is the cause for a new kind of community. A new community is the result of gifting, grace, and gospel, and is not based on law, merit, and an economy of simply external goods (like finance). We can talk about a community that lives, believes in, and practices the economy of grace and the gospel—a community that lives from the life-sustaining and renewing gifts of God. The unconditional character of God’s gift does not preclude the necessary reciprocity required for full participation in a real community as relationship between God and humans, and humans among themselves. God’s gifts of grace transform the conditions by which human life fulfills itself in a community with others (Tanner). A theology of grace is, therefore, of relevance to the discussion that wrestles with restricting gift to either an impossibility or to something that is merited. The gift of grace belongs to a different oikonomia; it belongs to God.

Rethinking Christocentric Theology

Michael Welker

The theology of the Reformation was, and still is, completely focused on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The four famous, programmatic sola formulas (sola Christus, sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide) stood, and continue to stand, at the center of the Reformation message. This message states that the salvific God of grace does not desire to be understood through metaphysical speculation. Rather, God has given God’s self to all humanity and can be recognized by all humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. For this reason, the pathway to God is to be sought and found in the study of scripture. Attempts to reach God on the path of philosophical contemplation are doomed to fail. These paths think about God as an all-determining reality, ground of beings, primal causes, or final point of reference. The God who humbly takes on human form does not want to be known through metaphysical or moral effort. The God who is near to us in incarnation and kenosis wants to be grasped and understood by faith.

This Christian theological insight hides both an implicit criticism of authority and academic challenge. Martin Luther frequently and impressively articulated both aspects. For example, the Reformer wrote to Spalatin in 1519 concerning John 6:37–40, which deals with the community of will between Jesus and the Father. In his letter Luther writes: “He who seeks to think beneficially about God should concentrate wholly upon the humanity of Christ.” Luther stresses: “This is the one and only path to recognizing God, a path from which the teachers of the Sentences have widely strayed.” Luther argues with dramatic flair that the great medieval theologians used sheer speculation to bypass the humanity of Jesus Christ in an attempt to worm their ways to God.1 For Luther, speculation is a dangerous theological path that can only lead us astray.

1 WABR 1, 3,27 ff. (translation by M. W.).
There have been repeated attempts to criticize Luther's Reformation approach. These attempts denounce its Christocentrism as »Christomonism« and, thus, ban it from academic consideration. Yet this polemic fails to recognize the comprehensive trinitarian understanding of the Reformers. The Reformers saw the entire creative power of God and of the divine Spirit to be bound together with the exalted Christ. Their focus on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ can direct us to the presence of the living, triune God. Meta-physical speculation is, at best, merely an attempt to gain a clearer concept of God; it does not disclose the verity of God. Furthermore, claims that a Christological preoccupation is incompatible with academic theology also fail to appreciate the academic and educational revolution associated with the novel Reformation approach.

I begin this essay by discussing the Reformation as an anti-speculative, educational revolution. I will do so from a Christological and biblical-theological perspective. In the second section, I examine the problems that arise from the theological motifs of an abstract theology of the cross, a speculative theology from below, and an authoritarian Christology (Herrschaftschristologie) conceived independently of the Spirit. I conclude by investigating the public and eschatological presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit. My aim is to demonstrate how the doctrine of the three-fold office of Christ can be fruitful for an incarnational theology and pneumatology.

1 The Reformation's Anti-Speculative Moves

The mathematician, scientist, and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead once perceptively observed the parallels between the academic theological approach characterizing the Reformation and the genesis of modern natural science. Whitehead observed that the Reformation's philologically-oriented »return to the sources« could be seen as an early equivalent to modern natural sciences' revolutionary turn to efficient causation and experimentation. As such the Reformation was parallel to developments in modern science. Whitehead concluded: »The Reformation and the scientific movement were two aspects of the historical revolt which was the dominant intellectual movement of the later Renaissance. The Reformation retrieved the sources and origins of Christianity. It appealed to the revelation of God here on earth. Among others, Francis Bacon, one of the founders of the modern natural sciences, famously stressed the need to examine efficient causation and to promote experimentation as a method for proving scientific claims. Whitehead took the Reformation and the origins of modern science as two clear expressions of a great and influential anti-speculative intellectual movement. This movement would shape the modern spirit. 2 The Reformation's Christological and biblical-theological perspective grounded a theological realism that was both emancipatory and critical of speculation.

An anti-speculative Christology begins with the humanity of Christ. A Christology grounded in Christ's humanity opens up an understanding of who God is. In order to understand humanity in relation to God, it is necessary to adopt a biblical-theological perspective. An anti-speculative theology requires that theological teachers gain historical and philological competence. Common sense is also necessary to understand the word and to think through matters of faith, even without philosophical or metaphysical training. The Reformers were not merely proposing to revise all academic and church theology, but were committed to reorienting the educational system and culture on a massive scale. The Reformation became an educational revolution.

Together with Spalatin, Karlstadt and Melanchthon, Luther planned a series of academic and university reforms in Wittenberg. The aim of these reforms was twofold: to shrink the influence of scholastic philosophy and theology; and to focus theology's attention back to its sources in biblical texts. The reforms also promoted the learning of Greek and Hebrew philology. But they did not end there. The Reformers strove to establish a fundamentally new approach to a comprehensive biblical education. When faced with the objection: »Why do we need Bible translations when the people cannot read?«, the Reformers responded by demanding that the school system be expanded and by advocating for the intellectual and spiritual education of children while they were still at home. The Reformers wrote catechisms and pamphlets, and enthusiastically engaged in visitations. Luther's diary 3 reveals just how tirelessly he worked and traveled to promote a biblically-oriented education that was also comprehensive. Luther's deeply anti-speculative skepticism informed his often harsh polemic against Aristotle. It stemmed from a theology and piety that was armed with a biblically-oriented realism. Luther's skepticism sought to take seriously the revelation of God in this world, instead of simply resorting to speculative principles or musings about God.

Luther's anti-speculative skepticism contains a severe criticism of a theology that risked eliminating Christ's humanity in order to promote absolute...

3 Cf. ANDREA VAN DÜLMEN, Luther-Chronik. Daten zu Leben und Werk, Munich 1983.
speculation of the divine. Luther emphasizes his anti-speculative position in key texts, for example the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), by making the sharp distinction between a *theologia gloriae* and a *theologia crucis*. With this distinction — or in other words opposition —, Luther goes beyond even Paul’s pointed formulations. With Luther we have a realistic bottom-up theology instead of religious top-down speculation!

2 Problems in Speculative Distortions of Luther’s Reformation Theology

There has been a tendency to efface Luther’s Christological and biblical perspective with a mere *theology of the cross*. Luther’s own sayings have been muddled in support of this position. Yet this position does not do justice to Luther’s intention. It places too much emphasis on God’s humiliation to the point of suffering on the cross. Dietrich Bonhoeffer represents this line of Luther-interpretation when he writes: *Only the suffering God can help.* Other theologians of the cross writing in the second half of the twentieth century, for example Jürgen Moltmann and Eberhard Jüngel also took up this interpretation and expanded it.

In view of this interpretative trajectory, a nagging question has not been answered. In fact, the question concerning how the impotent and suffering, indeed *crucified* God can help has been suppressed. Slogans such as *sub contrario*, *paradox*, or the mysticism of the cross suppress the question. A speculative theology from above is simply substituted for a no-less-problematic speculative theology from below, with Luther’s pithy sayings invoked to support this move. Such a reductionism fails to appreciate the liberating, insight-producing, and even culturally creative power of Luther’s Reformation approach.

Yet to what degree does the nearness of God in incarnation and kenosis truly fascinate us? I have no intention of calling into question the sustained power of the person and life of Jesus to attract and fascinate us. If the media were ever given the task of selecting not only a man of the years, but a man of the millennia, the unanimous choice would be Jesus of Nazareth. And yet the revelation of a powerful cultural force is still not a revelation of God. Walter Jens gave his translation of the Gospel of Matthew the dramatic title: *From the Stable to the Gallows* [*Am Anfang der Stalld am Ende der Galgen*]. Jens’s title captures the impressive, sustained iconic presence of Jesus Christ in classical art, in the church’s most important festivals, and in the media. Jesus Christ Superstar! — precisely in the images of manger and cross. How does the nearness of God in the form of a baby in a manger or in the figure of a dying and crucified man really move our hearts and touch our imaginations?

If divine nearness were truly compelling, how could the persistent and powerful dominance of abstract theism in the theologies and churches of the West be explained? Abstract theism constantly depicts God as the all-determining reality. Yet does not this image fail miserably to supply either answers or comfort in the face of theodicy? In spite of failure, abstract theism is still a powerful factor in shaping the tepid and skeptical religiosity of Western churches to this day. Furthermore, subjectivistic faith is also a powerful factor in contemporary religiosity by excising the revelation of God in Christ. The faith of *Me and my internal Others* seeks to discover God in one’s innermost self-consciousness. In such attempts to be near to God, Christ and Bible can only ever be distractions.

On the one hand, an abstract theology of the cross that only picks up crumbs from the Reformation table is unable to prevent the situation of abstract theism. On the other hand, an abstract theology of the cross undergirds an authoritarian Christology as characterized by the Barmen Declaration of 1934. I am self-consciously directing sharp criticism against both an abstract theism and an authoritarian Christology. Like many others, I have arrived at important and valuable insights from the discourse of the theology of the

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cross and its connections to Luther, Hegel, Moltmann and Jüngel. The Barmen Declaration was a beacon in the Confessing Church's resistance to both the Deutsche Christen and National Socialist ideology. Nazi ideology held both God and human beings in contempt, Barmen, Karl Barth and the school of dialectic theology resisted this ideology by focusing on Christology. The Christological focus served as a signpost to admonish those theologies and churches that had distanced themselves from the Bible under the weight of self-secularization and self-banalization. Barmen appealed to both Bible and Reformation. In many respects we must be thankful for and appreciate the modern theology of the cross and the theology stemming from Barmen. However, this theology did not only promote but also hindered the fruitful renewal of Reformation thought than promote it. A sober look back at these movements reveals that they also served to stabilize the sterile religiosity of many Western churches. I briefly consider the Barmen Declaration in light of my criticism before moving on to possible alternatives.

It is well known that the Barmen Declaration displays a thoroughgoing Christological focus. The first article reads as follows: «Jesus Christ ... is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. The other five articles also stress the rule of Christ over and against the ideological claims and attacks of the Deutsche Christen. How does Barmen conceptualize and clarify the rule of Christ? The third Barmen article draws on the Augsburg Confession VII, stating: «The Christian church is the congregation of the brethren in which Jesus Christ acts presently as Lord in word and sacrament through the Holy Spirit.» In line with AC VII, Jesus Christ acts in the church through word and sacrament.9

Thirty years ago Henning Schröer already considered the Christological focus of AC VII and warned of the «insular character of the church after Bar­men. He identified as problematic the formulations in which Barmen speaks of the church as existing «in the midst of a sinful world» and turning the attention of church worship to «word and sacrament». Schröer admits that these points are «justified» given «its principles and history». However, he draws on Jürgen Moltmann’s work to express his concern that Barmen neglected the diaconal and celebratory-doxological dimensions of the church.

Two key elements, in particular, are missing in the Barmen Declaration. The first missing element is the promised presence of Jesus Christ with the poor and in «the least of these» (Matt 25:31-46). The second missing element is the diaconal work of the church that logically follows from the first point. This absence is clearly and dramatically noticeable in Barmen’s silence on the persecution of Jews. Barmen’s single-minded preoccupation with «word and sacrament» alone is unequipped to emphasize the continuity between the rule of the risen Christ and the Old Testament legal traditions or its messianic promises. Barmen’s focus also avoids highlighting the assurances spelled throughout the Old Testament that God intervenes on behalf of the troubled, disadvantaged, and oppressed.

Barmen’s second article mentions a «joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world». This joy contrasts sharply with the apocalyptic mood characterizing Barmen’s third article. The sights of Barmen III are set on the eschatological parousia. It speaks of «the church of pardoned sinners».10 It only touches tangentially on the issue of the Creator God’s mercy on human beings that elevates and exalts them. Hardly considered in Barmen III is Paul’s testimony that the Holy Spirit brings about joy and the glorification of God even «in suffering» (1 Thess 1:6; 2 Cor 7:4; Rom 14:17; 15:13; Gal 5:22).

Once we acknowledge that Jesus Christ in no way works only «in word and sacrament», we are able to identify and clearly name Barmen’s inadequacies. We are also able to identify the problems concerning Barmen’s talk of the rule of Christ when we see the way in which Barmen III trips on its biblical prooftext. The authors of Barmen place the prooftext of Ephesians 4 before the third article and its corresponding counter-declaration. Barmen III quotes the biblical passage as saying: «Let us speak the truth in love and grow in every way upon him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body is joined» (Eph. 4:15-16).11

The passage from in Ephesians, however, does not speak of «growing upon the head, upon Christ but, rather oddly, «unto him who is the head, into Christ». Thus Barmen’s interpretation softens the dynamic tension between the head of the body and its members. This softening leads, in turn, to a

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9 BSLK, Göttingen 61967, 61.


11 Author’s note: The English version of Barmen III has somewhat corrected the points I am criticizing, which are in the German original. Hence I translate from the German.
highly problematic and inadequate summarizing of Ephesians 4:16. Barmen speaks of a head… from which the whole body is joined. Yet this summary truncates a much more fascinating and complex-sounding statement from Ephesians 4:16:

from whom (i.e. from the head, from Christ) the whole body - knit and joined together by every supportive joint in accordance with the power each individual part is given - achieves bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.12

In spite of an awkward formulation, the Letter to the Ephesians explicitly stresses the internally polyphonic cooperation of the members, joints and ligaments of the body of Christ. While the members of the body must receive their power and the direction of growth from Christ their head, they each still have their own respective powers and dignity. The Holy Spirit lends power and dignity to the members of the body through many acts of cooperation. This reciprocity must not be disregarded, not even overshadowed, by an overemphasis on Christ’s monarchical rule.

3 Jesus Christ’s Presence in the Holy Spirit

We need to make a number of Christological corrections in order to get out of these theological dead ends. First, we must recognize that the presence of the resurrected and exalted Christ cannot be understood without considering the humanity of Jesus. Theology and piety cannot be disengaged from a passionate interest in the life and work of the historical Jesus. We also need to appreciate an additional difficulty concerning the historical Jesus: Jesus encounters us differently in different contexts. He encounters us in one way when he preaches in Galilee, in another way when he participates in table fellowship, in another when he heals the sick and casts out demons, and in yet other ways when he comes into conflict with Rome, Temple and Torah.

The work of the historical Jesus is set in multicontextuality. Yet we only encounter a first level of multicontextuality in a second multicontextuality. The second multicontextuality mediates the first multicontextuality through biblical and extra-biblical witnesses. These witnesses order, integrate, and evaluate the different aspects of Christ’s work in different ways. These differences raise a number of historical and exegetical questions and problems. The biblical witnesses also stand in a third multicontextuality; the space of broader Old Testament remembrances and expectations. Finally, our questions (and those of our predecessors) of the historical Jesus are shaped by a fourth multicontextuality. This multicontextuality is informed by our respective intellectual and moral interests, worldviews, by the spirit of our times, and by our understanding of academic progress, etc.

We must not allow the difficulties of this fourfold multicontextuality to scare us away from searching for the historical Jesus, for the life of this particular human being. The risk of doing so would be to drift off into abstract, and finally, docetic Christologies - be they lowly or grandiose. We can never do justice to the challenges and demands of Reformation theology without constantly renewing the search for the historical Jesus in all of his corporeality and admittedly difficult approachability. A serious and multifaceted interest in the life of Jesus will also prevent us from a reductionistic theology of the cross, which is focused solely upon a suffering and impotent God.

The life of Jesus and the representations of his death on the cross reveal, if we are open to it, the monstrous power of the world. In the cross, the world’s powers confront and attack God and God’s presence. Jesus is condemned in the name of the ruling political system and in the name of established religion. Jesus was executed in the name of two legal systems, Jewish and Roman. Even public opinion was against him: »Crucify him!« they all shouted (Mark 15:13 ff. par). Jew and Gentile, Jew and Roman, native and foreigner were all in agreement. All powers joined together to work against God’s revelation. Even Jesus’ own disciples betrayed him. They abandoned him, and fled.13

The monstrous power of the world is revealed in Jew and Gentile, occupier and occupied, friend and foe. It works against God and the revelation of God. In light of this unveiled power, we must be open to see the deep estrangement between God and world. The world under the power of sin: here we finally see the sola gratia in all of its depth and subtlety [Abgründigkeit]. Nothing other than a second, new creation from chaos can overcome the rupture be-

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tween God and the world, between God and humanity. In the light of the new creation, we can speak appropriately about the subtlety of God’s compassion, of his suffering, and even of the suffering of the creative God and of the Spirit. The latter was driven out, was sacrificed, and was withdrawn during that night on Golgotha.

Yet another theological mistake must be corrected. The mistake addresses the fatal confusion between resurrection with joyful triumph and resurrection as mere physical resuscitation. The resurrection witnesses are quiet and modest. They have many doubts. They oscillate between concrete lucidity and ephemeral vision, between experienced theophany and doubt. The breaking of bread, a greeting of peace, the expounding of scripture, a call to baptize, and the sending of disciples into the world all testify to a profound confirmation of God’s power. The Resurrected One is not the resuscitated pre-Easter Jesus. The Jesus after Easter reveals himself to his followers in the power of the Spirit.

There are many who try to understand the Spirit in an intellectual way. At least many people in the West do. And they fail to access the presence of the risen Christ in the Spirit. Paul gives us an incredibly valuable clue when he says that he in his spirit not only remembers, but anticipates being to­gether with his beloved community in the Spirit (1 Cor 5:3f.). The power of the Spirit. The latter was driven out, was sacrificed, and was withdrawn during his suffering, and even of the suffering of the creative God and of the Spirit. The incorporation of the faithful into the life of the resurrected Christ is a crucial theological point. Theologies that speculate on or puzzle over ontological transformations become moot when they consider the life of the exalted Christ. A focus on the presence of the resurrected and exalted Christ in the community of the faithful helps us to understand the concrete ways in which the Spirit incorporates the community into the life of Christ. Calvin provides a further point of clarification that helps us connect the post-Easter Christ to the pre-Easter life of Jesus. Calvin writes: "To know the purpose for which Christ was sent by the Father, and what he conferred upon us, we must look above all at his threefold office: prophetic, kingly and priestly." Many significant theologians, among them Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth have taken up and expounded Calvin’s doctrine of the threefold office or the threefold office of Christ (munus triplex Christi). Johann Gerhard is to be thanked for facilitating its adoption in Lutheran theology. Roman Catholic and Orthodox theologians also incorporated this doctrine into their dogmatic the­ologies. The doctrine helps us grasp the powerful public work of Jesus Christ in all its richness. It connects the Old Testament traditions to the New Testa­ment. It clarifies the continuities between the Old Testament’s anointed kings, priests, and prophets and the New Testament’s allusions to these offices in view of Christ.

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The doctrine of the munus triplex is especially insightful when it is intepreted pneumatologically. When we look at the so-called offices of Christ in continuity with Jesus' pre-Easter life, his cross, and his resurrection, we see the emergence of a number of overlapping themes and intersections between the differing offices.

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16 Calvin, Ibid., II.15.
Human beings are given a share of the kingly office of Christ through the Spirit. The giving of the kingly office revolutionizes the human conditions of dominion because Jesus is simultaneously both brother and friend. He is one with the poor and, in the end, he is also one who is persecuted and excluded. As John Dominic Crossan emphasized in his two books about Jesus (which are successful in the USA), this king recognizes basic human needs: food, healing, and community. He even practices table fellowship with the weak, the needy, and the outcast. He turns his attention to children, women, and the Gentile. An ethos that is protective of the weak characterizes both the life of Jesus and the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaims. The ethos surrounding Jesus is an ethos of love, acceptance, forgiveness, and ennoblement.

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ take concrete shape in many, often unassuming, acts of love and forgiveness. The immediate witnesses to Jesus' work join many others who share in his humble yet incredibly powerful kingly rule. The light of Christian humanism also shines upon other religions as well as upon secular ways when love and compassion are put into practice. It is important to consider these other ways of exercising love and compassion because Christianity in return takes up valuable impulses from them. The kingdom of Christ is more than just the sum of all churches from every time and every place. Whatever you did for one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did for me - whether you recognized my presence in them or not (cf. Matt 25:40; 25:34 ff.). The Christian theologians who restrict the rule of Christ to «sacrifice upon the cross» fail to recognize the expansive reach of Christ's presence in the power of the Spirit.

The second office is Christ's priestly office especially mentioned in the Book of Hebrews. The priestly dimension of Christ's rule and kingdom is curtailed when it is focused solely on the difficult topic of the «sacrifice upon the cross». In order to avoid this curtailment, we should strive to be open to the biblical witnesses of the post-Easter appearances of the risen Christ. The Harvard theologian, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, has been helpful in showing that the resurrected One establishes the fundamental forms of the church's life of worship and its charismatic power. The appearances of the resurrected Christ are connected to the sharing of the peace, the breaking of bread, the teaching of scripture, the baptismal command, and the evangelical sending forth of the disciples. The polyphony of ways in which the church's worship instanta- nizes the church's existence is connected to the priestly office. This office is both shared and concretized in the priesthood of all believers.

The third office is the prophetic office. The cross of Christ gives to the prophetic office its precise contours. I emphasize: while an important aspect of the cross's message is the revelation of the suffering God, it must never be reduced to this revelation alone. The nearness of God in the poverty, weakness, and impotence of the Crucified One can never be taken to obscure God's confrontation in cross and resurrection with the principalities and powers of this world. Jesus Christ was the One who brought us the message of the coming kingdom of God; he was the One who communicated the power of healing, the power of turning one's attention to children, to the weak, the outcast, the sick, the suffering. This Jesus Christ was condemned by principalities and powers and condemned unanimously. Only after his resurrection does it become obvious that Christ is the head of the principalities and powers that stood up against him (Rom 8:38; Col 1:16; 2:20; 1 Peter 3:22).

Religion, law, politics, public morality, and opinion like to market themselves as «good powers» seeking «marvelously to protect» us. They fight on the cross against the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The cross exposes a world under the power of sin and a «sight of godforsakenness». Sin and godforsakenness not only threaten Jesus, but remain a constant danger to us all. The cross exposes the way in which public and powerful protective mechanisms - law, politics, religion, morality, public opinion - can fail and even destroy us and our societies.

The prophetic office includes more than just Christian proclamation and theological doctrine in the church. It includes the tasks given to communities to promote truth and justice, and also has its purview over the sciences and the legal system. This office sheds light on the necessity to critique current distortive social and global traditions. Critique can take the form of passive resistance against corrupt and perverted political systems, media and economic powers, and corrupt morality and religion. Christian proclamation and biblical interpretation aid in the necessary seeing of and acting upon the mandate to critique. The prophetic office also extends beyond church walls.


Indeed, it must critique a self-glorifying, self-justifying, or ideologically-blinded church or ecclesiasticism.

In this essay I have sketched out a new way in which the Reformation’s central insights can be framed. The perspective of a pneumatologically-informed Christology frames the way in which the exalted Christ can be seen as concretized in the community that is enlivened by the Spirit. Yet the clear articulation of a pneumatologically-informed Christology confronts several challenges: It must continue to generate further careful research in the area of the historical. It must overcome the preoccupation with a theology of the cross concerned solely with the suffering God. And it must finally conclude its fundamentalist and agnostic indecisiveness regarding Christ’s physical resurrection. Such a theory has only served to muddy the theology of the Resurrected One.

There are many benefits in confronting these challenges. A renewal of Christology in the spirit of Reformation thought can take place. A theological perspective that focuses on God’s revelation in Jesus Christ in the light of the biblical witnesses can be shown to be as fruitful in our time as it was five hundred years ago. Nothing should obstruct a renewal of Reformation theology, as long as theology and piety continue to inform reflection on the glorified body of the resurrected Christ and as long as faithful Christians remain open to being grasped by the renewing Spirit of the exalted Christ. I am not dreaming a spiritual dream. Rather I am pleading for a biblically-oriented and academically-led spiritual realism. Such a spirit already grasped Luther’s and Calvin’s Reformation.

SOLA GRATIA IN ZEITEN DER GOTTESFERNE – TRANSFORMATION LUTHERISCHER THEOLOGIE IN EINE SAPIENTIALE DOGMATIK UND IN EINEN CHRISTLICHEN UTILITARISMUS

Hartmut Rosenau

1 EINLEITENDE PROBLEMSTELLUNG

Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung allein durch die Gnade Gottes (sola gratia) gilt als das Zentrum und als das entscheidende Kriterium der lutherischen, ja der reformatorischen Theologie insgesamt. Das hat zuletzt nochmals die Diskussion um die vom lutherischen Weltbund und der römisch-katholischen Kirche getragene »Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre« und die »Gemeinsame offizielle Feststellung« von 1999 deutlich gemacht: Mag es auch Konsens im inhaltlichen Verständnis von Rechtfertigung geben, so bricht der Dissens doch spätestens wieder bei der Frage nach ihrer kriteriologischen Funktion im Blick auf die Konsequenzen für andere dogmatische Topoi wie etwa das Kirchen- und Amtsverständnis auf.

