

# EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

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## Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews selected from publications  
worldwide for an international readership,  
interpreting the Christian faith for contemporary  
living.*

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Carey. For Muslims, it conjures up idols. So we go back and use their terms and reinterpret them.

*How do your churches organize?*

*Parshall:* We follow the mosque pattern. It's something like the Christian Brethren style. Each church is autonomous. We don't encourage organizational links between them; we don't want bishops, big power structures, and money. The only 'money' is food. When we go to their place, they give us a meal; when they come to our place, we give them a meal, and that's it.

We have no institutions and no plans for any. For meeting social and physical needs, we look to groups like World Vision, World Relief Commission, Food For the Hungry, Salvation Army, and the Mennonite Central Committee. They come and do their thing in Christ's name. By government regulation, they can't preach. They serve a difference audience than we do.

*What about washing before praying?*

*Parshall:* Every Muslim has always washed before praying. Muslims will not pray without washing. Outside our centers we have a pot of water. If the converts want to wash, we don't object. In Islam, this is a meritorious act, to make one ceremonially clean. We tell the converts that washing does not make them clean before God, but if a convert has washed before praying for 50 years, we don't insist that he suddenly stop just because he has become a Christian.

*Some of your critics have said that your pragmatism overrides your theology.*

*Parshall:* Some scholars feel we should give a theological treatise for each of the things we do. I respect and appreciate theological critiques. On the other hand, I am a pragmatist, and if I look at something from my theological orientation, and it's permissible, then I do it. I don't want to spend the rest of my life going to one Th. D after another trying to figure out whether it's alright to wash before you pray. *p. 277*

## II A Multi-ethnic Community

*Reprinted from Evangelical Missions Quarterly, with permission*

Probably the model having the most potential for exhibiting total respect for maintained homogeneous units in a context of true spiritual unity is the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual local church. The First Baptist Church of Flushing, New York continues to show that it can happen. It is made up of a number of ethnic and linguistic 'congregations' that compose the total church. A pastoral staff from Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Portuguese backgrounds, among others, ministers to 'their' people in separate services. Prayer and Bible study groups flourish in other languages. Even church dinners reflect the ethnic diversity of the church, located in an area where more than fifty languages are spoken.

According to the senior pastor, Rev. Russell Rosser, the key to the healthy life and outreach of the church is their emphasis on relationships. A priority is placed on love and the preservation of unity. Members from the various 'congregations' share weekly in common worship services where the message is often translated. The pastoral staff meets for four hours a week for in-depth sharing in the Word and prayer, and for ministry to each other. The church board reflects the ethnic diversity of the membership. Each group, however, is free to determine the extent and closeness of its relationship to the

organizational structure of the church. Several are less closely involved than others, largely because of linguistic barriers. The point is that at no point are relationships forced nor artificially produced. The believers share far more than a common building; that fact is by comparison almost incidental to their oneness.

This particular church is a microcosm of what the Body of Christ is all about: unity out of diversity. A failure to take either diversity (and thus homogeneous units) or unity seriously is unbiblical and can hinder the witness and growth of the church. These two givens, societal and biblical, are too often seen as antithetical and one is unnecessarily sacrificed for the other. Rather, the biblical perspective should be maintained with reference to both, and in this way the church will find an experiential alternative that will permit each to find appropriate expression.

### **SOME QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

1. How should the election of Israel be understood in terms of HUP?
2. What place has the family as HUP? [p. 278](#)
3. To which of the following can we apply the *ta ethne* in the Great Commission? Peoples, tribes, nation state, suburbia, industrial complex and political associations.
4. What is needed to make ethnic churches into multi-cultural brotherhoods? [p. 279](#)

## **An Editorial Comment**

*This year all over the world the Protestant churches have been celebrating the 500th birthday anniversary of the great German reformer Martin Luther. Special thanksgiving services, publications and new editions and evaluations of Luther's writings and theology are numerous by now. Even a new kind of anthology of all Luther's works has been published. Obviously, Germany leads in these celebrations with special releases on every aspect of Luther's life and ministry. ERT's tribute to this man of God takes the form of a recapitulation of his theological emphases relevant to the current theological debates.*

*The following two articles published here in the section on Ethics and Society have been selected according to the above criterion. When the Christian world seems to be falling apart, not on the debates about Christ or church but on the questions about man, history and the World, it is imperative to remind ourselves of the decisive role the doctrine of creation played in the reformer's thinking. The first article brings out this fact. The author puts it strongly when he says that Luther's doctrine of justification by faith can be best understood only through his doctrine of creation! This excellent paper also adds a conclusion: the special relevance of Luther's doctrines for Asia, particularly for Confucianism, Taoism and Hinduism and their cultures. Perhaps even more crucial is the debate between dogmatics and ethics. In our age when ethics is equated with dogmatics, it is all the more necessary to recover the essence of Luther's *zwei-Reiche Lehre*, the two kingdoms doctrine. The second article in this section re-evaluates and demonstrates the significance of this Lutheran teaching for our world and age.*

*It is possible that some readers may be displeased to see Luther omitted in the section on Faith, but being discussed in the area of Ethics. This does not minimize the emphases of the*

*Reformation, but it reemphasizes the essential link between justification by faith and justice in action.*

Sunand Sumithra p. 280

# **The Significance of Luther's Thought on Nature in the Christian Witness in Asia Today**

Choong Chee Pang

*Reprinted from East Asia Journal of Theology, Vol. 1, No 1, 1983, with permission.*

## **THE WORD OF GOD AND THE WORD OF CREATION**

Heinrich Bornkamm is right when he observes:

In the sixteenth century and its peripheries two genuine revolutions broke through the cover of occidental intellectual life. They were two revolutions. They contributed something new to the history of mankind, and, unlike humanism, they signified more than a return home to ancient wisdom and to the measured and adjusted humanity of bygone ages. The one is the revolution of Christian faith through Luther; the other is a revolution consisting in a new conception of natural science, introduced by Nicholas of Cusa and extending through Paracelsus and Copernicus to Bruno, Kepler, and Galileo.<sup>1</sup>

Luther was basically a man of his time, In his own profound mind the two revolutions could not be entirely divorced from one another. There is undoubtedly in Luther's religious faith and spiritual experience a picture of nature or the created world. This is based on his conviction that it is faith in God the Creator that determines man's understanding of himself, of his existence and salvation. For this reason, Luther can characterize faith in God the Creator as the ultimately decisive truth. In a sermon of 1523 he says:

'I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and of earth' is, without a doubt, the highest expression of our faith. Whoever genuinely believes this has already been helped, has once again been set right, and arrived at the place from which Adam fell ... For such a man must have died to all things, to good and to evil, to death and to life, to hell and to heaven, and confess from his heart that he is able to do nothing by his own power.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Bornkamm. *Luther's World of Thought*. Eng. tr. by Martin H. Bertram (Saint Louis, Missouri, 1965) p.176.

<sup>2</sup> WA 24, 18.