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Theological Problems in Some of Dr. Kloha's Recent Publications

The book, *Texts and Traditions: Essays in Honor of J. Keith Elliott* (2014), a *Festschrift* coedited by Professor Dr. Jeffrey Kloha that honors Elliott, his former mentor, has a chapter by Kloha titled "Elizabeth's Magnificat (Luke 1:46)." And in a more recent chapter, *Listening to the Word of God: Exegetical Approaches* (2016), he now says "Elizabeth may well have sung the Magnificat, not Mary" (p. 203). This recent change does not correct his former statement that clearly states Elizabeth sang the Magnificat. This is an insignificant change. It does not renounce the former title, nor does it repudiate the arguments he has previously made in support of the title. Both actions are necessary.

But is it realistic to think Kloha will publicly (in writing) make a renunciation and a repudiation? Would he be willing to shock Elliott, his former mentor, whose teaching, known as "thoroughgoing eclecticism," he had fully accepted when he wrote that Elizabeth sang the Magnificat in 2014? Here it is important to remember that Kloha approvingly quotes Elliott's argument that an exegete should "select freely from among the available fund of variants and choose the one that best fits the internal criteria" (*Texts and Traditions*, p. 200), an approach that ignores external textual evidence. Moreover, what about the numerous *Festschrift* volumes that are now on library shelves that contain the chapter's title "Elizabeth's Magnificat (Luke 1:46)," and the erroneous arguments made in support of this spurious title? Needless to say, that chapter with its title has escaped the proverbial Pandora's box and cannot be retrieved.

Although Kloha in his most recent chapter in the book *Listening to the Word of God* (2016) now does not accent the term "plastic text," as he did previously, he does, however, still say, "the Greek text is in a constant state of revision and indeed plasticity" (footnote, p. 181, emphasis added). Thus, in this footnote he is still clinging to his idea of a plastic text.

As already noted, Kloha operates with what he calls "thoroughgoing eclecticism" of Professor Elliott. David Alan Black in his book, *New Testament Textual Criticism* (1994), calls it "radical eclecticism" (p. 37). And Black states, "This view, held by a minority of British scholars, has been criticized for ignoring the value and importance of the external evidence, particularly the Greek manuscripts" (p. 37). The latter is what Kloha does in order for him to say Elizabeth sang the Magnificat. This type of literary criticism, of course, is highly subjective, for it ignores the historical ve-

racity of the divinely inspired biblical text of Luke 1:46. Here the words of the Synod's sainted William F. Arndt come to mind. He has stated, "Scholars of naturalistic tendencies, like Bultmann, who is followed by Hauck, believe that Mary did not speak these words . . ." (See Arndt's *Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to St. Luke* (1956, p. 62). In short, confessional Lutheran exegetes do not say Elizabeth sang the Magnificat.

It is also helpful to note what Stephen Farris, the British theologian, says in his *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance* (1985). He states, "There are, therefore, no certain witnesses to the reading 'Elizabeth said' outside the Latin tradition . . . The external evidence, therefore, is almost entirely in favour of the reading 'Mary said'" (Ibid., 110, emphasis added). Kloha clearly ignores this scholar's argument.

In Kloha's Oberursel paper, "Text and Authority: Theological and Hermeneutical Reflections on a Plastic Text" (2013), he states that II Timothy 3:16 "refers only to what we now call the Old Testament" (p. 9). This statement ignores what Luther, Chemnitz, Gerhard, and other Lutheran theologians have taught, namely, that Paul's words in this text also apply to his epistles that he wrote before II Timothy, his last letter. Thus, *πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος* (all Scripture is God-breathed) does not only refer to the Old Testament, but also to Paul's previous epistles and also to the extant Synoptic Gospels, as Johann Gerhard shows (See his *On The Nature of Theology And On Scripture* (2009:332)). Gerhard further states, "those books of the New Testament that were already extant when the apostle [Paul] wrote this are not less God-breathed than are the books of the Old Testament" (Ibid., 333).

In Kloha's paper, "Text and Authority: Theological and Hermeneutical Reflections on a Plastic Text" (presented at Oberursel, Germany, 2013), he says the church decides what biblical writings are canonical (p. 13). This is contrary to what Lutherans have taught, believed, and confessed, ever since the time of Chemnitz, who said, "The canonical Scripture has its eminent authority chiefly from this, that it is divinely inspired, 2 Tim. 3:16 . . ." (*Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part I, 1971, p. 176). Chemnitz also stated, "the church by no means has this authority, for in the same way she could also either reject canonical books or declare spurious books canonical . . . the church does not have such power, that it can make true writings out of false, false out of true, out of doubtful and uncertain, certain, ca-

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nonical, and legitimate, without any certain and firm proofs which, as we have said above, are required for this matter” (ibid., 181). Chemnitz’s argument is also supported by the renowned, non-Lutheran scholar Bruce Metzger. In his book, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Context* (2003), he states, “neither individuals or councils created the canon; instead they came to recognize and acknowledge the self-authenticating quality of these writings, which imposed themselves as canonical upon the church” (p. 318). Thus, to say, as Kloha does, that the church decides what books are canonical is unmitigated Roman Catholic dogma, contrary to five centuries of Lutheran theology.

In Kloha’s paper, “The Authority of the Scriptures” (presented at Concordia Seminary’s symposia in 2010), he states, “I can live without a perfect Bible.” And three years later in his paper at Oberursel he says this is not problematic so long as the less-than-perfect Bible conveys the Gospel. Thus, he says, “The church heard the voice of the shepherd even though poorly copied, mistake-ridden manuscripts, because in spite of the mistakes, the Spirit still worked.” Or, as he says, so long as the Scriptures “preach Christ.” This is clearly echoing the erroneous hermeneutics of Gospel reductionism espoused by Seminex in the early 1970s.

And it also needs to be noted that although Kloha in his 2010 paper says the Scriptures are “the infallible Word of God,” he fails to tell us what he means by “infallible.” Does

“Do we in the LCMS want to go back to the days that preceded the Seminex faculty walkout in February 1974?”

he mean they are infallible (inerrant) because they are God’s verbally inspired Words in light of the promise Jesus made to His disciples in John 14:25-26? In these two verses Jesus clearly stated, “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send

in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” Or does Kloha mean the Scriptures are only functionally infallible, meaning they accomplish God’s intended purposes apart from specifically inspired words? The latter was the position held by the Seminex adherents.

In Kloha’s most recent chapter in *Listening to the Word of God* (2016), he sees “the Scriptures as both divine and human.” And then he adds, “This has profound implications for how we view them” (p. 181). This view of Scripture echoes Zwingli’s *alloeosis* that he, for example, invoked to say Christ’s suffering and death referred only to his human nature. Luther denounced the *alloeosis* as the devil’s mask, for it denied Christ’s divine nature (*Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, Article VIII: 38-40). Similarly, C.F.W. Walther saw the divine-human concept of Scripture in the light of Zwingli’s *alloeosis*. Said he, “We must say the same about the so-called divine-human view of Scripture (*‘Gottmenschlichkeit der Schrift’*) taught in modern theology.” And he warned, “Beware, beware, I say, of this divine-

human Scripture. It is the devil’s mask, for it ultimately gives us a Bible that I would not want as a Bible Christian (*Bibelchrist*). Such a Bible is no better than any other good book that I may read and constantly have to examine so I might not be deceived by its errors. For if I believe that the Bible also contains errors, then it is no longer for me the touchstone . . . In brief, words cannot express what the devil seeks to do with the concept of ‘divine-human Scripture’” (*Lehre und Wehre*, March 1886, 76-77, my translation).

Nota Bene: Do we in the LCMS want to go back to the days that preceded the Seminex faculty walkout in February 1974? For as George Santayana reportedly said, “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

A Solemn Observation: Kloha’s ideas or conjectures are not just a matter of scholarly difference-of-opinion. By his teaching and writings, he is influencing students who will become pastors in the LCMS. Some of them will go on to do graduate studies and become professors in Synod’s colleges and the seminaries. History shows that many students of a professor often carry his ideas to their logical conclusion, even when the professor himself has hesitated to do so, or that he does not seem to recognize the dire implications of his lectures. Many of Kloha’s arguments are clearly incompatible with the Scriptural position held and taught by confessional Lutheran professors and pastors. Given that he personally says the Scriptures are “infallible” (a term he does not define) is irrelevant if his philosophy of textual criticism, “thoroughgoing eclecticism,” and his seeing the Bible as a divine-human book, makes the infallibility or inerrancy of Scripture logically impossible and thus contradicts the longstanding commitment of the LCMS to the total truth of the Bible. (For this observation, I am largely indebted to Dr. John Warwick Montgomery.)

Prayerfully Submitted,

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Why Dr. John Warwick Montgomery is Right

In November 2013, a conference of confessional Lutherans from Europe, the Americas, and South Africa was held at Oberursel, Germany. Oberursel is where the seminary of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK, i.e., Selbständigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche) is located. Some of the papers and responses were given by the exegetical professors at our LCMS seminary in Saint Louis, including David L. Adams, James Voelz, Paul Raabe, Timothy Saleska, and Jeffrey Kloha. Dr. Kloha’s paper at Oberursel was later titled “Theological and Hermeneutical Reflections on the Ongoing Revisions of the *Novum Testa-*

“By his teaching and writings, [Dr. Kloha] is influencing students who will become pastors in the LCMS.”

mentum Graece.”¹

Dr. Kloha’s paper became the center of controversy even before it was published. Lutheran blogs and papers accused Dr. Kloha of all sorts of things, including false doctrine. I made my own small contribution early on with a blog article on the Saint Louis seminary’s blog-site.² In that blog article I stated “Dr. Kloha raises issues that need to be addressed by the church. There are problems to be solved here, the solutions are not obvious, and they cannot be resolved overnight.”³

Dr. John W. Montgomery joined this highly charged controversy with an article in summer 2015 titled “The Problem of a Plastic Text: the Kloha Essay on ‘Text and Authority.’”⁴ I have enjoyed the writing and scholarship of Dr. Montgomery since I first encountered it in the mid 1970s while in college. I highly respect his work and his careful and rea-

soned approach to theological issues. When he speaks or writes, Lutherans should listen.

On the matter of the method and criteria for determining which textual variants⁵ are authentic, Dr. Montgomery is right. Lutherans should always give first priority to external, objective criteria in making such judgments. The Lutheran pastor or theologian should not select poorly attested variants just because they seem to him to fit the literary context

or style of the biblical author.⁶ In other words, the subjective judgment of the text critic, of a theological faculty, or even the church-at-large, should not supersede the witness of the best ancient texts.

This all seems to be straightforward. How could any Bible-believing Protestant disagree with this approach? I think the problems have occurred because the Lutheran doctrine of the canonicity of Scripture seemed to Dr. Kloha to be an answer to the problems posed by 21st century textual criticism. *But there is no consistent Lutheran doctrine of canonicity in the history of Lutheran theology.*⁷ Very few living Lutheran theologians, besides Dr. John W. Montgomery and Dr. David P. Scaer at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, are aware of this problem and might know how

“...the subjective judgment of the text critic, of a theological faculty, or even the church-at-large, should not supersede the witness of the best ancient texts.”

The Lutheran Clarion—Nine Years!



With this issue we are beginning our **ninth** year of publication. We strive to present and uphold the truth of God’s Holy Word.

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to solve it.

I became aware of the problem of the external and internal evidences for the divinity and canonicity of Scripture in seminary (ca. 1979-1982) when I read the essay by Dr. Montgomery titled “Lutheran Theology and the Defense of the Biblical Faith.”⁸ I was kind of shocked that, as Dr. Montgomery pointed out, LCMS theologian J.T. Mueller (1887-1965)—one of the most conservative of the orthodox theologians of his generation—was against apologetics and the use of historical, external evidences to demonstrate the divinity of Scripture. Montgomery observed that the orthodox Lutheran theologians of the 16th to 18th century did use such external evidences, but he gave no explanation why J.T. Mueller did not. Further work on this matter for my M.Div. theses resulted in my conclusion that it was not J.T. Mueller, but Francis Pieper who had been responsible for the belittlement of the external evidences of the canon in orthodox Lutheran theology. Or at least Pieper had made that the position of the Missouri Synod through his seminary lectures and the publication of his dogmatics.⁹

What does this mean for the current controversy? If it is true, as Pieper argued, that the chief evidence for the canonicity of a book of Scripture is the “internal testimony of the Holy Spirit,” then it logically follows that the “internal testimony of the Holy Spirit” will also guide the believing text critic in a subjective manner to select those textual variants which are the most authentic. If this is Dr. Kloha’s position, which I cannot say for sure, he is simply following the religious epistemology that he was taught from Francis Pieper’s dogmatics by his conservative professors at Saint Louis.¹⁰

Dr. John W. Montgomery has pointed out the error in J.T. Mueller’s position and thereby also by extension Francis Pieper’s and Adolf Hoenecke’s position. Is the Missouri Synod ready to consign these esteemed orthodox theologians to the dustbins of heterodoxy? I think not. I am not ready to do that. But as long as we accept Mueller, Pieper, and Hoenecke’s position on the canon and its external and internal evidences, students who study these dogmatics at seminary will continue to carry these ideas to their logical conclusion. If it is a choice between Dr. Montgomery on one side, and Mueller, Pieper, and Hoenecke on the other, I will have to vote for Dr. Montgomery, because he agrees in this matter with the majority of the greatest orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians¹¹ in our long and venerable history.

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland

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- 1 In Achim Behrens and Jorg Christian Salzmann, eds., *Listening to the Word of God: Exegetical Approaches* (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2016), 169-206; see also the response to this essay in the same book by Vilson Scholz, pp. 207-210.
- 2 See Martin R. Noland, "A Response to Dr. Jeff Kloha's 'Text and Authority,'" December 12, 2013, at <http://concordiatheology.org/2013/12/a-response-to-dr-jeff-klohas-text-and-authority>
- 3 Some folks who have followed this controversy may wonder how I could state about Dr. Kloha's revised essay in Behrens and Salzmann (cited above, note 1) that "I find nothing in it that is false doctrine" ("Noland Replies to Christian News," *Christian News* 54 #19 (May 9, 2016): 3, col. 1) and at the same time disagree with some aspects of that essay or see such aspects as "problems." That is because I agree with the LCMS about what constitutes a "doctrine." In LCMS Constitution Article II, we define our "doctrine" as that which agrees with the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. In the Brief Statement (1932), Article 44, the LCMS also stated what is *not* doctrine: "Those questions in the domain of Christian doctrine may be termed open questions which Scripture answers either not at all or not clearly." Neither Scriptures nor the Lutheran Confessions answer the questions raised by textual variants, therefore we have no formal or official "doctrine" in the Lutheran church with regard to the matter of textual criticism. This is affirmed by the "Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles" (1973, under "The Infallibility of Scripture") which states "We recognize that there are apparent contradictions or discrepancies and problems which arise because of uncertainty over the original text." BUT – even though we don't have an official doctrine in the field of textual criticism, it therefore does not follow that every philosophical assumption, method, criteria, or statement made in that field is *congruent with our doctrine of Scripture*. My concern in the present article is the lack of such congruence, and I share that concern with Dr. Montgomery. For more on the LCMS approach to open questions and theological problems, see Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: CPH, 1950), 93-102; and C.F.W. Walther, "On Syncretism," "The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions," and "Theses on the Modern Theory of Open Questions," in *Church Fellowship*, Walther's Works (St. Louis: CPH, 2015), 81-143.
- 4 In *Modern Reformation* 24 #4 (July/August 2015): 29-35; see also Dr. Montgomery's later contributions and letters: "Kloha Revised" *Christian News* 54 #1 (January 4, 2016), n.p.; and "Beyond the Plastic Text: The Plot Thickens" *Christian News* 54 # 8 (February 22, 2016).
- 5 "Textual variants" refers to words, phrases, or sentences that are not identical when one compares ancient manuscripts of the same language to each other. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 3:2, the NIV reads "We sent Timothy who is our brother and God's fellow worker." The last three words are not found in the same form in all manuscripts. Some ancient manuscripts instead have: "fellow worker", "God's servant", "servant and God's fellow worker," or "God's servant and fellow worker." The NIV *Concordia Self Study Bible* (St. Louis: CPH, 1984) indicates some of these variants in its footnotes, p. 1835. A list of the most significant variant readings of the Greek New Testament can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_major_textual_variants_in_the_New_Testament
- 6 One qualification should be noted here, i.e., that if variants are equally attested in terms of external criteria, then the impasse in deciding which is the most likely original reading can be overcome by employing internal criteria, such as paleographic details, habits of scribes, literary context, or author's style. The basic method and criteria for the evaluation of textual variants were described by Bruce Metzger in *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 207-212.



The Lutheran Concerns Association (LCA) expresses thanks to all Synodical Convention attendees who stopped by the LCA booth in Milwaukee. The booth workers found it very rewarding to greet and speak with Convention attendees.

Many visitors commented on **The Lutheran Clarion** and the LCA Conference DVD's; both were available at the booth.

The volunteers received many positive comments about the **Clarion** and particularly issues that were addressed in preparation for the convention. There were several questions about what the LCA concerns are about the church. Many people who did not know about the **Clarion** signed up to receive it.

Your comments were greatly appreciated. We also handed out tote bags imprinted with the LCA logo and web address. Special thanks to the booth volunteers:

- Mr. Scott Diekmann (Puyallup, WA)
- Mr. Walt Dissen (Chesapeake, VA)
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- Mrs. Deanna White (McMinnville, OR)
- Mr. Gene White (McMinnville, OR)

- 7 For the best overview of the varied and sometimes conflicting positions of the orthodox Lutheran fathers on the canon, its external and internal evidences, and the "internal testimony of the Holy Spirit," see Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 106-118.
- 8 In John W. Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 129-153; originally published in English as "The Apologetic Thrust of Lutheran Theology," in *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 11 no. 1, special issue (Fall 1970): 16-39; available for free here: www.blts.edu/wp-content/uploads/lsq/11-1.pdf ; accessed July 29, 2016.
- 9 My M.Div. thesis was: Martin R. Noland, 1983, The Doctrine of the *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti Internum* as a Calvinistic Element in Lutheran Theology, M.Div. thesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. The relevant sections in Pieper are: Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Saint Louis: CPH, 1950), 4-5, 110-111, 308-309, 313-315. Since that time, I have found Pieper's position also in the Wisconsin Synod's dogmatician, Adolf Hoenecke in his *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 505-506. Both Hoenecke and Pieper belittled the external evidences for the divinity and canonicity of Scripture on the basis of a distinction between *fides humana* and *fides divina*. I can't find that distinction in C.F.W. Walther or the J. W. Baier (1647-95) dogmatics used by and edited by C.F.W. Walther. I think that Pieper and his orthodox peers developed that distinction through conversations or debates with the "mediating theologians" of the late 19th century like F. H. R. Franck (1827-94) of the Erlangen school of Lutheran theology; see Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:110-129.
- 10 Dr. Kloha studied at the Saint Louis seminary from 1988-92, under such luminaries in the dogmatics department as Ronald Feuerhahn and Norman Nagel.
- 11 For a quick proof of Montgomery's agreement with the orthodox fathers, see Johann Gerhard, *On the Nature of Theology and Scripture*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, Theological Commonplaces (St. Louis: CPH, 2006), 68-69.

Note from the Editors:

The paper that follows concerns the LCMS adjudication case of Dr. Matthew Becker. The paper was presented at the LCA Conference in Fort Wayne in January 2016.

In response to some of the problems in the adjudication system that the Becker case revealed, a resolution was proposed at the July 2016 LCMS convention in Milwaukee. Starting out as Resolution 12-01, it went through several iterations and a lot of discussion. Published in Wednesday's *Today's Business* (Issue 5), Substitute Resolution 12-01B (p. 467) was renumbered to become Resolution 12-14, which was adopted by a vote of 996-67. Prior to adoption of Res. 12-14, Council of Presidents' President Kenneth Hennings was called upon by President Harrison to "assure the assembly of the council's **unanimous** support" for Res. 12-14 (LCMS Convention Minutes, Session 7, Wednesday a.m., July 13, 2016, p. 21; emphasis added). Hopefully, the overwhelmingly affirmative vote will result in sorely needed changes to the LCMS Adjudication System.

Matthew L. Becker's Theological Vision: Revisionist and Provisionist (Part I)

Since the mid-1990s, Matthew L. Becker has made a name for himself as being one of the most outspoken leaders of the liberal remnant existing within the LCMS. On virtually every hot-button issue, from women's ordination to homosexuality to the acceptance of the notion that Muslims worship the same as Christians, Becker has taken a predictably liberal stance. As of this last summer, Becker has finally left the LCMS for what will be for him the greener theological pastures of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America). In spite of this recent exodus, Becker's theology is still nevertheless important to examine for a number of reasons. First, although Becker himself is no longer a member of the LCMS, he still possesses many followers within synodical circles. Indeed, many of these followers remain in important positions of power. Secondly, Becker continues to teach at Valparaiso University, a school still attended by many LCMS young people.

Although there is a clear consensus among confessional Lutherans in the LCMS and elsewhere that Becker is a heresiarch, the question still remains as to what lies at the heart of his heresy. What I will suggest in this talk is that the major difficulty with Becker's theology is what I call its "Provisionalism." By "Provisionalism," I mean the notion that the apprehension of God and his truth are always something constantly in a state of revision. Because humans are finite and stand within vagaries of history, claiming the definitive nature of the Word of God as put forth in the Scriptures and expounded in the Lutheran Confessions is anathema to Becker's way of thinking. At best, Becker views himself as a Lutheran, not because the Lutheran Church has apprehended and confessed God's truth in its fullness as set forth in the Scriptures in a definitive sense,

but because Lutheranism is an ever evolving trajectory which he stands within.

Ultimately, I will argue that Becker's provisionalist paradigm is completely antithetical to the Lutheran worldview. It is fundamental to the Lutheran paradigm that although we stand in the midst of the finitude and history, the eternal and infinite God has communicated himself and his truth in the historical humanity of Christ and the means of grace. Indeed, as the Lutheran Scholastics put it in opposition to the Reformed: the finite is capable of the infinite! For this reason, the Holy Spirit is no skeptic, in that he allows us sacramentally to participate in God's eternal truth through the finite medium of the Incarnation and the means of grace. In this, he writes truths of the faith on our hearts, so as Luther puts it, to "make them more certain than life and all experience."

Provisionalism:
"...the notion that the apprehension of God and his truth are always something constantly in a state of revision."

Becker's promotion of theological provisionalism outlook begins with his interest in the theology of Johannes von Hofmann, the 19th century Erlangen theologian. Becker wrote and published a doctoral dissertation on Hofmann. He has also written a series of journal articles on Hofmann as well. For those familiar with Pieper's dogmatics, Hofmann was easily recognizable as one of the chief objects of the author's polemics.

Much like Becker's, Hofmann's outlook is fundamentally a provisionalist one. Having studied at the University of Berlin during the heyday of German Idealism (particularly Hegel and Schelling) as well as the theological liberalism of Schleiermacher. Therefore, Hofmann sought to reformulate Lutheranism in light of his university training.

To give a succinct explanation of his theology, it can be observed that much like Hegel and Schelling, Hofmann holds that God's Triune life has evolved through history. Nevertheless, God's evolution does not occur through universal history (as in Hegel) but rather through a specific history, namely, the history of Israel and the Church as it is recorded in the Bible. This is sometimes called "*Heilsgeschichte*" or "salvation history." This history is not only an arena of God's own self-development through his relational interactions with himself and his creatures, but also the arena of revelation.

As someone who regarded himself as Lutheran, Hofmann insisted that the structure of this historical revelation took the shape of law and gospel. Nevertheless, law and gospel took on a different meaning for Hofmann than they

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normally possess for historic confessional Lutheranism. For Hofmann, the law is primarily characterized as an era of the Old Testament. It is not identified, as in classical Lutheranism, with the commandments of God and various ways that those commandments affect human existence under sin and grace. Rather law is identified primarily with the era of the Old Testament is one of wrath and mechanical legalism, even if there are within it prophecies and intimation of a coming time of grace.

According to Hofmann, in enfolding his Triune life in history, God has evolved past his manifestation in the Old Testament age of wrath by sending his Son. Jesus reveals and enacts God's love in history. By dying on the cross, he conquered the sin of those who rejected and killed him. He thereby actualizes God as love by suffering sinful opposition unto death and then overcoming that opposition in resurrection. By the power of the Spirit, Christians can now live out a spontaneous existence of love under the gospel. In the new era of grace, they are free from the enslaving mechanical legalism labored under during the era of wrath. Again, in this Hofmann also redefined the gospel less as the unconditional promise of life and salvation in Jesus, and more as the experience of God's love and the love-based ethos that was now possible in the era of grace.

Lastly, Christians can be certain that this account of the history of salvation is in fact true because of their own religious experience. The structure of their religious experience within the Church would be inexplicable without the Bible's account of the history of salvation generally being true. In this, Hofmann synthesizes the historical-evolutionary notion of the divine being he received from Hegel and Schelling, with the emphasis on the certainty of religious experience he received from both Schleiermacher, as well as from the Lutheran Pietism he had been raised in.

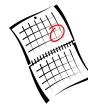
Several things should be observed in Hofmann's concept of revelation. First, revelation is primarily something that happens in the historical self-development of God and only secondarily in Scripture. Hofmann repeatedly argues that although Scripture is not inerrant, it is generally fairly reliable. This is important because Scripture's value does not lie in that it is a conduit of inerrant truth, but rather that it gives the Church genuine access to salvation history, which is the actual arena of revelation.

Secondly, in contrast to orthodox Lutheranism, Hofmann decidedly shifts the locus of authority from something external in the Word to something internal to the human subject. In other words, for Hofmann the Bible is only to be believed insofar as it is validated by criterion found in faculties internal to the human subject. Positively, like Schleiermacher, Hofmann holds that the contemporary subjective religious experience of the Christian can only be explained by the objective validity of the history of the salvation as it is explained in the Bible. Negatively, the Bible cannot be completely inerrant, in that human reason discerns contradictions in its accounts.

Ultimately then, the inner-self therefore decides as to what counts as revelation and what does not. Indeed, in

Mark Your Calendar!

January 16, 2017



LCA is busy planning for the 2017 LCA conference at Don Hall's in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on January 16, 2017. The tentative lineup of speakers so far includes:

- Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Gard
- Mr. Mark Stern, Esq.
- Dr. Adam S. Francisco
- Rev. Paul R. Harris
- Rev. Heath R. Curtis

It is not too early to register; see the registration form on page seven of this issue.

his book on scriptural interpretation, Hofmann goes so far as to say that the primary object of theological investigation of the theologian is his own religious experience. Statements like these earned Pieper's characterization of Hofmann's work as "*Ich-Theologie*." If Luther had lived after the 19th century, it is difficult to see how Hofmann would have escaped the Reformer's condemnation as a *Schwärmer*.

Lastly, since religious consciousness is always historically formed, all theological formulations are essentially provisional. As was observed earlier, Israel had a particular experience of God under law and wrath that was superseded by a new experience of a God of love in the era of the New Testament. Hofmann did not go as far as Schleiermacher, who claimed that Israel's religious experience and hence faith was simply a different faith than that of Church and that for this reason the Old Testament should be rejected. There is nevertheless a highly problematic implication in the logic of Hofmann's position that the Old Testament is in some sense superseded by the New, rather than fulfilled.

Moreover, since all doctrinal claims are simply a reflection on historically formed experiences of God, they are necessarily always provisional and revisable in light of God's evolution through history. This of course does not mean that there is not continuity with the past. Hofmann definitely saw himself and his fellow Lutherans as standing in a trajectory of God's self-development that began in the Garden of Eden and moved up to the Reformation. Nevertheless, although there is a continuity to the community and its fellowship with God, the content of this faith is always revisable.

Dr. Jack Kilcrease

LCMS Layman and Adjunct Professor of Theology at the Institute for Lutheran Theology and of Philosophy at Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, MI

The second half of Dr. Kilcrease's paper will be published in a future issue of the *Clarion*. Dr. Kilcrease will continue by showing how Johannes von Hofmann's influence plays out in Dr. Becker's work.



LUTHERAN CONCERNS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Monday, January 16, 2017

LCA Conference Presentations (Tentative)

...[T]hy Word is truth. [John 17:17]

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness... [2 Timothy 3:16-17]

[T]he Word of the Lord endures forever. [1 Peter 1:25]

6:40 a.m. - Registration Opens
7:00 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. - Bible Study
8:00 a.m. to 8:10 a.m. - Opening Devotion
8:10 a.m. to 8:20 a.m. - Welcome and Greetings from the LCA (Mr. Walter Dissen, Esq.) and the LCMS Indiana District
8:20 a.m. to 8:50 a.m. - Guest Speaker
8:50 a.m. to 9:20 a.m. - Questions and Answers
9:20 a.m. to 9:35 a.m. - Break
9:35 a.m. to 10:05 a.m. - Guest Speaker
10:05 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. - Questions and Answers
10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. - Guest Speaker
11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - Questions and Answers
11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon - Guest Speaker
12:00 noon - 12:10 p.m. - Questions and Answers
12:20 p.m. to 1:20 p.m. - Lunch Served in the Meeting Room
1:20 p.m. to 3:10 p.m. - Panel Discussion or Guest Speaker
3:10 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. - Questions and Answers
3:45 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - Panel Discussion with All Presenters
5:00 p.m. to 5:10 p.m. - Closing Remarks and Closing Prayer
5:30 p.m. - LCA Annual Business Meeting (Paid Members Only)

The conference will be held at Don Hall's Guest House. The rates are **\$89.00** + taxes for a standard room or **\$99.00** + taxes for a king room; rates include two breakfast vouchers/day. When making your reservation, mention that you are attending **THE LUTHERAN CONCERNS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE, CODE: GROUP 115**. To be guaranteed a room, reservations must be made by December 15, 2016. There is free airport shuttle service from the airport to Don Hall's. At the time of check-in, breakfast and dinner coupons (free breakfast and free dinner) will be given for each room (maximum two of each per room). A free lunch will be served in the meeting room (if registration is postmarked by 12/16/2016). You must make your own Guest House reservation.



REGISTRATION FORM

LCA Annual Conference · January 16, 2017

Don Hall's Guest House · 1313 West Washington Center Road · Fort Wayne, IN 46825

260-489-2524 · 800-348-1999 · www.donhallsguesthouse.com

Annual LCA Membership: \$35.00

I will attend the meeting:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

LCMS District _____

Annual membership fee (\$35) enclosed _____.

Paid LCA member conference registration fee: \$60 if postmarked by 12/16/2016; \$65 if postmarked thereafter. Enclosed _____.

Non-member conference registration fee: \$70 if postmarked by 12/16/2016; \$75 if postmarked thereafter. Enclosed _____.

Half day (AM or PM) registration fee is 50% less of above fee. If lunch is desired, add \$10; must be postmarked by 12/16/2016. Enclosed _____.

Seminary students and personnel will have the registration fee waived, but to receive **lunch for \$10**, registration must be postmarked by 12/16/2016.

I will pay at the door _____.

A free lunch will be served to early registrants who pay the applicable registration fee by 12/16/2016, or at the door.

Make check payable to **LUTHERAN CONCERNS ASSOCIATION**. Please detach this registration form and send to Lutheran Concerns Association · 149 Glenview Drive · New Kensington, PA 15068-4921

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The address for all matters pertaining to the LCA is:
149 Glenview Drive
New Kensington, PA 15068-4921

Editorial Board: Mr. Walter Dissen (Chairman)
Mr. Scott Meyer
Rev. Jerome Panzigrau

Mrs. Ginny Valleau: Layout, Printing & Mailing

Faithful Lutherans who are members of LCMS congregations are invited to submit articles of approximately 500 words for consideration. Inquiries are welcome. Manuscripts will be edited. Views and judgments expressed in articles are the author's own and do not necessarily represent those of LCA. Please email articles to Mr. Walter Dissen (wdissen@aol.com; 757-436-2049).

The Board of Directors for the LCA:

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New Kensington, PA 15068-4921