” Herbert N. Bate, ed., *Faith and Order: Proceedings of the World Conference Lausanne, August 3–21, 1927* (New York: George H. Doran, 1927), 233. See Ronald Feuerhahn, “Hermann Sasse as an Ecumenical Churchman” (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1991), 7. In his fifty ninth letter to Lutheran pastors, Hermann Sasse describes three other programs (different from that of the *Augustana* VII) that have controlled the ecumenical agenda: (1) the Pietistic program of a miracle attained through prayer (eighteenth century), (2) the Anglican program with the Lambeth Quadrilateral proposal (end of nineteenth), and (3) the Roman Catholic program of bringing back home the separated brethren (after the Second Vatican Council). Hermann Sasse, “After the Council,” in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, 3:387–88.

Post-Second Vatican Council dialogue between Rome and Lutheranism gave shape to a Lutheran movement called “evangelical Catholicism,” that takes sixteenth century Lutheran Reformation not as the foundation of a separate church, but as a reformatory movement within the only mother church. Carl Braaten, one of the leading

enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.”⁸⁰ In line with the Solid Declaration,⁸¹ Sasse points out that “[f]or the Lutherans the consensus required should always be regarded as the doctrinal content of the [entire] Book of Concord ... [for] certainly not the confessional writings belong to the essentials of the church, but ... the dogma which they contain must be preached, proclaimed to the world and confessed.”⁸² Somewhere else, Sasse explains why this is the case:

If we stand up for the doctrine of the sinner’s justification *sola gratia, sola fide*, it is not the dogmatic idiosyncrasy of a denomination which is at stake, but the article of which “nothing can be yielded or surrendered, even if heaven and earth and all things sink to ruin.” [SA II, 1, 5] Not only the church of our Confession, but the whole church of Christ, lives by this article. Hence we cannot possibly render a better service to the whole Christian church on earth, or even to the Christians of other communions who do not quite understand us today, than by preaching this doctrine in all purity and clarity. Indeed, it is the greatest contribution which can be made toward the true unity of divided Christendom, as the Formula of Concord says [SD III, 6], quoting Luther: “If only this article is kept pure, the Christian church also remains pure, and is harmonious and without sects; but if it does not remain pure, it is not possible to resist any error or fanatical spirit.”⁸³

theologians of this movement, raises the following questions: “Are we justified in continuing our separation? ... [D]o we need a divided Christendom to preserve the preaching of that law and gospel in its truth, power, and purity? ... [I]s there anything that could still justify a continued protest of the ‘protestant principle’ in a separate ecclesiastical order?” Carl E. Braaten, *Mother Church: Ecclesiology and Ecumenism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 18–19. Within this understanding of the Lutheran Reformation, evangelical Catholicism stresses upon the ecumenical thrust of the Lutheran Confessions and takes them as “ecumenical proposal,” not in the sense of Hermann Sasse, but as the particular voice with which Lutheranism can enrich the variety of voices that belongs to the one Christian church. Thus, Braaten again: “It is the purpose of the confessional writings in the Lutheran Book of Concord, for example, to serve the catholic church by referring it to the unifying gospel of Christ. This gospel is summarized in terms of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone. This is a summary of the whole gospel.” Carl E. Braaten, “Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics,” in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 1:53.

⁸⁰ AC VII, 2–3 in Kolb and Wengert, 43.

⁸¹ SD X, 31 functions as late Reformation authoritative interpretation of AC VII: “the churches are not to condemn one another because of differences in ceremonies when in Christian freedom one has fewer or more than the other, as long as these churches are otherwise united in teaching and in all articles of the faith as well as in the proper use of the holy sacraments.” Kolb and Wengert, 640.

⁸² Sasse, “Seventh Article,” 16–17.

⁸³ Sasse, *Here We Stand*, 29.

Summing up, the Lutheran Confessions exert their helping capacity by means of two basic functions: (1) a *critical function* with which the church can distinguish herself from other forms of life, as well as distinguish her proper language game from others', and (2) an *enabling function* that helps the church to think and perform what belongs to her essential being, develop further specific regulations in freedom and purity, and relate to other forms of life in a proper way.

The Lutheran Confessions Illuminating the Discussion

In view of such a central position and fundamental functions that model two ascribes to the Lutheran Confessions, how do they illuminate the particular discussion in case study three? What is the proper language game of the holy ministry with which the private care of souls is to be done? What can be considered a valid source of renewal for the church's ministry and its proper functions? Can a cross-fertilization with psychological therapy revitalize the private care of souls without confounding the church's necessary distinctiveness? Inasmuch as the Lutheran Confessions are the grammatical rule of the church with which this heavenly form of life configures her own language game, these Confessions are to be listened to in order to address these questions. And they, in fact, bring important definitions in this regard.

With respect to the *proprium* of the holy ministry, in locating the ministry at the very heart of salvation history and in such an intrinsic connection with article IV, *Augustana* V establishes with matchless clarity what the ministry stands for. In words of Norman Nagel,

In order that the gifts be given, that the gifts be received—that is faith—the Lord arranged for their delivery as gifts. Not a bit of good unless delivered. Hence we have Article V, without which Article IV would remain undelivered ... The office of the ministry is there for nothing else but the means of grace. It is never there for its own

sake, as is clear from Article V. There our attention is not left on the office of the ministry, as if it were an item by itself; rather, it is centered on the means of grace.⁸⁴

Some years before, Nagel had expressed the same notion: “A pastor is good for nothing but the delivery of the forgiveness of sins.”⁸⁵ *Augustana XXVIII* makes further elaborations of this understanding of the ministry. First, in view of late medieval abuses and excesses on the part of the bishops, article XXVIII recuperates the limited scope of action of the ministry. On the one hand, the ministry is not there for “bodily but eternal things and benefits . . . such as eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life,”⁸⁶ therefore “it does not interfere at all with public order and secular authority.”⁸⁷ On the other hand, it is there not to “teach or establish anything contrary to the gospel,”⁸⁸ but to execute that what has been given to it:⁸⁹

Bishops do not have the power of tyrants to act apart from established law, nor regal power to act above the law. Bishops have a definite command, a definite Word of God, which they ought to teach and according to which they ought to exercise their jurisdiction. Therefore, it does not follow that because they have a definite jurisdiction bishops may institute new acts of worship, for that does not come under their jurisdiction. They have the Word; they have the command about the extent to which they should exercise their jurisdiction, namely, when anyone does something contrary to the Word that they have received from Christ.⁹⁰

Second, *Augustana XXVIII* details five different actions with which the holy ministry executes that which really belongs to it: (1) preaching the gospel, (2) forgiving and retaining sins, (3) administering and distributing the sacraments to many persons or to individuals, (4)

⁸⁴ Norman Nagel, “*Externum Verbum*: Testing *Augustana V* on the Doctrine of the Holy Ministry,” *Logia* 6, no. 3 (1997): 27–28.

⁸⁵ Norman Nagel, “The Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions,” *CJ* 14, no. 3 (1988): 288.

⁸⁶ AC XXVIII, 8 in Kolb and Wengert, 92.

⁸⁷ AC XXVIII, 10 in Kolb and Wengert, 92.

⁸⁸ AC XXVIII, 23 in Kolb and Wengert, 95.

⁸⁹ AC XXVIII, 23–28, 30–52. “The first thing that the Augsburg Confession confesses of the holy ministry is that it is instituted by God.” Nagel, “*Externum Verbum*,” 30.

⁹⁰ Ap XXVIII, 14 in Kolb and Wengert, 290–91.

judging doctrine and rejecting doctrine that is contrary to the gospel, and (5) excommunicating those whose ungodly life is manifest and absolving those who repent.⁹¹ And all this is done “not with human power but with God’s Word alone.”⁹² In fact, “[w]hen they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them in the stead and place of Christ.”⁹³

For Christ wants to assure us, as was needed, that the Word is efficacious when human beings deliver it and that we should not look for another word from heaven. “Whoever listens to you listens to me” [Luke 10:16] cannot be applied to traditions. For Christ requires them to teach in such a way that he himself might be heard because he says “listens to me.” Therefore, he wants his voice, his Word, to be heard, not human traditions.⁹⁴

The ministry is there for eternal and spiritual things that no one can confer, except God himself. The confrontation that the *Augustana* raises against Rome’s loss of track regarding the divinely mandated specifications of the ministry becomes an inescapable indictment against the modern temptation to improve the Lord’s doing.

It is within this proper language game of the ministry, then, that the Lutheran Confessions are also able to bring specific definitions regarding the private care of souls. With this particular aspect of the office of the ministry, the symbolical writings do just as the Lutheran Reformation in general has done with the rest of the liturgical or ritual life of the medieval church, namely, they retain what is received in order to purify it.⁹⁵ Accordingly, even though they recognize that

⁹¹ AC XXVIII, 5, 8, 21; Ap XXVIII, 13; Tr 60.

⁹² AC XXVIII, 21 in Kolb and Wengert, 94.

⁹³ Ap VII/VIII, 28 in Kolb and Wengert, 178.

⁹⁴ Ap XXVIII, 18–19 in Kolb and Wengert, 291.

⁹⁵ In 1523, Martin Luther describes the Lutheran approach to the reform of worship in the following terms: “The service now in common use everywhere goes back to genuine Christian beginnings, as does the office of preaching. But as the latter has been perverted by the spiritual tyrants, so the former has been corrupted by the hypocrites. As we do not on that account abolish the office of preaching, but aim to restore it again to its right and proper place, so it is not our intention to do away with the service, but to restore it again to its rightful use.” Martin Luther, “Concerning the Order of Public Worship, 1523” *LW* 53:11.

private confession and absolution—the principal medieval practice related to the private care of souls— “is not commanded in Scripture but was instituted by the church ... the preachers on our side diligently teach that confession is to be retained because of absolution (which is confession’s principal and foremost part) for the comfort of terrified consciences.”⁹⁶ The Third Part of the Smalcald Articles exposes that the root problem with the papists’ penance is that they neither recognize what the nature and depth of our problem is, nor the location and breadth of its solution. Therefore, since “they do not recognize what sin really is,”⁹⁷ the penitent is moved away from Christ and faith, and consequently “gropes around in the things of God and seeks comfort in its own works, according to its own darkened opinions.”⁹⁸ In directing people “to place confidence in their own works,”⁹⁹ and making them to expect a solution “from one’s own powers, without faith, without knowledge of Christ,”¹⁰⁰ the papists have built “upon a rotten, flimsy foundation” a whole edifice that is nothing but “deceitful lies and hypocrisy, especially

⁹⁶ AC XXV, 12–13 in Kolb and Wengert, 74. For a discussion on the Lutheran reform of the sacrament of penance, see Paul H. Lang, “Private Confession and Absolution in the Lutheran Church: A Doctrinal, Historical, and Critical Study,” *CTQ* 56, no. 4 (1992): 241–53; Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of the Keys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 23–58; Ronald K. Rittgers, “Luther on Private Confession,” *LQ* 19, no. 3 (2005): 312–14; Koehler, *Counseling and Confession*, 44–59. Fred Precht enlists several Lutheran theologians (e.g., Philip Melancthon, Oskar Planck, Regin Prenter, Theodor Kliefoth) who consider the Lutheran reform of the sacrament of penance to be “the greatest contribution of Luther to the church.” Fred L. Precht, “Confession and Absolution: Sin and Forgiveness,” in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, ed. Fred L. Precht (St. Louis: Concordia, 1993), 334 note 13.

⁹⁷ SA III, 3, 10 in Kolb and Wengert, 313. The previous articles had set the stage for this criticism when they explain that “sin has caused such a deep, evil corruption of nature that reason does not comprehend it” (SA III, 1, 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 311), and that consequently, it is “the foremost office and power of the law” to reveal human beings “what utter depths their nature has fallen and how completely corrupt it is ... This is something they would not have believed before without the law” (SA III, 2, 4 in Kolb and Wengert, 312).

⁹⁸ SA III, 3, 18 in Kolb and Wengert, 314.

⁹⁹ SA III, 3, 12 in Kolb and Wengert, 314 (see also paragraphs 19, 23, 27–28).

¹⁰⁰ SA III, 3, 18 in Kolb and Wengert, 314. This is a constant refrain in the Articles’ criticism against the papists’ explorations on penance: they consistently exclude Christ and faith from the equation. See also paragraphs 14, 20, 23.

where it is at its holiest and most beautiful.”¹⁰¹ Over against this, the Articles find in Scriptures “the thunderbolt of God, by means of which he destroys both the open sinner and the false saint and allows no one to be right but drives the whole lot of them into terror and despair.”¹⁰² This passive contrition (*passiva contritio*)¹⁰³ that “is not fragmentary or paltry ... does not debate over what is a sin or what is not a sin. Instead, it simply lumps everything together and says, ‘Everything is pure sin with us. What would we want to spend so much time investigating, dissecting, or distinguishing?’”¹⁰⁴ In this way, still borrowing the triple structure of penance that he himself has previously criticized,¹⁰⁵ Luther exposes the certainty of an evangelical practice of repentance, for “there remains nothing [except a] plain, certain despair concerning all that we are, think, say, or do” (that is true contrition), “everything is pure sin [and therefore we] do not forget a single one” (that is true confession), so that, the only way out of this dilemma lies outside of us, “in the suffering and blood of the innocent ‘Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ [John 1:29]”¹⁰⁶ (that is true satisfaction). It is its realism and *extra nos* foundation (a foundation that is located outside of us) what makes this purified practice of confession a true source of comfort and sanctification.

Luther’s catechisms put it in the classical terms of repentance wrought by the law and faith enkindled by the gospel: “Confession consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins. The

¹⁰¹ SA III, 3, 39 in Kolb and Wengert, 318.

¹⁰² SA III, 3, 2 in Kolb and Wengert, 312.

¹⁰³ SA III, 3, 2; BSLK, 751:33.

¹⁰⁴ SA III, 3, 36 in Kolb and Wengert, 318.

¹⁰⁵ Rome structured the ritual of penance into three parts: contrition (feeling remorse and sorrow for sins), confession (the detailed enumeration of the committed sins for which the penitent sought forgiveness), and satisfaction (penitential acts intended to compensate for sins). Over against this abusive and legalistic system, Lutheran reformation affirmed two parts: confession and absolution. AC XII; Ap XII; SA III, 3, 12–29; SC, “Baptism,” 16; LC, “Brief Exhortation,” 15–19.

¹⁰⁶ SA III, 3, 38 in Kolb and Wengert, 318.

other that we receive the absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the confessor as from God himself.”¹⁰⁷ In words of the Large Catechism,

confession consists of two parts. The first is our work and act, when I lament my sin and desire comfort and restoration for my soul. The second is a work that God does, when he absolves me of my sins through the Word placed on the lips of another person. This is surpassingly grand and noble thing that makes confession so wonderful and comforting . . . We should therefore take care to keep the two parts clearly separate. We should set little value on our work but exalt and magnify God’s Word.¹⁰⁸

So this is what we find in the Small Catechism’s ritual of private confession. The entire dialogue is informed by no other word than that of God alone. On the one hand, the Ten Commandments allow the one who comes to confession to recognize what his real problem is (guilt before God) and where it lies (not in an uncertain area of his subconsciousness, but in his actual religious and vocational relations with God and his neighbors).¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the climatic words of absolution with which God himself bestows his heavenly and eschatological forgiveness allow

¹⁰⁷ SC, “Baptism,” 16 in Kolb and Wengert, 360.

¹⁰⁸ LC, “Brief Exhortation,” 15, 18 in Kolb and Wengert, 478.

¹⁰⁹ It is remarkable that the references to Luther’s own pastoral practice demonstrate that the reformer did neither ignore nor disdain those struggles that we tend to identify as the main concern of a psychological approach to the care of souls, such as depression or anxiety. The evidence shows that Luther in fact pays attention to these afflictions, but does not consider them to be the real problem that needs to be necessarily reverted, nor does he take these afflictions to be incompatible with a living faith. In fact, in his commentary to Psalm 118:5, Luther speaks about the necessity of them: “Whoever can learn, let him learn. Let everyone become a falcon and soar above distress. Let everyone know most assuredly and not doubt that God does not send him this distress to destroy him, as we shall see in verse eighteen. He wants to drive him to pray, to implore, to fight, to exercise his faith, to learn another aspect of God’s person than before, to accustom himself to do battle even with the devil and with sin, and by the grace of God to be victorious. Without this experience we could never learn the meaning of faith, the Word, Spirit, grace, sin, death, or the devil. Were there only peace and no trials, we would never learn to know God Himself. In short, we could never be or remain true Christians. Trouble and distress constrain us and keep us within Christendom. Crosses and troubles, therefore, are as necessary for us as life itself, and much more necessary and useful than all the possessions and honor in the world.” Martin Luther, “Psalm 118[:5], 1530,” *LW* 14:60. John Pless notices that in his letter to depressed prince Joachim of Anhalt, dated on December 25, 1535, “[t]here are no calls to pull himself out of despondence and get in tune with the spirit of the season. Joachim is not counseled to get some help with his self-esteem issues. Luther comforts him instead with the words of the apostle. In weakness God puts His power to save on display. From the lowliness of the manger to the humiliation of the cross right down to the pit of Joachim’s depression, God comes to save. God works in the depths. Luther once offended Erasmus by asserting that Christ Jesus is with us even in the sewer.” Pless, *Preacher of the Cross*, 45. See also Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 82–189.

the pastor to occupy his proper representative function (“in the stead and place of Christ,” *Christi vice et loco*),¹¹⁰ and, thereby, “to comfort and encourage to faith those whose consciences are heavily burdened or who are distressed and under attack,”¹¹¹ for their relief is located outside themselves, in God’s own word of absolution. Now, even though this “ordinary form of confession” has no pretension of being imposed as the only possible ritual, it certainly places the private care of souls under the baptismal pattern of true Christian life.¹¹² And since the unfathomable riches of Christian baptismal life (“victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God’s grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts”)¹¹³ are the very gifts that are renewed by means of the word of forgiveness, the Confessions raise a strong case for a private care of souls deeply focused in this purified form of private confession and absolution.¹¹⁴ On this basis, the Large Catechism expresses,

¹¹⁰ Ap VII/VIII, 28 in Kolb and Wengert, 178; BSLK, 411:25. See also Ap VII/VIII, 47; XIII, 12. The ritual form in the Small Catechism demonstrates that this representative role of the confessor cannot be stressed enough. Thus, the very initial definition of what confession is describes that “we receive the absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the confessor as from God himself and by no means doubt but firmly believe that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.” SC, “Baptism,” 16 in Kolb and Wengert, 360. The indicative-operative absolution itself is surrounded by the same notion: “Let the confessor say [further]: ‘Do you also believe that my forgiveness is God’s forgiveness?’ [Answer:] ‘Yes, dear sir.’ Thereupon he may say: ‘«Let it be done for you according to your faith.» And I by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ forgive you your sin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace.’” SC, “Baptism,” 27–28 in Kolb and Wengert, 361–62.

¹¹¹ SC, “Baptism,” 29 in Kolb and Wengert, 362.

¹¹² SC, “Baptism,” 12–14.

¹¹³ LC, “Baptism,” 41–42 in Kolb and Wengert, 461.

¹¹⁴ Apology XII signals the entire spectrum of spiritual gifts that absolution confers: “For when the gospel is heard, when absolution is heard, the conscience is uplifted and receives consolation. Because God truly makes alive through the Word, the keys truly forgive sins before God according to [Luke 10:16], “Whoever listens to you listens to me.” Therefore we must believe the voice of the one absolving no less than we would believe a voice from heaven ... At the same time, this faith is nourished in many ways in the midst of temptations through the proclamation of the gospel and the use of sacraments. For these are signs of the New Testament, that is, signs of the forgiveness of sins ... Thus faith is formed and strengthened through absolution, through hearing the gospel, and through use of the sacraments, so that it might not succumb in its struggle against the terrors of sin and death. This understanding of repentance is plain and clear. It increases the value of the sacraments and the power of the keys, illumines the benefits of Christ, and teaches us to make use of Christ as our mediator and propitiator.” Ap XII, 39–43 in Kolb and Wengert, 193.

Thus we teach what a wonderful, precious, and comforting thing confession is, and we urge that such a precious blessing should not be despised, especially when we consider our great need. If you are a Christian, you need neither my compulsion nor the pope's command at any point, but you will force yourself to go and ask me that you may share in it. However, if you despise it and proudly stay away from confession, then we must come to the conclusion that you are not a Christian and that you also ought not receive the sacrament ... Therefore, when I exhort you to go to confession, I am doing nothing but exhorting you to be a Christian.¹¹⁵

Summing up, Apology XVI affirms that “the gospel does not destroy the state or the household but rather approves them,”¹¹⁶ “and permits us to make outward use of legitimate political ordinances of whatever nation in which we live, just as it permits us to make use of medicine or architecture or food, drink, and air,”¹¹⁷ and—arguably we could also add to the list—psychological science. Notwithstanding, as came to be evident in the previous exploration, the search of renewal of the pastoral ministry and the private care of souls touches on the gospel itself. Here “[t]he pope, theologians, lawyers, and all human beings know nothing about this. Rather, it is a teaching from heaven, revealed through the gospel, which must be called heresy among the godless saints.”¹¹⁸ Trying to improve and even to metamorphose God's own doing into our human scientific techniques cannot represent anything but substituting the newness and heavenly character of gospel for our old decaying worldliness.

Conclusion

Chapter five has brought model two of confessional commitment (as a form of life in the

¹¹⁵ LC, “Brief Exhortation,” 28–29, 32 in Kolb and Wengert, 479. In a sermon on private confession, Luther expresses his high regard for this ancient practice: “I will allow no man to take private confession away from me, and I would not give it up for all the treasures in the world, since I know what comfort and strength it has given me. No one knows what it can do for him except one who has struggled often and long with the devil. Yea, the devil would have slain me long ago, if the confession had not sustained me.” Martin Luther, “The Eight Sermon, March 16, 1522, Reminiscere Sunday,” *LW* 51:98.

¹¹⁶ Ap XVI, 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 231.

¹¹⁷ Ap XVI, 2 in Kolb and Wengert, 231.

¹¹⁸ SA III, 3, 41 in Kolb and Wengert, 318.

world) to address Latin American case study three (how to revitalize pastoral counseling). The introductory comments of this present chapter has suggested that this type of discussion may expose a deteriorating process of secularization of Christian theology and practice. In addressing case study three, model two of confessional commitment made the following contributions: First, it suggested a series of categories to discern the issues under discussion, such as the prepositional triad “not of- / in- / into the world” (οὐκ ἐκ- / ἐν τῷ- / εἰς τὸν κόσμον), and the Wittgensteinian cultural-linguistic categories of “form of life,” “language game,” and “rule.” Second, model two ascribed the Lutheran Confessions a critical function that allows the church to distinguish between herself and other forms of life, and an enabling function that helps the church to think and perform what belongs to her essential being. Finally, model two let the Confessions illuminate the discussion in case study three by making explicit what the Lord has instituted as the *proprium* of the ministry, and by advancing specific proposals for how to configure the private care of souls by way of the church’s language game of the gospel.

The next chapter will complete the task that was begun in chapter four, by putting to work model three of confessional commitment as applied to Latin American case study six.

CHAPTER SIX

TESTING MODEL THREE: CONFESSIONAL COMMITMENT AS ORTHODOX DYNAMICS

Introductory Comments to Chapter Six

The present chapter completes the task of putting to the test the way our models of confessional commitment perform as descriptive and heuristic tools to address issues raised by real case studies. Model three of confessional commitment (orthodox dynamics) will be applied to Latin American case study six (theory and praxis in tension).¹ Five (or four) different profiles can be identified as part of the discussion represented in case study six, regarding the proper alchemy between theory and praxis in Christian education:

1. A *merely theoretical* approach that virtually reduces Christian education to the cognitive transmission of doctrinal propositional contents.²
2. An *expansionist* approach that integrates a practical aspect to the theoretical one and gives the former a definite priority.³
3. A *reductive practical* approach that reclaims praxis to the exclusion of theory.⁴
4. A *balanced* approach that aims at keeping both aspects in tandem.⁵
5. A *would-be superseding* approach that alleges to transcend the classical dichotomy by finding a third synthesizing category.⁶

¹ See above pp. 117–22.

² Even though there is no single author that holds this position, this first profile is presupposed by the other expressed alternatives.

³ Hugo Berger, José Pfaffenzeller, and Sergio Schelske (“La confirmación”) represent this second profile.

⁴ Carlos Nagel, Robert T. Hoferkamp, Héctor Hoppe, Daniel Helbig, Jorge Groh, and Edgar Kroeger Sr. represent profile three.

⁵ E. Kieszling and Leopoldo Heimann give voice to profile four.

⁶ David Coles and Sergio Schelske (“La educación teológica”) represent profile five. As pointed out in chapter

Before advancing, we should sum up the basic notions that case study six integrates under the two classical categories placed in tension. Under theory, the different proponents tend to think about Christian doctrine in its propositional nature. This doctrine is objective and external to the human being, and therefore, it is to be received or appropriated from without. Learning takes place through formal and traditional cognitivist methods that include the use of literature, text memorization, classrooms, and academic study programs. Under praxis, the proponents tend to think on actual behavioral performances or spiritual experiences. This is not to be learned from without, but rather through the actual implementation of exploratory strategies or the simple obedience to a moral imperative. This moves along the lines of constructivist and behaviorist theories of learning.⁷

Case Study Six in Context

Case study six touches on a longstanding discussion regarding the nature of theology that goes back to the end of High Middle Ages.⁸ With the foundation of the great universities in Europe, twelfth and thirteenth century scholars grappled with establishing the proper genus of theology as science (*scientia*).⁹ In the initial section of his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas (1224/1225–1274) takes the Aristotelian typology of sciences as his frame of reference.¹⁰ In his

three, the implicit (but actual) equation that Coles and Schelske make between their third synthesizing category (i.e., mission) and praxis finally reduces this fifth profile to another instance of profile two. Consequently, there are four actually different profiles in the discussion of case six.

⁷ For an introductory analysis and comparison of the main three learning theories, see Peggy A. Ertmer and Timothy J. Newby, “Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism: Comparing Critical Features from an Instructional Design Perspective,” *Performance Improvement Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2013): 43–71.

⁸ For this revision of the historical discussion regarding the nature of theology I follow Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Teoría de la Ciencia y Teología* (Madrid: Libros Europa, 1981), 235–73.

⁹ According to R. David Nelson, it is the struggle to establish theology’s position alongside the university scientific branches that prompted Christian theology to define itself in terms of the Aristotelian categories intellectual activities. R. David Nelson, “Prolegomena to Lutheran Theology,” *LQ* 31, no. 2 (2017): 129–30.

¹⁰ *ST I*, q 1.

Metaphysics, the “Philosopher” had distinguished three categories: (1) practical sciences (that deal with the performance of actions or *praxis*), (2) productive sciences (that deal with the production of things or *techne*), and (3) speculative sciences (that deal with the knowledge of truth or *episteme*).¹¹ Aristotle counts physics, mathematics, and theology (or metaphysics) within the third category, and establishes that “[t]he speculative sciences, then, are to be preferred to the other sciences, and ‘theology’ to the other. It is superior to the other speculative sciences.”¹² This is so because, whereas physics considers that what is real and movable and mathematics that which is immovable but unreal, theology “deals with the most important side of reality:” that which is real and immovable.¹³ Aquinas then follows this basic track when he establishes that

Sacred doctrine, being one, extends to things which belong to different philosophical sciences because it considers in each the same formal aspect, namely, so far as they can be known through divine revelation. Hence, although among the philosophical sciences one is speculative and another practical, nevertheless sacred doctrine includes both; as God, by one and the same science, knows both Himself and His works. Still, it is speculative rather than practical because it is more concerned with divine things than with human acts; though it does treat even of these latter, inasmuch as man is ordained by them to the perfect knowledge of God in which consists eternal bliss.¹⁴

The great Dominican theologian further specifies that theology belongs in the category of derivative sciences (*scientia subordinata*), since “just as the musician accepts on authority the principles taught him by the mathematician, so sacred science is established on principles revealed by God.”¹⁵ Criticisms against this understanding of theology did not tarry to appear.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1025b–1026a1–9, Loeb Classical Library, DOI: 10.4159/DLCL.aristotle-metaphysics.1933.

¹² Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1026a11.

¹³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1064a–1064b7–9.

¹⁴ *ST I*, q 1, art. 4.

¹⁵ *ST I*, q 1, art. 2.

One of the strongest alternative accounts of theology was that of Duns Scotus (1266–1308). In his *Ordinatio*, the Subtle Doctor finds in the authority of the Scriptures and the fathers that “this science is not strictly for the sake of speculation. And a speculative science aims at nothing beyond speculation.”¹⁶ Theology, instead, “intends love of the end outside the genus of knowledge, [therefore it] is practical.”¹⁷ And, inasmuch as a science is practical not primarily “from action as from its end,” theology also is practical primarily because it aims at the enjoyment of its ultimate or “first good.”¹⁸

Through the mediation of William Ockham (1280/1288–1349) and Gabriel Biel (1425–1495), Scotus’ understanding of theology as a practical science (*scientia practica*) came to inform the entire Protestant tradition.¹⁹ Thus we find Martin Luther confronting the speculative systems of both scholasticism and enthusiasm by establishing that “[t]rue theology is practical, and its foundation is Christ, whose death is appropriated to us through faith.”²⁰ Since in line with German mysticism theology belongs in the category of experiential wisdom (*sapientia experimentalis*),²¹ it is “experience alone [that] makes the theologian.”²² However, as Oswald Bayer clarifies it,

Luther’s famous sentence “experience alone makes the theologian,” excludes high-flown thoughts and speculations and therefore pure knowledge, but it should not be

¹⁶ Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* prologue, part 5, q. 1 n. 222, in *John Duns Scotus: Selected Writings on Ethics*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17.

¹⁷ Scotus, *Ordinatio*, Prologue, 276.

¹⁸ Scotus, *Ordinatio*, Dist. 1, 5–6.

¹⁹ Gabriel Biel, *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum I: Prologus et Liber primus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973); Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 14; Pannenberg, *Ciencia y Teología*, 242.

²⁰ Martin Luther, “Practical Versus Speculative Theology (Table Talk No. 153), Between December 14, 1531, and January 22, 1532,” *LW* 54:22.

²¹ Martin Luther, “*Randbemerkungen Luthers zu Taulers Predigten*, 1516,” *WA* 9:98, 21.

²² Martin Luther, “Value of Knowledge Gained by Experience (Table Talk No. 46), Summer or Fall, 1531,” *LW* 54:7.

used to support a principle of pure experience that could only be the principle of a vague openness and incompleteness. What makes the theologian a theologian is not experience as such, but the experience of scripture.²³

Therefore, Luther's ultimate definition of theology is neither speculation (*vita contemplativa*) nor praxis (*vita activa*), but receptive life (*vita passiva*): "It is by living—no, not living, but by dying and giving ourselves up to hell that we become theologians [*immo moriendo et damnando fit theologus*], not by understanding, reading, and speculating."²⁴

Protestant scholasticism retakes both the high Middle Age's discussion and its basic double alternatives on theology. Lutheran orthodoxy as represented by Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) defines theology more as wisdom (*sapientia*) than as science (*scientia*), for theology is a "God-given habit [*habitus*, θεόσδοτος] conferred on man by the Holy Spirit through the Word."²⁵ He also defines theology as "more practical" than speculative, for its ultimate end is "that we enjoy God," and "enjoyment is an act of the will, not of the intellect."²⁶

According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, Reformed theology also follows after the Scotist understanding of theology as practical science (*scientia practica*), though not in view of its ultimate soteriological end, but—in more Aristotelian terms—in view of its extension toward an ethic-religious performance.²⁷ This initiates with Calvinist theologian Bartholomew Keckermann (1572–1609), who establishes a distinction between theosophy (*scientia speculativa*) and

²³ Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 63.

²⁴ Martin Luther, "Operationes in Psalmos, 1519–21," WA 5:163 (English translation by Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 61).

²⁵ Johann Gerhard, "Preface," § 31, in *On the Nature of Theology and on Scripture*, Theological Commonplaces: Exegesis, or A More Copious Explanation of Certain Articles of the Christian Religion (1625), ed. Benjamin T. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 31.

²⁶ Gerhard, "Preface," § 12, 21.

²⁷ Pannenberg, *Ciencia y Teología*, 243–45.

theology (*prudentia religiosa*).²⁸ In this way, Keckermann opened up a new trajectory that would be taken up by Georg Calixtus (1586–1656). The latter distinguishes between *theologia scholastica* aimed at the polemical discussion and demonstration of truth, and *theologia ecclesiastica* or *positiva* aimed at the simple didactical exposition of the principal topics of Christian religion, in order to promote the later to the detriment of the former.²⁹ During the following century, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Johann Fichte (1762–1814), and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), would participate in a discussion regarding the proper definition of a positive science and the structure of the modern university. Within this conversation, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) establishes theology as one of the three positive sciences that constitute the higher faculties (together with law and medicine). In his *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, Schleiermacher provides the following classical definitions:

A positive science, namely, is, in general, a body of scientific elements which have a connectedness of their own, not as if, by a *necessity* arising out of the very *idea* of science, they formed a constituent part of the scientific organization, but only in so far as they are requisite in order to the solution of a *practical problem*.³⁰

Christian Theology, accordingly, is the *collective embodiment* of those *branches of scientific knowledge* and those *rules of art*, without the possession and application of which a harmonious *Guidance of the Christian Church*, that is a Christian Church-Government, is not possible.³¹

Even when this represented a clear reduction of the definition of theology into a “science of

²⁸ Bartholomäus Keckermann, *Systema ss. Theologiae tribus libris adornatum* (Hanoviae: Apud Guilielmum Antonium, 1602); Wolfart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1:3–4.

²⁹ Georg Calixtus, *Apparatus Sive Introductio in Studium et Disciplinam Sanctae Theologiae: Una cum fragmento Historiae Ecclesiae Occidentalis* (Helmstadii: Henning Müller, 1656), 174; Pannenberg, *Ciencia y Teología*, 249.

³⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology, Drawn up to Serve as the Basis of Introductory Lectures* (§ 1) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1850), 91 (author’s emphasis).

³¹ Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline* (§ 5), 93 (author’s emphasis).

Christianity,” intended to make this religious society attain its functional goals, Schleiermacher’s proposal won the day as the model followed in the Prussian educational reform and far beyond.³² With this development, the speculative side of theology reached a virtual disappearance that contemporary theorists still attempt to reverse.³³

Latin American theology has also some representatives that have addressed this discussion. Premier liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez objects that both classical approaches to Christian theology (i.e., the monastic wisdom [*sapientia*] and the scholastic science [*scientia*]) have eclipsed the real center of Christian life, that is, the *praxis* of charity.³⁴ Since God himself is moving humanity toward its goal in the ferment of history, Christian theology will only verify its legitimacy if it helps any liberating *praxis* that brings communion with God and fraternity among men into realization.³⁵ Therefore, Christian theology finds its proper place as a second act of critical reflection. Gutiérrez argues,

The church’s pastoral action is not deducible as a conclusion from theological premises. Theology does not engender pastoral action, but rather reflects on the later; it [i.e., theology] must find in the later [i.e., pastoral action] the presence of the Spirit that inspires the actions of the Christian community.³⁶

Therefore, for this Peruvian theologian, Christian theology is to integrate all its classical components, together with the theoretical tools of Marxist philosophy, in order to submit all of

³² Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Theory and History of Literature 10, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 31–37; Hans Frei, “Theology in the University,” in *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 95–132.

³³ Pannenberg himself is one of the leading theorists that work toward a recuperation of the speculative of Christian theology. Pannenberg, *Ciencia y Teología*, 263–77; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 48–61.

³⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación: Perspectivas*, 15th ed. (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1994), 58–61.

³⁵ Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación*, 61–67.

³⁶ Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación*, 68.

them to the absolute priority of the historical praxis of liberation.³⁷ In not too different terms, Cuban American theologian Justo L. González proposes to a broad readership a Hispanic or Latino way of doing theology, and explains that one of the traits of this new way of doing theology is to no longer define “truth” in the abstract, but in concrete acts of love. “In consequence, the present macroreformation calls for a new understanding of orthodoxy as closely linked to orthopraxis. To believe the truth means to live in the truth, and this means to be in love and justice with our neighbors.”³⁸

Therefore, what has begun as an asymmetric tandem that gave priority to the speculative side of theology with Aquinas, soon moved the scale to the practical side with Scotus and Lutheran Orthodoxy. With Reformed theology, Pietism, and Modernism, this priority of praxis developed into a virtual exclusivity, and its definition substituted the distant point of reference of an eschatological salvation of others (*allopraxis*) with the immediacy of a self-referential pragmatism (*autopraxis*).³⁹

The account of the fate of the philosophical discussion around politics that German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas brings in his *Theory and Praxis* seems to be relevant for our consideration of what happened with our own discussion on the theological field, on account of both its similitudes and the challenges that Habermas raises upon his critical analysis.⁴⁰ Habermas tracks two fundamental turns with which the modern world broke with the classical Aristotelian categorization of human science previously mentioned, which distinguished

³⁷ Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación*, 70–72.

³⁸ Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 50.

³⁹ David Preus, “The Practical Orthodoxy of Balthasar Meisner: The Content and Context of his Theology” (Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2017), 336–45, 350–51.

⁴⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon, 1974).

among *theoria* (the highest level of science that seeks after the knowledge of truth), *praxis* (a lower kind of knowledge aimed at the performance of what is right), and *techne* (the lowest kind of science intended toward the mastery of producing things).

The first great turn that modifies this scheme deals with a progressive encroachment of *techne* into the sphere of *praxis* that begins with the political philosophical experiments simultaneously proposed by Niccolò Machiaveli and Thomas More.⁴¹ Habermas describes this first great turn in the following terms:

Aristotle in principle recognized no separation between a politically enacted constitution and the ethos of civic life within the *polis*. Machiavelli and More, each in his own way, carried out the divorce of politics from ethics. The supreme maxim of the New Politics states: “The sole aim of the Prince must be to secure his life and his power. All means which he employs towards this end will be justified.” Private virtue is divorced from political virtue; the practical prudence of private persons now obligated to the good—that is, the obedient—life is divorced from the technical prudence of the politician . . . Just like the techniques for securing power in Machiavelli, so in More the organization of the social order is morally neutral. Both deal not with practical questions, but with technical ones. They construct models, that is, they investigate the fields, which they themselves have newly opened up, under artificial conditions.⁴²

This relocation of politics under *techne*'s concern for control and power, instead of *praxis*' concern for moral good, is already taken for granted a century later by Thomas Hobbes.⁴³ For him, “the maxim promulgated by Bacon, of *scientia propter potentiam*, is self-evident: Mankind owes its greatest advances to technology, and above all to the political technique, for the correct establishment of the state.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Machiavelli publishes *The Prince* in 1532, and More's *Utopia* appears in 1516. Niccolò Machiaveli, *The Prince*, trans. Hill Thompson (New York: Limited Edition Club, 1954); Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Peter K. Marshall (New York: Washington Square, 1965).

⁴² Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 54.

⁴³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁴⁴ Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 42.

The second great turn that represents a break with Aristotle's categorization of sciences is the inversion of its hierarchy. Whereas in classical times, *theoria* was taken to be the highest habit of the mind (over against *praxis* and particularly *techne*), in modernity *praxis* won the upper hand. This was so already with the Idealism of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Johann Fichte (1762–1814), whose dialectical thinking poses a fundamental distance between theory and *praxis* that, notwithstanding, is solved with the subjection of the former in function to the latter. Thus, for instance, Kant makes a clear-cut distinction between the theoretical employment of reason, interested in the principles that determine the objects of knowledge, and its practical employment, focused on the principles that guide the self-determination of the will. However, as Arnold Lorenzo Farr puts it, “if pure reason is to have a positive employment then it must be practical ... Pure reason remains pure theoretical reason in the first *Critique* to the extent that its interests are still cognitive. It is practical to the extent that it determines our actions.”⁴⁵ But Habermas finds that this integration of making theory a function of *praxis* gets finally established with Georg Hegel (1770–1831) and Karl Marx (1818–1883):

In the eighteenth century this dimension of a theoretically guided *praxis* of life was extended by the philosophy of history. Since then, theory, directed toward *praxis* and at the same time dependent on it, no longer embraces the natural, authentic, or essential actions and institutions of a human race constant in its essential nature; instead, theory now deals with the objective, overall complex of development of a human species which produces itself, which is as yet only destined to attain its essence: humanity. What has remained is theory's claim of providing orientation in right action, but the realization of the good, happy, and rational life has been stretched out along the vertical axis of world-history; *praxis* has been extended to cover stages of emancipation. For this rational *praxis* is now interpreted as liberation from an externally imposed compulsion, just as the theory which is guided by this interest of liberation is interpreted as enlightenment. The cognitive interest of this

⁴⁵ Arnold Lorenzo Farr, “The Problem of the Unity of Theoretical and Practical Reason in Kant's Critical Philosophy and Fichte's Early *Wissenschaftslehre*, and its Relevance to the Contemporary ‘Rage Against Reason’” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1996), 19–20.

enlightenment theory is declaredly critical; it presupposes ... the experience of an emancipation by means of critical insight into relationships of power.⁴⁶

Habermas advances and points out that these two moves—*techne* taking over the place of *praxis*, and *praxis* taking priority over *theoria*—were taken to their final consequences with the rise of a technocracy that took place when the positive sciences became the foremost means for attaining political power.⁴⁷ Habermas explains,

In this system, science, technology, industry, and administration interlock in a circular process. In this process the relationship of theory and praxis can now only assert itself as the purposive-rational application of techniques assured by empirical science ... The claim by which theory was once related to praxis has become dubious. Emancipation by means of enlightenment is replaced by instruction in control over objective or objectified processes.⁴⁸

The consequences of this final development is that *techne*—that is, the attainment of control under the promise of absolute emancipation by means of technological progress—has taken over *praxis* and its already subjugated *theoretical thinking* (now deprived from any critical force).⁴⁹ In view of this dramatic situation, Habermas advances the following proposals: (a) to bring theory and praxis together again, by reestablishing the latter's priority (together with its social ethical connotations) and the former's enlightening and critical function, (b) to submit technological advancements under the priority of praxis and critical theory, and (c) to foster the necessary social processes of communication and dialogue of argumentation in which the entire system of praxis, theory, and technological means are put under scrutiny for their legitimation.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 253–54.

⁴⁷ Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 5–7.

⁴⁸ Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 254–55.

⁴⁹ Habermas complains of this paradoxical becoming in which critical thinking, originally intended to annul any dogmatism that inhibits the emancipation of modern humanity, now is neutralized in its critical task, suspect itself of ideological dogmatism. Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 262–63. For a similar denunciation, see Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 41–53.

⁵⁰ Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 1–7, 16–19, 28–40, 276–82. Habermas details three criteria with which this

Habermas' contribution seems to be relevant for the purposes and focus of interest of this study in the theological arena. The similarity of trajectory with the theological discussion should not be a surprise, considering that Christian theology did not initiate its own discussion in isolation, but entered the broader philosophical discussion in the context of the European university. But what is more significant is the fact that both turns with which modern thinking breaks with its classical past are the effect of the modern world's secularization.⁵¹ No longer counting on God as the first principle and ultimate foundation of human activity, modern man needs to reorganize his understanding of reality and found it upon those bases of legitimation that still remain at his disposal.⁵² These bases became increasingly immediate and tangible as modern history moved from Kant's transcendental *a priori* to Hegel's and Marx's teleology, and finally to the technological value of efficiency and success. No longer having a God above who

communicative process can bring together and validate the pieces: "The mediation of theory and praxis can only be clarified if to begin with we distinguish three functions, which are measured in terms of different criteria: the formation and extension of critical theorems, which can stand up to scientific discourse; the organization of processes of enlightenment, in which such theorems are applied and can be tested in a unique manner by the initiation of processes of reflection carried on within certain groups toward which these processes have been directed; and the selection of appropriate strategies, the solution of tactical questions, and the conduct of the political struggle. On the first level, the aim is true statements, on the second, authentic insights, and on the third, prudent decisions." Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 32.

⁵¹ Notice that whereas the first turn (the encroachment of *techne* into *praxis*) happens with the rise of modern political theories that no longer seek social righteousness, but control and power (Machiavelli and More), the second turn (the reversion of the classical hierarchy among theory, praxis, and production) takes place with Enlightenment's project of the emancipation of modern man (Kant, Hegel, and Marx).

⁵² American philosopher Richard Rorty, for instance, takes the related philosophical dispute between pragmatism and rationalism to represent a search for self-validation. He opens his essay "Solidarity or Objectivity?" with the following definitions: "There are two principal ways in which reflective human beings try, by placing their lives in a larger context, to give sense to those lives. The first is by telling the story of their contribution to a community. This community may be the actual historical one in which they live, or another actual one, distant in time or place, or a quite imaginary one, consisting perhaps of a dozen heroes and heroines selected from history or fiction or both. The second way is to describe themselves as standing in immediate relation to a nonhuman reality. This relation is immediate in the sense that it does not derive from a relation between such a reality and their tribe, or their nation, or their imagined band of comrades. I shall say that stories of the former kind exemplify the desire for solidarity, and that stories of the latter kind exemplify the desire for objectivity." Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, ed. Michael Krausz (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 167.

sanctions a moral imperative for his relation with the world around him, modern man sees that very world as a disenchanted or demystified environment,⁵³ no longer as a mystery for its contemplation, nor as a community of fellows to deal with by means of right actions, but as an object of control. All this, together with the proposals with which Habermas challenges modern society, raises some questions regarding the discussion of case study six, such as the following: If the trajectory in the philosophical discussion described by Habermas is rooted in the secularization of modern world, is this not an essentially foreign and antagonist trajectory that Christian theology has followed after by reproducing the same moves as those of the philosophical field? Or, even worse: Does the similitude of turns expose a process of secularization in Christian theology parallel to that of the philosophical field? If, after answering these questions, it is still possible to keep speaking in terms of theory and praxis in Christian theology, how is the Christian church to meet Habermas' challenging proposals? What would the communicative process demanded by Habermas for mediating between theory and praxis look like? What would be the instruments and set of criteria to control and lead this critical communicative process?

What Model Three Does with the Case Study in Question

In addressing case study six, model three of confessional commitment (1) contributes with instruments for a meta-critique of the very discussion on the theoretical and practical nature of Christian theology, (2) provides instruments for leading a critical assessment of the relation of theory and praxis in Christian theology, and (3) allows the Lutheran Confessions to illuminate

⁵³ It is Habermas who points out that the demystification of the modern world opens up the possibility for modern political experiments distanced from the ethics of *praxis* and approached under the idea of control and power of *techné*. Habermas, *Theory and Praxis*, 50.

the discussion.

Instruments for a Meta-Critique of the Discussion

Model three of confessional commitment contributes to the discussion regarding the proper nature of Christian theology a set of instruments that raise a, so to speak, “meta-critique” of the discussion itself. Before providing instruments to grapple with the challenge posed by case study six, model three takes a step back in order to address one of the questions that brought the previous section to a close, regarding the validity of the discussion *per se*. Otherwise stated, is the discussion on theory and praxis in the field of Christian theology valid, or it is a foreign conversation, and even a sign of church secularization to be regretted rather than answered?

Model three places the story of any particular church within the framework of two movements that function together: one that is cyclic or synchronic, and another that is linear or diachronic.⁵⁴ As will be considered below, the cyclic movement, with its rather abstract and heteronomous component of “what is confessed” (that which rules and controls the other more practical components), “what is taught” (the actual public practices of a particular church) and “what is believed” (the actual private piety of its members), presents itself as a relevant instrument to appreciate the discussion in case study six. This cyclic movement proposes a double relation of complementary integration between the theoretical (“what is confessed”) and practical components (“what is taught” and “what is believed”), and of subordination of the latter under the former’s priority. With this, model three would represent nothing else than a reverted variant of profile two.⁵⁵ However, this cyclic movement does not function in isolation, but in

⁵⁴ See pp. 65–66, Figures 4 and 5.

⁵⁵ Just as the *expansionist* approach, the cyclic movement integrates the practical and the theoretical aspects of Christian theology, but seems to revert the hierarchical order of profile two, by putting praxis under theory.

correlation with and within the framework of the linear movement, which affirms the historical nature of Christian theology, as well as its eternal and revealed character. That is to say, even when the orthodox dynamics of the *Una Sancta* has an undeniable historical character, the doctrine that constitutes it as orthodox is not merely the best possible human theological achievement, but *doctrina divina*.

Therefore, it is not the case that each particular church (or each new generation) is placed under the monumental burden of redesigning the structure of its doctrine by first crafting such a foundation that may pass the test of the social or philosophical criticism of its time, and then proceeding to arrange the pieces that still stand. Rather, he who created and sustains the *Una Sancta* gives himself as the only foundation that legitimates whatever he has established for his church, even when that which he has established may not fit the preferred articulation of theory and praxis of the day and, consequently, may not attain a proper legitimation before the world.⁵⁶ The actual case is that each particular church is invited to have a share in the orthodox dynamics of the *Una Sancta*, and this takes place when that particular church embraces whatever the Lord of the church has established for her. If it were purely theoretical stuff, then orthodoxy would consist in embracing that very theoretical stuff and accepting the Lord's institution as the only legitimation, even when the philosophical discussion of the day would demand, for example, the practical validation of theory.

To use Robert Fossett's definitions,⁵⁷ this antifoundational stance does not censure any

⁵⁶ Matt. 7:24–27; 16:13–20; 21:33–44; Eph. 2:19–22.

⁵⁷ In terms of Robert Fossett's "antifoundationalist account of doctrine," model three is confronting here the foundationalism that lies behind any attempt to validate Christian theology upon a humanly devised basis, with the claim that "[t]he foundation for the Church and her doctrine is Jesus, *and nothing else*. Every claim the Church makes, her worship, speech, doctrine, and practices are all founded by and bound to Jesus alone." Fossett, *Upon this Rock*, 123.

theological conversation regarding the nature of Christian theology under the classic philosophical categories of theory, praxis, and production. But model three certainly raises a categorical critique against the pretentiousness of taking the definition of what is legitimate and what is not in Christian theology out of a previous philosophical decision we may take. Model three puts a stop on the modern aspirations that, under the pretext of an emancipatory critique, substitute the Lord's foundational and legitimating role, and reorganize the pieces (in terms of theory and praxis) of what the Lord has established for his church. Thus a distinction is made between a conversation that attempts to recognize the divine configuration of Christian theology in terms of theory and praxis, and another conversation that imposes upon Christian theology a foreign criterion of legitimacy in order to discriminate that which passes the test from that which needs to be abandoned on account of its theoretical or practical character.

Instruments for a Critical Discussion

The third model of confessional commitment claims that its cyclic or synchronic movement is constitutive of the church's orthodoxy, in that it corresponds to what the Lord has established for his church. When a particular church confesses the truth that the Lord has revealed and that the *Una Sancta* has dogmatized ("what is confessed"), when that church adjusts her actual public acts in accordance with what was given her to do ("what is taught"), and when her members live out their daily piety in terms of the dominical promise and command ("what is believed"), that particular church participates in the *Una Sancta*'s orthodox dynamics. And this is so because she has her entire experience and life adjusted to what the Lord has established for her.

There is a rough correspondence between the components of this cyclic movement (we believe, teach, and confess) and the main categories in the classic discussion regarding theory and praxis (see below, Figure 7). The component of "what is confessed" (*confitemur*) has the

divine and eternal truth at its core, a truth that no particular church constructs out of her own contextual reality, but rather receives from the outside, that is to say, from eternity above as the revealed truth, and from her classical past as the dogma of the *Una Sancta*. All this permeates this first component of the cyclic movement with a rather theoretical thrust. The component of “what is taught” (*docemus*) has the actual official practices of a particular community that are designed to drive salvation home to flesh-and-bone people around that church at its core. This makes its connection with praxis to need no further argumentation. Finally, the component of “what is believed” (*credimus*) has the actual private piety of those people who integrate the particular church in question, with their penitent and believing hearts, as well as the production of good works of love that inform the walk of life of each individual member. This seems to relate the third component with both praxis and *techne*.

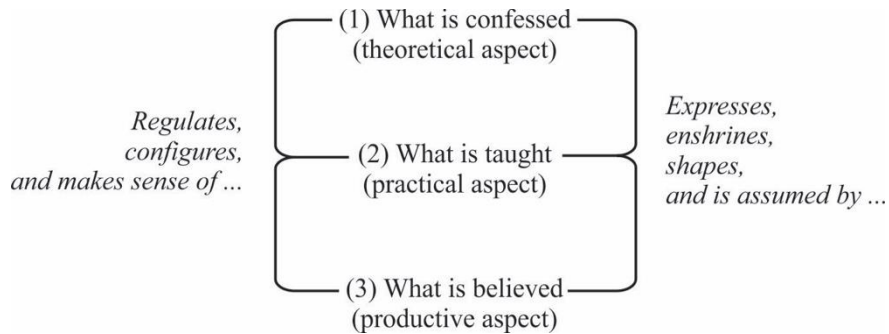


Figure 7. The cyclic or synchronic movement as paradigmatic matrix in the discussion of theory and praxis in Christian theology.

Now, this correspondence between the cyclic movement and the discussion of case study six, the particular configuration that the double relation of perichoresis and hierarchy establishes among the components, and the normative character for determining the church’s orthodoxy, are all factors that make model three’s cyclic movement a relevant instrument for running a critical

discernment and evaluation of the discussion in case study six. In this capacity, the cyclic movement provides a paradigmatic matrix with which each profile can be assessed by way of contrast. Thus, for instance, the reductionism of profiles one (“mere theory”) and three (“mere praxis”) flatten the tridimensional structure of an orthodox approach by isolating just one component of it. As a consequence, either praxis is left orphan of any explicit doctrinal framework of reference (profile three), or Christian theology is reduced to a mere disincarnate abstraction (profile one). Profiles two (“praxis over theory”) and four (“praxis and theory in balance”), by contrast, are non-reductive approaches, though they seem to conflate under praxis two components that model three distinguishes as “what is taught” (public practices) and “what is believed” (private piety)—a distinction that, as will be considered below, is crucial for running the critical process. Now, in terms of integration of the components of praxis and theory, both profiles two and four fail to ascribe the theoretical aspect the priority suggested by model three, with a reverted hierarchy in the case of profile two, and an ambiguous relatedness in profile four. However, this ambiguity affects both profiles, for what does “balance” mean? Is there any communication at all between theory and praxis in this balanced tension, or each aspect is left by its own? In a similar way, what is the specific way in which praxis rules over theory in profile two?

Finally, in providing this paradigmatic matrix of an orthodox configuration of the theoretical, practical, and productive dimensions of Christian theology, model three also demonstrates to be relevant for addressing two of the final questions with which the introductory section concluded. The first question was: How would the communicative process demanded by Habermas for mediating between theory and praxis look like? The double dynamics of descent and ascent that constitute the cyclic movement of orthodoxy brings important clues in this

regard. For the fact that the higher levels of the hierarchy (“what is confessed” and “what is taught”) regulate, configure, and make sense of the lower levels (“what is taught” and “what is believed”), constitutes the critical interpellation with which the “I” (of an individual member or a particular church) is addressed from without by the “Thou” of the *Una Sancta*. But, at the same time, in this communicative process, the lower levels of the hierarchy (“what is taught” and “what is believed”) express, enshrine, and even shape the former (“what is confessed” and “what is taught”), and are assumed by them (see Figure 7). Notice that the central or mediating position of “what is taught” is not only a graphic accidental detail in Figure 7, but rather a crucial functional instance without which there is no critical communicative process at all. For it is there, in the context of the actual performance of the divinely instituted rituals—the public proclamation of the pure doctrine of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments—that any Christian praxis and individual production is brought under the divine and truly emancipatory critique, and that any theoretical dimension of Christian theology attains its soteriological and this-worldly tangibility for which it has been revealed at all.

The other question model three helps to address is this: What would be the instrument and set of criteria to control and lead this critical communicative process? After exploring the critical function that the linear and the cyclic movements can exert, the answer to this question seems to be evident. But what remained implicit here is the centrality that both movements in model three ascribe to the Lutheran Confessions. They are the epoch-making dogmatization of the revealed truth that has signaled each new chapter in the story of the *Una Sancta*’s orthodox struggle against heresy (linear or diachronic movement). Therefore, there is no entrance, no participation in the orthodox dynamics of the *Una Sancta*, unless an individual Christian or a particular church is put under the criticism of the Lutheran Confessions. For they are that singular component that

crowns, regulates, and makes the cyclic movement to cohere with “what is confessed.” The normative priority held by this single component of the triad rests precisely on its instrumental function to control and lead the critical communicative process through which our personal and communal heterodoxy is kept in check and reverted into orthodoxy.

The Lutheran Confessions Illuminating the Discussion

The first thing that becomes noticeable is that the Lutheran Confessions do not explicitly address the discussion regarding the nature of Christian theology. This is no surprise if we consider that the Confessions are far from pretending an encyclopedic completeness. Notwithstanding, their very silence exposes—to say the least—the peripheral or alien nature of the discussion.⁵⁸ However, a big deal of what the Confessions explicitly address has a certain, though indirect, contribution to the discussion.

Radical Criticism against Any Human Foundation

Arguably, one of the main purposes of the Book of Concord is to shatter and deconstruct the deception of any foundation that may rest—even in the least sense—upon human abilities. And this is particularly the case if we deal with spiritual matters, which concerns the discussion in case study six. In condemning the synergistic tendency of the Philippists, the Formula affirms the dramatic state of corruption of the fallen humanity in these terms:

[N]ot only is original sin (in human nature) such a complete lack of all good in spiritual, divine matter, but also that at the same time it replaces the lost image of God in the human being with a deep-seated, evil, horrible, bottomless, unfathomable, and indescribable corruption of the entire human nature and of all its powers, particularly of the highest, most important powers of the soul, in mind, heart, and will. Ever since the fall, the human being inherits an inborn evil way of doing things, an internal impurity of the heart, mind, and way of thinking from Adam. Following

⁵⁸ See above note 694.

its highest powers and in light of reason, this fallen heart is by nature diametrically opposed to God and his highest commandments.⁵⁹

In the same way, the first group of antitheses of Solid Declaration I (concerning original sin), annihilates every possible corner in which a Pelagian anthropology may seek refuge,⁶⁰ to the point of arriving at the only logical conclusion: “corrupted human nature ... can do nothing else but sin in God’s sight.”⁶¹ Consequently, “in spiritual and divine matters, the mind, heart, and will of the unrebored human being can in absolutely no way, on the basis of its own natural power, understand, believe, accept, consider, will, begin, accomplish, do, effect, or cooperate.”⁶²

Remarkably, for the discussion in case study six, even though they explicitly intend to leave no single aspect of our human constitution outside the corruption produced by the fall, the Lutheran Confessions usually articulate the description of this contamination (as well as the believer’s renewal) in terms of both anthropological aspects evident in the tension behind the theory-praxis discussion, namely, mind (*mens*) and heart (*cor*), or reason (*intellectus*) and will (*voluntas*).⁶³

⁵⁹ SD I, 11 in Kolb and Wengert, 534–35.

⁶⁰ SD I, 17–25.

⁶¹ SD I, 25 in Kolb and Wengert, 536.

⁶² SD II, 7 in Kolb and Wengert, 544.

⁶³ “What else does this mean except that a wisdom [*sapientiam*] and righteousness that would grasp God and reflect God was implanted in humankind, that is, humankind received gifts like the knowledge [*notitiam*] of God, fear [*timorem*] of God, trust [*fiduciam*] in God, and the like?” (Ap II, 18 in Kolb and Wengert, 115; BSLK, 253:19–21); “Hugh means the same thing when he says that original sin is ignorance in the mind [*ignorantiam in mente*] and concupiscence in the flesh [*concupiscentiam in carne*]” (Ap II, 29 in Kolb and Wengert, 116; BSLK, 257:14–15 [citing Hugh of St. Victor, *The Sacraments of the Christian Life* I, 7, c. 28 (MPL 176:299)]); “[L]et us add [to our consideration] the following scholastic argument: it is necessary for righteousness to reside in the will [*in voluntate*]; therefore, since faith resides in the intellect [*in intellectu*], it does not justify ... It is evident that in ethics obedience to a superior, approved by the superior, is called righteousness. Now faith is obedience to the gospel, therefore, faith is rightly called righteousness ... However, although this faith resides in the will (since it is the desire for and the reception of the promise), nevertheless this obedience to the gospel is reckoned as righteousness not on account of our purity, but because it receives the offered mercy and believes that we are regarded as righteous through mercy on account of Christ and not on account of our fulfillment of the law ... Thus minds must be called away from focusing on the law to focusing on the gospel and Christ, and it must be acknowledged that we are regarded as righteous when we sense that we are accepted on account of Christ and not on account of love or the fulfillment of the law” (Ap IV, 304 in Kolb and Wengert, 164–65; BSLK, 375:14–15); “[The papists] say that the natural powers of humankind have remained whole and uncorrupted; that reason can teach correctly [*rationem recte posse docere*] and the will can rightly act [*voluntatem posse ea ... praestare*] according to it” (SA III, 3, 10 in Kolb and Wengert,

As grave a necessity to deconstruct any self-centered hope as they may have had, the Lutheran confessors did not fall into any kind of mere anthropological nihilism, as if this were a value in itself. There are various dialectical distinctions with which the Lutheran Confessions depict their ability to hold a remarkable anthropological positivity, even when they deploy their characteristic vocation of dismantling the human tendency to place our confidence in ourselves. Let us single out four of these dialectical distinctions.

First, the Lutheran Confessions are able to preserve an unshakable appreciation for the human nature's dignity, even when they affirm with absolute radicalness our thorough depravity and damnability. Thus the concordists are able to seal off any possible door Pelagianism may use to gain back an entrance into Lutheranism through the mediation of the Philippist party, at the very hour they take on condemning Matthias Flacius' Manichaean slip, by retaining the classical Augustinian distinction between human *substantia* (God's work) and the original sin, taken as *accidens* (the devil's work).⁶⁴

313; BSLK, 753:29–30); “Therefore, here as well, contrition is not uncertain, because there remains nothing that we might consider a ‘good’ with which to pay for sin. Rather, there is plain, certain despair concerning all we are [*sumus*], think [*cogitamus*], say [*loquimur*], or do [*facimus*]” (SA III, 3, 36 in Kolb and Wengert, 318; BSLK, 763:22–23); “Scripture denies to the natural human mind, heart, and will [*intellectui, cordi et voluntati*] every ability ... to think anything good or proper in spiritual matters by themselves, or to understand, begin, will, undertake, do, accomplish, or cooperate [*cogitandi, intelligendi, inchoandi, volendi, proponendi, agendi, operandi et cooperandi*] in them” (SD II, 12 in Kolb and Wengert, 545–46; BSLK, 1351:28–31); “He opens the mind and the heart [*intellectum et cor*] so that they understand [*intelligat*] Scripture and are attentive [*attendat*] to the Word” (SD II, 26 in Kolb and Wengert, 549; BSLK, 1359:19–20); “[T]here is no power or ability [*potentia aut virtus*], no cleverness or reason [*sapientia aut intelligentia*], with which we can prepare ourselves for righteousness and life or seek after it. On the contrary, we must remain the dupes and captives of sin and the property of the devil to do [*facere*] and to think [*cogitare*] what pleases them” (SD II, 43 [citing Martin Luther, “Confession on the Holy Supper, 1528,” *LW* 37:363] in Kolb and Wengert, 552; BSLK, 1365:32–34); “[A]n enlightened understanding is fashioned out of a darkened understanding [*ex intellectu coecato illuminatus fiat intellectus*] and an obedient will is fashioned out of a rebellious will [*ex rebelli voluntate fiat promta et oboediens voluntas*]” (SD II, 60 in Kolb and Wengert, 555; BSLK, 1373:33–35). For a discussion on Melancthon's reformulation of Aristotelian psychology and its influence upon the anthropological discussion in the Lutheran Confessions, see Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions (1529–1537)*, trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia, 1988), 125–29.

⁶⁴ At the disputation in Weimar, August 1560, around the synergistic controversy, second generation reformers got entangled around this categorical issue. On the one hand, Matthias Flacius found himself in the necessity to preserve Luther's radical understanding of original sin, and affirmed that sin is not an accident but a formal substance, and that with the fall, the image of God was replaced by the image of Satan (SD I, 1, 26–30). On the

Second, the Lutheran Confessions are able to concede human reason and free will a whole spectrum of capacities, even when their desperately necessary concern is to crush the indefatigable attempt of our flesh to retain at least some kind of participation and power in the spiritual realm. The clear-cut distinction that the Lutheran Confessions establish between our existence *coram deo* and our existence *coram mundo*, “between civil righteousness [*iustitia civilis*] which is ascribed to free will, and spiritual righteousness [*iustitia spiritualis*], which is ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate,”⁶⁵ allows them not only to rule out any human contribution and capacity in things divine, but also to affirm human will in its proper sphere of action:

It can to some extent produce civil righteousness or the righteousness of works. It can talk about God and offer God acts of worship with external works; it can obey rulers and parents. By choosing an external work it can keep back the hand from murder, adultery, and theft. Because human nature still retains reason and judgment concerning things subject to the senses, it also retains the ability to choose in such matters, as well as the freedom and ability to achieve civil righteousness.⁶⁶

Third, the Lutheran Confessions are able to eliminate any kind of uncertainty with respect to the believer’s righteousness in God’s sight, even when they affirm with the sternest realism that “the law will always accuse us since no one satisfies the law of God,”⁶⁷ for “[e]verything is

other hand, Viktorin Strigel, attempting to defend the Melanchthonian position that the human will is a third cause of conversion (together with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God), sustained that original sin was “an external obstacle” for the still remaining human spiritual powers (SD I, 22 in Kolb and Wengert, 535), thus, nothing beyond an Aristotelian accident (SD I, 2, 17–25). Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 201–15; Friedrich Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 291–374.

⁶⁵ Ap XVIII, 9 in Kolb and Wengert, 234; BSLK, 553:7–8.

⁶⁶ Ap XVIII, 4 in Kolb and Wengert, 233–34.

⁶⁷ Ap XII, 88 in Kolb and Wengert, 202. The octavo edition omits a section in Ap IV that elaborates around this notion regarding the principle office of the law with the following rhetorical questions: “For who loves or fears God enough? Who endures patiently enough the afflictions that God sends? Who does not often wonder whether history is governed by God’s counsels or by chance? Who does not often doubt whether God hears him? Who does not often complain because the wicked have better luck than the devout, because the wicked persecute the devout? Who lives up to the requirements of his calling? Who loves his neighbor as himself? Who is not tempted by lust?” Ap IV, 167; Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 130.

pure sin with us.”⁶⁸ Of course, here we are dealing with the core distinction between law and gospel that traverses the entire Reformation theology.⁶⁹ However, there are particular instances in which this dialectical articulation of the scriptural doctrine becomes remarkable. One of them is the distinction that the Formula establishes between two kinds of righteousness that “dare not be mixed with each other,” namely, the righteousness of faith (*fidei iustitia*) and the righteousness of new obedience or good works (*iustitiam novae obedientiae seu bonorum operum*).⁷⁰ With this distinction, the concordists locate the entire seat of justifying faith outside us (*tota iustitia nostra extra nos*): “we must seek all our righteousness apart from our merit, works, virtues, and worthiness and apart from those of all people,” for “our righteousness rests only on the Lord Christ” (*in solo Domino nostro Iesou Christo*).⁷¹ “[T]he entire obedience of the entire person of Christ [*tota totius personae Christi oboedientia*], which he rendered to the Father on our behalf [*nostra causa*] unto the most shameful death of the cross [Phil. 2:8], is reckoned to us as righteousness [*nobis ad iustitiam imputetur*].”⁷² Therefore, neither God nor justifying faith look to anything in us, not to our works, not to the righteousness of new obedience, not even to “his divine nature, as it dwells in us and works in us” (*in nobis habitat et operetur*).⁷³

For because this righteousness that is begun in us [*in nobis*]—this renewal—is imperfect and impure in this life because of our flesh, a person cannot use it in any way to stand before God’s judgment throne. Instead, only the righteousness of the obedience, suffering, and death of Christ, which is reckoned to faith, can stand before God’s tribunal.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ SA III, 3, 36 in Kolb and Wengert, 318.

⁶⁹ SD V, 1.

⁷⁰ SD III, 32; BSLK, 1401:4–5.

⁷¹ SD III, 55 in Kolb and Wengert, 572; BSLK, 1411:23.

⁷² SD III, 56 in Kolb and Wengert, 572; BSLK, 1412:1–3.

⁷³ SD III, 63 in Kolb and Wengert, 573; BSLK, 1415:7.

⁷⁴ SD III, 32 in Kolb and Wengert, 567; BSLK, 1401:8.

Therefore, “faith looks ... to Christ’s obedience alone.”⁷⁵ Article XI of the Formula does a corresponding thing when it explains that the biblical doctrine of the eternal election “offers the following beautiful, wonderful comfort:”

God made the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of each individual Christian such a high personal concern ... [and] he desired to guarantee my salvation so completely and certainly—because it could slip through our fingers so easily through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh or be snatched and taken from our hands through the deceit and power of the devil and the world. For he has preordained this salvation through his eternal intention, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and he has placed it for safekeeping into the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can snatch us away.⁷⁶

Finally, the Lutheran Confessions are able to confront Antinomianism with a robust advocacy of the necessity of good works in the Christian life, even when they condemn the synergistic tendency to ascribe those good works any positive function in soteriology. The distinction previously mentioned (# 3) is not aimed at the depreciation of good works at all. Augsburg Confession XX presents a great defense against this false interpretation: “Our people are falsely accused of prohibiting good works. But their writings concerning the Decalogue and other writings demonstrate that they have given good and useful account and admonition concerning proper Christian walks of life and works.”⁷⁷ Some paragraphs later, the princes proceed with the proper differentiation:

Further, it is taught that good works should and must be done, not that a person relies on them to earn grace, but for God’s sake and to God’s praise. Faith alone always takes hold of grace and forgiveness of sin. Because the Holy Spirit is given through faith, the heart is also moved to do good works. For before, because it lacks the Holy Spirit, the heart is too weak ... That is why this teaching concerning faith is not to be censured for prohibiting good works. On the contrary, it should be praised for

⁷⁵ SD III, 63 in Kolb and Wengert, 573.

⁷⁶ SD XI, 45–46 in Kolb and Wengert, 648; see also SD XI, 90.

⁷⁷ AC XX, 1–2 in Kolb and Wengert, 52.

teaching the performance of good works and for offering help as to how they may be done.⁷⁸

This is precisely what we find in the Catechisms' treatment of the Ten Commandments. There is a masterful combination of the absolute necessity and priority of the gospel (dealt with in the second and following principal parts),⁷⁹ together with a robust elaboration and an exultant praise of the good works we are given to do (dealt with in the first principal part).⁸⁰ The Formula's condemnation of Antinomianism and Nicholas von Amsdorf's erring response to George Major's heresy⁸¹ also constitutes a clear affirmation of the importance that good works have in Lutheran doctrine. The fact that good works must be excluded from the article of justification

⁷⁸ AC XX, 27–31, 35 in Kolb and Wengert, 56. Ap IV, 136 presents a similar defense: “We openly confess, therefore, that the keeping of the law must begin in us and then increase more and more. And we include both simultaneously, namely, the inner spiritual impulses and the outward good works. Therefore the opponents' claims are false when they charge that our people do not teach about good works since our people not only require them but also show how they can be done.” Kolb and Wengert, 142.

⁷⁹ Luther concludes his explanation of the Creed with these words: “These three articles of the Creed, therefore, separate and distinguish us Christians from all other people on earth. All who are outside this Christian people ... cannot be confident of his love and blessing, and therefore they remain in eternal wrath and condemnation ... From this you see that the Creed is a very different teaching than the Ten Commandments. For the latter teach us what we ought to do, but the Creed tells us what God does for us and gives to us. The Ten Commandments, moreover, are written in the hearts of all people, but no human wisdom is able to comprehend the Creed; it must be taught by the Holy Spirit alone. Therefore the Ten Commandments do not succeed in making us Christians, for God's wrath and displeasure still remain upon us because we cannot fulfill what God demands of us. But the Creed brings pure grace and makes us righteous and acceptable to God.” LC, “Creed,” 66–68 in Kolb and Wengert, 440.

⁸⁰ Luther concludes his explanation of the Ten Commandments like this: “[W]e are to keep them incessantly before our eyes and constantly in our memory and to practice them in all our works and ways. Each of us is to make them a matter of daily practice in all circumstances, in all activities and dealings, as if they were written everywhere we look, even wherever we go or wherever we stand. Thus, both for ourselves at home and abroad among our neighbors, we will find occasion enough to practice the Ten Commandments, and no one need search far for them.

For all of this we see once again how highly these Ten Commandments are to be exalted and extolled above all orders, commandments, and works that are taught and practiced apart from them. Here we can throw out a challenge: Let all the wise and holy step forward and produce, if they can, any work like that which God in these commandments so earnestly requires and enjoins under threat of his greatest wrath and punishment, while at the same time he adds such glorious promises that he will shower us with all good things and blessings. Therefore we should prize and value them above all other teachings as the greatest treasure God has given us.” LC, “Ten Commandments,” 331–33 in Kolb and Wengert, 431.

⁸¹ George Major defended the expression “good works are necessary for salvation” with which the Leipzig Proposal proposes a concession to the Augsburg Interim's reintroduction of Roman doctrine of justification. Nicholas von Amsdorf counters with the opposite expression, “good works are harmful for salvation,” taken from Luther's early polemical works. Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 191–93.

and salvation does not mean that they “are a matter of freedom for the faithful, in the sense that they [i.e., the faithful] have free choice whether they want or wish to do them or refrain from doing them,”⁸² and even less, that good works are in themselves “harmful for believers in regard to their salvation.”⁸³ Over against this distortion, the Formula makes clear that, even though the believers’ good works are pleasing and acceptable to God only “for the sake of the Lord Christ through faith” (because if good works “do not proceed from true faith, they are sin in God’s sight”),⁸⁴ “it is [still] God’s will and express command that the faithful should do good works,”⁸⁵ and even those “works that belong to the maintenance of outward discipline are also demanded of the unbelievers and unconverted ... [and] are praiseworthy in the world’s sight and ... rewarded by God in this world with temporal benefits.”⁸⁶

Now, no single bit of this still-remaining anthropological positivism throws a shade of ambiguity upon the Lutheran Confessions’ absolute rejection of any human contribution that may function as foundation and ultimate criterion of verification or legitimation in Christian theology. For the effect of the fall,

this inherited defect[,] is so huge and abominable that it can be covered and forgiven in God’s sight in those who are baptized and believe only for the sake of the Lord Christ. Only the new birth and renewal of the Holy Spirit can and must heal this deranged, corrupted human nature. This renewal [at the same time] only begins in this life; it is finally completed in the life to come.⁸⁷

In grappling with the eschatological tension in which Christian believers find themselves in this

⁸² SD IV, 20 in Kolb and Wengert, 577.

⁸³ SD IV, 38 in Kolb and Wengert, 580.

⁸⁴ SD IV, 8 in Kolb and Wengert, 575.

⁸⁵ SD IV, 38 in Kolb and Wengert, 580.

⁸⁶ SD IV, 8 in Kolb and Wengert, 575.

⁸⁷ SD I, 14 in Kolb and Wengert, 534.

life, the Formula of Concord, article VI (on the third use of the law), explains that

believers in this life are not perfectly, wholly, *completive vel consummative* [completely or entirely] renewed—even though their sin is completely covered by the perfect obedience of Christ so that this sin is not reckoned to them as damning, and even though the killing of the old creature and the renewal of their minds in the Spirit has begun—nonetheless, the old creature still continues to hang on in their nature and all of its inward and outward powers.⁸⁸

Consequently, the fragmentariness of our humanity—even in the case of the reborn Christians—is such, that no firm foundation for Christian theology can be established upon anything that belongs to us, may it be our best enlightened and emancipatory praxis, or our highest and strongest theoretical constructions. To use the way Oswald Bayer speaks about the passive nature of Christian faith, the first thing that the Lutheran Confessions do with respect to the discussion in case study six is to put a limit and to raise a demolishing critique on both “justifying thinking (metaphysics) and justifying doing (morality).”⁸⁹ In spiritual matters—such as engagement in Christian theology—nothing of our own, neither our doing (praxis) nor our thinking (theory), can stand by itself as the ultimate criterion of legitimacy. For this foundational place belongs to the very definition of a “god.”⁹⁰ Consequently, the Large Catechism raises this double critique against an idolatrous use of theory and praxis, when it denounces that “those who boast of great learning, wisdom, power, prestige, family, and honor and who trust in them have a god also, but not the one, true God,”⁹¹ as well as when it exposes “the greatest idolatry ... that seeks help, comfort, and salvation in its own works and ... relies on such things and boasts of them ... What is this but to have made God into an idol—indeed, an ‘apple-god’—and to have set ourselves up

⁸⁸ SD VI, 7 in Kolb and Wengert, 588.

⁸⁹ Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 21–27.

⁹⁰ LC, “Ten Commandments,” 1–3 in Kolb and Wengert, 386.

⁹¹ LC, “Ten Commandments,” 10 in Kolb and Wengert, 387.

as God?”⁹²

Uniqueness of the Divine Foundation

If Christian theology is to have a firm foundation that may function as a valid criterion of legitimation of that what the church is, thinks, and does, that foundation must be divine. The discernment between the feebleness of human alternatives and what God himself has given the church to be her sure foundation belongs to the very core of the reformatory purging function of the Lutheran Confessions, and runs through their entire argumentation.

Thus the great text of Matthew 16:15–19 lies behind two crucial reformatory discussions regarding the church’s foundation. One of them is the discussion that the *Augustana* VII opens up with respect to the unity of the *Una sancta* and the necessary conditions an external association needs to fulfill in order to belong in it:

Likewise, they teach that one holy church will remain forever [*una sancta Ecclesia perpetuo mansura*]. The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough [*satis est*] for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary [*Nec necesse est*] that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.⁹³

Even when the same confession concedes somewhere else the necessity and usefulness of certain traditions of human institution,⁹⁴ as well as the bishops’ authority by ecclesiastical right (*de iure ecclesiae*) to establish them,⁹⁵ *Augustana* VII sharpens its discerning function by clearing away traditions of human institution from the possible bases that establish the unity of the church in

⁹² LC, “Ten Commandments,” 22–23 in Kolb and Wengert, 388–89.

⁹³ AC VII, 1–4 in Kolb and Wengert, 43; BSLK, 103:5–9.

⁹⁴ See AC XV; XXIV, 1–9, 40–41; Ap XV, 20–21, 38–41.

⁹⁵ AC XXVIII; Ap XXVIII.

order to give the pure proclamation of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments the exclusivity that belongs to them. The Apology explains why this is so: Since the true unity of the church is “a spiritual unity, without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God,”⁹⁶ and since rites of human institution “contribute nothing to this giving of life”⁹⁷ and do not constitute a “righteousness . . . that enlivens the heart,”⁹⁸ the foundational rock on which Christ builds the *una sancta* as “the assembly of saints who truly believe the gospel of Christ and have the Holy Spirit”⁹⁹ can be nothing else but those instruments that God himself has instituted and uses to create that faith which justifies, namely, “the pure teaching of the gospel and [the right administration of] the sacraments.”¹⁰⁰ These divinely given instruments, and no single human device, are the “foundation” (*fundamentum*) that gives the church “the true knowledge of Christ and faith,” that confers her with such an honorable office as “the pillar . . . of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), and to which the promise of remaining forever even against the gates of Hell belongs.¹⁰¹ For this foundation is Christ himself.¹⁰²

Another instance of the discussion on the church’s foundation is the one presented in the *Tractatus* (Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope) around the identification of the proper referent of “the rock” in Matthew 16:18. Is it Peter himself, and consequently the bishop of Rome, who receives special prerogatives here? The theologians gathered in Smalcald rehearse and refer to the standard Reformation reading of the Matthean text: Since Peter is not answering

⁹⁶ Ap VII/VIII, 31 in Kolb and Wengert, 179.

⁹⁷ Ap VII/VIII, 31 in Kolb and Wengert, 179.

⁹⁸ Ap VII/VIII, 36 in Kolb and Wengert, 181.

⁹⁹ Ap VII/VIII, 28 in Kolb and Wengert, 178.

¹⁰⁰ Ap VII/VIII, 20 in Kolb and Wengert, 177; see AC V, 1–2; VII, 2 in Kolb and Wengert, 40–43.

¹⁰¹ Ap VII/VIII, 20 in Kolb and Wengert, 177; BSLK, 407:14.

¹⁰² Ap VII/VIII, 21 in Kolb and Wengert, 177.

the ὁμεῖς-question (“who do you [plural] say that I am?”) by himself, but “as representing the whole company of apostles,”¹⁰³ the keys and the promise were not given to the person of Peter in himself, but “were entrusted equally to all the apostles,” who “were commissioned in like manner.”¹⁰⁴ Consequently, “the church is not built upon the authority of a human being but upon the ministry of the confession [*super ministerium illius professionis*] Peter made, in which he proclaimed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore—the confessors advance—in pronouncing his promises, “Christ addresses him [Peter] as a minister [*tanquam ministrum*]: ‘On this rock,’ that is, on this ministry.”¹⁰⁶ A “ministry [that] is not valid because of the authority of any person but because of the Word handed down by Christ.”¹⁰⁷ In this way, the *Tractatus* finally brings home the identification of the church’s divine foundation, by quoting Hilary of Poitiers: “The Father revealed this to Peter so that he might declare: ‘You are the Son of the living God.’ Upon this rock of confession, therefore, the church is built. This faith is the foundation of the church.”¹⁰⁸

Beyond these discussions around Matthew 16, the other symbolic documents exhibit the same rationale. The Large Catechism, for instance, does not tire of confronting a self-made piety as the one represented by medieval monasticism (with its “false holiness and glamour” with which the devil has bewitched the world), over against those truly good works that find their foundation in “a sure text and a divine testimony” (*divini verbi testimonium*).¹⁰⁹ Luther’s

¹⁰³ Tr 24 in Kolb and Wengert, 334.

¹⁰⁴ Tr 23 in Kolb and Wengert, 334.

¹⁰⁵ Tr 25 in Kolb and Wengert, 334; BSLK, 808:7–8.

¹⁰⁶ Tr 25 in Kolb and Wengert, 334; BSLK, 808:9.

¹⁰⁷ Tr 26 in Kolb and Wengert, 334.

¹⁰⁸ Tr 29 in Kolb and Wengert, 335 (citing Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, VI, 36–37, *NPNF*² 9:111–12).

¹⁰⁹ LC, “Ten Commandments,” 120 in Kolb and Wengert, 403; BSLK, 975:9.

polemical restoration of the proper biblical praxis in obedience to the fourth commandment is representative of his continual rationale:

[N]otice what a great, good, and holy work is here assigned to children. Unfortunately, it is entirely despised and brushed aside, and no one recognizes it as God's command or as a holy, divine word and teaching ... Every child would have kept this commandment and all would have been able to set their consciences right before God and say: "If I am to do good and holy works, I know of none better than to give honor and obedience to my parents, for God himself has commanded it. What God commands must be much nobler than anything we ourselves may devise. And because there is no greater or better teacher to be found than God, there will certainly be no better teaching than he himself gives. Now, he amply teaches what we should do if we want to do truly good works, and by commanding them he shows that they are well-pleasing to him. So, if it is God who commands this and knows nothing better to require, I will never be able to improve upon it" ... For this reason you should rejoice from the bottom of your heart and give thanks to God that he has chosen and made you worthy to perform works so precious and pleasing to him. You should regard it as great and precious—even though it may be looked at as the most trivial and contemptible thing—not because of our worthiness but because it has its place and setting within that jewel and holy shrine, the Word and commandment of God.¹¹⁰

The argument reappears when the Large Catechism comes to the final principal parts on Holy Baptism and the Sacramental of the Altar. What constitutes the essence, the benefit and power, and the proper use and reception of these sacred rites is their explicit revelatory basis in "God's Word and ordinance" (*Verbum et institutionem Dei*).¹¹¹ What makes both Baptism and the Lord's Supper even "far more glorious than anything else God has commanded and ordained"¹¹² is that

¹¹⁰ LC, "Ten Commandments," 112–13, 117 in Kolb and Wengert, 401–02. The conclusion of the first principle part applies this same argument to the rest of the Decalogue as the "summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God," so that, even though they "are common, everyday domestic duties of one neighbor to another, with nothing glamorous about them," no one is "to dare to find a higher and better way of life and status than the Ten Commandments teach." And all of for the simple reason that this form of life counts with God's explicit command promise. LC, "Ten Commandments," 311–15 in Kolb and Wengert, 428.

¹¹¹ LC, "Baptism," 15 in Kolb and Wengert, 458; BSLK, 1115:4. A fundamental dogmatic point of departure in Luther's definition of both Baptism and the Lord's Supper is St. Augustine's sacramental axiom, "*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*" (When the Word is added to the element, it becomes a sacrament). LC, "Baptism," 18; "Lord's Supper," 10 in Kolb and Wengert, 458, 468.

¹¹² LC, "Baptism," 39 in Kolb and Wengert, 461.

the certainty of the self-giving and saving *promissio* is added to the explicit divine commandment.¹¹³ In the same vein, the Formula of Concord addresses “the divisions that have arisen in the past twenty-five years as a result of the Interim and for other reasons among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession” with the deliberate intention of making obvious “the foundation of the divine truth in all these articles” (*coelestis doctrinae in omnibus articulis fundamenta*) in controversy.¹¹⁴ To attain this purpose, the concordists consider that it is required to have “a clear and binding summary and form in which a general summary of teaching is drawn together from God’s Word, [and] to which the churches that hold the true Christian religion confess their adherence.”¹¹⁵ For “the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments” are “the pure, clear fountain of Israel [*limpidissimos purissimosque Israelis fontes*], which alone is the one true guiding principle [*unicam et certissimam illam regulam*], according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated [*iudicare oporteat*].”¹¹⁶ Accordingly, we find that particularly the last articles bring back home any argumentation under the normative authority of the only foundational basis for the church’s thinking and doing. Thus in establishing the whole array of theoretical and practical controversies around the Lord’s Supper, the concordists rehearse Luther’s own attachment to the words of institution, “[f]or upon these words rests our whole argument [*in his verbis (institutionis coenae) fundamentum nostrum*], our protection and defense against all errors and

¹¹³ This double divine word of divine commandment (*mandatum dei*) and promise of grace (*promissio gratiae*) will be the key mark with which the Apology would set apart baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and absolution (as actual sacraments) over against other humanly instituted rites which, “even though they perhaps serve to teach or admonish the common folk,” lack “the authority to promise grace” conferred by “the [explicit] command of God and promise of grace, which is the essence of the New Testament.” Ap XIII, 3–4 in Kolb and Wengert, 219; BSLK, 513:3–11.

¹¹⁴ SD, “Antitheses,” 19 in Kolb and Wengert, 530; BSLK, 1319:12.

¹¹⁵ SD, “Binding Summary,” 1 in Kolb and Wengert, 526.

¹¹⁶ SD, “Binding Summary,” 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 527; BSLK, 1311:7–10.

deceptions that have ever arisen or may yet arise.”¹¹⁷ A bit later, in addressing the controversial issue of God’s eternal election, article XI refers the church once and again to the explicitly revealed Word of God (*ex solo Verbo Dei*), the only place where she finds “that necessary, comforting foundation” (*fundamentum fidei nostrae maxime necessarium et consolationis verae plenissimum*),¹¹⁸ and “this simple, correct, helpful explanation, which is firmly grounded in God’s revealed will” (*simplici, perspicua et salutari declaratione, quae in voluntate Dei revelata solidissimum habet fundamentum*).¹¹⁹

Thus over against our attempts to establish the best criterion to judge and configure the church’s thinking and doing out of the anthropocentric alternatives that philosophy provides us (i.e., *theoria*, *praxis*, or *techne*), the Lutheran Confessions affirm a totally foreign and alien foundation, namely, only the word and institution of God (*solum verbum et institutionem Dei*). Luther’s polemic against the sacramentarians’ false spiritualism is a classic instance of this submission of our best critical insights to what God has given in his inerrant Word:

[T]he world is now full of sects who scream that baptism is an external thing and that external things are of no use. But no matter how external it may be, here stands God’s Word and command that have instituted, established, and confirmed baptism. What God institutes and commands cannot be useless. Rather, it is a most precious thing, even though to all appearances it may not be worth a straw.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ SD VII, 26 in Kolb and Wengert, 597; BSLK, 1465:40 (citing LC, “Lord’s Supper,” 19).

¹¹⁸ SD XI, 36 in Kolb and Wengert, 646; BSLK, 1573:37–1575:1.

¹¹⁹ SD XI, 93 in Kolb and Wengert, 655; BSLK, 1595:29–30.

¹²⁰ LC, “Baptism.” 7–8 in Kolb and Wengert, 457. Luther’s reproach against John Oecolampadius’ challenge is a telling instance of this theology-of-the-cross-like move: “[This is] Dr. Oecolampadius’ shameful, dreadful blasphemies, when he asks of what use or need it is for Christ’s body to be in the bread, and, if we do not show him, he will conclude there is nothing to it. Now what shall I say of the outrageous audacity of this hellish Satan? Well then: even if we could not show how it is useful and necessary for Christ’s body to be in the bread, should God’s Word for that reason be false, or be twisted around according to our notion? A faithful, God-fearing heart does this: it asks first whether it is God’s Word. When it hears that it is, it smothers with hands and feet the question why it is useful or necessary ... But those who are possessed with devilish arrogance invert this procedure and, by asking why it is useful and necessary, try to smother God’s Word. They boldly set themselves on the judgment seat, summon God to the bar to give an account of his Word, and ask the poor defendant why he chooses and uses such words, and why it is useful and necessary to do and say these things. If he does not show their use and necessity, they

Beyond and in spite of this preliminary contribution—or rather, preliminary censure—the Lutheran Confessions enable a descriptive recognition of the diverse and complex nature of the divine doctrine.

Diversity and Mutuality of the Components

Far from the human and modern emancipatory temptation to subject the divine doctrine to a process of critical discrimination that, for instance, pits the more theoretical aspect of it over against the more practical ones, the Lutheran Confessions portray a divine doctrine that is anything but one-dimensional. Thus there is certainly a great deal of propositional truth that must be adhered to and kept “whole and inviolate”¹²¹ and texts to be learnt by heart and repeated back word for word.¹²² There are also commandments that prescribe “what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God”¹²³ and that we are “to make them a matter of daily practice in all circumstances, in all activities and dealings, as if they were written everywhere we look, even wherever we go or wherever we stand.”¹²⁴ And there are also public, formal, and ritual practices that are “divinely instituted action[s],” such as the Eucharist, that “includes the entire action or administration of this sacrament: that in a Christian assembly bread and wine are taken, consecrated, distributed, received, eaten, and drunk, and that thereby the Lord’s death is

immediately take him away and crucify him as a malefactor, and then boast with the Jews that they have the sure truth and have rendered service to God. Isn’t it horrible to hear this? This is where one comes out when one tries to treat God’s Word according to men’s fancy.” Martin Luther, “That These Words of Christ, ‘This is My Body,’ etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fatatics (1527),” *LW* 37:127–28.

¹²¹ Athanasian Creed, 2 in Kolb and Wengert, 24.

¹²² SC, “Preface,” 10.

¹²³ LC, “Ten Commandments,” 311 in Kolb and Wengert, 428.

¹²⁴ LC, “Ten Commandments,” 332 in Kolb and Wengert, 431.

proclaimed.”¹²⁵ Consequently, if we take either Aristotle’s categorization of the human habits (i.e., *theoria*, *praxis*, and *techne*) or the components in model three’s cyclic movement (i.e., “what is confessed,” “what is taught,” and “what is believed”) as our working template, we will find that the Lutheran Confessions leave no empty space.

If we take Luther’s Small Catechism the way the Confessions themselves delight in defining it, as “a Bible of the Laity, in which everything is summarized that is treated in details in Holy Scripture and that is necessary for a Christian to know for salvation,”¹²⁶ that is to say, as a compendium of the entire divine doctrine, the multi-dimensional nature of Christian doctrine gets easily evidenced. A cursory reading through its principal parts will expose the variety of pragmatic functions that traverse Luther’s Catechism. To make an undetailed application of John Searle’s taxonomy of illocutionary acts,¹²⁷ whereas the first principal part (Ten Commandments)

¹²⁵ SD VII, 84 in Kolb and Wengert, 607.

¹²⁶ Ep, “Binding Summary,” 5 in Kolb and Wengert, 487. See also LC, “Longer Preface,” 17; SD, “Binding Summary,” 8.

¹²⁷ John R. Searle, “A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts,” in *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, ed. Keith Gunderson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 354–59. In this essay, Searle criticizes and reworks upon John L. Austin’s proposals in the latter’s *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962). Searle proposes the following taxonomy of five types of illocutionary acts, characterized on the basis of what he calls the “direction of fit” (are the words adjusted to the reality in the world or the other way around?):

(1) *Representatives* “commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something’s being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition” (e.g. statements, assertions). The direction of fit is words-to-world (↓).

(2) *Directives* “are ... attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something” (e.g. command, request, question, pray, invitation, advice). The direction of fit is world-to-words (↑).

(3) *Commissives* “commit the speaker (again in varying degrees) to some future course of action” (e.g. promise, pledge, subscription). The direction of fit is world-to-words (↑).

(4) *Expressives* “express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content” (e.g. gratitude, congratulations, apologize). Here there is no direction of fit, it is simply presupposed (∅).

(5) *Declarations* “brings about some alternation in the status or condition of the referred to the object or objects solely in virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed” (e.g. “I excommunicate you,” “I appoint you chairman”). The direction of fit moves in both ways, because of its “peculiar character” related to the role “extra-linguistic institution[s]” play (↑↓).

represents a case of “directives,” the second part (Creed) combines “representatives” and “commissives,” the third part (Lord’s Prayer) is a different case of “directives,” the fourth and sixth sections (Baptism and Lord’s Supper) are “representatives,” the fifth principal part (Confession and Absolution) articulates “commissives” with “declarations,” the first appendix (Blessing) combines “expressive” and “directives,” and the last appendix (Household Chart) represents “directives.”

In similar terms, Oswald Bayer points out the pragmatic significance of two different commentaries in which Luther himself describes the connection between the catechism’s different parts. In one of his earliest catechetical writings, Luther explains the rationale that brings the three historical parts of Christian catechesis, under his particular rearrangement of the order as Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord’s Prayer:

There are three things a man needs to know to be save: First, he needs to know what to do and what not to do [*was er thun und lassen soll*]. Secondly, if he finds that he cannot by his own strength do or not do what God asks of him, he needs to know where to turn to find that strength [*wo erß nehmen und suchen und finden soll*] to be able to do or not do what he [i.e., God] says. Thirdly, man needs to know how he is to seek and get that strength [*wie er es suchen und holen soll*]. Thus the commandments teach him to recognize his sickness so that he may know and understand what he can and cannot do, what he ought to do and ought not to do. In this way he comes to recognize that he is an evil and sinful man. After this, the creed shows and teaches him where he can find the medicine or the remedy that he needs, that is, the grace which will help him become a righteous man so that he may keep the commandments and which shows him God and the righteousness which he reveals and offers to us in Christ. Thirdly, the Lord's Prayer teaches him how he should desire, get, and appropriate this grace for himself, namely through regular, humble, consoling prayer. This is the way in which he is given the grace and thus is saved through fulfilling the commandments of God. These are the three chief things in all the Scriptures.¹²⁸

These “three things to know” (*drey dingk zu wissen*) imprint a clear practical emphasis on

¹²⁸ Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 71 (citing Martin Luther, “*Eyn kurz form der zcehen gepott. D. M. L. Eyn kurz form des Glaubens. Eyn kurz form dess Vatter vnszers*, 1520,” WA 7:204–05).

Christian catechesis, for them all revolve around our fulfillment of God’s commandments. However, reducing these “three things to know” to the single dimension of praxis would be a clear mutilation of the propositional basis that lies behind each principal part, to wit: “that he is an evil and sinful man” (Ten Commandments), “the grace ... and the righteousness which he reveals and offers to us in Christ” (Creed), and that he can address the almighty God as a Father (Lord’s Prayer). There is a later comment of Luther that Bayer brings to the fore regarding the different functions each part of the catechism plays:

If I have had time and opportunity to go through the Lord’s Prayer, I do the same with the Ten Commandments. I take one part after another and free myself as much as possible from distractions in order to pray. I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands. That is, I think of each commandment as, first, instruction [*lere*], which is really what it is intended to be, and consider what the Lord God demands of me so earnestly. Second, I turn it into a thanksgiving [*dancksagung*]; third, a confession [*beicht*]; and fourth, a prayer [*gebet*].¹²⁹

Bayer points out that “Luther applies this fourfold meditation of the Decalogue to all parts of the catechism”¹³⁰ in such a way that we must not bind one function to a particular section, but rather “each part becom[es] for him a textbook, song book, penitential book, and prayer book.”¹³¹ Thus, the Decalogue is not only demand, but also an “outright gift and promise,” the Creed “speaks not only of what we have received from God but also of our duty ‘to serve and obey him,’” and the Lord’s Prayer “is not only petition but, as in its address, also thanksgiving.”¹³²

With this, Luther and Bayer take us a step further. For it is not only that the diverse aspects or components of divine doctrine are not to be set in opposition with each other—as if

¹²⁹ Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 72 (citing Martin Luther, “A Simple Way to Pray for a Good Friend,” 1535,” *LW* 43:200; *WA* 38:364).

¹³⁰ Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 247 note 383.

¹³¹ Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 72.

¹³² Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 72.

the more “theoretical” or “representative” parts (as, for example, the Creed) were to be pitted over against the more “practical” or “directive” ones (such as the Ten Commandments). Even further, any aspect or component of Christian doctrine is, at the end of the day, both theoretical and practical in nature, and therefore, is to be taken as instruction (*lere*) that moves us into confession of our needs (*beicht*), prayer that expects and receives (*gebet*), and doxological thanksgiving (*dancksagung*) that brings us back to the instruction’s propositional and ethical contents. That is to say, there is no single propositional aspect of the divine doctrine that will move us into a mere theoretical pondering (*vita contemplativa*), to the exclusion of a passive suffering and reception of God’s own working on us (*vita passiva*), and of its ethical implications that throw us into our daily vocations (*vita activa*). Conversely, there is neither a single ethical demand, nor a divinely instituted ritual, devoid of a thorough dogmatic bearing. This is precisely what we find—to bring just a few loose examples— when Apology IV judges purity of doctrine on rather pragmatic bases (i.e., magnifying Christ’s honor and bringing consolation to the consciences),¹³³ when Solid Declaration V reaches an ultimate definition of “law” and “gospel” that combines objective propositional content with pragmatic effect,¹³⁴ or when *Augustana* VII gives a dogmatic qualification to the public ceremonies that mark and constitute the true unity of the church.¹³⁵

¹³³ Ap IV, 2, 156–58, 204, 212–17, 298–302, 375.

¹³⁴ The law is defined as “the righteous, unchanging will of God” (propositional aspect) and as “[e]verything that reproves sin” (pragmatic aspect—SD V, 17 in Kolb and Wengert, 584). In the same way, the gospel as the teaching that Christ “was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification” (propositional aspect) and as “everything that offers the favor and grace of God to those who have transgressed the law” (pragmatic aspect—SD V, 21–22 in Kolb and Wengert, 585).

¹³⁵ Notice that, even when the *Augustana* is “reducing” the necessary conditions for the unity of the church to its minimal (rather, divinely established) expression, not any preaching of a so-called “gospel” or any administration of the sacraments will do, but only that preaching of the gospel qualified as “purely” (*rein; recte*) and that administration qualified as “according to the gospel” (*laut des Evangelii gereicht werden*) and “rightly” (*recte*). See Sasse, “Seventh Article,” 15. BSLK, 102:9–10, 103:6–7.

What the Lord has given the church to confess, his divine doctrine, is anything but one-dimensional in nature. Its diverse components, additionally, do not exhibit any kind of rivalry or opposition, but a clear relation of mutuality.

Conclusion

This present chapter has put to work model three of confessional commitment (orthodox dynamics) by addressing Latin American case study six (theory and praxis in tension). In this way, the testing task that was begun in chapter four was completed. The introductory comments brought the discussion of case study six into its broad historical and philosophical context, which resulted in a series of challenging questions (particularly out of the contributions of Jürgen Habermas). When applied to the discussion of case study six, model three of confessional commitment made the following contributions: First, it put forward both movements that constitute orthodoxy (the cyclic and linear movements) as critical instruments. On the one hand, both movements raise a categorical meta-critique against the pretentiousness of taking into our hands the definition of what is legitimate and what is not in Christian theology on human bases different from what the Lord has given the church. On the other hand, the cyclic movement presents a paradigmatic matrix of an orthodox configuration of the theoretical, practical, and productive dimensions of Christian theology. Finally, model three allows the Lutheran Confessions to illuminate the discussion by raising a radical criticism against any human foundation for things divine, affirming the uniqueness of the divine Word in this foundational capacity, and exposing the diversity and mutuality of aspects that constitute the divine doctrine.

After testing the usefulness of the three models of confessional commitment to address real case studies drawn from the literature on confessionalism in Latin America, this work will proceed to evaluate their performance as descriptive and heuristic tools. This is one of the tasks

that will be addressed in the next and final chapter of the dissertation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Here the dissertation comes to an end. After a brief revision of the main contents that gave shape to this work, the performance of each of the models of confessional commitment that were put to the test will be evaluated, and, on this basis, the general goals and outcomes of this dissertation will be assessed. Finally, this chapter will advance suggestions for further exploration of areas of study related to the present dissertation.

Summary of the Dissertation

Chapter one (Introduction) articulates the proposed thesis, namely, to work with an integrative models-based approach to the notion of confessional commitment, and to test the productivity of this approach for addressing real case studies of South American Lutheranism. Then, this proposal is located in the context of current scholarly conversations that can be grouped around the thesis' two main foci of attention, that is, the North Atlantic scholarly discussion on the definition of confessionalism and confessional identity, and the conversation about the struggles and hopes of Lutheranism in the Global South in its search for a rationale that accounts for the usefulness and necessity of a confessional commitment. Finally, the introductory chapter explains the dissertation's intended outcomes and the route to be pursued to develop its thesis.

Chapter two (Three Models of Confessional Commitment) formally begins to develop the thesis by articulating a typology of models of confessional commitment. This is, arguably, the main proposed content of the dissertation, for it is here that the principal contributions regarding the notion of confessional commitment that the entire work intends to commend are brought together. The first proposed model builds upon a main contribution of St. Louis Professor Robert

Kolb on Luther's understanding of God and the human being, which invites us to describe confessional commitment under the metaphor of divine conversation. We have summarized it as follows: The Son and the Holy Spirit bring the committed "I" into a relation of conversation and community with God the Father ("Thou"). The Lutheran Confessions function as the grammar and "form of expression" or "method of speaking" in this divine conversation. The second model follows after George A. Lindbeck's use of cultural-linguistic notions and describes confessional commitment as the church's proper form of life in this world. We have summarized model two as follows: The church is a heavenly reality in the world, a totally unique form of life in this world, for Christ the Lord rules her exclusively through the gospel. The Lutheran Confessions function as the church's own "language game" that helps the church to construe her identity and regulate her stance in the world. Finally, model three makes use of the way formerly Lutheran historian Jaroslav Pelikan articulates his view of the history of Christian tradition around the creedal introductory formulas of *credimus, docemus et confitemur* (we believe, teach, and confess), and proposes a definition of confessional commitment as orthodox dynamics. We have summarized model three with these words: Each generation of believers is brought into the orthodox dynamics of the *Una Sancta*. The Lutheran Confessions play a key role in making this participation possible, for they are the Spirit-wrought confession of pure doctrine that establishes such participation. Each model was described under the consideration of the four dimensions that give shape to the working definition of "confessional commitment," to wit, the committed "I"'s (1) socialization and alliance, (2) narrative and belief, (3) experience, and (4) action.

Chapter three (Latin American Case Studies) articulates six case studies that offer a sample of the theological reflection and struggles of Latin American Lutheranism. They are construed out of the actual contributions and extended conversations registered in the theological journals

of two of the main Lutheran church bodies in South America, that is, *Igreja Luterana* (published by Seminário Concórdia in São Leopoldo, Brazil) and *Revista Teológica* (published by Seminario Concórdia in Buenos Aires, Argentina). On the one hand, our case studies represent but a small contribution to the still inchoate scholarly investigation of Latin American Lutheranism and its struggles with confessional identity and symbolical books. On the other hand, these case studies supplied this project with real problems and discussions that allowed us to put the models of confessional commitment to the test.

Case study one (Eclipse of *fides quae*?) presents the discussion in *IL* regarding the modern dilemma of the Christian faith's dilution and loss of dogmatic substance. What began as a denunciation of a distant loss of esteem and understanding of the dogmatic nature of the Christian faith (during the forties) came to be recognized as a problem that was affecting both the LCMS and the IELB (during the sixties). At the turn of the millennium, *IL* registers two related reactions to this issue. First, a categorical assertion that the dogmatic character of Christian faith is irreducible and unrenounceable. Second, a promotion of the usefulness of normative texts and doctrines. Case study two (Contextual demand of translating the faith) presents the discussion in *RT* regarding the necessity, strategies, and limits of translating the Christian proclamation for an Argentine audience. Four profiles participate in the discussion: one that disregards the necessity of translation, a second one that raises a strong criticism and a claim of its absolute requirement, a third profile that tries out possible paths, and a final profile that raises the opposite warning against a naïvely distorting translation.

Case study three (How to revitalize pastoral counseling) articulates a discussion in *IL* on revitalizing private care of souls (*Privatseelsorge*), fueled by three different postures. An initial position supports a standard Lutheran definition of private care of souls focused on the

forgiveness of sins bestowed in absolution (forties through seventies). During the last quarter of the twentieth century, a sense of dissatisfaction with this traditional strategy and a demand of renewal proposes the adoption of the paradigm of psychological therapy. Finally, during the last two decades, there is a strong reaction against the move toward the therapeutic, and a call to retrieving to the church's *proprium* (proper work). Case study four (In search of the proper place of the priesthood) presents the exchange of thoughts in *RT* regarding the necessity of making room for a robust practice of the priesthood of all believers. The proposals move in two different directions. One moves in a centripetal direction by trying to make room *within* the inner institutional structure of the church, and comes to the point of equating the priesthood with the holy ministry. The other proposal moves in a centrifugal direction, rejecting this equation and trying to invigorate the appreciation for Christian vocation and daily walks of life.

Case study five (The menace of local independentism) brings together a recurrent warning in *IL* with respect to the temptation of separatism and the false claim of independentism. The scope of the discussion moves in two different phases. During the first decades, the journal focuses its attention on the national church body and its relation to the rest of worldwide Lutheranism, the last forty years express the same concern in terms of the local congregation and the individual pastors in their accountability to the rest of the national church. Being actively conversant with the rest of the household of faith, strengthening the synodical structure, and actually implementing the episcopal role are some of the suggestions to prevent the menace of independentism. Finally, case study six (Theory and praxis in tension) presents the discussion in *RT* regarding the proper nature of Christian theological education around the classical theory-praxis polarity. The standpoints represented virtually exhaust every possibility. There is a denunciation of a merely theoretical approach, an expansionist profile that prioritizes praxis over

theory, a reductive practical approach that simply rejects theory, a balanced proposal that tries to keep both aspects in tandem, and a final approach that alleges to transcend the classical dichotomy with a third category. Only three of these six case studies were used in the following chapters.

Chapter four (Testing Model One) applied model one (confessional commitment as divine conversation) to Latin American case study two (contextual demand of translating the faith). Model one exposed the relevance of the discussion of case study two, and expanded the perspective on what and who is involved in the missionary task of translating the message. Additionally, model one placed the Lutheran Confessions at the center of the stage as the foremost paradigm of translation and legitimate norm for the translation negotiation process. This chapter initiated a procedure that was repeated in the rest of the dissertation with the other two confessional commitment models.

Chapter five (Testing Model Two) tested the usefulness of model two (confessional commitment as a form of life in the world) with Latin American case study three (How to revitalize pastoral counseling). This model contributed two sets of categories—namely, the prepositional triad not of- / in- / into the world (οὐκ ἐκ- / ἐν τῷ- / εἰς τὸν κόσμον), and some key cultural-linguistic notions such as “form of life,” “language game,” and “rule”—that helped to draw a map of the church’s reality and, subsequently, to discern the different standpoints represented in case study three. Model two also ascribed the Lutheran Confessions a critical function and an enabling one that help the church to cope with its stance in the world. The Lutheran Confessions make explicit the *proprium* of the ministry—namely, administering the means of justification—and the way to lead a private care of souls that is coherent with the church’s language game.

Finally, chapter six (Testing Model Three) brought to completion our testing work by getting model three (confessional commitment as orthodox dynamics) to address case study six (theory and praxis in tension). First of all, model three and the Lutheran Confessions (in the crucial role that model three ascribes them) contribute an astringent meta-criticism of the entire philosophical foundationalism that traverses much of the discussion in case study six. Additionally, model three supplies the diagram of the cyclic movement as a paradigmatic matrix of an orthodox configuration of the theoretical, practical, and productive dimensions of Christian theology. Finally, the Lutheran Confessions affirm the diversity and mutuality of aspects that constitute the divine doctrine.

Evaluation of the Models of Confessional Commitment

Evaluating how the models of confessional commitment perform their task is a key move to make a decision with respect to the viability of the thesis that has driven this dissertation. The models will not be evaluated with the intentionality of commending one in detriment of the others, but to sustain the dissertation's working thesis in general terms. This section, then, will first establish the evaluative criteria, and then, will proceed to evaluate each of the three models.

Evaluative Criteria

A model is to be evaluated on its own terms. This has been this study's working definition of a model: A model is an artificial construct that proposes a simplified and comprehensive picture of reality designed to facilitate a particular understanding of this reality and the exploration of its challenges and possibilities. Consequently, the two basic functions that a model is to perform (namely, the *descriptive* function of proposing a particular view of the object of study, and the *heuristic* function of helping to explore challenges and solutions) are the

fundamental aspects to be assessed.¹ Additionally, the virtuosity with which a model performs its functions is another relevant dimension here. Elaborating upon one of the sets of evaluative criteria that philosopher Ian Barbour enlists,² the models' performance of each function will be assessed under the following leading questions and criteria:

Q1: *Descriptive function*: Does the model help to understand the object of study?

Q1a: *Simplicity*: Does the model propose a simple, consistent, and coherent description of the object of study?

Q1b: *Comprehensiveness*: Is the model able to include the different aspects that constitute the object of study?

Q1c: *Adequacy*: Does the model exhibit versatility toward different types of objects of study?³

Q2: *Heuristic function*: Does the model help finding solutions to the challenges raised by the object of study?

Q2a: *Simplicity*: Does the model propose a clear and straightforward solution?

Q2b: *Comprehensiveness*: Is the model's proposed solution broad enough to

¹ This is in line with the proposal of model theorist Frederick Ferré: "The reliability of a model of this kind, and therefore the reasonableness of accepting it as a means of organizing our thoughts in the area of its relevance, is measured precisely by its success in performing exactly those more sophisticated tasks we have just now been discussing. If the heuristic suggestions they make bear fruit; if the parallelisms among our data do remain parallel upon closer scrutiny; if the bold imagination of those who hit upon the model is not disconfirmed by future experiences, while the conceptual account which it makes possible and into which it is incorporated succeeds in substituting coherence for fragmentation, a sense of understanding for blank disconnection—then a model may justly be affirmed." Ferré, "Metaphors," 337.

² Barbour attributes to Frederick Ferré the following three evaluative criteria: "*Coherence* refers to consistency, interconnectedness, conceptual unity and the reduction of arbitrariness and fragmentation. *Inclusiveness* refers to scope, generality and ability to integrate diverse specialized languages. *Adequacy* is a matter of relevance and applicability to experience of all kinds." Barbour, *Models and Paradigms*, 66.

³ To evaluate adequacy in a proper way would require that we put each model to test with a diversity of case studies. Since we are using just a single case study per model, the relativity of our evaluation of this criterion is even higher than with the criteria of simplicity and coherence.

respond the different challenges raised by the object of study?

Q2c: *Adequacy*: Does the model's proposed solution demonstrate applicability?

I will consider four possible answers to any of these questions:

0 = No, and this model exhibits no virtue in this respect.

1 = No, but this model exhibits some virtue in this respect.

2 = Yes, but this model exhibits some defect in this respect.

3 = Yes, and this model exhibits no defect in this respect.

The answer to Q1 and Q2 will establish the evaluation of each model. The answer to Q1, for instance, will be the average product of the answers to Q1a, Q1b, and Q1c. Once again, this quantitative approach is not intended to compare one model over against the others, but to establish if our models pass the test (if the average mark is 2.0 or more) or not (if the average mark is below 2.0). Objective as this may seem, the present author approaches this necessary part of the work under the conviction that a real objectivity is simply not possible here.

Evaluation of Model One

I have tested model one (confessional commitment as divine conversation) by applying it to Latin American case study two (contextual demand of translating the faith). In terms of its *descriptive* function, model one presents a strongly unified and simple depiction of the phenomenon of translation of the Christian message around its root metaphor of divine conversation (Q1a = 3). Model one, at the same time, was not only able to account for the entire discussion, but even so it expanded its horizon (Q1b = 3). Its metaphor presented no difficulty in portraying a fitting description of the case study in question (Q1c = 3).

In terms of its *heuristic* function, model one advances a rather coherent proposal of a solution to the quest of case study two, though this proposal seems not to be thoroughly

straightforward in its expression to satisfy the urgency with which a church in mission seeks to answer questions about confessional identity (Q2a = 2). However, model one demonstrates its ability to broadly take up the entire problem and various challenges into consideration (Q2b = 3), and to contribute a relevant and pointed solution (Q2c = 3).

If this grading is fair, the performance of confessional commitment in model one is outstanding (average mark = 2.83).

Evaluation of Model Two

I have tested model two (confessional commitment as a form of life in the world) by applying it to Latin American case study three (How to revitalize pastoral counseling). In terms of its *descriptive* function, model two does not present a simple portrayal of the object of study, but a complex picture connected with the proper tensions of the reality of the church in the world. These tensions and complexity, notwithstanding, do not spoil the coherence of a still understandable depiction (Q1a = 1). The two sets of categories (the prepositional triad of John 17 and the cultural-linguistic notions) contributed by model two were useful to trace maps of the church's reality that helped to have a complete picture of the discussion (Q1b = 3). This depiction was fit for portraying the issue at stake in case study three (Q1c = 3).

In terms of its *heuristic* function, the same complexity that affects the depiction also makes its appearance in the proposed solution, though, once again, not destroying at all its consistency (Q2a = 1). The ruling function ascribed to the Lutheran Confessions in order to configure the proper language game of the church and of the holy ministry allow model two to offer a rather embracing and inclusive response to the problem raised by case study three (Q2b = 3). Now, this response demonstrates to be, at the same time, incisively on target (Q2c = 3).

If this grading is fair, the performance of confessional commitment model two is rather

satisfactory (average mark = 2.33).

Evaluation of Model Three

Finally, model three (confessional commitment as orthodox dynamics) was applied to case study six (theory and praxis in tension). In terms of its *descriptive* function, model three does not advance a simple descriptive metaphor, but a relatively complex one. However, it presents a coherent and unified description of what is going on in the discussion of case study six (Q1a = 2). The meta-critique that exposes the deeper problems of secularization and philosophical foundationalism that lie behind the discussion, and the critical instrument of the cyclic movement that helped locating each profile in case study six, demonstrate the model's satisfactory comprehensiveness (Q1b = 3). The relevance and adequacy of the model's depiction of the situation remains satisfactory, even when the instrument of the cyclic movement does not have a one-to-one correspondence with the classical categories of *theoria*, *praxis*, and *techne* (Q1c = 2).

In terms of its *heuristic* function, beyond the complexities of the discussion, model three advances a rather simple and straightforward response to the entanglement in case study six, by recovering the true foundation that establishes the agenda and character of Christian education, namely, *solum verbum et institutionem Dei* (God's Word and institution alone), whatsoever such character may be in terms of theory and praxis (Q2a = 3). However, model three does not just exert a merely censoring function. It also provides answers to the challenges raised in the discussion of case study six, and by the critical assessment of philosopher Jürgen Habermas. In doing all these things, model three proposes a broad and comprehensive solution (Q2b = 3). It must be conceded that a "both/and" answer to an "either/or" question does not totally satisfy the questioner. Notwithstanding, this author considers that the "both/and" with which model three responds is still an adequate solution (Q2c = 2).

If this grading is fair, the performance of confessional commitment model three is certainly satisfactory (average mark = 2.49).

Evaluation of the Thesis

The thesis of this dissertation reads as follows: Given the diversity of ways Lutheran theologians define confessional identity in the North Atlantic, this dissertation argues for an integrative models-based approach to confessional commitment that takes account of various elements involved in such commitment. Moreover, given the dearth of studies on confessional identity in the Global South, this work tests the productivity of this models-based approach for addressing case studies on confessional commitment in a South American context.

The proposition of a typology of models of confessional commitment to be applied to real case studies has enabled this work to (1) integrate a diversity of current North Atlantic contributions on the issue of confessional identity, (2) bring to the fore part of the ongoing conversation in Latin American Lutheranism, and (3) test the fruitfulness of a models-based approach with real case studies in a satisfactory way. This work, then, comes to the conclusion that the thesis is thereby confirmed.

Contributions of the Dissertation to Current Scholarship

The introduction of this dissertation pointed out a diversity of scholarly conversations with which this project interacts. In general terms, the thesis touches on and contributes in three main areas: (1) the North Atlantic discussion on confessional identity, (2) the research on South American Lutheranism and its relation to the Lutheran Confessions, and (3) the theological use of models for exploring confessional commitment. Moreover, each of the models that have organized current North Atlantic contributions on the issue of confessional identity interacts in

critical and constructive ways with the actual stance of the theologians taken as the main source of the models presented in this work. The following section lays out in more detail the contributions in the aforementioned areas.

Contributions to the North Atlantic Discussion on Confessional Identity

The introduction of this work has put together something like a roster of historical issues under discussion regarding the Lutheran Confessions that include the nature of subscription, their biblical legitimacy, relevance, and the hermeneutical question of how to use them in the face of current challenges.⁴ Out of this roster, the dissertation has mainly focused on the last two related issues by exploring the validity of some of the contemporary suggestions regarding confessional commitment for addressing Global South Lutheranism's expressed struggles and hopes. Timothy Wengert and Robert Kolb narrow down the definition of the hermeneutical issue not in terms of "prescriptive hermeneutical principles" that would render an aprioristic valid interpretation of the confessional texts, but in terms of their pragmatic usefulness as proposals of "who God is as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ and who we human creatures are, as rebellious creatures fashioned in the Creator's image ... as expressions of and witnesses to the Word of God."⁵ The present dissertation offers a supplementary contribution to this approach, namely, the articulation of confessional commitment as a fundamentally personal interpellation of the committed "I" by the divine "Thou." In terms of the personalist philosophy of Martin Buber,⁶ confessional commitment is never reduced to an I-it relation, but is always an I-Thou conversation between the confessionally committed person or ecclesial community as it is addressed and defined by the

⁴ See section "Shifts in the Discussion Regarding the Lutheran Confessions" in chapter one, pp. 2–7.

⁵ Wengert and Kolb, "The Future of Lutheran Confessional Studies," 125.

⁶ Buber, *I and Thou*.

trinitarian “Thou.”⁷

Our approach to the confessional question in terms of “confessional commitment” before the “Thou” that addresses the “I” through the mediation of the Lutheran Confessions brings into the current confusion—produced by a lack of clear definition of terms, or rather, by the use of ambiguous terminology such as the general expressions of “confessionalism” and “confessional identity”—a conceptual category that we expect may help the field to step beyond this problem. Thus, elaborating on Werner Klän’s germinal work on “confessional commitment” and integrating aspects of the notion of “religious commitment” that the sociology of religion has already developed, this work has proposed a technical definition of “confessional commitment.” Confessional commitment is the solemn disposition of the community/person to be defined in her (1) socialization/alliance, (2) narrative and belief, (3) experience, and (4) action, by the One who deals with her through the Lutheran Confessions as a true doctrinal exposition of the Word of God. In committing to the Lutheran Confessions, the “I” solemnly allows the “Thou” that addresses him through the mediation of these Confessions to shape his identity in these four dimensions.

Contributions to the Research on South American Lutheranism

With respect to our interest in the confessional discussion related to the Latin American context, this dissertation has advanced at least two contributions. One of them is the attempt to elucidate specific issues under discussion in current Latin American Lutheranism, as portrayed in

⁷ This is not to contradict the red flag that Jaroslav Pelikan raises (with which I am in absolute agreement) when he avers: “Faith and the confession of the faith must always be more than doctrine, of course ... but [confessing the faith] can never be less than doctrine ... [For when] in the interest of the authenticity of the ‘experience of Christ as my personal Savior’ or of some other such redefinition, faith is drained of its doctrinal content, neither the personal Christ experience nor its authenticity can long endure.” Pelikan, *Credo*, 65.

the theological journals from which the six case studies have been collected. A second contribution to the field is the assessment of the literary production and the theological discussion on the Lutheran Confessions in Latin America. As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, there is a great amount of raw material for this task that covers a considerable period of time. Notwithstanding the availability of resources, there has been a remarkable lack of interest in undertaking the task of surveying, interacting, and assessing how this part of world Lutheranism reflects on and uses the Lutheran Confessions. Even though the dissertation preserved its focus of interest in the North Atlantic discussion as its starting point (all of the models of confessional commitment presented were totally construed out of northern voices), it also paid considerable attention to southern discussion and contributions. In this way, this dissertation represents a rotation of the traditional “horizontal” axis of interest in the conversation between Europe and North America (East-West), by bringing the “vertical” conversation (North-South) to the fore of confessional studies. Broadening “the dialogue of the household of faith” has been defined as a key move in twenty-first century Lutheran confessional studies.⁸

Contributions to a Theological Use of Models

The present study has not used the strategy of models as a heuristic instrument to further any exploratory development of the content of Christian doctrine. The understanding of doctrine that this work embraced moves in an evident opposition to the notion of “symbolic disclosure” with which the theological use of models is commonly related. Instead, the models-based approach was used to organize a diversity of theological proposals as a typology of heuristic

⁸ Wengert and Kolb, “The Future of Lutheran Confessional Studies,” 118, 123.

pictures that contribute unified and coherent appreciations of particular aspects of our experience of reality and strategies for exploring possible solutions to problems. This dissertation has artificially constructed three distinctive types of contemporary proposals on confessional commitment as simplified and comprehensive pictures to explore what it looks like to be committed to the Lutheran Confessions and to advance solutions to problems the Lutheran church in Latin America has had to grapple with. Bringing this strategy into current confessional discussion contributes a viable methodological approach for dealing with the current state of confusion that Joel Okamoto denounces,⁹ and that Irene Dingel defines as “def[y]ing] any general conclusion.”¹⁰ The strategy of models seems to commend itself for the fact that it does not find the incommensurability of different proposals as a stumbling block, but rather as an epistemological given. However, this author has proceeded under the conviction that this alluring aspect of the strategy of models should not promote “an uncritical acceptance of dichotomies ... [or] to avoid dealing with inconsistencies or to veto the search for [a real conceptual or doctrinal] unity.”¹¹

Contributions to Robert Kolb’s God of Conversation

Model one of confessional commitment (as divine conversation) has virtually reproduced St. Louis Professor Robert Kolb’s contribution on Luther’s understanding of God and His human beings. The dissertation, however, brings together what Kolb himself has arguably left virtually disconnected or—better yet—in an underdeveloped stage of interaction. Confessional commitment model one has put the Lutheran Confessions (one of Kolb’s main areas of expertise)

⁹ Okamoto, “Introduction,” 5–6.

¹⁰ Dingel, “Function and Historical Development,” 305.

¹¹ Barbour, *Models and Paradigms*, 77.

within the conceptual framework of the divine-human relationship in terms of conversational partners (one of Kolb's insights into Luther's theological thinking). This represents an enriching supplement in both areas. For, on the one hand, current discussion regarding the possible functions and uses of the Lutheran Confessions, which in modern times has tended to move in the direction of the church's (or the person's) stance *coram mundo*, is expanded with the important insight on the Confessions' function in the church's (or the person's) stance *coram deo*. On the other hand, this pregnant description of God conversing with us, incorporates the Trinitarian narrative of the historical creeds and confessions of the church and elaborates on their proper function. In this regard, the dissertation has not taken a different direction than the one already traced by Kolb himself.¹² Part of what the dissertation does is to bring to the fore the germinal notion that Kolb intimates.

Contributions to George Lindbeck's Cultural-Linguistic Ecclesiology

Confessional commitment model two (as a form of life in the world) intends to be a positive appropriation of two aspects of George Lindbeck's proposal: (1) the cultural-linguistic character of the church, and (2) the regulative function of doctrine as an intrasystematic grammar. These notions have been used to account for the regulative or grammatical function with which the Lutheran Confessions make up and determine the church's particular form of life in this world. As mentioned before, this appropriation of Lindbeck's contribution reduces the effectiveness of his ecumenical program, but this has been done as an attempt to use Lindbeck's main notions without sacrificing with him aspects of the nature of the church and its doctrine that conservative critics take as fundamental, such as first-order propositional referentiality.

¹² Kolb, "Relationship between Scripture and Confession."

Contributions to the Discussion on *Lex orandi—Lex credendi*

The third model of confessional commitment (as orthodox dynamics) has a bearing on the discussion regarding the dynamic relationship between the components of the liturgical axiom *lex orandi—lex credendi*. This modern rendering of the ancient expression was hammered out by the liturgical movement to recuperate the relationship between liturgy and theological reflection, by way of giving back its doctrinal substance and reflection to the church's liturgical life and reestablishing the ecclesiastical liturgy to its function as the proper matrix for doing theology.¹³ Involved as it was in the ecumenical program, the liturgical movement found in the axiom *lex orandi—lex credendi* not only a motto that represented its goals, but also a powerful tool that would provide the necessary ambiguity to bring different liturgical and theological traditions into an apparent shared discourse. The indefiniteness produced by the lack of a specific verb that may privilege a particular understanding of the relation between liturgy and doctrine gave the axiom enough openness so that each tradition would be able to put its own interpretation into the adage.

In his doctoral dissertation, Joseph Omolo finds three basic alternatives:¹⁴ Whereas some

¹³ The axiom reshapes a phrase attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine, a fifth century monk and disciple of Saint Augustine. Lutheran liturgiologist James Waddell conjectures that it was Don Prosper Gueranger, a nineteenth century French Catholic monk—described by Pope John VI as the father of the “Liturgical Movement”—who coined the modern form of the axiom. James A. Waddell, “Rethinking *lex orandi lex credendi*,” *The Lex Orandi Lex Credendi Question*, May 22, 2009, <https://lexcredendilexorandi.wordpress.com/>. See also Damasus Winzen, “Guéranger and the Liturgical Movement—Comments on Bouyer’s *Liturgical Piety*,” *The American Benedictine Review* 6 (Winter 1955–1956): 424–26; A Sister of Ryde, “Dom Geranger: Prophet of Ecclesial Renewal,” *Faith* 38, no. 4 (July-August 2006): 19. Paul De Clerck has demonstrated that the original phrase by Prosper of Aquitaine, *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, not only does not support the usual way the liturgical movement understands it (i.e., that doctrine has to be established on the basis of the liturgical practices), but even moves in the opposite direction. De Clerck reminds us that the fifth century Augustinian Monk was refuting the Semi-Pelagian reading of 1 Timothy 2:1–2, arguing that “if the Church has the custom of praying for unbelievers and other enemies of the cross of Christ in order that they be converted and receive faith and charity, then this is clear proof that God alone is able to be the author of conversion. ‘The command to make supplication’ formulated by the Bible and put into practice by the Church determines, therefore, the rule of faith.” Paul De Clerck, “‘*Lex orandi, lex credendi*’: The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage,” trans. Thomas M. Winger, *Studia Liturgica* 24, no. 2 (1994): 189.

¹⁴ Joseph T. Omolo, “Worshipping Meaningfully: The Complementary Dynamics of Liturgy and Theology in Worship” (Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2014).

participants in the discussion put liturgy above doctrine (*lex orandi* establishes *lex credendi*),¹⁵ others reverse this order (*lex orandi* expresses *lex credendi*),¹⁶ and finally other authorities put liturgy and doctrine in mutual correlation (*lex orandi* and *lex credendi* complement each other).¹⁷ The axiom's alluring potency, however, is its main problematic trait, since it makes different traditions use the same vocabulary, but it does not produce a nuanced conversation that takes account of doctrinal distinctives. Michael Aune¹⁸ denounces that the leading figures in the discussion have voided the definition of the categories of *leitourgia* and *theologia* from their proper "theological" nature, taking them rather as "ecclesiological" (or sociological) categories that refer to nothing else but the ritual and intellectual activities performed by the human religious society called "church." The one that is cut off from the equation is God himself.¹⁹

¹⁵ The Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann accuses Western scholasticism of removing liturgy from its proper place: "from a *source* it becomes an *object*, which has to be defined and evaluated within the accepted categories." Alexander Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgical Tradition," in *Worship in Scripture and Tradition*, ed. Massey Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 168. Roman Catholic theologian Aidan Kavanagh, thus, defines liturgy as *theologia prima* and doctrine as *theologia secunda*. Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984), 73–74. David Fagerberg and Gordon Lathrop are representatives of this trajectory that come from a Lutheran origin. David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology?* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004); Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

¹⁶ Lutheran theologians Hermann Sasse and Vilmo Vajta represent this approach. Hermann Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the Catholic Mass," in *The Lonely Way*, 2:17–32; Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship: An Interpretation* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1958); Vilmos Vajta, "Creation and Worship," *Studia Liturgica* 2, no. 1 (March 1963).

¹⁷ Regin Prenter, Pope Pius XII, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Kilmartin are some of the representatives of this third alternative reading of the axiom. Regin Prenter, "Liturgy and Theology," in *The Musical Heritage of the Lutheran Church* 5 ed. Theodore Hoelty-Nickel (Valparaiso, Ind.: Valparaiso University Press, 1945); Pope Pius XII, "*Mediator Dei*: Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on the Sacred Liturgy to the Venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and Other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See," November 20, 1947, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html; Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (London: Epworth, 1980); Edward J. Kilmartin, S. J., *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice—Systematic Theology and Liturgy* (Kansas: Sheed & Ward, 1988).

¹⁸ Michael B. Aune, "Liturgy and Theology," parts 1–2, *Worship* 81, no. 1 (January 2007): 46–68; 81, no. 2 (March 2007): 141–69.

¹⁹ Aune, "Liturgy and Theology," part 1, 61–65; part 2, 151–67. In consequence, Aune supports Paul Marshall's suggestion that the "time for retirement" of the axiom has already come. Aune, "Liturgy and Theology," part 1, 65–68. Paul V. Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology': Is there a *lex orandi* for All Christians?" *Studia Liturgica* 25, no. 2 (1995): 142.

Roman Catholic liturgist Cyprian Vagaggini points in the same direction:

It is well known that the modernists supposed they could find in the formula *lex orandi lex credendi* their theories on the concept of the faith as blind feeling, completely extraneous to discursive reason, which is generated in the subconscious and is expressed in some way in the practical and religious life, especially in the liturgy. The liturgy in turn would be the generative rule of dogmatic formulas, and these would be nothing but an attempt to express intellectually the state reached at a certain moment of development by that same blind religious feeling. Thus the blind religious feeling, extraneous to reason and continually changeable, which somehow makes its states extrinsic in the liturgy, would also command the formulation and the meaning of the dogmas, as well as the necessity of their continual adaptation, even substantial, to its variation.²⁰

Kurt Marquart points out that the anti-dogmatic effect of all this “experiential-expressive” mysticism is nothing else than “secularization with a vengeance!” and that “[t]his is the very *monstrum incertitudinis* [monster of uncertainty] which Luther rejected in the frivolous word-games of scholasticism!”²¹

In adopting the hermeneutical tool that Jaroslav Pelikan uses to shape his view of the history of Christian tradition, “we believe, teach, and confess” (*credimus, docemus et confitemur*),²² and that Pelikan himself has brought near the conversation around the liturgical axiom,²³ confessional commitment model three also enters this same conversation even if it does it in a tangential way. The orthodox dynamic expressed in terms of the cyclic movement between “what is confessed,” “what is taught,” and “what is believed,” exhibits a clear correlation with

²⁰ Cyprian Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1976), 530.

²¹ Kurt E. Marquart, “Liturgy and Dogmatics,” *CTQ* 67, no. 2 (2003): 186. Over against this ancient perversion that affects the liturgical model axiom, Marquart affirms that “the outward, revealed Word, truth, or doctrine of God is theology in its most basic, primal sense,” and that “for the church of the purely preached gospel and the rightly administered sacraments, justification is indeed the heart and soul of everything, and is therefore also *the* criterion for the whole life of the church.” Therefore, it is to this preached word or doctrine that “everything else is subordinated—human ritual absolutely, but even the divine sacraments relatively.” Marquart, “Liturgy and Dogmatics,” 183, 188, 190.

²² See section “Main Source of the Root Metaphor: Jaroslav Pelikan’s Articulation of the History of Christian Doctrine” in chapter two, pp. 69–72.

²³ See, for example, Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 1:339; 2:34–35; 3:66–80; and Pelikan, *Credo*, 158–85.

the expanded version of the liturgical axiom proposed by Robert Rosin in terms of *lex orandi lex credendi et lex vivendi*.²⁴ Within this conversation, the cyclic movement of model three advances the following contributions: (1) it recuperates the proper and historical place that the normative texts of creeds and confessions used to have in the discussion; (2) it brings back into the equation of *lex orandi-lex credendi* the missed notion of the divine self-giving, which under our understanding of Christian doctrine as *doctrina divina* holds that it is God (and not human beings) who is the main agent speaking and acting in “what is taught” and what is “confessed” in the church; (3) it also expands the scope of the axiom, so to speak, “downwardly,” for the cyclic movement does not limit its scope to the higher levels of the official and professional ecclesial acts and texts, but also includes the role that popular piety plays under the component of “what is believed;” and finally (4) it, in turns, expands and recasts the role the liturgical axiom can play in the discussion regarding the history of doctrine.

Contributions to the Discussion on the Historical Nature of Christian Doctrine

With its linear or diachronic movement in the story of Christian doctrine, the third model of confessional commitment contributes also to the discussion regarding the historical nature of Christian doctrine. The discussion regarding the historical development of doctrine has characterized nineteenth century European theology and became a crucial instrument in ecumenical conversations after the Second Vatican Council. Model three enters this conversation

²⁴ Rosin proposes: “We use to hear the phrase ‘*lex orandi lex credendi*,’ this is, ‘a rule of worship is a rule of belief.’ In other words: the way we worship will have an effect on that what we believe and what we do not believe. We could extend the phrase a little bit more: ‘*lex orandi lex credendi et lex vivendi*,’ the way we worship affects both how we believe, and how we live. Its impact lasts for an entire week and, in truth, for an entire life.” Robert Rosin, “A teologia de Lutero e o culto,” in *Lutero e o culto cristão: O que acontece quando Deus e homem se encontram no culto*, Textos do 3º Simpósio Internacional de Lutero 07–10 de Julho de 2009, Contagem regressiva para os 500 anos da Reforma em 2017, ed. Paulo W. Buss (Porto Alegre: Concórdia, 2011), 12.

under the following two assumptions: (1) That Christian doctrine is *doctrina divina* and not a mere human intellectual or scholarly reflection on things divine; and (2) that pure Christian doctrine is simultaneously undeveloping (for the eternal truth of the gospel was revealed in Christ once and for all) and historical in nature (for it was revealed in time and will be received and rejected until the end of times). Model three affirms that there is a diachronic movement in the history of Christian doctrine, though not in terms of a progressive evolution of the doctrine *per se*, but in terms of the human reception and rejection of it, that is reflected in the way each generation articulates and embraces the doctrine. This ongoing struggle between reception and rejection of the divine doctrine defies any aesthetically coherent depiction (such as an ideal straight line of continual progression), but still exhibits—along the path of the history opened up after the “once for all” (ἐφ’άπαξ) character of Christ’s revelation of the eternal mystery (μυστήριον) of the gospel—those critical landmarks that signal new stages in the history of Christian doctrine of the formal dogmatization of the revealed truth crystallized in the three ecumenical creeds and the Reformation confessional documents that form together the Book of Concord.

Suggestions for Further Exploration

In spite of our declared confirmation of the thesis and diverse contributions to the theological scholarly discussion, the dissertation has fallen short in several respects that, besides representing a limitation on this work, constitute an invitation for further exploration. Just but four aspects that require attention will be mentioned here.

First, this work has postponed testing the productivity of three of the six Latin American case studies of confessional commitment for consideration at another time. We are speaking about case study one (Eclipse of *fides quae?*), four (In search of the proper place of the

priesthood), and five (The menace of local independentism). This decision was taken because of the limited space of this work, but more importantly because it was felt that our work with the other three cases would be sufficient to test the viability and usefulness of a models-based approach. Doing a similar work as we have done in chapters four through six with the other case studies would give these discussions a deeper consideration and the models of confessional commitment a wider basis to demonstrate their productivity.²⁵

Second, the spectrum of current proposals on the confessional discussion is admittedly limited. In terms of geographical distribution, this study has only considered North American proponents (i.e., Robert Kolb, George Lindbeck, and Jaroslav Pelikan) who arguably construe their understanding of the role and nature of the Lutheran Confessions within the traditional axis of a North American-European conversation. Of course, it is not their fault, but it exposes a limitation in the present research. Enlarging our typology of confessional commitment models in geographical terms would do better justice to the intention of bringing the Global North and Global South into closer conversation that this dissertation has pursued in a rudimentary way.

²⁵ As a matter of fact, our initial plan was to test our three models not with one, but with two Latin American case studies. Thus, confessional commitment model one (divine conversation) was intended to address case studies one and two, model two (form of life in the world) was going to address case studies three and four, and model three (orthodox dynamics) was planned to be applied to case studies five and six. With respect to case study one (eclipse of *fides quae?*), the correspondence of content between the divine revelation (*protologia*) and the church's response (*homologia*) that confessional commitment model one affirms, would represent a strong reinforcement of the main line of argumentation in *IL*. With respect to case study four (In search of the proper place of the priesthood), the two sets of categories model two advances (the prepositional triad of John 17 and the cultural-linguistic notions) would be useful tools to discuss the basic dilemma of where to look in order to expand the necessary room for the priesthood to be properly lived out (by moving in a centripetal direction or in a centrifugal one?). Finally, with respect to case study five (the menace of local independentism), the central role that the *Una Sancta* plays in establishing the committed I's identity and story represents a clear support to *IL*'s confrontation of modern tendencies toward independentism. However, the same theological rationale with which model three confirms the solutions proposed in case study five (i.e., reinforcing the synodical nature of IELB and the functions of the episcopal authority) exposes the relativity of that very solution. For, unless the synodical organization and the office of bishop explicitly serves the "I" in anchoring its own identity in nothing less than the *magno consensus* of the *Una Sancta*, none of them will really prevent the menace of independentism, but rather, may become new fences that isolate a national or regional church body from the rest of the *Una Sancta*. To be sure, that would be a larger extension than the local congregation, but still would be a case of local independentism anyway.

Now, how would it look like to articulate a model of confessional commitment if its root metaphor were taken from the Latin American context? Taking into consideration the commonplace characterization (though not without reason) of Latin American context, possible trajectories would be to take confessional commitment as true Christian freedom and as true indigenouslyness.²⁶

Third, all the models of confessional commitment assembled in this dissertation take the Lutheran Confessions in a similar capacity, as the “norm” or “rule” that controls and gives shape to whatever story each particular model tells. So, even when we could articulate each model as a discrete and unique proposal, the main theologians that supply our models’ root metaphors concur in the similar attempt to vindicate the authoritative function of the symbolical books. What if, for the sake of argument, we had included a fourth model that denies this normative status to the Confessions? Enlarging our typology by way of integrating more conflictive postures would move us into the exploration of further kinds of use of the strategy of models, either in terms of a comparative assessment intended to promote one model over against the others, or in terms of exploring possible solutions to positions in conflict.

Fourth, a similar reductionism affected the depiction that this work presents of Latin American Lutheranism (not to speak about Global South Lutheranism). Even though the assemblage of the six case studies out of the extended conversations published in the theological journals *Igreja Luterana* and *Revista Teológica* supplied this work with a considerable resource

²⁶ The first alternative would represent a reappropriation and reorientation of the root metaphor of liberation theology in terms of the true redemptive freedom from Satanic and worldly oppressive tyranny. The second alternative would capture a related issue of interest in Latin America, not only among those syncretistic trajectories that try to recuperate pre-Columbian native religiosity, but also among those Christian traditions with clear European influence that still struggle with their own self-definition. The Lutheran Confessions certainly help defining and experiencing both yearned realities of freedom and of the discovery of who we truly are.

that at the same time represented specific and actual discussions, these six case studies admittedly are far from constituting a comprehensive description of the wide variety of struggles, discussions, and trajectories of Latin American Lutheranism. These case studies are far from exhausting the entire content of *Igreja Luterana* and *Revista Teológica*, or the ways such content could be categorized and assessed. Moreover, these two journals' contributions are themselves far from exhausting the historical itinerary of IELB and IELA respectively. Finally, these two church bodies are far from representing the entire spectrum of Lutheranism in the Global South. Thus, expanding our consideration of confessional identity and commitment into other sources and other church bodies would give us a much better appreciation of that entire picture.

Concluding Comments

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”²⁷ The church's true confession is never a product of the best possible human insights. It is what the Father reveals from heaven where he speaks among us, that is, his word of truth through which the Spirit effects the faith that believes the revealed truth and that gives it back as confession.²⁸ This is how the church of the Lutheran Reformation celebrated the divine gift of Almighty God, who “out of immeasurable love, grace, and mercy for the human race, has allowed the light of his holy gospel and his Word that alone grants salvation to appear and shine forth purely, unalloyed and unadulterated out of the

²⁷ Matt. 16:17–18.

²⁸ See Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 12:3.

superstitious, papistic darkness.”²⁹ They were granted the privilege of receiving and giving back the divine truth in front of the world and of God by means of those very texts that came to conform the symbolical books of the Lutheran church. These confessions, notwithstanding, are not a relic to be safeguarded in the showcase of a Lutheran museum, since

a confession cannot remain a real confession if it is only inherited. It must be confessed. We can confess it only if we are deeply convinced that it is the true interpretation of Scripture. The confession is always the answer of the church to the Word of God ... It is the Lord himself who has provoked the first dogma of the church: Jesus is the Christ, Jesus Christ is Lord. All later confessions and all the various functions of the confessions have their root in this demand of our Lord not only to follow him, but also to confess our belief. Each generation has to do that again. We do so with the words of the fathers because we find in Scripture the same truth which they found. But we must do so for ourselves.³⁰

And our generation, both in the Northern hemisphere as well as in the South, is neither excluded nor excepted from answering the Father’s revelation and the Son’s inquiry by means of the Spirit-wrought response of faith. It is my honest desire that this work contribute to this very end.

²⁹ “Preface to the Book of Concord,” 2 in Kolb and Wengert, 5.

³⁰ Sasse, “Selective Fellowship,” 252.

APPENDIX ONE

LATIN AMERICAN JOURNALS: STATISTICAL DETAILS

The following tables present the statistical details that lie behind the section “Sources of Latin American Lutheranism” in chapter three (Latin American Case Studies). That section makes reference to a series of categories that classify the articles in *Igreja Luterana* and *Revista Teológica* under types¹ and subtypes,² on the basis of their particular contents, and quantitatively according to the number or percentage of articles and pages dealing with each type of content. This study has taken into consideration the entire publication output of each journal up to the 2010s.³

This Appendix lays out comprehensive statistical information, which furnishes an organized picture of the different trajectories and emphases of the two journals that functioned as the quarry from which we assembled the case studies of Latin American Lutheranism. The tables offered below work in pairs, that is, each table exhibits the number of articles on a topic and the

¹ Eight instances of articles were identified with *IL*: (1) editorial (including news, and opinion-forming articles); (2) Bible (both exegetical and homiletical resources); (3) dogmatics (locus-oriented articles); (4) confessions; (5) church history; (6) practical theology; (7) Brazilian culture and context; (8) book reviews. In the case of *RT* all these same categories appear, with the only exception that *RT* does not publish articles on Argentine culture and history (context).

² Since a main focus of this dissertation is the relation and stance that Latin American Lutheranism exhibits toward its symbolical books, I have unpacked in particular detail the different approaches to the Lutheran Confessions that constitute the type on “confessions.” I could distinguish five different subtypes within this category: (1) Isagogic articles that explore the historical background of particular documents of the Confessions or of the Book of Concord in general; (2) constructive or exploratory articles that expose how the Lutheran Confessions help explain or approach human or ecclesiastical reality; (3) apologetic articles that defend and affirm the continuous validity of the Lutheran Confessions in face of a conspicuous challenging context; (4) text-focused articles that either reproduce or explain a portion of the text of the Lutheran Confessions; and (5) articles in challenge to the Confessions that put them into question in different respects.

³ In the case of *IL*, this represents a total number of 76 years of publication (from 1940 to 2016), 258 numbers, 1,968 articles, and 17,110 pages. In the case of *RT*, this represents a total number of 54 years of actual publication (from 1954 to 2015), 172 numbers, 1,043 articles, and 8,649 pages. In the case of *IL*, the last annual issues (2017 through 2019) are left aside. *RT*, on the other hand, has discontinued its publication during the following years: 1979, 2001–2005, 2012, and 2016–2018. In 2019, *RT* restarted its publication.

next one immediately following it offers the number of pages on the same topic.

Table 2. *Igreja Luterana*—number of articles per type per decade

TYPE	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	TOTAL
Editorial	140	132	70	91	71	39	16	5	564
Bible	148	149	72	92	67	57	48	26	659
Dogmatics	65	106	41	42	35	13	9	17	328
Confessions	25	13	21	16	5	5	10	10	105
History	30	26	26	10	23	8	8	2	133
Practical	36	57	22	24	34	37	38	6	254
Context	58	9	14	6	12	4	1	2	106
Book review	5	33	20	22	22	18	7	5	132

Table 3. *Igreja Luterana*—number of pages per type per decade

TYPE	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	TOTAL
Editorial	436	730	531	455	334	96	70	14	2,666
Bible	702	890	850	710	804	1,911	2,409	1,470	9,746
Dogmatics	320	871	713	466	346	149	118	228	3,211
Confessions	135	108	133	147	85	55	180	103	946
History	146	194	393	100	172	118	149	21	1,293
Practical	191	435	267	240	291	525	655	97	2,701
Context	234	42	122	36	60	64	12	40	610
Book review	12	107	54	99	103	84	21	33	513

Table 4. *Igreja Luterana*—number of articles on the Lutheran Confessions per decade

SUBTYPE	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	TOTAL
Isagogic	12	10	1	3	4	3	1	8	42
Constructive	12	3	4	3	1	3	8	1	35
Apologetic	6	4	6	10	0	0	2	2	30
Text-focused	8	0	0	3	0	0	4	0	15
In challenge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5. *Igreja Luterana*—number of pages on the Lutheran Confessions per decade

SUBTYPE	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	TOTAL
Isagogic	72	70	3	15	26	23	16	73	298
Constructive	56	20	72	37	8	39	156	19	407
Apologetic	34	42	89	99	0	0	17	20	301
Text-focused	40	0	0	33	0	0	78	0	151
In challenge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6. *Revista Teológica*—number of articles per type per decade

TYPE	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	TOTAL
Editorial	23	52	45	67	32	7	7	233
Bible	56	109	76	94	24	8	16	383
Dogmatics	23	41	52	33	24	8	13	194
Confessions	12	12	25	6	1	0	11	67
History	17	31	15	23	14	4	12	116
Practical	28	44	65	95	59	11	21	323
Book review	13	11	9	3	0	0	0	36

Table 7. *Revista Teológica*—number of pages per type per decade

TYPE	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	TOTAL
Editorial	130	262	296	224	155	24	14	1,105
Bible	665	1,046	667	582	199	90	186	3,435
Dogmatics	230	416	438	268	417	134	147	2,050
Confessions	100	112	159	75	4	0	155	605
History	139	266	157	209	219	150	154	1,294
Practical	285	306	600	802	635	240	277	3,145
Book review	39	22	41	10	0	0	0	112

Table 8. *Revista Teológica*—number of articles on the Lutheran Confessions per decade

SUBTYPE	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	TOTAL
Isagogic	11	2	3	0	0	0	0	16
Constructive	0	7	10	3	0	0	7	27
Apologetic	1	5	7	1	1	0	4	19
Text-focused	0	1	15	2	0	0	0	18
In challenge	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Table 9. *Revista Teológica*—number of pages on the Lutheran Confessions per decade

SUBTYPE	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	TOTAL
Isagogic	95	15	16	0	0	0	0	126
Constructive	0	76	93	29	0	0	106	304
Apologetic	8	32	39	8	4	0	47	138
Text-focused	0	11	99	38	0	0	0	148
In challenge	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	20

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