

Maintaining the Theology of the Cross in our Doctrine and Practice

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[Theologia Crucis vs. Theologia Glorae: Which Side Are We On? - A Significant Illustration Luther Used Once]

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The Theology of the Cross

This paper is given under a number of assumptions. First, there is the assumption that there are no Luther scholars among us, for if there are, this paper was assigned to the wrong person. This topic starts in some of Luther's writings and goes deep into Luther scholarship, far more deeply than we will be pursuing the topic.

Second, there is the assumption that I have been led to enough of the important sources not to have misrepresented the topic assigned to me. The field of Luther studies is so vast that something could easily be overlooked. It was not until well over a week after the assignment letter reached me that someone informed me where in Luther's writings he uses this terminology. The two major books I have looked at are:

Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, written in German in 1929, translated by Herbert J. A. Bouman and published by Augsburg in 1976. This book is not easy reading. First, it is an aerobic book, that is, one with lots of footnotes, some of them important, all in the back of the book. For 160 pages of text, there are forty pages of endnotes, 263 of them in all; the longest footnote is four pages long. Second, either von Loewenich writes very obscurely, or the translation is poor; eg, "sin is a surrender to multiplicity."¹

Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, written in English, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1985. Although written as a response to von Loewenich's book, it is quite different, providing much historical background. I found it much more interesting reading, although I still didn't understand everything he was saying. This has real footnotes, many of them, however, entirely in Latin.²

Also to be mentioned in this context (both of my sources and the ones I didn't immediately discover) is James G. Kiecker, "Theologia crucis et theologia gloriae: The Development of Luther's Theology of the Cross," WLQ, Volume 92, pp. 179-188; this is a reaction to the two books, agreeing with some of each and concluding significantly, "Luther's theology of the cross, while displacing what he termed the prevalent theology of glory, emerges as the true theology of glory."³

Third, there is the assumption that the average pastor in our Synod, and thus also in our Northern Conference, is still working on the goal of acquiring the entire set of the American Edition of Luther's Works, still a bargain at the price of roughly \$1000.⁴ Thanks to the good people in Port Huron, I was able two years ago to complete my American Edition set.

And fourth, there is the assumption that the average pastor is still working on the ultimate goal of reading this American Edition of Luther's Works. I have not yet finished reading it. If my assumptions are wrong, you might as well stop me here, and we can go to lunch early.

Luther's theology of the cross is an interesting concept, and of great significance. It has first of all had a substantial impact on the publishing world, necessitating the publishing of several books and articles, along with their rebuttals and explanations and further substantiations.⁵ When I contacted WLS Library for help, they

provided me with the three sources listed above, along with Paul Althaus' *The Theology of Martin Luther* (also a translation from German, this time by Robert C. Schultz), which devotes the ten pages of chapter five to the theology of the cross; the first volume of a new Luther biography by Martin Brecht (translated into English by James L. Schaaf, also flush with endnotes); and a paper by Hermann Sasse called "Luther's Theology of the Cross," edited (and perhaps also translated) by Prof. Arnold J. Koelpin of MLC. Further, the bibliographies in von Loewenich's and McGrath's books run to seven and nine pages respectively. Brecht writes in his Foreword:

Since World War II, international Luther research has produced a myriad of studies with new questions, theses, and results. For example, these studies have dealt with Luther's socioeconomic background, his psychic constitution, the influence of late medieval theology, the historicity of the posting of the theses, the date and nature of the reformatory discovery, and the significance of political factors for Luther's cause.⁶

Aside from the older research, which continues to be just as indispensable as ever, about 1500 smaller and larger publications dealing with the young Luther have appeared since 1950 alone.⁷

This is very good for Luther scholars who are highly interested in such things. I have already confessed that I am not such a person. My dabbling in these materials has not encouraged me to want to pursue such scholarship. The Luther scholarship I read, although certainly of some value, left me disappointed. Although there were always abundant quotes from Luther, there was also an abundance of reinterpreting of Luther in the light of later, radical theologians.⁸ In spite of protestations to the contrary, there was a consistent effort to present what Luther thought at various stages of his career, not what is right and true and to be believed. Obviously, these impressions were taken from a limited exposure to this vast field, and do not apply to those writings produced by our people.

Where does that leave us? Where does that leave me, since I still have the assignment, at the very least, of attempting to explain what the theology of the cross is? I submit that the concept "theology of the cross" which has been found in Luther's writings also has meaning for us. It does not have value because it presents us with new ideas about God; we learned the basics of the theology of the cross already before confirmation class. Rather, the theology of the cross serves as a reminder, as something that draws us back to what alone is important. My goals in this paper are the following:

1. Let us retain the Gospel, let us emphasize the Gospel, let us preach the Gospel, understanding that the Gospel is clearest at the cross.

"Preach one thing, the wisdom of the cross!" That is Luther's answer to the vital question posed by the ministry of all ages: what shall I preach? The wisdom of the cross, the word of the cross-that great stumbling block to the world-is the proper content of Christian preaching, is the Gospel itself. Thus Luther teaches and the Lutheran church with him.⁹

2. Let us listen to Luther preach the Gospel. If you have not yet acquired all of the American Edition of Luther's Works, keep that as your goal. And read the books you buy. Read Luther. Read his beautiful Genesis commentary, filled with gems. Bask in his words, which usually don't stray far from the Gospel. Don't apologize for Luther's harsh words about the Jews, or try to explain them away; read what he actually wrote, and absorb all the Gospel truths which surround a couple of unfortunate sentences, even in the Jews and their Lies. Read his delightful writings against the Leipzig goat and Hanswurst. You have my permission to save the Psalms lectures for later.¹⁰ Read Luther. Set up a regular program for yourself of reading Luther. Since the American Edition is completely published, we have no excuse for not reading Luther. Chuckle over the occasional gaffs the editors have included in their footnotes,¹¹ but read Luther.

3. Once all of Luther's Works have been read, we cannot abandon Luther. While we must read the Bible from cover to cover to cover, letting Genesis follow Revelation, we probably will not do the same with

Luther-although it wouldn't hurt to try. I feel that it is at this point that Luther scholarship can do us some little good. Once we have finished all of Luther's Works, a volume or two from this vast field can reacquaint us with Luther. Perhaps a modest goal would be good: Read a biography of Luther each fall, and at the very least two volumes of his works each year. If you want to read McGrath, you probably won't regret it; you may well regret reading von Loewenich.

Now that the introductory material is out of the way, we need to turn to Luther's use of the terms *theologia crucis* and *theologia gloriae*. He did so in the Heidelberg Disputation. This is found in Volume 31 of Luther's Works, the first volume in the Career of the Reformer set, the first after the first thirty volumes have been devoted to Old Testament (1-20) and New Testament (21-30) writings. The volume contains:

Disputation Against Scholastic Theology, 1517
 Ninety-five Theses, 1517
 Heidelberg Disputation, 1518
 Preface to the Complete Edition of a German Theology, 1518
 Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses, 1518
 Proceedings at Augsburg, 1518
 Two Kinds of Righteousness, 1519
 The Leipzig Debate, 1519
 The Freedom of a Christian, 1520
 Why the Books of the Pope and His Disciples Were Burned by Doctor Martin Luther, 1520

Every pastor definitely should own and read this volume of Luther's Works.

In the introduction to the Heidelberg Disputation, the editors point out that this was, in a sense, part of the effort to silence Luther after the appearance of the Ninety-five Theses six months earlier. This occasion was chosen because the Augustinians of Germany were going to be meeting anyway at Heidelberg. They met triennially on Jubilate Sunday, which fell on April 25th in 1518. Of the meeting itself, little is known, although it seems that Luther resolved to send his Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses to the pope "with a letter of apology" as a result of that meeting. The disputation took place the day after the meeting. Luther prepared the theses, and also wrote a brief explanation of each one, before the debate. Leonhard Beier did the actual debating, "with Luther presiding."¹²

The Heidelberg Theses are divided into two groups: twenty-eight theological theses and twelve philosophical theses. They are here printed for you, along with some helpful divisions from Brecht; "The first twelve theses dealt with the works of men and of God."¹³

HEIDELBERG DISPUTATION

Brother Martin Luther, Master of Sacred Theology, will preside, and Brother Leonhard Beier, Master of Arts and Philosophy, will defend the following theses before the Augustinians of this renowned city of Heidelberg in the customary place. In the month of May, 1518.¹

THEOLOGICAL THESES

Distrusting completely our own wisdom, according to that counsel of the Holy Spirit, "Do not rely on your own insight" [Pr3v5], we humbly present to the judgment of all those who wish to be here these theological paradoxes, so that it may become clear whether they have been deduced well or poorly from St. Paul, the especially chosen vessel and instrument of Christ, and also from St. Augustine, his most trustworthy interpreter.

1. The law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance man on his way to righteousness, but rather hinders him.

2. Much less can human works, which are done over and over again with the aid of natural precepts, so to speak lead to that end.

3. Although the works of man always seem attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins.

4. Although the works of God always seem unattractive and appear evil, they are nevertheless really eternal merits.

5. The works of men are thus not mortal sins (we speak of works which are apparently good), as though they were crimes.

6. The works of God (we speak of those which he does through man) are thus not merits, as though they were sinless.

7. The works of the righteous would be mortal sins if they would not be feared as mortal sins by the righteous themselves out of pious fear of God.

8. By so much more are the works of man mortal sins when they are done without fear and in unadulterated, evil self-security.

9. To say that works without Christ are dead, but not mortal, appears to constitute a perilous surrender of the fear of God.

10. Indeed, it is very difficult to see how a work can be dead and at the same time not a harmful and mortal sin.

11. Arrogance cannot be avoided or true hope be present unless the judgment of condemnation is feared in every work.

12. In the sight of God sins are then truly venial when they are feared by men to be mortal.¹⁴

"The second group of theses (13-18) continues the process of radicalization by examining the anthropological foundations of human activity."¹⁵

13. Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin.

14. Free will, after the fall, has power to do good only in a passive capacity, but it can always do evil in an active capacity.

15. Nor could free will endure in a state of innocence, much less do good, in an active capacity, but only in its passive capacity.

16. The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him² adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.

17. Nor does speaking in this manner give cause for despair, but for arousing the desire to humble oneself and seek the grace of Christ.

18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.¹⁶

"The third section of the theses (19-24) is famous. It harks back to God's action and how it is understood."¹⁷

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Ro1v20].

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.

23. The law brings the wrath of God, kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ [Ro4v15].

24. Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.¹⁸

"Up to this point the Heidelberg disputation is really only another summary of the critical theology of humility. At most we can have only a sense of something new. Not until the fourth group of theses (25-27), which deals with the relationship between faith and works, does this change."¹⁹

25. He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ.

26. The law says, "do this," and it is never done. Grace says, "believe in this," and everything is already done.

27. Actually one should call the work of Christ an acting work and our work an accomplished work, and thus an accomplished work pleasing to God by the grace of the acting work.

28. The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it.²⁰

"The philosophical theses do not match the significance of the theological ones. They intend first of all to prove that the scholastics understand Aristotle incorrectly, but at the same time to make clear that Aristotle can provide support neither for theology nor for natural philosophy."²¹

PHILOSOPHICAL THESES

29. He who wishes to philosophize by using Aristotle without danger to his soul must first become thoroughly foolish in Christ.

30. Just as a person does not use the evil of passion well unless he is a married man, so no person philosophizes well unless he is a fool, that is, a Christian.

31. It was easy for Aristotle to believe that the world was eternal since he believed that the human soul was mortal.

32. After the proposition that there are as many material forms as there are created things had been accepted, it was necessary to accept that they all are material.

33. Nothing in the world becomes something of necessity; nevertheless, that which comes forth from matter, again by necessity, comes into being according to nature.

34. If Aristotle would have recognized the absolute power of God, he would accordingly have maintained that it was impossible for matter to exist of itself alone.

35. According to Aristotle, nothing is infinite with respect to action, yet with respect to power and matter, as many things as have been created are infinite.

36. Aristotle wrongly finds fault with and derides the ideas of Plato, which actually are better than his own.

37. The mathematical order of material things is ingeniously maintained by Pythagoras, but more ingenious is the interaction of ideas maintained by Plato.

38. The disputation of Aristotle lashes out at Parmenides' idea of oneness³ (if a Christian will pardon this) in a battle of air.

39. If Anaxagoras posited infinity as to form, as it seems he did, he was the best of the philosophers, even if Aristotle was unwilling to acknowledge this.

40. To Aristotle, privation, matter, form, movable, immovable, impulse, power, etc. seem to be the same.²²

One time the term "theology of the cross" appears. Luther did not use this term outside of Volume 31 of Luther's Works-as far as I could tell. Curiously, the index to Volume 31 lists the theology of the cross as an entry; the Index volume, which I thought contained the indexes from all the volumes, does not list the theology of the cross as an entry. Brecht writes:

The pair of concepts which have become famous-theology of glory, theology of the cross-was used a few times by Luther in the spring of 1518 [only?], certainly without intending by this slogan simply to signify a theological principle. What Luther wanted to assert against his opponents at that time was that the proper way of approaching theology lay in the cross and suffering, not in works and achievements.²³

Brecht then, if I understand him correctly, lists the few other times Luther used this expression: (1) in some writing against Eck²⁴; (2) in the lectures on Hebrews²⁵; (3) in his Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses²⁶; (4) in the 1519 exposition of the Psalms²⁷; however, three of the four references are only to the Weimar edition, making them difficult for me to locate.

From these few references in these theses, and a couple of occurrences in Luther's Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses, part of what has been written on the theology of the cross has been developed. The other part (probably the major part) has been developed out of the rest of Luther's writings where he says (or is thought to have said, or is made to have said) similar things. If you want to know this sort of thing, you have some references to start with above.

What now are we to do with this concept of theology of the cross, especially as opposed to theology of glory? Paul calls the theology of the cross *o logov o tou staurou*, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." 1Cor1v18. Again, Paul calls it *Xriston estaurwmenon*, "We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." 1Corlv23-24. Many interpretations are given to the theology of the cross, some of which I didn't understand. But this is what the theology of the cross must mean, if it is going to do us any good. That is the viewpoint I will be taking in the explanation of this concept: This is what Luther meant by the theology of the cross, because Luther used the words correctly. I am well aware that most (if not all?) take a different view. The following definition, spoken by the translator of Johann Gerhard's *The Daily Exercise of Piety*, is good:

In stark contrast to the often trivial devotional material with which I had been familiar, these meditations were stunning in their profundity. **Here was the 'Theology of the Cross.' Here was Law in all its severity and Gospel in its full sweetness.** Here was Biblical, Sacramental, and Christological Lutheranism, often ringing with the statements of the ancient fathers.²⁸

The terminology itself is somewhat ambiguous, somewhat like the objective/subjective genitive problem. Theology, of course, means the study of God. What, then, is a theology of the cross?²⁹ A study of God on the cross would work well as a definition. I would also suggest that it be understood as a theology which focuses on the cross. Thus, a theology of glory would be a theology that focuses on glory-that will be defined later. Thus, a theology of money is a theology that focuses on . . .³⁰

Qeologia never occurs in Scripture. Qeologov occurs once, but only in the TR in the title of Revelation.

Staurov occurs 27X, 15X of the cross itself,³¹ 12X of the death died on the cross, ie, crucifixion; of those 12X, 6 of them are used in the Gospels regarding taking up one's cross.³²

Based on these brief word studies, I can imagine four possible definitions of theology of the cross:

- 1) That theology which centers on any cross, eg, the moral implications of capital punishment by crucifixion—is it "cruel and unusual punishment"? This is clearly not meant.
- 2) That theology which centers on the cross of Christ, ie, on His death for our sins. There is no other way to look at theology! "This then is a firm principle of the theology of Luther and the Lutheran Church: theology is theology of the cross, nothing else. A theology which wants to be something else is pseudo-theology."³³
- 3) That theology which defines our lives as Christians according to Jesus' words about taking up our own crosses.
- 4) That theology which regards our cross-bearing as meritorious before God.

The term theology of the cross is commonly used—on the pages that made sense to me—in the last three meanings, generally mixed. If that last evaluation is correct, that explains some of my confusion, for the second usage is clearly justification, while the third is sanctification; mixing them will always be confusing; the fourth is clearly wrong.

Although Luther was certainly aware of Jesus' usage of the word cross (eg, "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me." Mt10v38) and gave that its proper place in his theology of the cross, the major emphasis was and must be on the cross of Christ, not the cross of Martin. The question Luther was dealing with, particularly at this point in his life, the question that each of us has dealt with, is dealing with and will continue to deal with, is: How are we saved? The answer of medieval Christianity was works in one form or another (works + grace, grace + works, man's efforts at doing *quod in se est*, what is in him, ie, his natural abilities, etc).³⁴ The answer Luther grew up with was, You'd better watch out, for the stern Judge Jesus is coming to get you. The Holy Spirit led Luther through his study of Scripture to discover and to believe that salvation is purely God's gift to us; Luther learned what grace really means: God's free and undeserved gift to us of what we could never get in any other way, in fact the very opposite of what we deserve.

This is primarily what Luther has in mind when he speaks of the theology of the cross. When we ask the question, How are we saved? then we must exclude from the picture everything but the cross of Christ. We cannot think of our works in any form along with the cross of Christ; we cannot think of God's grace coming to us in any other way than through the cross of Christ. We cannot look at the cross of Christ and think, There is my Savior, and still have anything else in the picture on which to still rely for help. The cross of Christ is the central event in all of history, the most important event bar none that has ever taken place. There on the cross the sinless Son of God who had kept the law perfectly *pro nobis* is charged with the sins of the world and punished and damned for those sins. Our salvation and God's grace are there on the cross, and nowhere else. When the glory of saving us is taken away from Jesus and given to man who saves himself in some way or other, then that is clearly not a theology of the cross in the good sense, but a theology of glory in the worst sense. Thus, decision theology is definitely a theology of glory, ie, a theology that gives glory to man and derision to Jesus.

Luther's specific reason for using this terminology, viz, the theology of the cross as opposed to the theology of glory, was to oppose the human speculation about God that had been rampant in the middle ages, and for that matter continues in the minds of people to this day. By the theology of the cross Luther would point out that here on the cross we can learn about God; we can learn what God is like nowhere else. This is an emphasis that we still need to grasp and apply today. If you want to know what God is like, then look to Jesus, for He is the only God there is. He is "the only God our Savior (monw qew swthri hmwn)." Jude25. "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God (monw qew), be honor and glory for ever and ever." 1Tm1v17. "He is the true God (o alhqinov qeov) and eternal life." 1Jn5v20. And don't look to Jesus teaching the Sermon on the Mount, for example, but look to Jesus on the cross, Christ crucified, for there and there alone can you find God. The only God there is, ie, the only God we can be concerned with and deal with, is the God crucified for us. We can have nothing to do with any other God.

This must be understood as a contrast to the concept of the hidden God.³⁵ What God has revealed about Himself in Scripture, we can know and believe. Luther finds all that God has revealed about Himself

summarized and encapsulated on the cross, hence the theology of the cross. There are, however, many other questions that people have asked and could ask about God for which God provides no answers. There is, of course, the delightful question Luther records from Augustine in his Genesis lectures, What was God doing before He created the world? Answer: He was gathering sticks to beat people who ask questions like that!³⁶

There is the natural human tendency to speculate about God and His nature, to apply our human reason and logic to God, to draw conclusions about God from what we observe in nature and even from what He has told us in His Word, conclusions which we regard as advancing beyond what God has revealed to us. "The attempt to perceive God as he is, whether from observing the world, by mystical experience or by philosophic speculation, is the theology of glory."³⁷ In the early Christian church, people reasoned how it was possible for God to be three Persons, and yet only one God; the creeds reject every attempt to explain this; we simply believe what God says about Himself in Scripture, no more and no less; the words we use to describe this³⁸ are and must be defined as meaning exactly what God says about Himself in Scripture, since we surely do not understand this.

This same speculating about God has often occurred in the various election controversies. *Cur alii prae aliis* is the question that our logic tries to answer, but cannot. We all know the two absolutely logical explanations of those words, and we all also know that those logical explanations are utterly false. Our logic is not able to comprehend God. Our logic—a marvelously good gift of God—is capable of handling many of the things in the universe God created for us; but our logic is *a priori* incapable of comprehending God. Could our logic surpass God, then we would surpass God. We cannot make rules that circumscribe God.

One example of this speculating about God is still quite common in our literature. Certainly the words are meant correctly, but they are still an improper way of speaking about God. We say, for example, that God cannot go back on His Word. Our goal, of course, is to comfort our hearers with the certainty of God's promises. He has promised us these things, and He cannot break His promise. Thus, in order to make God seem logical to our hearers, we reject the clear words of Scripture that nothing is impossible for God. It is completely true to say that God does not go back on His promises; who of us knows God so backwards and forwards that we can speak as the oracles of God and say that God cannot go back on His promises?

There are places where Scripture speaks about God's inability. Eg, "He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them." Mk6v5. Jesus ouk edunato eke poihsai oudemian dunamin—that could hardly be clearer: Jesus was unable to perform miracles. We are not to understand that as if the almighty God had suddenly become a weakling. We are not to understand that as an expression of Jesus' exinanition, for that was not an inability, but a voluntary setting aside of the use of the power He still fully retained. Jesus' inability to perform miracles in Nazareth did not lie in Him, but in the people. As Mark goes on, kai eqaumazen dia thn apistian autwn, Jesus was amazed because of their lack of faith. Jesus' miracles were to serve the purpose of supporting faith in the Savior of sinners. In His omniscience, Jesus knew that performing miracles in Nazareth, at least at that time, would not have supported faith, but would at most have entertained the people. Therefore the inability to perform miracles was in the people who didn't believe, rather than in Jesus.³⁹ A clear statement of God's inability is found in 2Tm2v13, ei apistoumen ekeinon pistov menei arnhsasqai gar eauton ou dunatai, "He cannot disown Himself." When God in Scripture says He is unable, that is one thing; when we reach conclusions ourselves about God's inability, that is the theology of glory.

I exhort you to examine your teaching and preaching and to think carefully before you speak of God's inability to do something. Atheists think that their speculation about the God they say they don't believe in has completely disproved the existence of God. Eg, they ask if God can build a wall so high that He can't climb over it. I believe the answer of faith to such a question is not to show its logical inconsistency, but to simply confess Yes, our God can do all things. Let the simple yes of faith terrify the heart of even the atheist before the God who most certainly exists. "The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror." Is28v19.

This speculation about God Luther calls the theology of glory. It is that specifically because it seeks through human speculation to plumb the depths of God's nature, to discover what God is really like, behind and beyond His words, and especially behind and beyond and apart from the cross of Christ. We ought not speculate about God because it is a useless endeavor; our logic is incapable of reaching valid conclusions about God. We

ought not speculate about God secondly because we immediately run into the hidden God, the God with whom we cannot deal, the God with whom we do not want to deal. Our "God is a consuming fire." He12v29. He "lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see." 1Tm6v16.

I presented four possible definitions of the theology of the cross, at least two of which seem to be used. I have also four possible definitions of the theology of glory, only one of which is what Luther seems to have meant.

- 1) That theology which focuses on the glory of God. Since God's glory is His grace, ie, what He wants us to glorify Him for is the fact that He is gracious to us, there is no other way to look at theology!
- 2) That theology which focuses on the glory we will receive in heaven.
- 3) That theology which focuses on the glory we have now on earth, viz, the spiritual glory we have as Christians, eg, that we have the ear of the Almighty God and Savior who hears and answers our prayers, along with all of His other promises to us.
- 4) That theology which focuses on the intellectual and material glory some think we ought to have, or which some regard as the necessary outward marks of the Christian life.

Obviously, it is this last definition, or something related to it, that Luther had in mind. In my mind, the first three are much more obvious definitions of theology of glory than the last, and that immediately adds some confusion, confusion which Kiecker attempts to remove by saying, "Luther's theology of the cross, while displacing what he termed the prevalent theology of glory, emerges as the true theology of glory."⁴⁰ First and foremost, then, the theology of glory is not only the exact opposite of the theology of the cross, but it is everything else than the theology of the cross. We find our salvation on the cross, God crucified for us, the supreme manifestation of God's grace. To find salvation anywhere else, or to add anything at all to the cross is then the theology of glory. The theology of glory gives us glory for our own salvation, something that God doesn't do, since *usteroumen thv dochv tou qeou*, we "fall short of the glory of God." Ro3v23. In support of this, the theology of glory then also speculates about God—it must speculate about God in order to produce its work righteous ideas, which are so contradictory to what God says in Scripture.

In this context, Luther seems to deny the natural knowledge of God, at least according to some of the sources.⁴¹ Of course he doesn't do that. Rather, in his forceful way and in a context where he has said he is speaking paradoxes,⁴² he stresses the limitation of the natural knowledge of God. Luther wrote:

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Ro1v20].

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.⁴³

The beautiful and familiar words of the apostle Paul to which Luther refers are these: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible (*aorata*) qualities—His eternal power and divine nature (*h aidiov autou dunamiv kai qeiothv*)—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (*anapologhtouv*)." Ro1v20. Although these things can most certainly be learned about God from what He has created, they are not enough for salvation—that is Luther's point. According to Paul, we learn that God is eternal, since He certainly existed before He created our world. We learn further that He is extremely powerful, powerful enough to have created 100 billion fusion reactors (stars) in our galaxy, and 100 billion similar galaxies.⁴⁴ Our conscience tells us that He is God and we are not. And that is the end. We are left to conclude that this tremendously powerful God who will not die holds us guilty for what we have done and will punish us for what we have done; there is no escape possible for us. A theologian who reaches and teaches these conclusions only is a poor excuse for a theologian.⁴⁵ The ultimate revelation of God, the one that does us the

ultimate good, is not in nature, but on the cross. The theologian who advances beyond the natural knowledge of God (Law) to that knowledge of God revealed on the cross (Gospel) is a real theologian.

The theologian who remains only with the natural knowledge of God is pursuing the theology of glory. That needs to be understood here in a twofold sense. First, he is a theologian who is attempting to see God as He is in His glory apart from His revelation in Christ on the cross. Second, he will then inescapably produce a doctrine of salvation by works in some form, thus a theology that gives glory to man as his own savior. When this theologian seeks to understand God as He is apart from the cross, then he is trying to deal with the hidden God. This terminology is used in at least two ways.⁴⁶ John Schaller's *Quartalschrift* article on the hidden God, referred to above, defines the hidden God as referring to God as He is in Himself, apart from His revelation to us in the crucified Christ. Prof. Schaller discusses various questions about Himself that God has chosen not to answer; therefore, in that sense, He remains the hidden God. The other meaning given to the words "the hidden God" is completely different. God and His glory and power as God are "hidden" on the cross in the shamefully crucified Jesus. I think that a careful use of language could distinguish between "the hidden God" (as defined by Schaller, a sense in which Luther also uses this language) and the God "hidden" under the crucified Savior. Luther wrote up explanations for the first twenty-eight theses of the Heidelberg Disputation. The following are the relevant sections of these explanations:

20

He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

The "back" and visible things of God are placed in opposition to the invisible, namely, his human nature, weakness, foolishness. The Apostle in 1Cor1v25 calls them the weakness and folly of God. Because men misused the knowledge of God through works, God wished again to be recognized in suffering, and to condemn wisdom concerning invisible things by means of wisdom concerning visible things, so that those who did not honor God as manifested in his works should honor him as he is hidden in his suffering. As the Apostle says in 1Cor1v21, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross. Thus God destroys the wisdom of the wise, as Is45v15 says, "Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself."

So, also, in Jn14v8, where Philip spoke according to the theology of glory: "Show us the Father." Christ forthwith set aside his flighty thought about seeking God elsewhere and led him to himself, saying, "Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father" [Jn14v9]. For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ, as it is also stated in Jn10 [Jn14v6]: "No one comes to the Father, but by me." "I am the door" [Jn10v9], and so forth.⁴⁷

21

A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls "enemies of the cross of Christ" [Ph3v18], for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works. Thus they call the good of the cross evil and the evil of a deed good. God can be found only in suffering and the cross, as has already been said. Therefore the friends of the cross say that the cross is good and works are evil, for through the cross works are destroyed and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's.⁴⁸

Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.

Indeed the law is holy [Ro7v12], every gift of God good [1Tm4v4], and everything that is created exceedingly good, as in Gn1v31. But, as stated above, he who has not been brought low, reduced to nothing through the cross and suffering, takes credit for works and wisdom and does not give credit to God. He thus misuses and defiles the gifts of God.

He, however, who has been emptied [Cf. Ph2v7] through suffering no longer does works but knows that God works and does all things in him. For this reason, whether man does works or not, it is all the same to him. He neither boasts if he does good works, nor is he disturbed if God does not do good works through him. He knows that it is sufficient if he suffers and is brought low by the cross in order to be annihilated all the more. It is this that Christ says in Jn3v7, "You must be born anew. " To be born anew, one must consequently first die and then be raised up with the Son of Man. To die, I say, means to feel death at hand.⁴⁹

Reference was made earlier to Luther's words about the theology of the cross in his Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses, written in the spring of 1518, the same time as the Heidelberg Disputation and Luther's "Asterisks." After a lengthy explanation of Thesis 58,⁵⁰ Luther concludes with the words:

From this you can now see how, ever since the scholastic theology—the deceiving theology (for that is the meaning of the word in Greek)—began, the theology of the cross has been abrogated, and everything has been completely turned up-side-down. A theologian of the cross (that is, one who speaks of the crucified and hidden God), teaches that punishments, crosses, and death are the most precious treasury of all and the most sacred relics which the Lord of this theology himself has consecrated and blessed, not alone by the touch of his most holy flesh but also by the embrace of his exceedingly holy and divine will, and he has left these relics here to be kissed, sought after, and embraced. Indeed fortunate and blessed is he who is considered by God to be so worthy that these treasures of the relics of Christ should be given to him; rather, who understands that they are given to him. For to whom are they not offered? As St. James says, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials" [Jas. 1:2]. For not all have this grace and glory to receive these treasures, but only the most elect of the children of God.⁵¹

Yet in the meantime they have opened the floodgates of heaven and flooded the treasury of indulgences and the merits of Christ so that by this deluge almost the whole Christian world is ruined, unless my faith deceives me. A theologian of glory does not recognize, along with the Apostle, the crucified and hidden God alone [I Cor. 2:2]. He sees and speaks of God's glorious manifestation among the heathen, how his invisible nature can be known from the things which are visible [Cf. Rom. 1:20] and how he is present and powerful in all things everywhere. This theologian of glory, however, learns from Aristotle that the object of the will is the good and the good is worthy to be loved, while the evil on the other hand, is worthy of hate. He learns that God is the highest good and exceedingly lovable. Disagreeing with the theologian of the cross, he defines the treasury of Christ as the removing and remitting of punishments, things which are most evil and worthy of hate. In opposition to this the theologian of the cross defines the treasury of Christ as impositions and obligations of punishments, things which are best and most worthy of love. Yet the theologian of glory still receives money for his treasury, while the theologian of the cross, on the other hand, offers the merits of Christ freely. Yet people do not consider the theologian of the cross worthy of consideration, but finally even persecute him.⁵²

The theology of the cross and the theology of glory need to be distinguished in two areas: justification and sanctification. In regard to justification, we must find our hope of salvation in the cross of Christ and there alone; we must not seek some other way of salvation in God's unrevealed (and thus hidden) glory, nor in our own works, no matter how good we might think they are. But they must also be distinguished in sanctification, which was the original reason why this paper was assigned. As said, I find the emphasis on justification in the theology of the cross to be by far the more important one; and yet the emphasis on sanctification must also be there, because of the words of Jesus. Whereas Jesus describes following Him as taking up our cross, whereas the apostle Paul explained those words by saying, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," Ac14v22, many today describe the Christian life as one continuous success story, with never a setback. Some claim that God doesn't ever want His children to get sick. Others maintain that God wants Christians to be wealthy. And still others promise certain and sure success in God's kingdom if only we use the right methods and programs.

Jesus, however, said, according to the synoptic Gospels:

Matthew	Mark	Luke
"and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me." Mt10v38.		"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple." Lk14v7.
kai ou ou lambanei tov stauron aOutou kai akolouqeï opisw mou, ouk estin mou aciov. Mt10v38.		
"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Mt16v24.	"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Mk8v34.	"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Lk9v23.
Ei tiv qelei opisw mou elqein, aparnhsasqw eauton kai aratw ton stauron autou~ kai akolouqeitw moi. Mt16v24.	Ei tiv qelei opisw mou elqein, aparnhsaqw eauton kai aratw ton stauron autou kai akolouqeitw moi. Mk8v34.	Ei tiv qelei opisw mou erxesqai, arnhsasqw eauton kai aratw ton stauron autou kaq hmeran, kai akolouqeitw moi. Lk9v23

Ylvisaker, *The Gospels*, lists these five passages as occurring on three different occasions; he shows the second set as describing the same incident, while the first set is on two different occasions.⁵³ However, since the chronology of the Gospels is so difficult to nail down in its specifics, it is enough for us to note that Jesus used the expression on several occasions, and in slightly differing wording. Three different verbs are used for taking up the cross: *lambanw* (take), *bastazw* (carry) and *airw* (lift up, raise). The most significant difference is Luke's addition of *kaq hmeran*, daily, a definite addition to the aorist imperative *aratw*.

As Jesus took up His cross of suffering, so His followers have their cross of suffering to take up. It is by no means the same cross of suffering; His far surpasses ours. But there is a similar cross that we are to carry as followers of Christ crucified. Just as Jesus' mission as our Savior was not accomplished in the way in which the Jews expected it to be accomplished, so also the life of Christ's followers is not what we would expect. Jesus' greatest worldly successes were followed by the cross. His amazing popularity at the feeding of the five thousand was followed shortly by the statement, "From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him." Jn6v66. Jesus' glorious entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to shouts of praise was followed very shortly by shouts for His death. So also for His followers. Our greatest successes are followed by the cross. Baptism is followed by constant temptation. After the tremendous treasure we receive in the Lord's Supper, we return to the "real" world and to apparent failures. Our greatest successes in the ministry come most often not because of our tremendously brilliant plans and programs, but apart from them, handed to us by God on a platter. We gratefully accept them (eg, the new family who walks into church one Sunday and soon becomes one of the most faithful and active families in the church, without our having done a thing to bring them in, except unlocking the church doors on Sunday morning), and we ought also to take the reminder from our Father that He has already given us a most effective Word and most effective Sacraments, and doesn't need our puny efforts to make them more effective.

This, of course, is related to the complex matter of Luther's *Anfechtungen*, a word which, according to what I read, is best left untranslated. Observing these *Anfechtungen* in one's life is not a sign of God's displeasure, but a sign of God's love. "The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son." He12v6. *Anfechtungen* are not simply the troubles that everyone faces, not simply the times when things go wrong, but they are the attacks of devil, world and flesh.⁵⁴ Thus *Anfechtungen* include doubts about God's love (the cross provides the convincing proof of God's love), doubts about the truthfulness of God's Word when all the world seems opposed to it (once again, the cross provides the answer), and doubts about one's own salvation and election (where else can one look besides the cross for the answer?).

The motive behind the assignment of this paper was apparently that there needs to be a clear distinction among us between the theology of the cross and the theology of glory especially in the practical aspects of our work in the ministry, specifically, in the measure of our success. The letter assigning this paper put it this way:

Though Luther's theology has historically been ours in the WELS, our people today find themselves increasingly faced with the lures of success-and result-oriented thinking, of a "church as entertainment or fun" mentality, of a growing fascination with faith-healing and other of the more sensational gifts of the spirit, as well as of numerous other religious trends and fashions that are outward signs of a theology of glory.

As stated before, I find the main emphasis of the theology of the cross in the area of justification, not of sanctification. And yet the two are intimately connected. Everything that is not the theology of the cross is the theology of glory. Every deviation from proper sanctification is the theology of glory. And proper sanctification is a proper emphasis for us also. We study justification thoroughly, and yet remain beginners at sanctification all our lives. Similar statements have been made in recent years, sometimes with the implication that there are others (in other church bodies) who have become masters at sanctification, from whom we can learn; I do not mean the words in that way. Even the best Christians (even should they be in other church bodies) never advance beyond being beginners in the matter of sanctification.

Without a proper understanding of justification, no one even begins at sanctification. Without understanding Christ crucified as our only Hope, exclusive of anything else in the world or in our own souls, we cannot take up our cross and follow Jesus. And since we always, to our dying day, will have difficulty with justification, we will always have difficulty with sanctification. We focus our eyes on the cross of Christ, but our peripheral vision is still working. We carry with us the *opinio legis* and can never escape it completely. We laud the great grace of our Savior that out of His tremendous love for us He would even die for us—and wonder what He saw in us worth loving! "Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive."⁵⁵ And yet our innermost ideas always revert back to the same work righteous ideas.

The tendency is growing, also in our church body, of distinguishing between Christians: there are Christians, and then there are real Christians. Perhaps we will one day speak of ordinary Christians as opposed to "born-again" Christians; our literature has already spoken of Christians as distinguished from "disciples." Christians are sometimes described based on what they do, rather than on what they believe. Even the terminology "confessing Jesus as Savior and Lord" is entering our speech patterns. Although in each case the wording employed is Biblical language, the meaning conveyed by the words is no longer Biblical, because the words have been redefined in today's theological climate. "Born-again" in common usage never refers to baptism, as it always does in Scripture, but to a conversion experience timed and dated. "Disciples" are not those who learn from Jesus, but rather those who have advanced beyond a baby-like trust in Jesus as their Savior, and now can say that Jesus is also Lord of their life, to whose laws they conform. In each case, the end result of such a distinction is that our salvation no longer depends solely on what Jesus has done for us, but also on what we ourselves have done and are doing. That spells the end of the theology of the cross and the enthronement of the theology of glory.

As we devote our lives to the *habitus practicus* of the ministry, we need to realize that our task is described quite well by our Savior when He said, Khrucate to euangelion, Mk16v15. He sends us out as heralds; the beginning and the end of our work is simply to announce a message. And yet we do not want to be wasting our time; we want to be accomplishing something; and we want to accomplish something that we can measure, so that we can feel successful about it. We want outward signs of our success, signs that are visible to us, so that we can feel good about ourselves, signs that are hopefully also visible to our members, so that they can praise us as we full well deserve to be praised. Kiecker writes:

By God's grace we have faith, and our good works are the fruit of this faith. But when our strenuous activities in the ministry become the focus of our attention—when we glory in what our faith has produced rather than focusing on Christ's work on the cross and glorying in that—then the theologian of glory is very much alive. Furthermore, the God who created the heavens and the earth has certainly done great things among us. But when we focus on such great works of God—when we glory in a smoothly running synodical organization, a superb educational system, a successful local building project rather than focusing on God's greatest work done through Christ on the cross and glorying in that—then everything has been turned upside-down. The cross has been squeezed out, and we are left with a false theology of glory.⁵⁶

The theology of the cross strikes at the roots of such thoughts, and thus, with our all too common misunderstanding of justification, the cross can seem extremely burdensome. Instead of the crowds who thronged around Jesus on a couple of isolated occasions, we get the rejection that Jesus faced regularly. The measure of our success cannot be the crowds, nor can it be the rejection; the measure of our success is the message we proclaim, whether it is believed or rejected.

Sasse cites an incident he identifies as illustrating the theology of glory:

Let us take one example. On 23 June, 1910, John Mott delivered the closing address of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. That important meeting marks the beginning of the ecumenical movement of our age. Mott's words were a powerful appeal to missionary action, inspired by the hope that the final goals of all Christian missions would soon be reached. He

began with the words, "God grant that all of us may in these next moments solemnly resolve henceforth so to plan and so to act, so to live and so to sacrifice, that our spirit of reality may become contagious among those to whom we go: and it may be that the words of the Archbishop (here he refers to some saying of Archbishop Davidson of Canterbury) shall prove to be a splendid prophecy, and that before many of us taste death we shall see the Kingdom of God come with power."

Four years later the First World War broke out. Seven years after that conference, Bolshevism started the greatest persecution which has ever threatened the existence of the church. Forty years later China was conquered by Bolshevism, and the Christian missionaries were forced to leave the greatest mission field of the contemporary world. "Lead on, O King Eternal, the day of march has come; henceforth in fields of conquest Thy tents shall be our home"—that had been the battle song of the American missionaries at the time of the Edinburgh conference.⁵⁷

Our Synod has been struggling much of this century with similar questions. What is our role in history? J. P. Koehler has frequently been castigated for his words on this matter. A recent issue of the *Quartalschrift* quoted once again his words, "dogmatism, with a streak of pietism."⁵⁸ The words are quoted, more in context, in other mission literature.⁵⁹ The impression is given that Koehler was an opponent of mission work, in fact, a proponent of educational work to the exclusion of mission work. We still feel that tension when, as some might put it, our educational work is auctioned off to pay for our mission work. J. P. Koehler's words, in context, give a different impression:

There was something not entirely sound about Synod's heathen-mission endeavor, the idea that a church is not living up to its mission unless it engages in heathen-mission work, according to the Lord's great commission: Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. That idea is dogmatism, with a streak of pietism, and it provoked the criticism of Prof. Hoenecke. And in distinction from the mission houses abroad, the tackling of the work here was unintelligent in that the prospective missionaries were not given adequate training at the college or the seminary. The only distinction made was that they were given complete maintenance, on the strength of the argument that heathen-mission work required special sacrifice and consecration. A further misstep was to train young men who were still unknown quantities in this inadequate way and then put them on their own in strange surroundings, which were equally strange to the authorities.

These mistakes, outside of being a part of the general slipshod management, also arose from the lukewarm attitude of Synod's leadership that dreaded the added cost to the budget. But the constituency showed enthusiasm for the undertaking, and so the "mission brethren" had to be given the rein. The right enthusiasm coupled with historical understanding might not only have made for intelligent action but for a wholesome reaction on the rest of Synod's work. As it was, the same "mission brethren" were the ones who already did more than their share for Synod's institutions, and their dogmatizing about the mission principle, to wit: that heathen-mission work is the best spur to the church's home endeavors, remained a slogan at best.⁶⁰

Notice what Koehler objects to. Never does he say that mission work is wrong. Rather, he objects to "the idea" that "a church is not living up to its mission unless it engages in heathen-mission work." When Jesus gave us the great commission, He didn't so limit His command; nor does He anywhere describe the marks of the church as engaging in "heathen-mission work." If that dogmatizing idea had been rejected, then there could have been a rational discussion, followed by a determinative vote, regarding what was best for the Synod to do at that point in history. But this unscriptural idea, which Koehler calls "dogmatism, with a streak of pietism," had first to be rejected.

Koehler further objects to the wrong methods that were used. This is not a Scriptural argument, but a common sense argument; our missionaries, home and world, raise the same objections to this day. Those who are not engaged in field work are charged with the responsibility of directing that work; they are naturally tempted to think that they know the only right way to do it, regardless of how many times their omniscience had been shown to be flawed in the past.

Koehler finally objected to "the mission principle," defined as "heathen-mission work is the best spur to the church's home endeavors." We still hear that "mission principle" recited. Is it true? It is not stated in Scripture. Koehler questioned whether it was true. We can safely grant him the right to his own opinion. What is right in this whole matter is the cross of Christ. That Jesus commanded us to proclaim the cross of Christ is beyond question. Since He did not limit that command, the questions of where and when can only be answered always and everywhere. When they are answered specifically, then we have moved away from the theology the cross into the theology of glory.

On the same matter, Johann Gerhard has often been cited as an opponent of mission work. Eg, "When Gerhard wrote that the Great Commission had already been fulfilled by the apostles, we learn more about his limited knowledge of the world than his love for the Gospel."⁶¹ Werner Elert studies Gerhard's words in context and completely exonerates him.⁶²

Citing these men—out of context and with misunderstanding of their words—has been done with the conclusion—explicit or implicit—that we need to make up for their mistakes by doing more of a specific kind of mission work now. How weak! Scripture remains clear and to the point. To rely on other reasons and other motivations than the cross of Christ is once again the theology of glory. This is not to say the opposite, namely, that mission work is wrong. At bottom, we need to recognize that Jesus' commands to us apply to both: education and missions. Therefore, we need to do both, as God gives us the opportunities. How much, where and when is determined by us in democratic fashion, viz, the majority rules. To state that we must do one or the other, that we must enter this field or not enter that, is the dogmatism Koehler spoke of.

We will conclude in much the same way that Kiecker did, "Above all else the theologian of the cross will center his thoughts on Christ's cross and will glory in that, and this theology of the cross will be the true theology of glory."⁶³ The apostle Paul wrote, "No, we speak of God's secret wisdom (sofian en musthriw) a wisdom that has been hidden (apokekrummenhn) and that God destined for our glory (eiv docan hmwn) before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (ouk an ton kurion thv dochv estaurwsan)." 1Cor2v7-8. When our theology focuses on our glorious Lord Jesus who has, so to speak, glorified us with forgiveness, then we have a real theology of glory which is identical to the theology of the cross. What He wants to be His glory is His grace, that He gave Himself for us on the cross. Our glory is the same, that He allowed Himself to be crucified for us. We confess with Luther: *CRUX sola est nostra theologia!*⁶⁴

Endnotes

¹ p. 162. Someone has explained to me that he was referring to the movie. McGrath writes, "The English translation of this work is seriously inaccurate at several points of importance." McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p. 148n2.

² I have attempted to follow McGrath in using abundant footnotes, rather than von Loewenich in using abundant endnotes. I have also been forced to employ Latin phrases against my will. [Editor's note: the format dictated for the online essays necessitated a change from footnotes to endnotes]

³ WLQ 92, p. 179.

⁴ The current NPH catalog still expects this set to be completed at some future date, which it was ten years ago, assuming that the Index Volume 55, published in 1986, was the last one published.

⁵ "His [Luther's] theology of the cross was really discovered only in the 20th century." Olivier, Daniel, *Luther's Faith: The Cause of the Gospel in the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982), p. 120.

⁶ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther, His Road to Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. xi.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁸ For example, Brecht writes, "In contrast to a purely historical faith, he [Luther] advocated a trusting, existential faith." p. 353. The word "existential" as a description for Luther occurs often in Brecht's biography.

Althaus enlists Luther as an opponent of "false biblicism" ("The Bible tells me so"), distinguishing between the Word of God which God speaks to us and the Bible, pp. 51-52. He curiously says that Luther taught two contradictory things about Christ's descent into hell, namely, that He descended into hell to suffer for our sins while on the cross, and that He descended into hell after His resurrection, p. 207. He writes:

There is no doubt that Luther's own personal understanding of Christ's descent into hell relates it to the passion, Gethsemane, and Golgotha. Calvin adopted this understanding and it was accepted in some confessions of faith of the Reformed Church. In distinction from Luther, Melancthon understood the descent into hell as Christ's triumphal victory march into hell. Christ terrifies the devils and the damned by showing them His power. Lutheran orthodoxy developed this idea. The descent into hell is the first stage of Christ's exaltation. Thus Luther's deep understanding is abandoned. Lutherans, for the most part, opposed the Reformed understanding of the descent into hell as part of the humiliation without realizing that they were also polemicizing against Luther. (pp. 207-208).

Althaus must be unaware that the Lutheran doctrine of Christ's descent into hell is established in FC IX entirely on the basis of Luther's 1533 Torgau sermon, making Althaus' words here utter gibberish.

To this could be added his gross misunderstanding of justification and good works, pp. 241-242.

⁹ Hermann Sasse, "Luther's Theology of the Cross." The current mission festival flyer, while rich in testimonials, is strangely silent about the content of the Gospel.

¹⁰ "The four-fold exegetical scheme dominates Luther's exposition of the Psalter." McGrath, p. 79.

¹¹ Luther usually quoted Scripture references from memory; occasionally, he got a reference wrong; the editors always point that out, sometimes letting their arrogance seep through. It is thus appropriate to note that there are also places where Luther's reference in the text and the editors' correction in the footnotes are both wrong; further, there are places where Luther's reference in the text is correct, and the editors' correction is wrong. There are places where the editors miss the point of what Luther is saying, eg, LW 31, 230n108-110.

¹² LW 31, pp. 37-38.

¹³ Brecht, p. 231.

¹ This is an approximate date. The disputation actually took place April 26, 1518.

¹⁴ LW 31, pp. 39-40.

¹⁵ Brecht, p. 232.

¹⁶ LW 31, p. 40.

¹⁷ Brecht, p. 233.

² Cf. p. 10, n. 5. [*quod in se est*].

¹⁸ LW 31, pp. 40-41.

¹⁹ Brecht, p. 234.

²⁰ LW 31, p. 41.

²¹ Brecht, p. 234-235.

²² LW 31, pp. 41-42.

²³ Brecht, p. 233. Kiecker (p. 187) quotes Gerhard Ebeling, "Although [Luther] did not make constant use of [these terms] as slogans to represent his theological outlook, but only took them up again on rare occasions, they are a very accurate expression of his understanding of theology." Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther, An Introduction to His Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 226.

Similarly, Luther's famous expression *simul justus et peccator* apparently only occurs twice, Althaus, p. 242n82.

²⁴ WA 1:290-91. LW 31, p. 309 gives the references for Luther's "Asterisks" (written in March 1518 in response to Eck's "Obelisks") as WA 1, 281-314 and St. L. 18, 536-589. The following is the paragraph referred to, cited from St. L. 18, 552:

Eck. 6. Obelisk

[Wider die 16. These Luthers.]

"Eine freche These. Denn nachdem sie vom Korper getrennt sind, wissen die zu reinigenden Freunde Gottes gewiss, dass sie selig werden, aber als durchs Feuer."

Luther:

Woher wissen sie das gewiss? Weil es Eck sagt. Und die Folgerung hat statt nach seinem Meister, von einer Autoritat in bejahender Weise. So unwissend ist er in der **Theologie des Kreuzes**, dass er glaubt, sie seien deshalb gewiss, selig zu werden, weil sie Freunde Gottes and vom Leibe getrennt sind.

Thus, Luther would here define the opposite of the theology of the cross as proving theological statements by bold human assertion.

²⁵ WA 57 (Hebrews): 79, lines 16ff. LW 29 contains the lectures on Hebrews; the index does not list "theology of the cross"; Vogel's Cross Reference to Luther's Works lists them as coming from "57^{III}, 97-238," thus after this reference. Kiecker (p. 182) cites the words from another edition (*Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 16, Luther: Early Theological Works, ed. and trans. by James Atkinson (London: SCM Press. 1962), pp. 233-234):

As far as I can tell, Luther uses the phrase "theology of the cross" for the first time in his Lectures on Hebrews (1517-1518). Commenting on He12v11 ("For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness"), Luther draws the contrast between discipline as an alien work of God—God sending pain—and a proper work of God—the pain is for our benefit. "Here we find the Theology of the Cross," says Luther, because the fruit of righteousness is "hidden" by pain, just as salvation is "hidden" by the cross. The complementary phrase, theology of glory, however, does not yet appear.

²⁶ WA 1:613-14 = LW 31:225-26.

²⁷ WA 5:176, lines 1-23. LW 10-11 are Psalm lectures from around 1513; LW 12-14 are Psalm lectures from around 1532. Luther's work on the first 22 psalms of 1519-1521 (*Operationes in psalmos*) are found in St. L. IV; by my calculation, the reference should be to around column 470, but no reference to the theology of the cross could be found there.

²⁸ WLQ 93, p. 233.

³ Parmenides was a well-known Greek philosopher who, with Zeno, headed the Eleatic school and taught a monistic cosmology.

²⁹ Apparently, this is a hard concept to define. An example of a definition that doesn't define: "At stake was a theology other than the current one, a new way of speaking about faith, which Luther called the theology of the cross: 'of the cross' because it was on the very fact of the cross, of the Crucified, that his thought was fastened." Olivier, p. 118.

³⁰ "Truly, this wisdom of the cross and this new meaning of things is not merely unheard of, but is by far the most fearful thing even for the rulers of the church. Yet it is no wonder, since they have abandoned the Holy Scriptures and have begun to read unholy writings of men and the dissertations on finances instead." LW 14, p. 305, quoted in von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, pp. 22-23.

³¹ Mt27v32,40,42, Mk15v21,30,32, Lk23v26, Jn19v17,19,25,31, Co12v14, He12v2, Ph2v8, Collv20.

³² Crucifixion: Ga5v11, Eph2v16, 1Corlv17,18 Ph3v18, Ga6v12,14. Taking up cross: Mt10v38, Mt16v24, Mk8v34, Mk15v21 (Simon of Cyrene), Lk9v23, Lk14v27.

³³ Hermann Sasse, "Luther's Theology of the Cross."

³⁴ "*Homini facienti quod in se est Deus infallibiliter dat gratiam.*" McGrath, p. 89.

³⁵ John Schaller, "The Hidden God," WLQ 13, pp. 213-233; 71, pp. 185-202.

³⁶ LW 1, p. 10, here phrased according to my memory of how Prof. Becker told the story.

³⁷ Hermann Sasse, "Luther's Theology of the Cross."

³⁸ such as, Trinity, omoousiov, etc.

³⁹ "Und wegen dieses Unglaubens **wollte and konnte** Er da nicht eine einige Tat tun; nur wenig Kranken legte Er die Hande auf und heilte sie; denn etliche wenige Seelen suchten Ihn doch immer, Sein Wort bleibt nie ganz ohne Frucht." Carl Manthey-Zorn, *Der Heiland* (Milwaukee: NPH, 1909), p. 101.

⁴⁰ WLQ 92, p. 179.

⁴¹ "The theology described in Romans 1:20 was possible when man was first created. But men have misused it. Now it no longer makes them pious, but rather fools. God therefore now follows another method. What is now important is not the knowledge of God's invisible nature in his works but the knowledge of his back side visible through sufferings." Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 25-26.

⁴² Some overstress the paradoxical form: "All this makes it clear that the theology of the cross results in a new understanding of what we call 'reality.' True reality is not what the world and reason think it is. The true reality of God and of his salvation is 'paradoxical' and hidden under its opposite. Reason is able neither to understand nor to experience it. Judged by the standards of reason and experience, that is, by the standards of the world, true reality is unreal and its exact opposite if real. Only faith can comprehend that true and paradoxical reality." Althaus, p. 32.

⁴³ LW 31, p. 40.

⁴⁴ The estimates of astronomers I read somewhere; the obvious guesses are occasionally changed, even doubled.

⁴⁵ Without the third verse, the first two verses of "How Great Thou Art" (CW 256) could be read as an expression of the theology of glory.

⁴⁶ von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p. 39, speaks of "the double track on which this idea runs for Luther." Althaus says:

God is hidden in his revelation and is revealed to us not directly but paradoxically in the cross and in suffering. He can reveal himself to us sinful men only when he is thus hidden. The hiddenness Luther describes in *The Bondage of the Will*, however, is not the coincidence of revelation and of hiddenness but God's hiddenness behind and beyond revelation in the mystery which forms the background of his almighty double-willing and double-working of salvation and damnation. (p. 277)

⁴⁷ LW 31, pp. 52-53.

⁴⁸ LW 31, p. 53.

⁴⁹ LW 31, p. 55.

⁵⁰ “Nor are they [indulgences] the merits of Christ and the saints, for, even without the pope, the latter always work grace for the inner man, and the cross, death, and hell for the outer man.” cf. LW 31, pp. 30, 212; the explanation of this thesis, the second longest of any of the explanations, covers pages 212-228.

⁵¹ LW 31, pp. 225-226.

⁵² LW 31, p. 227.

⁵³ 55. Mk10v38

72. Mt16v24, Mk8v34, Lk9v23

98. Lk14v27.

⁵⁴ We do need to distinguish between *Anfechtungen* and the problems that everyone has. A recent article in *Newsweek* describes many of the troubles and hardships that have come to people unintentionally because of technology. For example:

A modern technology, the jet airliner, has democratized tourism, enabling millions to travel to see Michelangelo's restored frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, where the heat of the visitors' bodies and the vapor in their breath combine with dust in the air to produce indoor acid rain....The proficiency of smoke jumpers at extinguishing small forest fires has produced a "fire deficit" by building up flammable materials that feed intense fires dangerous to the many people who, encouraged by firefighting proficiency, build homes at the edges of forests.

The author states the source of this information:

Depressed? Don't be. But do read the new book from which these ideas are drawn, Edward Tenner's "Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences." It explores what he calls "the strange consequences of nearly everything." Tenner, a visiting scholar at Princeton, is not one of those neo-Luddites who believe, as a wit said, that progress was all right once, but it went on too long. He acknowledges a kinship with Mary Shelley, whose "Frankenstein" "first connected Promethean technology with unintended havoc." But he is, on balance, cheerful, in his mordant manner, about "the tendency of the world around us to get even, to twist our cleverness against us."

One reason he is cheerful is that he believes in the creativity of disaster. To Murphy's Law ("If something can go wrong, it will") he offers a positive corollary: "Sometimes things can go right only by first going very wrong." As when the tragedy of the Titanic produced the International Ice Patrol. But Tenner's sober theme is pertinent to our political discontents that arise from impatience with the world's imperfections, and misplaced confidence in our ability to manipulate society. *Newsweek*, July 22, 1996, p. 72.

But these are not *Anfechtungen*. *Anfechtungen* are not self-made problems, even unintentionally self-made problems. *Anfechtungen* are attacks in the spiritual realm.

⁵⁵ LW 31, p. 57. For the benefit of those reading the footnotes, this important statement is repeated, "Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive."

⁵⁶ Kiecker, pp. 187-188.

⁵⁷ Hermann Sasse, "Luther's Theology of the Cross."

⁵⁸ WLQ 93, p. 186.

⁵⁹ *To Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People* (NPH, 1992), pp. 20-21.

⁶⁰ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, pp. 198-199.

⁶¹ conference paper delivered in 1992.

⁶² Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (CPH, 1962), p. 399n17.

⁶³ WLQ 92, p. 188.

⁶⁴ McGrath, p. 169: "WA 5.176.32-3. The capitals are Luther's."