Issues, Etc.

JOURNAL

A Lutheran Letter to Ex-Evangelicals

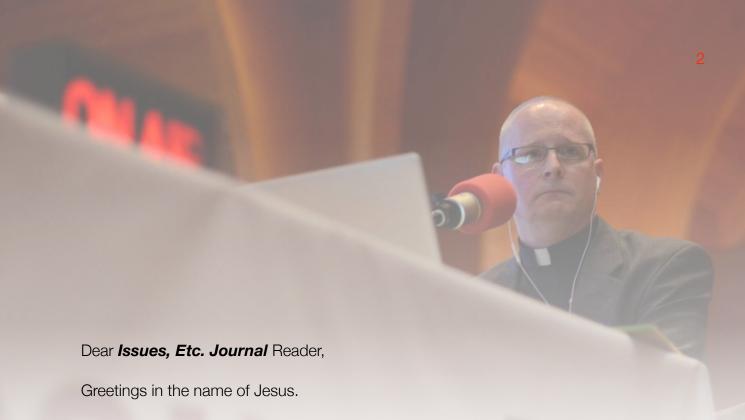
by Todd Wilken

Wittenberg Trail:
My Journey to the
Lutheran Christian Tradition

by Rob Kieselowsky

Wittenberg Trail: Sixteenth Century Strasbourg

by Ken Schurb



In this edition of the *Journal*, I have written a letter to ex-Evangelicals as they enter Lutheranism. Sadly, much of Evangelicalism is Christianity without history, creeds, Sacraments, and liturgy. Lutheranism can be a big change from that. Ex-Evangelicals need to know what they are getting themselves into.

We have two Wittenberg Trail features. First, Pr. Rob Kieselowsky tells us about the deep doubt created in him by the hodgepodge of American Christianity and the comfort and certainty found in the Lutheran confession. Second, Dr. Ken Schurb offers the story of Strasbourg, and an entire city's journey to the Reformation.

You'll also find a list of our generous sponsoring congregations at the end of the Journal.

Enjoy this edition of the Journal.

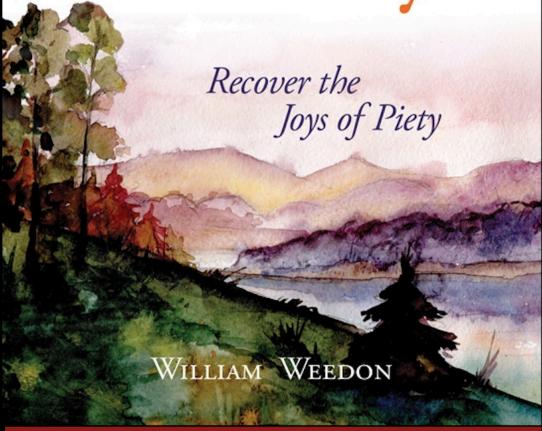
Wir sind alle Bettler,

Todd Wilken, host

Issues, Etc.



Thank, Praise, Serve, and Obey



Piety is a good thing.

Yes, you read that right. Piety isn't about doing better or doing more. It's about becoming more godly.

A Lutheran Letter to Ex-Evangelicals

by Todd Wilken

Dear Ex-Evangelicals,

Welcome to Lutheranism.

I know that Evangelicalism has hurt you. I know you're sick of it.

But please don't make Lutheranism your rebound religion. Don't become Lutheran to spite your Evangelical past. Yes, Lutheranism isn't Evangelicalism. But don't embrace Lutheranism for what it isn't; embrace Lutheranism for what it is.

So, let's talk about why you're here.

If you're here for the beer, you're here for the wrong reason. Yes, many Lutherans drink beer. But if you want beer, you're looking for a bar, or a brewery, or your brother-in-law's cookout.

If you're here because you heard being a Lutheran is easier than being an evangelical, you're here for the wrong reason. Lutheranism is hard. Maybe you heard that Lutherans don't take sin very seriously. You heard wrong. Lutherans are deadly serious about sin; it's the evangelicals who are soft on it. Maybe you heard that Lutherans only care about the Gospel and the other teachings of Scripture aren't that important. You heard wrong. Lutherans care about everything Scripture teaches precisely because they care so much about the Gospel.

Maybe you're here because of that one or two things about Lutheran doctrine (Law and Gospel, the theology of the cross, etc.) that you really, really like, but the rest doesn't interest you. If so, you're here for the wrong reason. Lutheranism isn't just one or two things. I know that picking and choosing your doctrines in Evangelicalism was normal. It isn't here.

And if you're here to teach us life-long Lutherans a thing or two from your adventures in Evangelicalism, you're here for the wrong reason. Yes, there's certainly a lot we life-long Lutherans can learn from ex-evangelicals like you, but Lutheranism doesn't need you (or us) to fix it.

So, if you're here for the beer, for something easier than Evangelicalism, for that one doctrine you like, or to repair the Reformation, you came for the wrong reason. You're still welcome to stay, and, if you're serious about Lutheranism, you need to know what you're getting yourself into.

To do that you need to come in with your eyes wide open. You learned as an Evangelical that the first person to come up and shake your hand at a new church usually turned out to be trouble. The same thing is true here. There are some who hang out on the fringes of Lutheranism. They specialize in ex-evangelicals like you. They'll meet you on the way in, ply you with a few Luther quotes, and try to convince you to follow them. They aren't likely to tell you what I'm about to tell you. Either they don't believe it, or they think it will scare you away. Maybe it will. But you still need to hear it.

So, if you're not here for the beer, for something easier than Evangelicalism, for that one doctrine you like, or to fix the Reformation, why should you be here?

History

The church or churches you belonged to in Evangelicalism probably didn't have much of a history. If it was a non-denominational congregation, its history may have gone back fewer than 50 years. By comparison, Lutheranism is old, 500 years old as of this writing, in fact. And because Lutheranism treasures the wisdom of the Church from the first day onward, Lutheran congregations say, do, and sing some things that take you all the way back to the apostles. While Evangelicalism seems to have a case of historical amnesia, Lutherans want to hold on to whatever is true, no matter how old it is.

Evangelicalism is essentially evolutionary. It survives by changing and moving away from the past. Lutheranism is historical. It survives by returning to and remaining faithful to what has come before.

Being Lutheran means embracing history, not just as a subject, but as a precedent. This is history as the ongoing story of the Church and her confession. Lutherans don't believe in reinventing the wheel with each generation.

Lutherans believe that what was confessed and practiced

by those who came before us should be confessed and practiced by us today. We believe that our ancestors in the faith were almost always wiser than we are today. The

Reformation continues, not by leaving behind what came before us, but by returning to it and remaining in it.

Lutheranism itself is a matter of history. Lutheranism is what it is today because it was what it was in history. The past isn't mere prologue to us; it is who we are today.

This is why so much of what you will encounter in Lutheranism is really, really old: our worship, our prayers, our songs, our creeds and confessions. Lutherans allow history, not the present moment, to shape what we believe, teach, and confess.

This also means that unlike Evangelicalism, you're not allowed to make Lutheranism into whatever you want it to be. You may have been a self-styled evangelical, but that isn't possible in Lutheranism. Many have tried; all have failed. Unlike Evangelicalism, Lutheranism isn't yours to do with as you please. It belongs to you and to everyone who came before you.

Lutheranism is old, but it claims a history going back much more than 500 years. Lutheranism claims more than the history of the Reformation; it claims the whole history of the Church. The confessional book of Lutheranism, the *Book of Concord*, begins with the ancient Christian creeds: the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian. These creeds and confessions are still more reasons you should be here.

Creeds

In Evangelicalism, you probably didn't memorize, learn, or recite the creeds of Christianity. You may have rejected the very idea of creeds as unchristian. "No creed but the Bible!" may have been your... creed.

But a creed is nothing more than a statement of what you believe. If your former Evangelical church had a "statement of faith" on its website, that was its creed—for good or bad. It's likely that few knew what it said. It's likely that everyone just held to his own private set of beliefs. Those were creeds too—not necessarily good creeds, but creeds nonetheless. The question isn't whether or not a Christian has a creed. Everyone has a creed. The question is whether or not the creed they have is Christian.

Lutheranism loves and treasures the historic creeds of Christianity.

Lutherans believe that these creeds are vital for teaching and understanding the Bible and the Christian faith. These creeds have been carefully crafted, time-tested, and proven in battle. And these creeds are undoubtedly, most certainly Christian. Here's how the *Book of Concord* describes it:

Directly after the times of the apostles, and even while they were still living, false teachers and heretics arose, and symbols, i.e., brief, succinct confessions, were composed against them in the early Church, which were regarded as the unanimous, universal Christian faith and confession of the orthodox and true Church, namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, we pledge ourselves to them, and hereby reject all heresies and dogmas which, contrary to them, have been introduced into the Church of God. (Ep. 3)

The first Lutherans started with the ancient creeds as their confession and standard of what Scripture teaches. From these creeds, the first Lutherans continued to confess the biblical faith. Along with the history I mentioned before came further confessions of the faith with strange sounding names: the Augsburg Confession, the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, the Small and Large Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord. All



these confessions were published in 1580 in the Book of Concord.

There's a myth that Lutherans follow Martin Luther. We don't. You've probably had Luther quoted to you during your time as an evangelical. Maybe it's part of the reason you first considered coming to Lutheranism. But Lutheranism is far more than a collection of Luther quotes.

Luther wrote and said a lot of things; he is among the greatest teachers in Church history. But some of what Luther wrote wasn't even remotely Lutheran. This is why Luther can't be the standard of Lutheran theology. The Lutheran Confessions are the standard. Lutherans follow what is taught in the Bible as confessed in the *Book of Concord*. This is what makes every Lutheran a Lutheran. This is what will make you a Lutheran.

The point is that creeds are a good thing. Having a set, written standard of belief, doctrine, and confession is a good thing. The creeds and confessions are "the Faith once for all delivered to the saints."

Most ex-Evangelicals quickly understand why Lutheranism is creedal. What puzzles many, and may still puzzle you is why Lutherans make such a big deal of the Sacraments.

Sacraments

Yes, this is often the highest hurdle for ex-Evangelicals coming into Lutheranism. You're on board with Lutheranism and you love its teaching on grace and forgiveness, but the Sacraments may seem to be a bridge too far. But the truth is that apart from the Sacraments, there is no Lutheranism.

If you only dabble in Lutheranism, you might be able to avoid the Sacraments. But sooner or later you're going to bump into Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. The Sacraments aren't incidental or peripheral to Lutheranism. They are right at the heart of the thing.

Lutherans are known for taking Scripture seriously—and no where more so than when it comes to the Sacraments. The Bible says that Baptism saves. It washes away sins, clothes you with Christ, buries you with Christ, makes you an heir of salvation, and a child of God. The Bible says that God has given His Church

the authority to forgive sins in Jesus's name. This forgiveness is as real as if God Himself were to speak it. The Bible says that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are the body and blood of Jesus. To eat and drink them believing this is to have forgiveness, life, and salvation.

The Sacraments are the best kept secret of Lutheranism. Many exevangelicals are shocked to hear that Lutherans actually believe such things. But we do.

The very reason so many ex-evangelicals are attracted to Lutheranism—our emphasis on grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ—is the very reason Lutherans believe what they do about the Sacraments. Jesus gives us His grace and forgiveness through the Sacraments He instituted. The Sacraments are nothing less than the Gospel in action. And this explains why Lutherans call the Sacraments "the means of Grace."

Lutherans believe that it is in these Sacraments that Jesus is present to forgive our sins. And, this explains why Lutherans worship the way they do.

Liturgy

Evangelicals are all about worship. As an ex-Evangelical, you know this. I'm convinced that evangelicals are desperately looking for something on Sunday morning that their anemic form of worship simply cannot deliver. They are looking for the history, doctrinal substance, and reverence that can only be found in the historic liturgy of the Church.

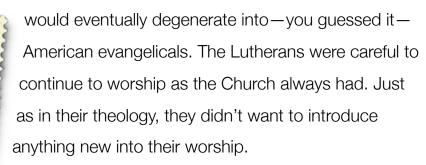
There's no getting around it. Lutheranism and the liturgy go together; they always have. If you could have walked into a Lutheran service in the sixteenth century, you would have seen and heard something that looked very Roman

Catholic by today's standards. The reformers themselves regarded this as a badge of honor:

We do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses are celebrated every Lord's Day and on the other festivals, in which the Sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other like things. (AC, 24, 1)

In the sixteenth century, those abandoning the liturgy weren't the Lutherans;

those abandoning the liturgy were the radical reformers that



For Lutherans then and now, the liturgy has never been a matter of personal preference, style, or tradition. The historic liturgy is maintained and practiced because, like the historic creeds, it contains and communicates only what the Bible teaches.

Will you find Lutherans who have abandoned the liturgy and worship like the Evangelical church you just

left? Sadly, yes. As an ex-evangelical, I'm sure that you can see that for what it is.

DER DEUTSCHEN

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So, now that you're here in Lutheranism, learn to embrace the historic liturgy. It will not be easy at first. The learning curve is steep. But the climb is completely worth it. Before you know it, you will find yourself at home in the form of worship as old as the Church.

Lutheranism isn't simply historical, creedal, sacramental, and liturgical. That describes many kinds of Christianity. What sets Lutheranism apart from them?

Jesus

Jesus is the most important thing about Lutheranism. This single-minded emphasis sets Lutheranism apart from all other confessions of faith in Christianity. Lutheranism is finally about the crucified and risen Jesus. It's ultimately about what Jesus has done in His perfect life, sinless suffering and death and resurrection to earn salvation for a world of sinners like you and me. You know this, and that is really why you are here.

Why have I left the most important thing about Lutheranism until last? Why talk about history, creeds, the Sacraments, and the liturgy first? Perhaps you've figured it out already: It is by being historical, creedal, sacramental, and liturgical that Lutheranism is all about Jesus. Lutheranism isn't a free-floating emphasis on Jesus. Lutheranism's emphasis on Jesus is found and expressed in the specifics of history, creeds, Sacraments, and liturgy.

To the degree that Lutheranism loses its historical, creedal, sacramental, or liturgical character, it becomes that much less focused on Jesus. And conversely, the more focused on Jesus Lutheranism is, the more it embraces history, the creeds, the Sacraments, and the liturgy.

During this 500th anniversary year of the Reformation a lot of things have been presented as Lutheran that simply aren't. I'm writing this so that you won't be fooled. I'm also writing this to warn you. If you come into Lutheranism picking and choosing what you like, just like you did in Evangelicalism, you'll end up an ex-Evangelical with a handful of Lutheran ideas—nothing more.

Come on in, but come for the right reasons. Don't come just because you're sick of Evangelicalism; come because you want to be Lutheran.

Coming to Lutheranism has been difficult. Perhaps you've lost friends, even family relationships. You've searched for reliable sources for your theology, and maybe had to relearn everything you've been taught. Don't let that be for nothing. Lutheranism is what you've been looking for all along. And you'll see that it's deeper and richer and more filled with the comfort of the Gospel than you thought.

Where Is Here?

So, welcome to Lutheranism. I'm glad you're here. But where is "here"?

As you already know, you can learn about Lutheranism from books, websites, conferences, or radio shows. But none of these can substitute for the real thing: a Lutheran congregation on Sunday morning. Only in a Lutheran congregation on Sunday morning do the history, creeds, Sacraments, and liturgy of Lutheranism live.

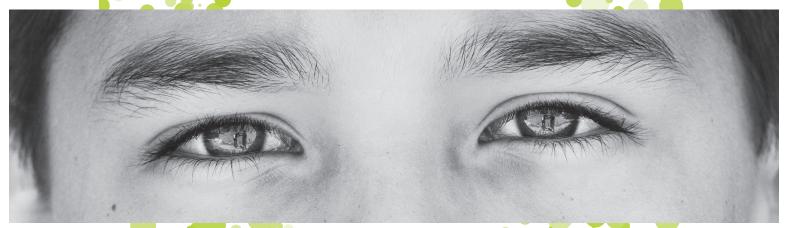
Find yourself a solid, Lutheran congregation. How will you know when you have found one? Look for those things: the history, creeds and confessions, Sacraments, and liturgy. Find a faithful Lutheran pastor. How will you know when you have found one? You'll know because he will embrace *everything* there is to Lutheranism without mental reservation and encourage you to do the same. A faithful Lutheran congregation with a faithful Lutheran pastor are absolutely necessary for your journey into and life in Lutheranism. You cannot be or remain Lutheran without them.

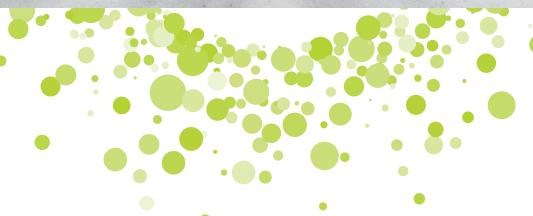
Now, go to church on Sunday morning. You cannot become or remain Lutheran (or Christian) apart from the weekly preaching of God's Word and the gifts of the Sacraments in a Lutheran congregation. This alone is where Jesus is forgiving your sins and giving you His life and salvation. To think you can do otherwise is to rely on something other than Jesus and the gifts He gives through His Church. To think you can do otherwise is to depend on yourself and your own inner resources. And, haven't you had more than enough of that in Evangelicalism? Sincerely,

A Lutheran









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Wittenberg Trail: My Journey to the Lutheran Christian Tradition

by Rob Kieselowsky

I do not exaggerate when I say that historic Lutheranism saved me from falling off a precipice of despair at a time when I nearly abandoned the Christian faith. So I love it.

I learned the hard way that American Christianity is a mere approximation of Biblical Christianity, and in the end, not enough to sustain faith. As one who was taught the Lutheran Christian tradition as an adult, this beautifully clear expression of Holy Scripture is what animates my church-planting work in Philadelphia. I am driven with a passion for Christ's Word and His life-giving body and blood graciously bestowed in Holy Communion.

I grew up in a Bible church in which the teaching was relatively haphazard, without a unifying system to understand the Scriptures. I was baptized at 12 years old, after giving a testimony of my conversion in front of the congregation. Then, I spent my freshmen year of college at a Bible institute at a Baptist camp in the Adirondacks where I read the Scriptures all the way through. I was heavily influenced at the time by Calvinist theology. It offered a sense of substance and focus. I transferred to a Bible college near Philadelphia to complete my bachelor's degree and in my junior year I spent a semester abroad, studying in Israel among students from different evangelical colleges from all over America. In Israel, I first began to understand the broader scope of historic Christianity, visiting Presbyterian,

Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic worship services. And for the first time, I saw a common devotion to the Lord's Supper and the sacraments.

I looked for something of substance when I returned to the States for my final year of college. I joined a large Presbyterian church and eventually studied at Westminster Seminary.

And spiritually, I burned out.

I had returned to a place where there was a tremendous amount of Bible and theological study but little spiritual care. Specifically, the idea that one's spiritual well-being and growth is a matter of biblical and theological knowledge ran its course. Calvinist theology in practice emphasizes the accumulation of Bible knowledge over preaching of Christ crucified and the objective gifts of the Lord's Supper and Holy Baptism. As a result, spiritual maturity becomes learning more stuff. And I had learned a lot of stuff already.

My soul was in bad shape when I received an offer to teach history at a Christian high school in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. I knew I needed something different. I thought for sure that I would have to abandon biblical theology and a foundation of justification by faith alone in Christ alone to worship in a setting that valued historic liturgy. Desperate and willing to try something different, I attended my first Lutheran service at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA. To my great joy, I found beautiful liturgy and sound biblical theology, along with strong preaching and true pastoral care by Rev Christopher Esget. It seemed too good to be true.

My wife and I had both grown up singing Baptist hymns and were very disillusioned by modern forms of worship. We longed for a church that cherished hymns. It was challenging when we realized that the Lutheran tradition possessed theologically rich liturgy but that most of the hymns were foreign to us. The German

chorales and ancient Latin hymns were a significant culture shock, but they quickly drew us in by the depth of their substance.

I also remember being a little upset with Pastor Esget that I couldn't take Holy Communion right away—I had a degree in theology! After he patiently catechized us over several months, we learned to rejoice in the gift of the Small Catechism. Finally, here was a tool to unify our understanding of the Scriptures. With the catechism as a guide and a beautiful Divine Service to heal our souls, my wife and I were confirmed on Easter 2003.

A few years later, with great confidence bestowed by the Lutheran tradition, I had to sit my wife down and tell her that I thought I needed to go to seminary again.

Now the Lord has seen fit to call me to serve in Philadelphia. I currently care for a congregation just west of the city and also am cultivating a new congregation within the heart of the city. Logos Lutheran is the first-ever LCMS congregation in Center City. Regionally, there are 6 million people, and it is the most underserved city in our synod. We gather each week for Holy Communion because the tools we use to win people to the faith should be the same things that will sustain their faith. There is no gimmick or marketing strategy that can create and sustain truth faith in Christ like being instructed by means of the Small Catechism and, in real repentance, joining true communion with the Savior of the world.

Christians down through the ages have prayed the words of John 1:14 at Communion: "And the Word (logos) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." When we began meeting in the heart of Philadelphia, we chose the name Logos Lutheran as the name of the church. The aim is to proclaim Christ crucified, the Word made flesh, distinctly and unapologetically from the Lutheran perspective. I am thoroughly convinced that our great Lutheran theological heritage is a gift to be

treasured. Though many new churches in Philadelphia avoid a clear affiliation with a theological tradition in an attempt to quickly increase membership, we remain convinced that Lutheran teaching and identity will be the bedrock of a congregation that will endure.

We seek a faith that clings to the Word that took on flesh to suffer and die, to shed His precious blood for the entirety of humanity. This new church has formed in order that many might hear the Word, truly believe in the Christ, and receive His body and blood given for the forgiveness of sins. The confessional Lutheran tradition excels at cultivating a humble spirit that clings to Christ alone and His gifts to carry redeemed sinners through this life.

The Word continues to rescue my soul and the souls of those in my care.

Christ continues to come to us, forgive us, and lead us so that we might delight in

His will and walk in His ways. And I still love it.



Rev. Rob Kieselowsky is Executive Director of Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries.





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The Wittenberg Trail: Sixteenth-Century Strasbourg

by Ken Schurb

Usually "Wittenberg Trail" features follow the pilgrimage toward Lutheranism by various individuals in the present or the recent past. This article, however, focuses on an entire city in days long gone by. As we celebrate the 500th anniversary year for the sixteenth-century Reformation, here is a peek at how the Wittenberg Trail looked back then.

Our spotlight shines on the free imperial city of Strasbourg, which subscribed the Formula of Concord in 1598. After that, Strasbourg was called home by post-Reformation Lutheran theologians such as John Dorsch, Sebastian Schmidt, and the redoubtable John Conrad Dannhauer. Through the sixteenth century, Strasbourg had turned into one of the seats of Lutheran orthodoxy.

This development might have been surprising, though. Located at a crossroads of trade and on the Rhine River, Reformation-era Strasbourg played host, for greater and lesser periods of time, to a wide variety of people including theological partisans of various stripes—from Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (after he left Wittenberg) and Kaspar von Schwenckfeld to the Gnesio-Lutherans Tilemann Hesshus and Matthias Flacius. The most famous theologian to enjoy a billet in Strasbourg was John Calvin, who spent three important years (1538-1541)

there during his "exile" from Geneva. With all these disparate influences, how did this city wind up on the Wittenberg Trail?

The Reformation in Strasbourg did not begin under Wittenberg auspices. It had been pioneered by the cathedral preacher Matthias Zell. Attracted to Luther's teachings, Zell started his own series of sermons on Romans in Strasbourg after the Diet of Worms in 1521. He soon recruited for the cause the Hebraist Wolfgang Capito and a former Dominican who was fleeing persecution, Martin Bucer. Bucer and Capito guided the Reformation in Strasbourg for years. These men turned out to be Zwinglians regarding the Lord's Supper. They thought a bodily presence of Christ in the Supper was unnecessary. Bucer even sat on the same side with Zwingli, opposite Luther, at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. Largely because of this doctrinal difference, the Lutheran princes would not let representatives from Strasbourg sign the Augsburg Confession the following year. So Strasbourg joined three other cities in submitting to the emperor an alternative confession, the Confessio Tetrapolitana. Strasbourg has been characterized as "the birthplace of what today is called 'Protestantism', as something transcending Lutheranism and Zwinglianism."²

Even after the Diet of Augsburg, though, Strasbourg retained a desire to cultivate good relations with Luther and his followers. The city's politicians had their reasons, particularly security. So did the theologians. Bucer, for one, underestimated the difference between Luther and Zwingli and held out high hopes for what might be achieved through negotiation. He saw his hopes somewhat realized in the Wittenberg Concord of 1536, where Luther came to terms with Bucer and other Strasbourgers on a "mild formulation of [Luther's] doctrine." Yet Luther continued to watch Bucer like a hawk thereafter, which turned out to be wise in 1537 when Bucer did not sign Luther's Schmalkald Articles. Nevertheless, a

certain cordiality settled in. Capito suggested that one of Luther's sons study with Bucer and himself in Strasbourg. For their part, Bucer and Capito sent to Wittenberg one of their students, a man whose doctoral disputation Luther chaired in 1543: Johannes Marbach.

Marbach's 35-year career in Strasbourg (1546-1581) marks the city's most important move along the Wittenberg Trail. He had been called to serve as pastor of a church in the city and as a professor in the theology faculty of Strasbourg's Academy. Although a learned man, Marbach was neither by inclination nor his own intention an original thinker. His lectures on John, begun shortly after he arrived in Strasbourg, in form resembled Philip Melanchthon's biblical commentaries. Marbach mined the text for doctrinal topics, or loci. He was a very intentional Lutheran, and carried on an active correspondence with others of like mind. When Marbach was chosen to be president of Strasbourg's Company of Pastors in 1552, he applied to himself a typical Lutheran term, "superintendent." The next year, he composed an "Agenda" which elaborated on and refined the city's church order of 1534.

Marbach also proposed a visitation of parishes not only in the countryside but also of those within Strasbourg. Tactfully, he wrote that while in the city nothing was lacking regarding preaching and administration of the sacraments, problems could still arise from a lack of uniformity in certain church ceremonies. One of the potential problem areas he identified was catechism instruction. (Capito's Reformed catechism remained in use.) The authorities approved the visitation in the city, although it occurred only once, in 1554. From then on, regular meetings of the Company of Pastors basically took the place of urban visitation. Visitation continued in the country, though, and by the early 1560s it could be reported that all the rural parishes had their own pastors.

Marbach's chief troubles in Strasbourg arose over the city's Academy and its rector Johannes Sturm. Sturm was an experienced and respected humanist educator. He and other Academy faculty members were "generic Protestants" who had pronounced leanings toward Calvin and Reformed teachings. The resulting difficulties only figured to mount up as more and more aspirants to be pastors sought not only certification for ordination but also M.A. degrees. By about 1600, over 70% of the men who were nominated to be pastors in Strasbourg and vicinity held such dual credentials, and most of them were Academy products.

Marbach's struggles with the Academy went through a couple of stages. The first, during the early 1560s, involved theology faculty member Girolamo Zanchi. Marbach had tried to work with Zanchi, but he heard that Zanchi was teaching in the Reformed manner about predestination. He urged Zanchi not to talk about this issue, which turned out to be but the tip of an iceberg that included the Lord's Supper. Zanchi refused to comply, citing in his defense what today would be called academic freedom. He complained that all he heard from the persistent Marbach was "Augsburg Confession, Augsburg Confession!" Zanchi attempted to counter Marbach by appealing to Strasbourg's own confession of 1530, the *Confessio Tetrapolitana*, only to find that the city's political officials wanted to hear nothing more about that document. For Bucer and Capito subscribed the Augsburg Confession when they signed the Wittenberg Concord in 1536. Marbach won this battle. Zanchi departed.⁴

Yet Marbach's challenges with the Academy and with Sturm were not over. In 1569 Sturm went on the offensive, threatening to resign because he said the pastors and the theologians were bringing in "barbarism" via constant disputations on doctrinal matters. Shades of Erasmus' aversion to theological assertions versus Luther's insistence on them some 45 years earlier! This battle concerning the

Academy dragged out over the next several years, but Marbach suffered a setback this time. The government did not want to lose the highly reputed Sturm, who had carefully framed the issue. According to him, it amounted simply to: Who oversaw theological education at the Academy? In effect, Sturm was challenging his supervisors to say whether he was rector or not. When they replied that he was, he pressed his advantage, eventually gaining control also over theological disputations. Marbach ended up being relieved of his position as dean of the theological faculty. Moreover, Strasbourg's governing authorities made sure to inform him that he was the president of the Company of Pastors, not the church "superintendent."

Although Marbach would not live quite long enough in this world to see it, his successor Johann Pappus fought another battle with Sturm, a parallel one, and prevailed. Not long after the Formula of Concord was released in 1577, Pappus held a disputation asking whether one could show due Christian love to false teachers while condemning their teachings. Sturm, who thought not, became enraged. He tried to discipline Pappus, then went on to attack him and other Lutherans in print. Sturm over-reached. He more than implied disrespect for pastors and their calling publicly to teach the truth and reject error. Furthermore, in the process he ran afoul of the Elector of the Palatinate, now a Lutheran. By the end of 1581, Sturm was dismissed from his "life-time" position at the Academy.

Nonetheless, it took until the church order of 1598 for Strasbourg to commit officially to the Formula of Concord. Reluctance came in part from the city fathers, who looked to the Swiss as possible allies against military attack and did not want to anger them. Yet Strasbourg's pastors had subscribed the Formula of Concord years earlier, and they had been using it to judge the teaching of ministerial candidates. When the "new" church order was adopted in 1598, it codified practices long in place. It brought nothing new by way of doctrine.

Sixteenth-century Strasbourg spent quite a while on the Wittenberg Trail. Elements of its journey included learning (albeit imperfectly at the moment) the Lutheran teaching on the Lord's Supper at the time of the Wittenberg Concord; intelligent and faithful leadership by Marbach and Pappus; attention to worship, catechesis, and visitation; building collegiality through shared understandings of doctrine among an increasingly educated cadre of clergy; confronting and dismissing Academy faculty who compromised biblical doctrine; large quantities of patience; and the often-surprising gracious providence of God in everyday events. Not to be overlooked in this mix are the steady, faithful ministrations by many pastors over the years. On that last point, even Martin Bucer provided a fitting word: "Nothing in this life is more sacred or greater . . . than those things that pertain to the sacrosanct evangelical ministry, the ministry of the eternal salvation of humanity itself." 5



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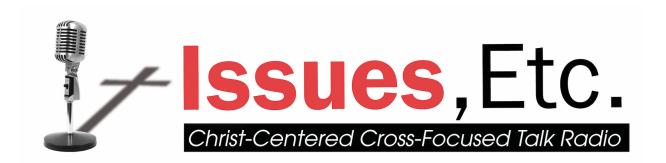
¹ This article is almost entirely dependent on research by James M. Kittelson, summarized in these articles he contributed to Hans Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): "Capito, Wolfgang," "Marbach, Johannes," "Pappus, Johann," and "Strasbourg." See also the following: James M. Kittelson, "Humanism in the Theological Faculties of Lutheran Universities During the Late Reformation," *The Harvest of Humanism in Central Europe: Essays in Honor of Lewis W. Spitz*, ed. Manfred P. Fleischer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 139-157; James M. Kittelson, "Luther's Impact on the Universities – and the Reverse," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 48 (January 1984): 23-38; James M. Kittelson, "Martin Bucer: Forgotten Man in the Late 16th Century?", *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe*, eds. Christian Krieger and Marc Lienhard (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 2:705-714; and James M. Kittelson with Ken Schurb, "The Curious Histories of the Wittenberg Concord," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 50 (April, 1986):119-137. Kittelson's lifetime of work on Strasbourg came to fruition in his book, *Toward an Established Church: Strasbourg from 1500 to the Dawn of the Seventeenth Century* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2000).

² Hermann Sasse, *This is My Body* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), 160. Of Bucer, "the man of the via media," Sasse added: "Modern scholarship has discovered that he is not only the father of the conventicles which later became so popular with the Pietists, but, after going to Cambridge, he also became one of the fathers of English Puritanism" (*This is My Body*, 170, 245).

³ Sasse, 251.

⁴ However, Marbach did not take this battle to be simply an academic tournament, let alone an occasion to throw his weight around as president of the Company of Pastors. He saw the problem when Zanchi characterized the Christian as being bound to Christ through two different bonds, claiming that the "external bonds" of word and sacrament were not as reliable as the "internal bond" of predestination. "To the contrary," Marbach insisted, "we begin in the church from the external word and the ministry of the church and we affirm that the word of the Gospel and the sacraments instituted by Christ are not accidental bonds but truly [dependably] substantial ones" (quoted by Kittelson, *Toward an Established Church*, 105). The church's ministry and certainty of salvation for Christians lay at stake.

⁵ Quoted in Kittelson, *Toward an Established Church*, 106.



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