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Introduction to the *Concordia Theological Journal*, Vol. 6, Issue 1

The Concordia Theological Journal (CTJ) has been published for the past five years as the academic journal for the theology departments of Concordia University—Wisconsin (CUW) and, after the merger, Concordia University—Ann Arbor (CUAA). For this the sixth year of its publication, it has been expanded to showcase not just the academic work of CUW/CUAA but also of the entire Concordia University System (CUS). The reach of the journal has been extended in that it will not only be published in print but also is found online at our own webpage (www.cuaa.edu/ctj) and is listed on ATLASerials™ with the full-text of each article being available on ATLA-Serials Plus™. To maintain academic excellence, we are now using a system of double-blind peer review. We are colloquially terming this expansion of the authorship pool, the extension of the journal's reach, and the institution of double-blind peer review "CTJ 2.0" in order to emphasize the extent of the changes made to what has already been a strong history of journalistic excellence.

The purpose of CTJ is to provide space for interdisciplinary, academic conversation within the tradition of Confessional Lutheranism on pressing problems affecting the church and Christian higher education. To this end, while we want to focus on academic offerings from the universities' and colleges' theology departments, we are open to interdisciplinary work as well that would include faculty in other academic departments at CUS schools, such as biology, anthropology, English, etc. Please see our website for instructions on how to submit articles for consideration.

The articles in this issue investigate what it means to be authentically Lutheran in the rapidly changing world of the twenty-first century, particularly as it relates to faithful articulation of doctrine and practice in higher education and congregational life. The article by Scott Yakimow (CUAA) provides an analysis of the practice of the early church as witnessed in the New Testament and the Didache regarding how prophets and their prophecies were tested in order to suggest a possible pattern for determining when a new articulation of doctrine or practice is faithful to the faith as it has been received. Philip Brandt (Concordia University—Portland) draws upon the history of the development of the liturgical seasons in order to make a suggestion for re-situating the penitential aspect of the Advent season to the time after Christmas due to changes in our culture. Joel Oesch (Concordia University—Irvine) reflects on the nature of what it means to be human in the twenty-first century and makes a proposal for how an incarnate, em-

bodied life might be reconceived and reclaimed in what is termed the “Age

Editorial

“Theology Is For Confession”

Nearly thirty years ago Gerhard Forde wrote his well-known treatise -
.[1] For me, this book was a game-changer. I began to see theology not primarily as an academic enterprise that finds the truth at all costs, but as a discipline that is fundamentally oriented to the church and directed toward a specific end: God’s eschatological announcement of the Gospel message in Jesus Christ, “Your sins are forgiven.” This understanding of theology has continued to propel my own teaching at the university level, and Forde’s distinction between explanation and proclamation remains a necessary distinction so that the gospel is not elided by a system. In Forde’s own metaphor, the distinction helps to ensure the bridegroom is heard saying, “I love you,” to his bride and not merely a lecture on the nature of love.

With some trepidation and a recognition of the continuing significance of Forde’s work, I wish to put forward an alternative to broaden and enrich his proposal that theology is for proclamation. I believe it is more helpful to say that theology is for confession.[2] Before I describe what that means, let me explain why I think the adjustment is necessary: the church. Forde’s notion of proclamation easily separates Christians from each other so that every Christian stands before God, yes, but all seem to stand in their own separate space, hearing their own personal proclamation. The preacher and the hearer are all that is necessary for the proclamation to take place, and a robust sense of Christian community falls to the wayside as unnecessary or unimportant.[3] The problem is exacerbated in an American context where individualism is assumed, and Americans can hardly see, let alone express, the social nature of faith, work, or even public life. Moreover, America is the land of novelty and utilitarian thinking, which has thrown away the old wine skins of history and tradition to embrace the new wine of the therapeutic.[4] In short, the idea that theology is solely for proclamation endangers the

[1] Gerhard O. Forde, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

[2] Paul Hinlicky has rightly placed confession as central to dogmatics. Hinlicky writes, “I will argue that public confession, not (supposedly) righteous political interventions in the mixed society of the common body, is the fruit by which theology is known, tested, and judged.” Paul R. Hinlicky, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 24.

[3] Steven Paulson, a student of Forde and himself a noted Lutheran theologian, shows just what this looks like. Paulson sums up his basic ecclesiology: “The Holy Spirit works anew all that is needed by bringing Christ to his sinners via the preaching ofýce.ò Steven D. Paulson, ñDo Lutherans Need a New Ecclesiology?” 15 (2001): 217. Paulson’s more recent book reiterates the same perspective. Steven D. Paulson, , Doing Theology series (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 237–40. For criticisms of Forde’s ecclesiology, see Cheryl M. Peterson, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 45–8.

[4] I mention therapy precisely because proclamation can easily be interpreted in a therapeutic

to confess Christ. A theology that cultivates confession will thus learn from history and use the good, true, and right dogma of the church for teaching and maturation in faith. Fourth, confession emphasizes a more positive role

say, doctrine, the prophet's behavior, and the effect on the ecclesial life of the community were all in view for the early church's testing of the prophets. I will close by offering some reflections on how this may be of relevance today in discerning faithful articulations of Christian doctrine and practice, particularly in its focus on testing the practical fruly i (o)- pdrine, t -29.4 (i

be stated as follows: given that the early Christian community viewed themselves as players in a cosmic spiritual struggle and believed it necessary to be aligned with one side or the other (whether wittingly or unwittingly), they judged the veracity of the spirit motivating the prophets and their prophecies by comparing what they said to what they were taught, by evaluating the behavior of the prophet, and by looking to the fruits of the prophecy in the corporate life of the church.

Judging Prophets:

In his aforementioned book, David Aune sets up the problem of dealing with conflicting political and prophetic authorities by contrasting the means available to Greco-Roman prophets in mediating conflicting oracular utterances with those associated with inspired prophets such as those within the Jewish tradition. Unlike the Greco-Roman prophets where an utterance may be rejected due to a [illegible] 37.8 (d A)

> lar false prophet (or group of false prophets) whom the author regarded as particularly threatening. Conflict among various prophets or between prophets and other types of Christian leaders in which prophetic is questioned is a way of solving the problem of conflicting authority as perceived in what appear to be conflicting norms and values.[9]

This indicates that the true problem for Aune is not the effects that true or false prophecy might have on the theology of the church (he describes this as an conflict between norms and values) but rather of preserving political power for an entrenched leadership. Aune's second conclusion trades upon the first and necessarily presupposes political conflict either between prophets or, more likely, between prophets and established commun.3 (cI(a)-6.7 (l p)-a.3 (b)-.1 (t r)8.3 (h)0.91(or)-39. (o)16.5(m)-30r)8.3 (h)0.91

they could then use to assert their own authority over prophets who would upset the . The method propounded entailed charging disruptive prophets with being possessed by evil spirits or with being deceivers interested only in their bellies. If my reading of Aune is at all reflective of his thought, then the narratival framework he presupposes is one where political realities form a theology which is then intended to be used instrumentally to protect established authority and **not** one where theological statements regarding ultimate reality resonate in the political realm thereby issuing in a changed political reality. In a word, politics over theology.[12]

However, is that what is going on in texts? Is the principal concern exemplified in the texts best read as that of safeguarding the political leadership of the community? Is this the correct presupposition to bring with respect to these particular texts? I do not think so. These texts are about determining the character of the spirit inspiring the prophet in order to see if the fruit of the act of prophecy will be beneficial to the church or bitter indeed. Rather than approaching the texts presupposing that theology is a tool used to strengthen the hand of political control, I contend that the texts are better read when understood as representing leaders who are concerned to get the theology right, not so that they can control the community, but so that they themI contnn undernoee- ⁄Lang (en-US)/M4ID 622 ⁄BDC BT10JETEMC /

rejected, sometimes even without comment. Expulsion from the Christian community was a temporal, political consequence of divine realities expressed by means of theological statements, statements regarding the existence of cosmic conflict, lying spirits, deceitful prophets, etc. and the effects of such on life now and eternally. Within this narratival framework, the equation described in my reading of Aune is reversed where theology now takes primacy over politics in the worldview of the texts. In a word, theology over politics. If the existence of cosmic conflict is not understood to be the background of why prophets need to be judged, then the stakes of such judging will remain unclear. These presuppositions will be tested by seeing if they help to explain the texts in question.

Paul on Testing the Spirits

First Thessalonians

In what is perhaps his earliest letter, Paul is already stating his concern for testing prophecies. He writes in 1 Thess. 5:19–22: "Do not quench (ůƀɏɜɜgŰŰ[13]) the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." While it is quite likely that this is a series of standardized instructions in an easily memorized form,[14] what Paul has to say here must be understood within the context of the entirety of his epistle. By placing it in this context, Paul's focus on the role of the Spirit in prophecy and his concern regarding the behavior of the prophets along with the practical fruits of prophecies come to the fore.

After greeting the Thessalonians, Paul describes how the gospel he preached came to them by emphasizing the role of the Spirit: "our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and [with] full conviction." (1:5) It should be noted that the "with" (translating "ɤɜ") in brackets is likely not original to the text.[15] If this is true, Paul coordinates the latter two phrases as part of a single concept—that of the gospel being proclaimed to the Thessalonians not in mere words but in

[13] Note that Paul uses the same term in Eph. 6:16 when referring to how the "shield of faith" is able to ñextinguishò the ñ Ć

power and in the Holy Spirit and great fullness of assurance . In the next verse, Paul continues his crediting the Holy Spirit with a real, indeed, a determinative role in his preaching and its results in the community when he says: "And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit." (1:6) Though receiving the Spirit-empowered word of the gospel brought affliction in imitation of Paul, his companions, and the Lord, it also brought with it joy precisely because the Spirit is active in it. Yet the affliction is real as well. Why? Because receiving the word that comes by the Holy Spirit entails a turning from idols (cf. 1:9–10), and doing so places one in a conflictual situation where the messengers of the Holy Spirit are "shamefully" treated (cf. 2:2). Paul should therefore be understood as encouraging the Thessalonians by assuring them, even in the midst of suffering, that the message they hold to is divinely authorized by the Holy Spirit and is itself the activity of that Spirit. The effect Paul envisions is twofold: first, that they would continue to serve the "living and true God" and continue to "expect his Son from heaven;" and second, that by so fortifying the Thessalonians in their faith and expectation, he would also tacitly commend himself to them as the proclaimer of the Spirit's message. Both of these effects have to do with the fruits of his work among them.

Paul makes this second claim explicit when he transitions from praising the Thessalonians to a defense of the divine nature of his own ministry and his own words. Not enough attention has been paid to understanding the nature of evaluating the prophets by means of Paul's defense of his own ministry. While Paul may not fit the mold of a mantic prophet but rather that of an apostle who teaches, the fact that he appeals to many of the same criteria for evaluating the prophets (such as those outlined by Aune) suggests that he sees his role as being close enough to that of a prophet to apply a similar standard.[16] Further, since in the end true teaching or true prophecy is understood as that authorized by and originating from God, the problem is the same in both cbutsro

ical move, Paul has firmly positioned himself as the spokesman of the Holy Spirit whose words are God's own words and whose ministry is beset by evil powers seeking to derail his ministry thereby emptying it of its fruits.

Chapter four begins with instructions on how the Thessalonians might live in such a way that they please God (4:1). After describing this life, Paul says, "For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore (ὭϵϑϽΰϱϵϳ) whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you." (4:7–8) Paul connects as closely as possible (by means of the emphatic inferential conjunction "ὭϵϑϽΰϱϵϳ") the God who calls His people to holiness with the rejection by disregarding such holiness not being an offence against a human being (or one could add, a human political structure) but against God Himself—perhaps more importantly in the context of this article, the God who gives His Holy Spirit. Paul raises the stakes considerably in this statement thereby shedding new light upon his defense of his own ministry. If his words or actions were shown to not be meeting the standard of holiness he lays out here, he would be betraying not a human authority but a divine authority. As he said earlier (2:4), pleasing human beings (or maintaining a human political community) is not what is at issue in Paul's rhetoric; rather, pleasing God is what is crucial.

The stakes are high for Paul in 1 Thessalonians. It is the dead who are "in Christ" that will rise up first to meet the Lord in the air to always (

him, the Spirit should not be quenched because it is the same Spirit that authorizes and originates Paul's gospel as being the gospel of God (1:5; 2:9, 13), the words that the Spirit used to turn the Thessalonians from idols to the living God (1:9), the words by which the Gentiles might be saved (2:16). True prophecies are not to be despised because they are the speaking of this Spirit, but they need to be tested (ŭɕəɬɛƳɛɤ), just as Paul considers himself to have been tested and approved by God, the tester of hearts (2:4). The means of that testing can be discerned by the standard Paul applies to himself—that of behavior that is in accordance with the character of the Spirit he proclaims and so is also fruitful in the lives of those he teaches, effecting in them a change of life in the same character as Paul's changed life. The good fruit of the prophet's activity[20] should be maintained while even all appearances of evil (ˊŬɜŰ-ɡ Ů¶ŭɕgɡ ˊɕɜdɟɕʑ—5:22) are to be avoided, because to disregard the holiness that comes from God is not to disregard a humanly-contrived injunction but to disregard God. The consequences of "getting it wrong" in the context of the spiritual struggle Paul outlines (where Satan / "the tempter" is an active entity) are dire (5:3, 9), while those of having

First Corinthians

A second important set of Pauline texts that deal with judging the prophets is found in 1 Corinthians. Unlike 1 Thessalonians where Paul treated few subjects all in the context of the impending "day of the Lord" which necessitated an analysis of the entire epistle, 1 Corinthians treats many different subjects in order to establish a regulated church life that expects to continue for some time. Of principal interest for understanding Paul's attitude towards "discerning the spirits" is 1 Cor. 12–14. Here, I adopt James Dunn's reading of these chapters where he sees three primary criteria for "discerning the spirits" being forwarded by Paul: 1) "the test of the gospel;" 2) "the test of love;" and 3) "the test of community benefit."[22]

Dunn finds the "test of the gospel" in 1 Cor. 12:1–3 where "ecstatic inspiration"[23] was likely in view due to Paul's comment, "You know that when you were pagans you were led astray (ˇ ´Ŭɔɦɛů₃ɞ) to mute idols, however you were led (ƒɔůůdů)." (12:2). The passive "ƒɔůůdů" indicating that they were "being led" combined with the compound participle "ˇ ´Ŭɔɦɛů₃ɞ" (based upon the same root) showing that they were those who were "led astray" strongly suggests that the powers associated with the "mute idols" were responsible for their leading. These powers were surely conceived of in spiritual terms as Paul makes clear in describing pagan sacrifices as being offered to "demons" (ŭŬ₉ɛɞ₃ɷɞɡ), a designation he uses for the spiritual powers associated with idols throughout 1 Cor. 10:19–22. So after making the connection to idols in 12:2, Paul then gives the short creed "Jesus is Lord" (Ŧɨɟ₉ɞɡ Ɣɖůɞǰɡ)[24] as the test of the ecstatic utterance inspired by the Holy Spirit in contrast to an ecstatic utterance of "Jesus be cursed" (ƀ₃ŸdůɛŬ Ɣɖůɞǰɡ) by what must be taken as the powers associated with the idols. It is difficult to think that Paul had anything else in mind but an evil spirit, a demonic power like those of the idols giving rise to an ecstatic utterance contrary to the gospel.

The second criterion, "the test of love," is to be found in 1 Cor. 13. Dunn contends that the placement of ch. 13 between 12 and 14 which treat of similar topics should not be a cause for puzzlement. Rather, "it was written in recognition that charismatic ministry and other important expressions of the Christian life and congregation could often be exercised in a selfish and uncaring manner."

mark of greater maturity" with "effects more enduring than any charism."[26] If Dunn is right, then it is interesting to connect Paul's instruction of love with the purpose he expressed earlier to impart a wisdom to the "mature" (ŰŮɚŮıɕɮɡ) in 2:6, a wisdom corresponding to the "more excellent way" (ɋˊŮɟɓɕɚoɜ ʿŭ-ɜ) (12:31) by which he describes ch. 13. This comparison seems to be apropos given that ch. 2 is also a discussion of the role of the Spirit in revealing the "secret and hidden wisdom of God" (2:7). Since Paul connects the revelation of this wisdom directly to the operation of the Spirit in this chapter, it is not too difficult to imagine that he has in mind either inspired teaching (such as Paul himself gives) or even prophetic utterances. Such a "spiritual person" (ˊɜŮgɛŰŰɮə-ɡ) who gives the teaching, in contrast to the "natural person" (ɣgɢɮə-ɡˇ ɜdɟɤˊɕɡ), is not to be judged (2:15). Yet this presupposes that such a one truly is a "spiritual person" and not a "natural person." This can be seen in the next verse where Paul cites Is. 40:13, "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" with

Dunn's third criterion, "the test of community benefit," comes from ch. 14 and is, for him, the clearest of the three criteria. He seizes upon Paul's use of concepts relating to "building up" seven times in this chapter as a way to demonstrate the importance Paul places upon it.[28] Dunn says: "In

be using ´ɜŮgɛ¥Ű ɤɜ (spirits) 'in the sense of ´ɜŮgɛŬŰ ɮəƧɜ' (spiritual gifts, or those things which pertain to the Spirit),"[32] seems unnecessary as well. A virtual substitution of one word for another resulting in what appears to be a spiritual gift of cataloging (a gift only a librarian could love) has less to commend it than reading it as "spirits" referring to animate (and animating) spiritual powers which flows well from Paul's conception of spirits outlined above.

There has been much discussion over the meaning of "discerning" (

Summary:

To summarize Paul's approach to discerning the spirits in prophecy, I propose the following four conclusions. First, the content of the prophecy must be consonant with the gospel as Paul preaches it. A spirit that does not teach God's salvific activity in Jesus contained in the short proto-creed "Jesus is Lord" cannot be the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead thereby vindicating his Lordship. Second, the behavior of the prophet must

of “abiding” (ɛɣɜɤ). A full study of the way John uses the word is beyond the scope of this investigation, but a number of instances are directly relevant. The first instance is programmatic for the remaining uses. In 2:5b-6, John writes: “By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” For John, the concept he is about to develop regarding “abiding” is purposive. One does not merely abide in such a way that one’s life is unchanged. Rather, the consequence claiming to “abide in him” (i.e., Jesus) is that one needs to do what he did—to refrain from sin and engagen-849 (o)-08 (d)-275 (ne ne(d)-27-32 (T)

result that she is abiding in death (3:14); or if she will be identified with God Himself and abide in Him unto eternal life.[41]

The Didache:

The Didache is important to this discussion because it is a witness to the early church's practice of judging the prophets in the early 2nd century and is very practical in its outlook. It is unlike the previous three texts we have examined in a number of ways, only two of which I mention here. First, there is a change of genre from the Pauline texts that are epistles written to particular churches and the Johannine epistle which appears to be written by a well-known church leader for general circulation among churches who know him to a document that appears to be a church order mixed together with a paranetic section derived from an already existing document. Second, the Pauline and Johannine texts exhibited strong coherence of thought where the thoughts and personalities of the authors come to the fore. The hand of the didachist, however, has not left as much of an imprint on the materials he has used and is, at times, almost invisible.[42] The Didache has the tone of a person transcribing the customs of a group of congregations in a particular region. In consequence of the genre of the Didache as a mixed church order and its lack of a strong authorial presence, reading it as a tightly argued document where verbal correspondences are crucial to understanding the whole (as I read the previous texts) becomes a much more speculative affair. Therefore, I will be largely treating the Didache piecemeal, rarely looking to the flow of the whole document since the existences of such a flow is open to serious dispute.

In 11:1–2, the didachist opens his section on the reception given to itinerant churchmen with the general category of "teacher" which he then subdivides into that of apostle and prophet. These two categories have some overlap because an apostle whose behavior does not accord with what is expected of him can be called a "false prophet." Teachers and prophets also

[41] Though Aune agrees here that "the term 'spirits' refers to one spirit of error (1 John 4:6), who speaks through many 'false prophets' (1 John 4:1)," (Aune, , 224) he still reads the text as primarily dealing with political conþict within the community: ñThe position which we take… is that the polemic in 1 John 4:1–3, 6 is leveled against those prophets … In a word, these prophets too appear to have a basic antistructural and antimaterial stance which expresses

appear to exercise distinctive yet overlapping roles in the congregation in later chapters (13:1–2), even as bishops and deacons are said to do the ministry of prophets and teachers (15:1–2). This suggests that understanding "teacher" as a general office or position in 11:1–2 is not appropriate. Instead, it is likely that the reference to teachers in 11:1–2 should not be understood as referring to a particular defined role but rather a general reference to the activity of teaching itself as it is exercised by itinerants—something that apostles and prophets do.[43] Therefore, it is appropriate to think of some overlap between the prophet and the "teacher" (ŭɘŭɎůəŬɚɕɠ) in that both "teach" (ŭɘŭɎůəɤ), even though the redactor later makes a distinction between the two roles in the church.

A second consequence of this observation is that according to 11:1–2, it can be assumed that if a prophet were teaching but not "in the spirit," then he would be subject to a testing of his teaching by a comparison of its content with the two ways material[44] of 1–6 and, interestingly, the liturgical practices of 7–10. If the prophet's teaching (not "in the spirit") undermines or dissolves (

Turning to prophets in 11:7ff, the didachist urges care upon the reader. A prophet “speaking in the spirit” is not to be tested or discerned (ŭɘŬəʇʊɜɤ

and suggests that the cases mentioned in 11:9–12 are just that—a casuistic application of this general principle. Further, given that the two ways material of chs. 1–6 is likely seen as an authoritative interpretation of the manner

of the church" (11:11) is accepted as long as that behavior is not urged upon the community.

Conclusions and Reflections

In the course of this study, we have observed that the early Christian community applied specific criteria (though not necessarily propositionally rationalistic criteria) to the prophets in order to adjudicate the true prophet from the false. Running throughout the texts we have studied, we see a similarity of concerns. First, there was a concern for doctrine. The teaching of the prophet was to be weighed to see if it harmonized with what the community had believed and taught. Doctrine matters in judging the prophets and their prophecies for the early church, but it was not the sole criterion for accepting the prophet or his utterance. This category of testing is well-known and non-controversial.

Second, the behavior of the individual prophet was of great importance in determining whether or not he spoke from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. This serves to add another layer beyond the doctrinal test in that it demonstrates an overall concern for the "fruits" of the prophet, which includes but goes beyond doctrinal accuracy. This second criterion is hardly one that can be fully encapsulated in a series of rules. It depends upon the concept of "recognition" rather than that of logical coherence as with the doctrinal test. Recognizing the behavior of a true prophet was more a matter of seeing if the prophet conducted himself in ways that resonated with the community as being honest and forthright, according to the spirit of the community which is, assumedly, the Holy Spirit. This is essentially like determining whether the narrative of the prophet's life fits into the story of what the Holy Spirit is doing or would do in those situations such that the prophet's story is consonant with the Spirit's story. So here, recognition and discernment say much the same thing.

The third concern is ecclesial in that the effect of the prophet's ministry in up-building the community was ascertained. If the prophet's words led to an increase in Christian life and faith for the church, then the prophet is accepted. Again, as with an evaluation of behavior, this is a highly contingent criterion and not easily discerned. It takes time for the fruits of prophetic practice to come to full bloom. But it is also here that the concern for the practical effects on the Christian community is of great importance. Does what the prophet says build up the body of Christ in its love for God and neighbor or not? Perhaps here is Augustine's dictum that: "S7 (r)-15.tior G

“Can We Talk About Advent”

Phillip Brandt

Abstract

they are by the effect which the words and actions have on the hearer. This has only sharpened for me over the past decade as I have left called parish ministry to enter the ranks of the academy. I am no longer the one immersed in sermon preparation and hymn selection every week. When I was, the liturgical calendar was a very real part of my life, profoundly shaping me. Now, I am the one experiencing that hard work on the part of the pastor and musicians of the parish I attend. In my work-a-day world, I am far more influenced by other calendars, primarily academic. December is not a period of fasting, penitential vows, and an emphasis on prayer but of final exams and the end of the term. Both have a certain apocalyptic tenor, but they are very different.

When I look at my own experience and speak to my fellow parishioners, I find that Advent is simply not a penitential season. It is a season of feasting, parties, decorating trees, and preparing for a grand party on the 25th of the

the Advent which was intended by the fathers: a period of penitential practices. I grieve that loss too and fear for the people who live without it. They need it as well. This is why I want to talk about Advent. I am not trying to restore an aesthetic season which waited until Dec. 24 to erect the Christmas tree. I really do not care when the tree is set up. I am arguing that in the 21st century, people need a time to repent. Advent, even if we keep the Christmas carols at bay for the first 24 days of December, simply cannot be that season in our current cultural situation.

In this article I propose to take a brief look at Advent, its origins, and its purpose. But this is not simply an historical exercise. I intend to propose that we need to reconsider this season and how we embody the Advent proclamation of Law and Gospel in our cultural context. Advent is not an artifact which we need to preserve. It was founded as an ecclesial action which conveyed a particular message and worked a particular work for the congregant. I would distill Advent's original message/effect, particularly its penitential emphasis and practices, and ask whether Advent and Christmas as more recently formulated actually accomplish what we want or even need them to accomplish. And then I would propose a reconsideration of just how we might accomplish that essential Advent and Christmas task. My proposal is that we consider the two or three weeks immediately after the Christmas holiday as an intentionally and liturgically observed penitential period.

A Pastoral History of Advent

Advent is a relatively late addition to our liturgical calendars but is still ancient. The Advent we know, a period of four Sundays prior to the feast

preparation, and fasting. Our scanty references to this period of winter fasting suggest that it was initially understood and articulated as a period of preparation for Catechumens who were to be baptized. It might be assumed that this period of fasting was designed for a small part of the community,

Rite, it is still a period of six weeks, not four.[8]

An Important Aside on Ancient Penitence and Fasting

This paper is interested in the practices which marked this period. What did observing Advent entail for the Christians of the late antique and early medieval periods? The modern congregant is often unaware of the extent to which both Lent and Advent reflected the culture which obtained at the point of their establishment. The early church walked a very rigorous and sometimes excessively penitential road which is alien to a modern western outlook. Advent was not as severe as Lent in many places because it only added one day of fasting to the weekly calendar. Christians were expected to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays every week of the year except the festivals. In Advent, they also were expected to fast on Mondays.[9]

This seems excessive to moderns. But these ancient practices were rooted in a particular way of looking at the world. In the ancient and medieval world, persecution and plague were frequently seen as visitations of divine justice and occasions for very visible acts of repentance.[10] A visitor to Rome today will likely visit the Castel Sant' Angelo. It was originally Hadrian's (died 138) tomb but by the Medieval period had been converted to a fortress. It derives its name from an event which is said to have happened in 590, in the days of Pope Gregory I. A plague was ravaging the area, and Gregory heard that a pagan shrine had recently been rejuvenated and was even attracting Christians. Assuming that the plague was punishment for this sin, Gregory destroyed the shrine and several others. Upon his return at the head of a penitential procession, he was said to see Michael the Archangel atop the tomb, cleaning and sheathing his bloodied sword. An angel has adorned the top of the Hadrian's mausoleum for many of the years since then.[11] We have no idea if this story is true—likely it is a medieval fable—but what matters is that it was perceived as factual in the medieval context. This "made sense" in the medieval world.

I bring this story up because it introduces us to the different world in which the early and medieval church lived and in which it formulated its penitential seasons. Gregory, of course, is the same Gregory who decreed the Advent season of four weeks prior to Dec. 25. These people took very seriouiadven t,(l s)-3nsmo (i)10.ten79.8 (i)-4.2 (s s)-3 (n)30 ( )age(or)-41.1 (y u-17.

They went on pilgrimages. They took vows of self-denial and engaged in

merchants. I have great sympathy for the merchants. My mother worked in a small gift store for some years which was owned by her good friend. For eleven months of the year they made no profit. The entire profit for the year was the Christmas season. If I were a merchant, I would undoubtedly be trying to maximize that as well.

While it is understandable, this commercial Christmas has had an effect on both the Advent and the subsequent Christmas seasons. By the time

and take grim stock of the damage done by too much feasting, my lack of self-control, and insufficient exercise. Now the piper must be paid in gnawing hunger, sweat, and tears.

This is all the language of repentance, but it is couched differently from the liturgical language of repentance, and therefore I think we miss it. We need to seize this time of penitential action and make it into a season of penitence—effectively relocating the Advent penitential action to the days after Christmas. Another way to think of this is to say that these actions—which people are doing anyway—need to be taken before God and not simply in service to the self.

Of course such a course of action will necessitate rethinking what we are doing. I wonder, though, if it is not high time for that and if the re-thinking will be limited to the way we talk about New Year's resolutions. Our modern discussion of repentance is perhaps not rooted as much in Scripture as we imagine it to be. We tend to see penitence solely as some abasement before the divine, a 3 (h)-19.8 (i)8.311.4 (n)5.5 (t b)-7.9 (e)10.j4(o)2.5 ()(i)8. wh (l ne)(e)-10

and plan.

We should not shy away from dieting as penitence and we should have

Here is why I believe the penitential season which follows the Festival of the Incarnation may be necessary. Christ has come into this world, taken up human flesh, to redeem this world and all its sinful humanity. Salvation is not an escape from world of senses and the material. Christian salvation is God restoring us to right relationship with him and his creation. We need to

Conclusion

Any such proposal as this needs finally to ask whether what it proposes is better than what exists at the moment. I come to yet another Thanksgiving/Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season as I compose these words. Here is what I am expecting to happen. The pressure to celebrate will increase over the coming weeks as expectations rise for the Thanksgiving Day feast. We will be consumed by where, when, and with whom we will observe this secularly originated holiday. We will finally decide on which family members will be present, the menu, and where exactly the feasting will take place. The questions of who will bring dessert, who will bring the cranberries, and who will supply the yams will be settled. The yams will need to be without marshmallows at my house; that is non-negotiable. This is a liturgical event with clearly defined rules and expectations. The with-marshmallow crowd will be excommunicated with all the fervor of a 19th century inter-denominational dialogue between German and Swedish Lutherans.

After the Thanksgiving feasting is done and the families have returned to their respective domiciles, we will engage in the preparation for Christmas. My family eschews the Black Friday crush and madness. Critical questions are when shall we erect the tree and decorate it? When will we complete the holiday shopping for gifts to be distributed at Christmas? When will we brave the ladder and weather to string the lights on the gutters of my home, cursing my earlier sloth during beautiful fall days? Yes, Advent will make its appearance. We will attend a midweek service preceded by a meal of soup and bread. But it will not be a penitential affair, a simple meal which allows me to divert resources to the poor in almsgiving. A friendly competition has arisen in my parish of late. A score of crockpots will show up with soups of increasing complexity and subtler flavors as the Wednesdays of December progress. We have become soup snobs. There will be dessert too. While a soup supper may have origins in fasting, any such ideas have been blunted. It is about fellowship and community. I am not complaining, merely observing.

The preacher—a very good one in my parish—on Sundays and Wednesdays will direct our attention to the promised Messiah. He will likely point to themes of darkness and light. There is much darkness to note and great need for the Light of the World. The candles will be lit during a family oriented litany of prayer and readings. We will sing “O, Come, O, Come, Emmanuel” every week as another candle on the wreath is lit. Will he wait until Christmas to proclaim that Light? I would not. On the Sunday prior to the festival, all the pretense of waiting will be pushed aside as the Sunday School presents their Christmas program. In the Narthex the Angel Tree

al reality. When taken together, the transformative effects of these social technologies are substantial, particularly as their use generates a withdrawal from traditional forms of community. Economist Edward Castronova suggests that the gravitational pull of the virtual life will "create a change in social climate that makes global warming look like a tempest in a teacup."[4]

Perhaps the most substantial change is located at the level of human identity. The Digital Age, along with its retinue of devices, is primed to be the foremost shaper of human identity in the Western world, outpacing the more traditional influences of family, religion, political persuasion, or ethnicity. Technologies not only shape the way we think about the world around us, but, in an inward turn, these tools have taught us to think about ourselves—about human nature—in largely unfamiliar ways. The "tool as teacher" designation may be too benign. Perhaps we should start calling digital tools our . One visit to a baseball game, a restaurant, or train station will show you who is in charge of whom. As the famous saying goes, "We shape our tools, and thereafter, our tools shape us."[5]

The young woman on the pier reminds us how blurry the distinctions between the virtual and real have become. Clay Shirky, author of , argues that a user's digital world no longer remains distinct from the real life they inhabit. He explains,

> The old view of online as a separate space, cyberspace, apart from the-real world, was an accident of history. Back when the online population was tiny, most of the people you knew in your daily life weren't part of that population. Now that computers and increasingly computerlike phones have been broadly adopted, the whole notion of cyberspace is fading. Our social media tools aren't an alternative to real life, they are part of it.[6]

MIT Sociologist Sherry Turkle, sharing Shirky's sentiment, notes the ease by which Internet users fluidly move between various virtual and embodied identities by baldly stating, "We are all cyborgs now."[7]

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[4] Edward Castronova, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), xiv–xv.

[5] Mistakenly attributed to sociologist Marshall McLuhan, this phrase was actually penned by his friend, Father John Culkin, a professor at Fordham University. The quote surfaced in 'A Schoolman's Guide to Marshall McLuhan' in (March 18, 1967), 70. It has been modiýed and used in a variety of contexts since then, though it is no stretch to think that the central idea behind the quote is McLuhan's.

[6] Clay Shirky, (New York: Penguin, 2010), 37.

[7] Sherry Turkle, (New York: Basic, 2011), 152. Turkle's full quote: "Within a decade, what had seemed alien was close to becoming everyone's way of life, as compact smartphones replaced the cyborgs' more elaborate accoutrements. This is the experience of living full-time on the Net, newly free in some ways, newly yoked in others. We are all cyborgs now."

The central reason why Christians should be paying attention to this tidal change is that ours is an Age of Excarnation. Roman Catholic philosopher, Charles Taylor, describes excarnation in this way: Excarnation is "the steady disembodying of spiritual life, so that it is less and less carried in deeply meaningful bodily forms, and lies more and more in the head."[8] As Christian intellectualism potentially leaves the body behind, so the profound nature of the Incarnation and our collective witness as the living Body of Christ slowly recedes from our theological imagination, leaving us with a feeble form of Gnosticism. Excarnation directly threatens human embodiment and undercuts the uniquely incarnational claims of Christianity.

Moment by moment, the West is experiencing a transformation. Embodied expressions of culture, art, music, vocation, and community have now given way to digitally mediated living. It is just a matter of time before the cultural takeover of digital technologies is complete, invading our very bodies in pursuit of more knowledge, longer lifespan, and enhanced emotional capacities. I admit that I am rather pessimistic that our society will place clear boundaries on the human body as we proceed further into the present century. The distinction between man and technology will continue to blur, and so Christians, like the Apostle Paul, are going to have to "build tents in Corinth," living in a culture that largely despises scriptural declarations of human identity. Culture, in both its religious and non-religious forms, may lose the ability to articulate a holistic response to the question, "What makes humans, human?" because it lacks any solid footing with which to place the body as an essential component of human life.

The nature of technology, as it transforms our understanding of personal biology, sociology, and psychology, raises the timeless question, "Who am I?" Whether through circumstance or curiosity, self-reflective people are

could be signs of their displeasure. To be sure, the result was "interpreted as an outside power which infus[ed] itself into a man's doings."[15]

The ancient Greeks, too, believed that man was neither divine nor animal, though features of each would reveal themselves in a person's constitution. From the bottom, the appetitive desires of sex, food, and comfort were largely identified as animalistic. They were the lower instincts that, though necessary, could overpower a man and make him a slave to base desire. From the top, the Greeks understood the life of mindful rationality and the practice of virtue to be the goal of human activity. The contemplative life reflects the divine.[16]

Contrast these positions with biblical anthropology. Whereas the pagan divine-man relationship is born in tension and discord, the biblical witness takes great pains to describe the creation of man as originally good, being uniquely made in God's own image. Human beings are given the divine mandate to be both priests and stewards; to offer to God their bodies as living sacrifices and to exercise dominion over the whole of God's creation.[17] Whereas the Greeks emphasize the rational life of the mind and relegate

etrate the person and give broader meaning to his situation in life.[20]

Darwin's discoveries in the natural world leaked steadily into the realms of religion, philosophy and ethics. Nietzsche, as an unflinching torch bearer of Darwinian theory, drew upon the naturalist to construct his own philosophy of will and power. If the strong are fit enough to survive and reproduce, then they also have the ability to mold the world in their favor, using other creatures—indeed, even other men and women—as instruments for their own achievement. Nietzsche's rejection of Christianity, in large part, stemmed from his desire to strip away Christian virtue from the might-makes-right natural order of things. Faith, hope, and charity were despised byrviva2d iat aii1 ((i)-2.2 (. 211 (s)-29.6 (C20.1 (ia)-18.8 (i)8.9 10 0 ✓)-1s)-3h)36

The metaphor is certainly useful in the natural sciences. It prompts the scientist to probe in the structures of matter and locate the relationship between the discrete pieces and the whole. After all, altering one tiny spark plug makes the difference between a pleasant Sunday drive and sitting in a parking lot with an angry expression on your face. The stakes are considerably higher if one ignores the magnificent machinery of the human genome.

. . .

Each metaphor sends humanity toward a particular fate; it indicates a or ultimate end to which a person strives. If man is a being caught between divine forces from above and unruly nature below, then the flourishing life is one that avoids the wrath of the gods and finds a certain harmony with the natural world. The pagan, then, would harness what power was available to him through spells, shamans, and sacrifice to minimize the curses and maximize the blessings for one's family, crops, and social relations.

If man is only an evolved animal, then ultimate flourishing is to adapt, survive, and spread one's genes. Strength and vigor become the operating virtues, and human communities are either reduced to arenas by which strong individuals subdue the weak or serve as entities of power unto themselves to rule other groups.

And, finally, if man is a machine as de la Mettrie suggests, then flourishing can be equated with optimum efficiency, where all the parts that make up a person's body and mind operate seamlessly without deferring to outside or transcendent sources of meaning.

These metaphors make claims about the human person—who the person —and they suggest particular forms of flourishing. Yet each of the above models lacks the incarnational impulse of human nature—by that I mean an inherent bodily dignity given to man and woman by God as gift and as essential to a person's human-ness.

Models and frameworks only work insofar as they explain fixed targets, in this case, human nature. What happens if given is called into question, as in the case of the rising Transhumanist movement?

HOMO TECHNOLOGICUS?

Imagine, for a moment, that you go to your eye doctor. After twenty minutes of assorted tests, she tells you what you already know. You need stronger lenses. Then, much to your surprise, she tells you about some

they speak to this fundamental anxiety about what it means to be human in a technologically advanced society. Ironically, the resistance to such a surgery implies a certain discomfort with the belief that a person can actually be thought of . To put this another way, it appears that an individual is a machine right up until we allow actual machines to penetrate one's body with increasing regularity. Then, we find ourselves disoriented in the human-but-not-quite-human terrain of the "uncanny valley" and are left with the intuition that our nature can and should remain appropriately distanced from the strict determinism implied in the Man as Machine metaphor.

Presently, the term "machine" has an anachronistic quality to it. Perhaps the more suitable metaphor is a slight augmentation of Man as Machine to Man as Computer, the flesh-and-bones hardware facilitating the software of the mind. For anyone who has ever bought a new computer online, the available customization options are nearly endless. Processors, graphics cards, power supplies, memory—all powerful tools to help a user run the type of programs they need to be successful. This is the story of Transhumanism, a story when man takes hold of his evolutionaT6.5 (s)09tstf Maputeluce10 0 0 1oo wre

ic pursuit to reverse the aging process. Aubrey de Gray, a noted leader in this field, bemoans the fatalism that is present in current discussions about death. His work at SENS Research Foundation and AgeX Therapeutics focuses on regenerative medicine, therapies that halt or reverse normal cellular decay, prompting widespread optimism for a future where death is chosen, not inevitable.[27]

Super-intelligence is the second super. Oxford philosopher and transhumanist thinker, Nick Bostrom, lays out three forms of super-intelligence, two of which are useful for my purposes: "speed" superintelligence and "quality" superintelligence. The former refers to any system that can do what a human intellect can do, only "multiple orders of magnitude" faster. The latter identifies systems that are as fast as the human mind but "vastly qualitatively smarter."[28] In either case, the age is approaching when computer speeds (or the speed of human thinking augmented directly by digital technologies) will create new rules on what is humanly possible.

ed component of human identity. This is an important point. It is here that Man as Machine models begin to fail. What's left is a view of man that essentially regards human identity as , as . The person is never wholly immaterial, per se, since consciousness may in the future run from silicon-based platforms. But he loses his incarnational character; the human body no longer has a proper role to play in terms of identity.

When the body is lost for the promise of a transhumanist utopia, the person inevitably loses other goods. Procreation becomes a hassle and no longer represents a central human expression of hope for the future. Courage and sacrifice no longer serve as virtues, becoming nostalgic afterthoughts of a bliss-saturated generation unaccustomed to the uncomfortable idea of death. Since the object of al5 (r)6or tr; ts

tion is, “the steady disembodying of spiritual [and communal] life, so that it is less and less carried in deeply meaningful bodily forms, and lies more and more in the head [and in the device.]” My expansion of the definition allows us to consider the deep influence of digital media on the person regardless if they are participants in traditional faith communities or not.

Ultimately, this term can and must be set in opposition to incarnation. Whereas incarnation is image made flesh, excarnation seeks the reverse: flesh made image. Man become software. Excarnation is the reducing of the rich complexity of human life, identity, and experience to quantifiable data; it is the intentional ‘captioning’ of the human person. An obvious example of excarnation is pornography, where the profound depths of embodied human sexuality are cast aside for superficial images designed to reduce the subject to an easy-to-discard sex object. To use a lighter example, boys’ high school sports are changing dramatically. With the rise of popular video games, such as the Madden franchise, fewer and fewer boys are trying out for the team. Boys feel like they “know” football because they can play a video game with expertise, leaving behind the experiential knowledge that only comes with the embodied participation on the field.[35] An irreducibly physical activie rtspescS.9 (s)-7.0 3[illegible]

of connectivity and near-unlimited cash flow. And yet, this approach leaves substantial gaps. Harari's statement, like de la Mettrie's , fails to produce any resource by which one can claim intrinsic dignity for the human body, strong or weak. What's left is a fragile accord between individuals for the sake of survival, akin to one member of a community pleading with another, "If you don't hurt me, I won't hurt you."

I suggest that if one gets human identity wrong, then the resulting model of human flourishing risks minimizing or ignoring the crucial role of the body.[37] Solid theological anthropology must include a space for the person's physical constitution. Therefore, I believe that the Church's first and most pressing step is to lay out a straightforward case for human identity that incorporates enfleshed living and properly accounts for the necessity of physical communities of grace. This approach need not be Luddite in any way, as the Lutheran articulation of freedom allows us to engage culture in all of its forms.

I suggest a model that binds human identity directly to the life of the Trinity. Human distinctness is borne out of the creative, redemptive, and sanctifying purposes of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, respectively. What does that look like, exactly?

Telos (Vocation)

From the instant of his creation, man has been given purpose. In the broad sense, Adam and Eve are created to bring glory to God, to participate in the life of God made immediate to them in the Garden. God the Father bestows man and woman with the gift of , a reason for being that reflects his very own nature.[38] In the narrow sense, man and woman exist to work the ground, to exercise care and dominion the animals, and to be fruitful and multiply. God's design for humanity is brought to fullness in Revelation 21–22, where the Tree of Life, crops, and rivers again move and produce in harmony, and all of humankind is caught up in the glorious praise of God in song, worship, and community.

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[37] This dynamic works in the reverse, to an extent. A healthy understanding of our collective past can help us better understand our individual identities in the present. Charles Taylor notes this by saying, "Our past is sedimented in our present, and we are doomed to misidentify ourselves, as long as we can't do justice to where we come from." (Taylor, 29).

[38] The of humanity reverberates in discussions of philosophy and theology, from Aristotleôs treatment of human þourishing ( ), to Aquinasô teleological emphasis in the ýfth of his Five Forms, to Luther's "new obedience" borne out of faith and directed toward neighbor. See Aristotle, (1095a15–1102a); Thomas Aquinas, , trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925), Ia, q. 2, art 3; and Paul Althaus, , trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 245–50.

Christian engagement with the world operates between these two idyllic states, doing the works that the Father prepared in advance for the Body of Christ to do. The Christian is to make disciples, to baptize, and teach the present and coming kingdom of God, while at the same time, praising God by serving in the kingdom of the left in the everyday matters of vocation avocation. To be without vocation is to be without purpose. It should serve as no surprise, then, that unemployment affects a person so profoundly, for the loss of a job strips away a crucial feature of one's very humanity. Vocations not tied to employment are just as central to our identity; they enliven us with reasons for being, for doing.

Notice how this wing of theological anthropology opens the door for those in the technology industry. Christians do not have to take a Luddite stand here, but instead they can encourage the faithful research and implementation of digital and robotic technologies with a heart of discernment to love one's neighbor. This is not too dissimilar from the vocation of soldier, who must from time to time wield his or her weapon against the enemy. The discipline and training it takes to do such difficult tasks is necessary for a peaceful society, just as the same is necessary for those who wield other dangerous things, like the Iren-US

As Lutherans, we confess the following realities in this light:

- One, creatures. God, in his goodness and wisdom,

Church-Community

All of the aforementioned arguments about embodiment are incomplete without the community. We experience community in our creatureliness, as Eve's introduction to Adam was borne out of God's declaration that "it is not good for the man to be alone."[43] Luther adds that Adam, while "beautiful" and "provided for," nevertheless lacks the "gift of the increase and the blessing—because he is alone."[44] Our experience of the embodied life is necessarily communal, as we bear our creaturely limitations to live lives of service and consolation to the brethren. Even more than that, our bodies bear unique witness in and amongst the communities we live in, as the apostle Paul reminds the church at Corinth, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in 0 10 27 431.2299 T(s)29.9 (S)/MCID 27 395.2299 Tm[(w)12.5502(6l)-13 [(v

Here one ought to notice that the Christian is never far from the

especially in light of the over-promising, under-delivering (and ultimately,

unfold Don Draper's search for who he really is. Identity no longer articulates human sameness. Instead Don Draper's identity remains perpetually enigmatic and extremely personal. He pitches: "what you call love was

horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand."[18] From the ancient age up to the early modern and Enlightenment, Western thinkers perceived the world within and without through differing perspectives on one shared horizon of being and meaning.[19] One orients and originates one's self in relation and reaction to set forms of meaning. Thus, Taylor notes, "For someone in Luther's age, the issue of the basic moral frame orienting one's actions could be put in universal terms. Nothing else made sense."[20] Now, however, such a universal frame makes no sense to my secular students in our secular age.

ness" which can be met by building something into one's life, some pattern of higher action, or be met by connecting one's life up with some greater reality or story.[28] In , Taylor puts this in terms of the ordinary contemporary aspiration to live a fully satisfying life.[29] In other words, this may be seen in the incessant drive to override the fragility of fragmentation and experience coherent lives of fulfillment. In , Taylor defines the modern identity in relation to the good and the search for fulfillment through three major frameworks: the inner self or inwardness, the affirmation of the ordinary life, and the voice of nature, which implies the expressivist notion of nature as inner moral source.[30]

II. Christian Identity, Vocation, and the Affirmation of the Ordinary Life in the Private and Public Spheres

In relation to the importance of the Reformation as starting point for Taylor's and , as well as to Luther's revolutionary underst-deo Lun3 Tc 10 0 0 10 m[(o)16.5 (l) Kr'0.1 (i)10.6w/0ETEMC (s)

is integrated in a new way into an ethic of everyday existence. My work in my calling ought to be for the general good."[42] Taylor, citing Joseph Hall, observes that for the Puritans, "God loveth adverbs; and cares not how good, but how well."[43] Christians are to live for God and for others in ordinary ways done extraordinarily well. This impetus for excellence eventually morphs into what Taylor calls in , "the age of mobilization" and "designates a process whereby people are persuaded, pushed, dragooned or bullied into new forms of society, church, association."[44] Taylor goes on, "whatever political, social, ecclesial structures to which we aspire now have to be mobilized into existence."[45] For example, to take the cosmos and cosmology, there was a shift from the enchanted world to a cosmos conceived in conformity with post-Newtonian science, in which there is absolutely no question of higher meanings being expressed in the universe around us. The commodification of time and demarcation of the metaphysical correlates with the rise of the self-reasoning and self-existing person as promoted by the enlightenment and eventually develops into what Taylor titles "the buffered self," the interiorization of individual identity.[46]

III. Finding our Place in Society: Charles Taylor and Martin Luther on Christian Identity and Vocation in an Age of Authenticity

All of this leads to today, where, according to Taylor, we find ourselves in an age of authenticity. "It appears," reasons Taylor, "that something has happened in the last half-century, perhaps even less, which has profoundly altered the conditions of belief in our societies."[47] The meta-projects of the age of mobilization: nationalism, Marxism, idealism, etc., have fragmented and no longer compel mass adherence. A life well lived is now a life well experienced. Taylor goes on, "This is a culture informed by an ethic of authenticity. I have to discover my route to wholeness and spiritual depth. The focus is on the individual, and on his/her experience. Spirituality must speak to this experience. The basic mode of spiritual life is thus the quest. . . It is a quest which can't start with a priori exclusions or inescapable starting points, which could pre-empt this experience."[48] Thus, in teaching students theology today, instructors would be wise to begin with the experiences of their students. Articulating identity includes the experiences of finding

[42] Taylor, , 258.
[43] Taylor, , 224. Joseph Hall quoted in: Charles H. George, and Katherine George, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 139.
[44] Taylor,

identity. For Christians, identity is centered in the self-giving love of God and found in Christ who finds us by the Spirit where we are. Thus, Christians affirm the search for finding ourselves in relation to human flourishing. For Luther, human flourishing means living in service for others. In this age of authenticity, Taylor holds out hope for societal transformation through Christians participating in the love ( ) of God, "which is by definition a love which goes way beyond any possible mutuality, a self-giving love not bounded by some measure of fairness" but open to limitless self-giving.[49] This self-giving love of God overpowers the separation anxiety of sin that stalks contemporary searches for the self. For Christians, the authenticity of the self is experienced in the affirmation of living ordinary lives for others extraordinarily well.

This perspective of divinely imparted transformation coordinates with Luther's concentration on the personal faith of the Christian believer as lived out in his or her baptismal and societal calling, and the infinite possibilities this opens for transforming self and society. When I teach Luther's theology, I often incorporate Martin Luther King Jr.'s (named by his father after Martin Luther) sermon, "The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life" (1960), which echoes Martin Luther's sermon "On the Three Kinds of the Good Life" (1521). Luther's sermon proclaims the good life as radiating out to others from the center of justification by faith in Christ. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermon puts Luther's dictum of passive and active righteousness or being free from all, subject to none and being a servant of all, subject to all, in contemporary and vocational terms. For Martin Luther King, Jr., "There are three dimensions of any complete life . . . length, breadth and height. Now the length of life . . . is not its duration . . . it is the push of a

Dante, traverses from hell and back.

fully as they will be fully known.[61] In this journey of faith, witness proliferates in with-ness: Christians walk by faith together with fellow searchers for human flourishing from before and with seekers here and now. Somehow, someway, even my secular students, who initially judge Augustine to be preachy, connect with his mystical vision at Ostia with Monica his mother. Augustine, like Dante, is named by another in the pull of love and thereby experiences the feeling of wholeness followed by the rude return to reality "where a sentence has both a beginning and an ending."[62] Taylor teaches us that acknowledging and articulating identity in relation to the good is complicated and requires two large tomes (*Self*) comprised of many sentences to only begin to understand the self in relation to our secular age as a cohesive whole. For Taylor the sources of the self steer the affirmation of ordinary life: rightly navigating our vocations from Dante and the love of God to Don Draper and all the ambivalence that authenticity allows. , in between Christ who rose and Christ who will come again, the Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel to fulfillment in the way of Christ. While Taylor reminds us that we cannot go back to the past, neither, as his endeavors exhibit, should we forget previous searches for human identity. Even though we search for identity and fulfillment in an immanent frame, cross pressures still push us in and out: to the interior memory, which connects past in the present, and to the persistence of transcendent traditions of future hope. Here Taylor constructively offers: "The fading contact of many with the traditional languages of faith seems to presage a declining future. But the very intensity of the search for adequate forms of spiritual life that this loss occasions may be full of promise."[63] He goes on, "We could say that this is a world in which the fate of belief depends much more than before on powerful intuitions of individuals, radiating out to others."[64] Luther teaches that the sameness of individual- Christ-imputed-identity invokes the inherent impulse to live radiating outside of ourselves: in and for God, and in the putting on of our neighbors for the wellbeing of the other.[65] Dante radiating out to Beatrice. Augustine radiating out to Monica. Beatrice and Monica radiating out of God. Ordinary Christians radiating out to others in the extraordinary love of the Holy Spirit. Transforming my life into life. "The heart has its reasons," Pascal

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

Book Review

Review by Theodore J. Hopkins

Dietrich Bonhoeffer cites and refers to no one more than Luther, yet Bonhoeffer's own relationship to the Lutheran tradition remains a relative lacuna in Bonhoeffer studies. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to fill the void, and Michael DeJonge's new monograph is a significant contribution to this arena. In fact, DeJonge's book is a tour de force in Bonhoeffer scholarship, showing how Lutheran theological frameworks permeate Bonhoeffer's thought. Picking up where his previous monograph left off— -

governmental authority. In all three of these areas, DeJonge runs against the grain of Bonhoeffer scholarship. Whereas Bonhoeffer is usually portrayed