

a ‘moral unanimity’, with concessions to permit them to make it a united front. Something like a moral unanimity was in fact achieved by give-and-take in the only other document promulgated at the Council, the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, on the relationship of faith and reason. But on infallibility the majority used procedural rules and packed committees to ram through almost all of what they believed to be true.

In telling this story, O’Malley is outstanding. He juggles a large cast of activists on all sides; he makes us feel the frustrations of the endless repetition of points in a side chapel with appalling acoustics. He explains how the proponents of infallibility were limited more than anything else by tunnel vision, by hermeneutic rigidity, completely unable to make sense of *Wissenschaft*, historical-critical method. If its greatest champions were converts, its greatest detractors were historians from the German School. Not for the first, or last, time, scholasticism confronted humanism and won. And Pius IX comes out of it all as a man made rigid not so much by arrogance as by fear. He strove to build a fortress that would keep the modern world at bay. But he felt there all too many people inside his fortress ready to open the gates or wave white flags. *Plus ça change...*

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## Vítor Westhelle, *Transfiguring Luther: The Planetary Promise of Luther’s Theology*

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This rich and informative study clears a path to the new appropriation of the Luther legacy in the global South. Justice cannot be done to its many contributions, including the critique of old Lutheranism’s Luther in the global North, in the space of this review, which will focus on Westhelle’s account of Luther’s apocalyptic christology in tandem with his creation theology.

Westhelle’s programme is to show how ‘the principle by which Luther articulated his theological thought ... offered space for the people to articulate the language concerning their relationship to themselves, to the world, and to God, *beyond the confines of the regimes that controlled and regulated the proper use of language, creatively transgressing and crossing them*’ (p. 39, emphasis added). As such, it makes a virtue of the ‘unsystematic’ nature of Luther’s theology, eschewing comprehensive representations or theological worldviews that fossilise Luther and reify his doctrine. Westhelle regards such attempts at systematisation (beginning with Melancthon) as cover-ups of the ‘embarrassing hybridity’ (pp. 110, 190) of the Christ-event, which Westhelle’s ‘burlesque’ Luther attests as a fool for Christ.

The irony of representing Luther’s foolish witness to Christ as event in an academic study does not escape the author. He recognises that his retrieval of Luther and Chalcedon can only appear as ‘the symptomatic expression’ of Derrida’s ‘archival

malady ... the feverish recruitment of the past to justify the present' (p. 97). In any event, Derrida's worries about the betrayal of apophatic presence through kataphatic representation (in doctrines and systems of doctrine) inform Westhelle's discussion, especially of Luther's well-known binaries of law and gospel, letter and spirit, and justice and justification.

The heart of the study is an account of Luther's christology as Chalcedon's *communicatio idiomatum* with an apocalyptic twist. According to Westhelle, Luther's apocalyptic christology cannot be represented by a chronology: it is not the end of time, but the time of the end breaking into the transactional regime of *do ut des* and *suum cuique*. Luther's joyful exchange explodes this regime's repressive and calculating legalisms with an unheard-of righteousness that consists in God's giving precisely what is not deserved. In taking sin not His own, slavery not His own and death not His own, Christ gives as a gift the righteousness, freedom and life of this personal act of love. This new economy is 'the alterity of Christ in the midst of the world' (pp. 271–2). It must accordingly be proclaimed as a paradox, that is to say, as a catachrestic metaphor which by the jarring Pauline oxymoron, 'Christ crucified', bespeaks the presence of this *novum* in the world. The new creation comes, then, as an 'incision' which defies regulation or even coordination with the legality, rationality and economic calculus of prevailing structures of malice working injustice.

But how does this apocalyptic framework generate a hopeful ethic? The Chalcedonian doctrine of the incarnation identifies the creation of God in humanity, groaning under the structures of injustice, as the very object of the redeeming act of love. Calling upon the anti-Gnostic witness of Irenaeus of Lyon, Westhelle argues that creation theology 'provides criteria for distinguishing relative good and evil' (pp. 260–1). This corrective is especially needed because modern constructions of Luther's law-gospel theology in the 'two-kingdoms doctrine' represent a disfiguring acculturation of the Reformer's teaching that led to the 'cynical' (and socially conservative) argument that 'we ought to join God in the task of preserving a helpless world while God saves our souls' (p. 281).

Westhelle's Luther proves to be a resource for the 'planetary' theology of the future, with the shift from the two-kingdoms doctrine to creation theology marking an instance of the change that a contextual hermeneutics makes in the questions put to a figure like Luther. According to Westhelle, what grabs the attention of the global South in reading Luther is not the two-kingdoms doctrine, but Luther's attack on usury and his concomitant insistence that economic justice is integral to the goodness of God's ongoing creation.

Westhelle follows Oswald Bayer in reconstructing Luther's theology of the three orders of creation: *ecclesia*, *oeconomia* and *politia*. To be sure, this retrieval acknowledges medieval limitations in Luther's formulation of the doctrine, namely, assumptions about the static nature of the orders and the individualistic framework of redemption that accompanies them. But he goes on to argue that the orders contain irreducible anthropological dimensions, which both relativise the particular institutional forms the orders take, yet in their mutual irreducibility protect against tyranny. The materiality of creation in its dimensions of production and reproduction (*oeconomia*) are protected by intersubjective negotiation of interests (*politia*), such that praise and thanksgiving can sound on the earth (*ecclesia*). In this way, the orders together speak against gnosticisms that disembodiment or atomise salvation.

There are difficulties with this attractive and promising retrieval of Luther for 'planetary' purposes. I will mention several in terse formulation. First, there is an

overreliance on Derrida, who is Kantian modernity continued in post-colonial garb. Materialist theologians will do better with Deleuze. Likewise the genre of genealogical essay that Westhelle attempts does not escape the peril of representation or even system. It is still *writing* that violently appropriates the other.

Second, while the trinitarian nature of Luther's (and Chalcedon's) christology is duly noted (pp. 108–9, 118), it does no work in overcoming the aporias caused by superimposing (via Derrida) the Cartesian-Kantian subject-object dualism on Luther. In short, what the late Robert Jenson spoke of as the 'pneumatological deficit' of modern western 'binitarianism' continues to frame even the vigorous christology here proposed. The theological fear is that restricting knowledge of God to his self-revelation in Christ evacuates God of transcendence. Westhelle consequently affirms Luther's speculation about the *deus absconditus* 'unbound by His Word', supposedly to preserve a penumbra of 'mystery' (pp. 119–20, 161). A better alternative would be to take incarnational theology as limiting but also informing the way we conceive of God's transcendence – namely, as the eternal perichoresis of the love of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

Third, it is surely right to see in Luther's apocalyptic doctrine of inherited sinfulness the recognition of universal complicity (pp. 236–7), and correspondingly to reground 'the impossible possibility' of social justice in disruptive grace (p. 239). But a self-critical reckoning on precisely this basis with the bloody legacy of Bolshevism – a rival-in-kind modernism to the capitalism Westhelle excoriates – goes begging, at least in this book.

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## Paul Silas Peterson, *Reformation in the Western World: An Introduction*

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*Reformation in the Western World* is a learned and laudably ambitious attempt to weigh up the impact of the Reformation, for good and ill, on western culture and modernity. The breadth of reading on show in the endnotes (occupying nearly 60 pages, in tiny type) is genuinely awesome, encompassing a wealth of literature in both English and German. Paul Silas Peterson has himself reviewed Brad Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation* (Belknap Press, 2012), and his own monograph seems to be framed as a reply to it, taking a more positive view of both the Reformation and modernity. Sadly, it shows some signs of hurried composition, perhaps to avoid missing the high tide of the Reformation year. The structure of the argument can be loose, and the prose, often inexact and rarely elegant, has a somewhat staccato character.

For all its aspirations to breadth and balance, this study remains locked into the 'Whig interpretation of history', a paradigm which is itself deeply indebted to cultural (rather than dogmatic) Protestantism. This shows in the way it tends to oscillate between two senses of 'Reformation': the narrower sense, that of the Protestant